



COME SINGING AUGUST 2024 NEWSLETTER

Dear All,

So here we are now in the dog days! Have you ever wondered where the expression comes from? Perhaps something to do with overheated dogs lolling in the shade? In fact this time is named after the period following the rise of Sirius, the Dog star, which was connected with heat, drought, and thunderstorms - roughly between late July and early September.

And it has been pretty hot. Most dogs will have headed for cool kitchen floors, but some find more creative ways to enjoy the weather as this video clip shows: [https://x.com/ B S/status/1815232201966932406](https://x.com/B_S/status/1815232201966932406)

In case you can't access it, these screen shots may give an idea!



One of the saving graces of all the rain earlier in the summer was that the grass and leaves kept their glorious fresh green for much longer than usual . That may soon fade once the heat sets in, so here's a quiz to keep the thought of lush greenery alive ...

1. 'I'm blowin' the day to take a walk in the sun and fall on my face on somebody's new-mowed lawn' - what a day.....
2. it's long past the first of May, but now's the time to trust to your wanderlust and escape to ...
3. Windsor Davies and Don Estelle did a spoof version of this Ink Spots hit. Trees have ears...
4. William Blake's vision of Christ visiting industrial England and briefly creating a paradise among the 'dark satanic mills'.
5. A very different Tom Jones dream - 'the old hometown looks the same'...
6. One of those endless songs we sang in the back of the car on long journeys!
7. Not all gardens are on dry land! ...Ringo Starr wrote this when holidaying on a boat owned by Peter Sellers.



8. Wistful memories of a long life, well-lived
9. A silly one! Your lawn may be full of weeds, but don't take such drastic measures to keep them under control!
10. Another vision of pastures green - perhaps one of the most-loved hymn tunes. (In this version accompanied by our very own David Dunnett.)

A chain (smoking??) reaction...

At a recent Millennium Library session, Stella requested *Smoke gets in your eyes*, a favourite which for Nigel triggered a memory of the advert for Esso Blue paraffin. This rang a bell too with Linda who wrote:

I'm on the bus home I was thinking of what that man said about Smoke gets in your eyes being an Esso Blue advert I think in the late 60's. I remember it well but only part of the words so I've looked it up it goes like this:

*They asked me how I knew it was Esso Blue;
I of course replied: with lower grades one buys
Smoke gets in your eyes.*

Apparently it is as sung by The Platters originally (not the advert)

That set Nigel thinking further:

That is so interesting and clearly the Esso advertisement version. I don't think I ever heard the proper version as we had no commercial tv or radio. As a youth of the right age the version I would sing was derogatory and probably learnt at primary school to suggest that it was indeed Esso Blue causing the smoke in the eye.



In Nairobi at home we had mains electricity but on holiday trips to 'the coast' everything (the fridge and lighting) was 'paraffin power'. Esso Blue of course!

A holiday at Blue Lagoon, Watamu was usually a rented 'bungalow'. It had internal walls but no ceilings making the space cool by day and night - and a paradise for fascinating geckos 🦎.

The bungalow stood on a private plot fronting to a white sandy beach. The pure and squeaky sand was protected from the full force of the Indian Ocean by an off-shore coral reef. Inside the reef was safe bathing and snorkelling with no sunscreen. The days were spent in bathing costumes in and out of the waves.

Occasionally at 14 years old I enjoyed driving solo along the sandy private road to the plot trying to 'drift' Dad's Zephyr on the bends.

I find the songs we enjoy at Come Singing will often trigger similar memories (of perhaps when first I heard them).

These will often open up other happy thoughts (long forgotten) to last and encourage through the following days.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfBboBz3yoc>

Charity shops are wonderful hunting grounds for music books. This week's treasure was a collection of **Irving Berlin** songs - full of pizzazz, (is that a word??) style and polish, and such an enormous range... I hadn't realised that he had such a long life, 1888-1989. He was born in Imperial Russia, and had an impoverished childhood in New York, selling newspapers in the street and later singing in saloons. He taught himself to play the piano (more about this later!) and began to improvise and compose songs. After his first huge success Alexander's ragtime band (1911) he went on to write some of the most iconic songs of the century -

White Christmas <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ36gbGIm8Y>

Putting on my top hat <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZOJoV6H2UM>

Let's face the music and

dance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjJHnKw7YNA>

There's no business like show business <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-7Ad3b10M>

Anything you can do I can do

better https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WO23WBji_Z0

Blue Skies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCh6Vtoed3o>

Easter Parade <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYac9O3GYTM>

Perhaps no wonder that he kept a low profile during the last few decades of his life - exhausted?? Berlin's first wife tragically contracted typhoid on their honeymoon and died just a few months later. His second marriage, to the heiress Ellin Mckay lasted until her death just a year before his own.

Berlin believed that a good lyric was the most important element of a song, and in work rather than inspiration. Writing music down wasn't his strong point, so he dictated to a 'musical secretary'. Neither was he a natural pianist: he played mainly on the black keys (ie in the key of F sharp major) but owned three pianos which could transpose at the touch of a lever! I wonder what he would have made of our little electric keyboard at the library, and its evil spirits which sometimes will, and sometimes won't change key!



That charity shop find set off such a voyage of discovery and delight - hooray for Irving Berlin!

Summer greenery quiz answers (beware of ads in the first one!)

1. What a day for daydream — Lovin' Spoonful <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwH4wPz-URM>
2. Mountain greenery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVoOeRUP6Eo>
3. Whispering grass https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLSXfxnf_iw
4. Jerusalem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ebtI8vbYFQ>
5. The green green grass of home <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j64H2aWWU0E>
6. The green grass grows around <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-99EA3lxtqA>
7. Octopus garden <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=De1LCQvbqV4>
8. The green leaves of summer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BRqA3DSmpc>
9. Please don't eat the daisies https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hskpOND_pUs
10. Crimond https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbGsIVeKU_E