



# COUNTSTHORPE U3A UPDATE AND CURFEW CHRONICLE No 11

*Dear Member*

This month's bumper Chronicle has, as you might expect, a bit of a Christmas theme, though not exclusively so. My usual thanks go to all of you who have sent in contributions – they are always very warmly welcomed.

As usual, if YOUR submitted item is not included in this issue – please don't worry as it is very safely tucked away in the depths of my computer for subsequent issues of our Chronicle – of which there are likely to quite a few. I just try to put together a mixture of items, which I hope you will all enjoy.

Now read on and enjoy this issue of the Chronicle. Keep safe, keep smiling and keep remembering the good times we had, and will have again, in our U3A! And - don't forget to send in your contributions. Happy Christmas!

*June Hawkins*  
*Information and Publicity Officer*



*Chronicle contributions not later than 22 December, please,  
to me by email at: [jhawkins45@talktalk.net](mailto:jhawkins45@talktalk.net)  
or by post to 28 Mulberry Court, Enderby Rd, Blaby. LE8 4BU*

*Firstly, before we forget completely about November, here's a lovely reflective poem written by Adrian Dobey.*

## **AUTUMN MORNING**

Shining through the rising mist  
A sky of dusky blue,  
Warm autumn colours, vividly  
Reflect the crystal dew.

Overtures of small birds now  
Echo in cool air,  
A singing kettle on hot coals  
Returns a peaceful air.

Cupping hands around a mug,  
I contemplate these days,  
November sunrise, glorious,  
Stretching forth its rays.

A morning full of promises,  
What wonder will it bring,  
Though winter soon will wrap around,  
These rare days speak of spring.



*And now, a little nostalgia to really start off our Christmas issue. . .*

## **CHRISTMAS IN THE 1940s**

Families now have little memory of Christmas during and after World War II so here is an account of Christmas in the 1940s as a comparison with today. Nothing happened until a week or so beforehand. Then children's activity was directed to making and wrapping small presents to give to relatives. These consisted of drawings, small needlework gifts like lavender bags, or cooked sweets. No adult expected anything big from a child. Children weren't encouraged to expect presents, but were told they might "get something if they were good". Otherwise the preparation consisted of decorating a small Christmas tree and making paper chains to cheer the house. Finally on Christmas Eve the evening meal was early so that we could sleep before Midnight Mass, for which we were called just before 11.00 pm. As now, the Mass was a candlelit occasion with carols and a crib, and was followed by hot porridge at home before going back to bed.

Christmas Day began when we woke to a small stocking by the bed. It contained a comic, a wrapped pencil or crayons, some soap, a tube of gums, a notepad perhaps, or a small paperback, and a wrapped apple at the bottom. Nothing extravagant, but we were allowed to eat the apple and gums during the morning. (After the war there were chocolates too and an orange instead of an apple). Then we were expected to help get the table ready for the Christmas meal. Apart from a chicken, it was all normal winter food, but dressed up with bread sauce, as a special occasion. After lunch and listening to the King's radio message, we children went off to play with toys while adults stayed and talked. Then we were expected to help in clearing and washing-up, by which time we were ready for fruit cake, with squash for children and tea for adults. After tea a few surprise presents were usually given - but nothing extravagant. We played with games like jigsaws, or with our toys, until bed-time. In later years we were allowed to stay up with the adults to play charades and other card and guessing games, and to roast chestnuts. We made our own amusements, instead of relying on television as families tend to do now. It was quieter, yet very happy.

Boxing Day was a more leisurely day, often with a cold lunch and a good walk afterwards if the weather was suitable. Thereafter life returned to normal. Decorations had to be down by Twelfth Night by tradition. Looking back it seems that less fuss was made in advance, but that the event was the more enjoyable for the element of surprise.

*Sent in by GJS*



*Altogether now, sing-a-long: "Everybody's doin' it, doin' it, doin' it. . . ."*

## AGEING

I recently read a letter in the Radio Times complaining about the description for the 17 September episode of ITV's 'Tonight' about people aged over 55 and above, entitled "Scams: Ripping off the Elderly". As I'm approaching 70, but from the wrong direction, it made me feel ancient, but you have to laugh about it, so . . .

- You drop something when you're younger and just pick it up. When you're older, you stare at it for a bit, thinking whether you actually need it.
- I've reached the 'Wonder Years'. Wonder where my glasses are, wonder what I came upstairs for . . . etc, etc.
- I've had a knee replacement, my eyes are bad, I'm hard of hearing, I've got high blood pressure, I get dizzy spells, I can't always remember things. Luckily I've still got my driving licence.
- I think I'll tell the doctor I've decided to keep the hip and could he replace the rest of me?
- With my old age and accumulated wisdom, I believe your little toe is there to make sure that all the furniture in your house is in the correct place.
- If your eyes hurt after you drink your coffee, you forgot to take the spoon out of the mug.
- I've bought a pair of shoes with memory foam insoles, so no more forgetting why I walked into the kitchen.

Apparently the World Health Organisation has traditionally categorised the 'elderly' as 65 and over. Now the 65-74 year olds are categorised as 'early elderly'. Personally I think 'elderly' is always 10 years older than I am! And, as a member of the U3A, remember, it's not how old you grow, but HOW you grow old.



*Sent in by Tricia Brown*

## SAM'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING

*(A well-loved monologue – think of Stanley Holloway!)*

It was Christmas Day in the trenches  
In Spain in't Peninsular War,  
And Sam Small were cleaning his musket  
A thing as he'd ne're done before.

They'd had 'em inspected that morning  
And Sam had got into disgrace,  
For when sergeant had looked down the barrel  
A sparrow flew out in his face.

The sergeant reported the matter  
To Lieutenant Bird then and there.  
Said Lieutenant, "How very disgusting  
The Duke must be told of this 'ere."



The Duke were upset when he heard  
He said, "I'm astonished, I am.  
I must make a most drastic example -  
There'll be no Christmas pudding for Sam."

When Sam were informed of his sentence  
Surprise rooted him to the spot.  
'Twas much worse than he had expected,  
He though as he'd only be shot.

And so he sat cleaning his musket  
And polishing barrel and butt.  
While the pudding his mother had sent him  
Lay there in the mud at his foot.

Now the centre that Sam's lot were holding  
Ran around a place called Badajoz.  
Where the Spaniards had put up a bastion  
And ooh . . . what a bastion it was!

They pounded away all the morning  
With canister, grape shot and ball.  
But the face of the bastion defied them,  
They made no impression at all.

They started again after dinner  
Bombarding as hard as they could.  
And the Duke brought his own private cannon  
But that weren't a ha'porth o' good.

The Duke said, "Sam, put down thy musket  
And help me lay this gun true."  
Sam answered, "You'd best ask your favours  
From them as you give pudding to."

The Duke looked at Sam so reproachful,  
"Oh, don't take it that way," said he.  
"Us Generals have got to be ruthless.  
It hurts me more than it did thee."



Sam sniffed at these words kind of sceptic,  
Then looked down the Duke's private gun.  
And said "We'd best put in two charges;  
We'll never bust bastion with one."

He tipped cannon ball out of muzzle  
He took out the wadding and all.  
He filled barrel chock full of powder,  
Then picked up and replaced the ball.

He took a good aim at the bastion  
Then said "Right-oh, Duke, let her fly."  
The cannon nigh jumped off her trunnions,  
And up went the bastion, sky high.



The Duke, he weren't 'alf elated  
He danced around trench full of glee.  
And said, "Sam, for this gallant action.  
You can hot up your pudding for tea."

Sam looked 'round to pick up his pudding  
But it wasn't there - nowhere about.  
In the place where he thought he had left it,  
Lay the cannon ball he'd just tipped out.



Sam saw in a flash what 'ad happened:  
By an unprecedented mishap.  
The pudding his mother had sent him,  
Had blown Badajoz off the map.

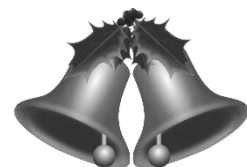
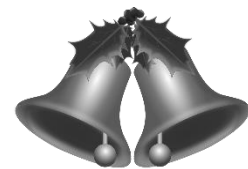


That's why fusiliers wear to this moment  
A badge which they think's a grenade.  
But they're wrong . . . it's a brass reproduction  
Of the pudding Sam's mother once made.



## CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. What does the Bible say about the three wise men?
  - a) There were three of them
  - b) They were wise
  - c) They were men
2. And they found Jesus . . .
  - a) By following yonder star
  - b) By following yonder planet
  - c) By satnav
3. Which is getting worse?
  - a) Christmas Bore
  - b) Christmas Creep
  - c) Christmas Disease
4. What did James Swan put in his mince pies in 1861?
  - a) Swan
  - b) Horse
  - c) Whale
5. Best way to dispose of your Christmas tree
  - a) Feed it to an elephant
  - b) Chuck it over your fence
  - c) Think ahead, buy an artificial one
6. What's unusual about reindeer?
  - a) They have shiny noses
  - b) Only species where the females have antlers
  - c) Only deer repelled by slightest smell of human urine
7. What's unusual about the Rathaus in Gengenbach, Germany?
  - a) It hosts a Christmas banquet of 2,000 rats
  - b) It has the largest permanent Nativity scene, featuring stuffed rats
  - c) It has the world's biggest Advent calendar



*(Answers later) Sent in by Tricia Brown*

## IF WE LOOK BACK!

During the last few weeks I decided to do some research for a book I may write based on my knowledge, and experiences I have had related to me over the years from friends, relatives and parents about the war years 1939 to 1946.

I'm doing this in today's climate of lockdowns, restrictions, loss of jobs, curtailed contact with love ones, plus the death toll we are experiencing with the pandemic, Covid 19!

It did occur to me how similar it is to the war years, but even though we do not like it, at least we do not, and I hope not, ever again experience the life our parents and grandparents lived through.

I was born in the year of the Battle of Britain when our then young men from this and some other countries never thought twice about giving their lives for their families, children, wives or sweethearts and their country.

I remember my Dad saying they stationed his regiment at an air base to protect it and he watched young men who flew the planes land with them full of bullet holes and within a short time taking a plane up again, against the enemy's aircraft.

The valour of the people, wives, kids, and every person who experienced the bombing! Loss of home, relatives, loved ones and so on. They had rationing, restricted travel and leisure hours, loss of men and women folk and children to live with, as well as working a night on munitions.

So I sit down and with my best intentions think of what we are now experiencing, and in Leicester have done so for a long, long time now. Like then, we are now involved in fighting a different enemy and still losing loved ones.

However, now we have freedom to live where we wish to. Our property is safe and if we are told correctly, the younger people seem to be able to cope with the virus. So what if we have some restrictions and we are curtailed drinking long hours and cannot have more than 6 people in our bubble? Supposedly doing this will keep the virus down.

The one big difference is we now have is the media, that puts us in the position of informing us whatever happens wherever it happens, which in the 1940s we did not have. You make your mind up which is your preference! I feel the spirit that was in our forefathers is still there and the people of the UK pulling together can do what was done then - win!

*Sent in by Colin Norman*



## A CHRISTMAS SKETCH

(SCENE: A typical lounge with the detritus of Christmas scattered around the room. Father Christmas (FC) is lying flat out in a large armchair. The vicar (V) and Maurice (M) stand, looking down at him.)

M Right! Now you're here, Vicar, you can help me measure him up for his coffin

V Er . . . er . . . I'm not sure that's part of my job description, Maurice

M Of course it is, Vic. You're the one who does the hatching, matching and dispatching, aren't you?

V I . . . I . . . suppose so, but I only came to offer some comfort and support to Mrs Christmas.

M She the one who sent for us, was she?

V Well, yes. She said he always get drunk after Christmas but this time she couldn't wake him up so she assumed he must have passed away.

M A blessed relief I should think, considering the state he gets into every Christmas. Goodness knows who'll do the job now he's gone.

V I see. I see. S...so there'll be a vacancy to be filled, will there? Don't YOU fancy applying for it, Maurice?

M Well, I reckon I could do a better job than him. Last year he gave my 16-year old son a Barbie doll, my 6-month old granddaughter a copy of War and Peace, my 90-year old bedridden granny a skate board and I got a voucher for a complete makeover including nail painting, hair restyling and a full facial. My missus nearly died laughing till she realised that she'd got a beard trimmer. Now, grab hold of the other end of this tape measure and let's get the job done.

V It . . . it . . . doesn't seem quite right when the old fellow is still warm.

M Makes it easier before rigor mortis sets in. Right, Vic! Top to toe he's, what, about 170?

V A hundred and s..s..seventy what, Maurice? I thought he was about six feet tall.

M Stop chuntering and help me measure him round the middle.

*(Maurice fumbles around Father Christmas's waist. Father Christmas suddenly sits bolt upright. Maurice and the vicar leap back in shock)*

FC What the red-nosed reindeer do you two think you're doing? Can't a fellow get some shuteye in peace?

V We . . . we thought . . . er . . . er . . . we . . . we . . . thought . . .

FC Don't care what you thought, keep your filthy hands off me. I read about a bloke like you in the Sunday Paper. Peter File I think his name was. Now, clear off the pair of you and let a chap get some rest. Oh, and on your way out, tell Mrs Christmas to bring me a cup of tea and a bacon sarnie. Cheerio!

*Written by Shirley Wilding*



## MEMORIES OF TEACHING

Last month we read Sue Wyllie's excellent article about her training to be an accountant. This inspired me to write about my experiences starting my career as a young teacher.

When did I start teaching? It was a long, long, time ago. Here are some memories of those early days . . .

It was all so long ago. In fact when I started my first job in Wigston, I remember clearly a new wattle-and-daub extension being added to Tesco.

My first school was a modest affair. Times were hard and food was not plentiful. When I arrived for my very first interview in the middle of the morning, I was shocked to see the head cook at the top of a ladder looking for mice in the thatched roof to augment the Lancashire Hot Pot.

In those days the photocopier comprised a monk with a quill. There was no running 30 copies off at 9.00 am ready for the start of Lesson 1. You had to plan well in advance. "How long to get this copied Benedict?"

"That'll be four weekes in illuminated scripte with ye gold embellishments, Sir, or just three weekes if thou sticke with the playne olde scripte in Microsoft Sans Serif font".

Travel in those days was mostly by horse (or horse and cart). I remember the opening of the first ride-in horsewash. It was run by a bit of a dope called “Tossler the Ostler”. Anyway, he called this horse cleaning business ‘Wash-n-Trot’ and he opened it in Bull Head Street. Staffing comprised a spotty youth with a broom and bucket of soapy water who charged a ‘groat for the coat’ plus an extra farthing for a complete underbody clean – which you thought was a bit pricey, but seemed to bring a smile to the face of the horse.

In Countesthorpe I remember that ‘Griff’s the Smiths’ on Leicester Road could put a new shoe on your horse while you waited (with a free fetlock check for every full set fitted). And you could get a goblet of hot mead from the vending machine in the luxury waiting room – which actually comprised of a few straw bales and a warty old crone with a tin bucket and ladle.

Once I was late for school and hired a taxi because I was in such a hurry. Never again! It took three hours for the sedan chair to arrive which was carried by one bloke who was 6ft 7in at the back and one 4ft 3in at the front. I spent the whole journey studying cat’s eyes in the road. Yes, in those days we were advanced enough to have cat’s eyes – except these were real cats buried in the road up their necks and fed ‘meeewslis’ twice a day in order to keep them alive (thereby stopping their eyes from falling out and rolling all over the road confusing drivers even more).

At school, male staff were expected to wear doublet, padded breeches and hose. Cod-pieces were popular but, eventually, flopped. However, in their heyday these could be very useful as many teachers used their codpieces as sellotape dispensers. Other teachers, such as science staff, used their cod-pieces as handy racks for distributing safety goggles, while teachers of electronics found it to be very useful for mounting cable reels. Also, it proved to be invaluable at lunchtimes for storing your doughnut. Those male teachers who were a little shy, or less ostentatious, stored their polo mints on it.

Ladies wore large dresses draped over elaborate cage-like frames. These provided excellent storage facilities as they incorporated a variety of hidden hinged doors and lids which provided access to a host of resources. It was not unknown for a female teacher to carry about her person racks of pens, pencils, spare slates, the odd abacus, and a spare folding table and chair (for that unexpected new admission).

As conflict with neighbouring regions was a regular occurrence, PE staff had to include compulsory training in the use of the sling-shot as this was part of the national curriculum in case you were called to arms to defend your county. Sling shots were in short supply so girls were encouraged to improvise with items of their underwear. Much to the annoyance of the boys, girls had a distinct advantage as their improvised slings could be double-shotted – and, frustratingly, capable of letting off both ‘barrels’ at once.

Other national sports included 'clod nurdling' and 'planking the terde'. There were prescribed levels of attainment at each Key Stage. For example, if you could nurdle your clod to a distance of 3 cubits, you attained a respectable Level 2.

Boys' uniform in those days consisted of a cap, leather jerkin, and short breeches held up with braces. Of course you didn't stand any nonsense from the kids in those days. There were a variety of punishments employed. For example, if pupils broke the rules, you hung them up by their braces in a line on the gymnasium wall bars. If you felt like a bit of extra entertainment, you walked along the row pulling on their legs and letting them go with a twang. To watch them all bobbing up and down was most amusing.

In those days serious illness was always around – particularly the dreaded plague. This was reflected in the popular culture of the day with songs like 'Saturday Night Fever' and 'Staying Alive'. And a particularly popular science fiction programme on TV was about the building of a half human/half machine called the 'Bubonic Man'.

Of course in those days Rural Studies formed an essential part of the curriculum. It was felt vital that pupils should become 'at one' with nature, the countryside, agricultural matters and specialised farming equipment. To this end, boys were taught how to manipulate their twangles, rotate their grumbloks and to help mothers sponge their blubberwaps.

Girls followed a different aspect of the Rural Curriculum – concentrating on how to position their kloppers to achieve maximum effect, and mastering differing techniques to encourage the menfolk of the village to be very productive.

In spite of such hardships these were happy days. Teachers today complain about Ofsted inspections, but we had inspections, too.

For example, the structure of school buildings was regularly inspected by a local parish official called the Beadle. His particular expertise was in relation to the safe structure of the school; most importantly, that the wattle and daub contained the correct ratio of straw to manure. When out of earshot he was often referred to as the 'Dung Beadle'.

Children were regularly inspected for lice and fleas by a local 'Nitte Nurse' who travelled from school to school in her cart which displayed the slogan 'Bitte by Bitte I'll 'Ave Each Nitte'.

Ah, those were the days; such fond irreplaceable memories!

*Peter Bradbury*

*(Note from Peter: Memories can be unpredictable and play tricks, so I might have got my timelines a bit muddled - but hey-ho!)*

# Code Word

The solution letters have been replaced by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet is represented by a different number. Crack the code to complete the grid.

	14		18		14		12			15		5		
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18	21	11	16	18	13			6			7	26	6	23
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A B C ~~D~~ E F G H I J K L M N O P Q ~~R~~ S T ~~U~~ V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

**U**

**D**

**R**

*Sent in by Ken Marriott*

## BUT, WHAT WAS A BANANA?

Like Shirley Wilding, I also was born in London – North London in 1940. At a very young age I knew what a doodlebug was, an air-raid shelter – a Morrison shelter (kept under the bed just in case it should be needed), a gas mask and what the cupboard under the stairs was for, a soup kitchen that was always lovely and warm, and perhaps as I now suspect, due to the mulligatawny soup. (It's amazing just what you can learn whilst walking in the virus lockdown – I had no idea that it was a curry spice until then). As a child I never did like it – much too hot. I also knew about the all clear siren and the shelters at the top of our road and in the park – just a road away from where we lived. BUT WHAT WAS A BANANA?

Like all parents in London, mine were really concerned for the safety of us children and, like so many others, my sister and I were packed off to the country. We stayed in a very large house, but not for very long, so my memory is very limited. However, I do remember the little boy called Garth who lived there staring at me whilst the nanny was bathing me. But we were such perfect children, that after about three weeks my mother was so lonely without us that we then went home to London again!

As time went by I grew bigger and at about 4½ years old I was able to discover just what this long-awaited banana was all about! The big day came. My mother had heard through the grapevine that BANANAS had arrived at a little grocery shop at Hendon Central station. We were dressed in our Sunday best; it really was a special day for a special treat and off we went. We were even to be allowed to eat on the bus coming home.

Once we were settled back on board, the serviettes and BANANAS were handed out. What on earth was all the fuss about? My sister has never stopped eating bananas, but I have never eaten even one again!



As I grew a little older and bigger I was given a tennis ball which, with practice, I could bounce against a wall and catch again. My tennis ball was always with me and wherever there was a wall – inside or outside – my ball would be bounced and caught. Then one day when I was in the toilet HITLER took my ball and wouldn't let me have it back! I was heartbroken and I went downstairs sobbing my heart out. When my mother asked what was wrong, I said that I had dropped my ball down the toilet and HITLER wouldn't let me have it back again. Needless to say I didn't give him a second chance!

Time and tide wait for no man, and eventually the dreadful war came to an end. There was a wonderful exhibition at Olympia in central London (it might have been the first Ideal Home one?). So many wonderful things that we had not seen before due to the war – such as crayons that you could draw with on fabric. These were particularly good on the old white silk parachutes which I believe could only be used once, so the silk was wonderful for making underwear. There were wonderful huge bunches of black grapes – not to be eaten until we got home where my mother was waiting for us. It was a truly happy and memorable day, thoughts of which I treasure to this day.

On the way back home from central London we passed the huge craters where the bombs had fallen in the streets – so very sad to see such dreadful devastation to a wonderful city. Once we had reached Baker Street we could see down into the houses' basements. People were starting to prepare meals and, being a nosy little girl, my father (at my request) started telling me about upstairs and downstairs.

My father was in the airforce during the war, repairing the aircraft that returned intact. The constant roar of the engines whilst being repaired cost him his hearing, which affected the rest of his life – he was a truly *gentle* man.

Life after the war was all about making the most of what you had, or could earn, or make – everything mattered. Homework became popular. Hence one day my mother arrived home with a large dustbin sack full of royal blue feathers. It appeared that hats were still in fashion and the feathers were to decorate the new models in styles of that time. Five feathers had to be picked out of a huge bag and put together in a small bunch and then went on the latest models. Bag after bag of royal blue feathers kept arriving – always royal blue. Guess whose job it was to sort out the feathers! My father bought a treadle sewing machine and I started to make leather writing cases and handbags; once he had punched the holes in them I was then allowed to help bind the parts together with cream thonging.



There was still food rationing but sweets were now available. I remember the very first time I was able to buy them. On my way to Sunday school, the sweet shop had opened and of course I hadn't got a clue what any of them tasted like. With my penny I opted for hundreds and thousands, because I would get so many! Little did I know how quickly they would melt. Another lesson learned!

*Contributed by a Wartime Capricorn*

## IS IT FRED OR IS IT FRANK?



This intriguing picture of the two zebras popped up at a recent Sci-tech group (Zoom) meeting and we spent an interesting minute or two working out whether the head belonged to Fred or Frank. It was suggested that it might be a good quiz question for the Chronicle, so here it is!

By the way, the actual meeting was about the 'law of conservation of angular momentum' and how cats used this fundamental law of physics to twist themselves in the air to land on their feet after being dropped upside down. The light relief of Fred and Frank was quite welcome.

As an interesting addition, this is a link to the best demonstration I've seen on how cats manage to land on their feet.

<https://youtu.be/RtWbpyjJqrU>

*Contributed by David Marsh*

### ANSWER ME THIS!

1. You are a cyclist in a cross-country race. Just before crossing the finish line you overtake the person in second place. In what place did you finish?
2. You have a 3-gallon jug and a 5-gallon jug. You need to measure out exactly 7 gallons of water. How can you do it?



## A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO MY FEMALE FRIENDS

If I were ol' Santa, you know what I'd do?  
I'd dump silly gifts that are given to you  
And deliver some things just inside your front door  
Things you have lost, but treasured before.



I'd give you back all your maidenly vigour,  
And to go along with it, a neat tiny figure.  
Then restore the old colour that once graced your hair  
Before rinses and bleaches took residence there.

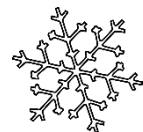
I'd bring back the shape with which you were gifted  
So things now suspended need not be uplifted  
I'd draw in your tummy and smooth down your back  
Till you'd be a dream in those tight fitting slacks.

I'd remove all your wrinkles and leave only one chin  
So you wouldn't spend hours rubbing grease on your skin  
You'd never have flashes nor queer dizzy spells,  
And you wouldn't hear noises like ringing of bells.

You'd never have headaches and no corns on your toes,  
No searching for spectacles when they're right on your nose  
Not a shot would you take in your arm, hip or fanny,  
From a doctor who thinks you're a nervous old granny!

You'd never have headaches, so no pills would you take.  
And no heating pad needed since your muscles won't ache.  
Yes, if I were Santa, you'd never look stupid,  
You'd be a cute little chick with the romance of a cupid.

I'd give a lift to your heart when those wolves start to whistle,  
And the joys of your heart would be light as a thistle.  
But, alas, I'm not Santa. I's simply just me,  
The "matronest" of matrons you ever did see.



I wish I could tell you all the symptoms I've got,  
But I'm due at the doctor's for an oestrogen shot.  
Even though we've grown older, this wish is sincere,  
Merry Christmas to you and a Happy New Year!

*Anonymous Contributor*

## A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO THE GENTLEMEN! The Four Stages of Life



- 1 You believe in Santa Claus
- 2 You don't believe in Santa Claus
- 3 You are Santa Claus
- 4 You look like Santa Claus



### ANSWERS TO CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. **None of the above.** The story of the Kings/Wise Men only appears in Matthew, there are no details, no mention of Kings, or Wise men, just 'maji', which according to the General Synod of the Church of England says nothing about numbers, wisdom or gender.
2. **Sorry, none of the above again.** a) There are no records of unusual astronomical events. Stars appear to move, so follow one and you walk in corkscrew loops. b) If they'd followed Venus from Jerusalem, they'd have ended up in the Sahara. c) Who knows where they would end up!!!
3. **b)** It is a real effect, Christmas starts earlier each year. Web searches for festive words found Christmas started November 11 in 2007, October 12 in 2008, August 19 in 2012. a) Is a place in Australia. c) A form of haemophilia.
4. **c) Whale meat,** which James had stored for months with fruit, salt, spices, sugar and rum, and allegedly, very tasty.
5. **a)** Rich in vitamin C, an elephant can eat five a day. Liked by giraffes, rhinos, camels and deer too. (Trees obviously untreated by chemicals). c) Ecologists prefer real trees. b) Really? Anyway, you could do yourself an injury!
6. **b)** a) They have hairy noses. c) Strangely, just the opposite!
7. **c)** The 18th century Rathaus (Town Hall in German) has 24 windows turned into an advent calendar each year. *(Personally I think a) and b) don't bear thinking about!)*

## ANSWER ME THIS! - THE ANSWERS

- 1 Second place (*if you pass the person in second, you take their second place and they become third*)
- 2 Fill the 5-gallon jug, pour it into the 3-gallon jug until the 3-gallon is full, leaving 2 gallons in the 5-gallon jug. Now pour the 3 gallon jug out. Pour the remaining 2 gallons from the 5-gallon jug into the empty 3-gallon jug. Now fill up the 5-gallon from the tap. You now have exactly 7 gallons.



*And now a little inspiration for all those 'thank you' notes we have to write after Christmas!*

### CHRISTMAS THANK YOU

*by Mick Gowar – sent in by Gill Gillespie*

Dear Auntie

Oh, what a nice jumper. I've always adored powder blue, and fancy you thinking of orange and pink stripes. How clever of you!

Dear Uncle

The soap is terrific. So useful and such a kind thought, and how did you guess I'd just used the last of the soap that last Christmas brought?

Dear Gran

Many thanks for the hankies. Now I really can't wait for the 'flu, and the daisies embroidered in red round the M for Michael! How wonderfully thoughtful of you!

Dear Cousin

What socks! And the same sort you wear, so you must be the last word in style and I'm certain that the luminous green will make me stand out a mile.

Dear Sister

I quite understand your concern. It's a risk sending jam in the post, but I think I've pulled out all the big bits of glass so it won't taste too sharp on my toast.

Dear Grandad

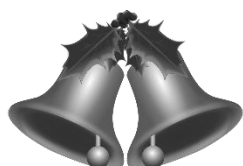
Don't fret – I'm delighted, so don't think your gift will offend. I am not at all hurt that you gave up this year and just sent me a fiver to spend.

***It wouldn't be Christmas without a bit of "Ho! Ho! Ho!" so here goes . . .***

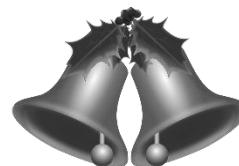
- I have a pencil that used to be owned by William Shakespeare. But he chewed it a lot and now I can't tell whether its 2B or not 2B.
- I've finally told my suitcases there will be no holiday this year. Now I'm dealing with emotional baggage . . .
- I hate telling people I'm a taxidermist. When they ask what I do every day, I say, "Y'know. Stuff."
- Astronomers got tired of watching the moon go round the earth for 24 hours. So they decided to call it a day.
- Before my surgery the anaesthetist offered to knock me out with gas or a boat paddle. It was an ether/oar situation.
- Chimpanzee No 1: "What rhymes with orange?"  
Chimpanzee No 2: "No, it doesn't!"
- This is my step ladder. I never knew my real ladder.
- What happens if you get scared half to death twice?
- I checked into the Hokey Pokey Clinic and turned myself around!
- Frog parking only! All others will be toad.
- I want to grow my own food, but I can't find bacon seeds.



*Sent in by David Hebblewhite*



***THAT'S ALL UNTIL NEXT  
MONTH!***



*Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New  
Year. Stay safe and keep smiling!*