



COME SINGING, FEBRUARY 2024

Dear All,

It's that exciting time of the year when you never know whether you'll be drenched, frozen or gently warmed with golden sunshine! Gardens are full of optimistic shoots, the Earlam Road crocuses are coming out and my little camellia is almost going over now. It would be so good if the frosts hold off for a little while..



Each year there are surprises in the garden as things come up in unexpected places, perhaps moved around by the birds or squirrels. Last year a large fern suddenly popped up in the middle of the lawn, and this year I discovered that someone has secretly planted bulbs outside my front door – but in straight lines! So kind, but I might try to disorganise them a bit in time for next year once they've flowered...



There are seventeen hidden treasures here - some flowers in open sight, and some spelled backwards or diagonally! How many can you find?

A bouquet of flowers...

Z Q A I G E L I U Q A U E A P
D S W G R R C I J Y J G S F Y
U I Z P K I C E X O M D O N I
E R R X C K S H A Y I V R Z P
B L U E B E L L S H S H M C U
P B N E D D N V C F W O I G C
X I A S T E R R D Y K N R F R
W B L R V T O Y J A S E P L E
N D O S E T D P X Y I Y I O T
P S W L W P H P F X L S I W T
E F O A F O O O Q N Q U Y E U
M I Y N L F C P D S Q C V R B
V P Z L G L K N O C C K Q E Q
D Y M D I V T H I S T L E N M
V V M A I L L I W T E E W S V

During the dreariest of the weather the thought of hot chocolate seemed very tempting... In actual fact a thimbleful is more than enough for me, but still the idea seems to epitomise warmth and comfort - 'hot chocolate, drinking chocolate'

<https://youtu.be/TEKm7rF2MpY?si=WzCegAWBlasYkHTV>



It wasn't always the sweet sugary concoction we know now. By 1800 BC an early central American civilisation had turned cacao into a bitter drink with ceremonial uses (including giving it to sacrificial victims, so watch out!!). Drinking chocolate was an essential feature of social, cultural, and economic life and reserved for the nobility.

From there it spread to Spain around 1544, perhaps when Mayans came over with Catholic missionaries. Monks drank it before religious services and there are accounts of visitors to Spanish convents being offered chocolate by the nuns!

Then to France, where King Louis XIV granted a royal patent to a chocolatier, allowing him to manufacture drinking chocolate with the king's stamp on it. Britain caught on in the mid 1600s and chocolate (and coffee) houses began opening in London, charging entry fees and attracting well-to-do but not always well-behaved clients! Gambling, immoral behaviour and sedition were rife. In 1675 Charles II tried to ban public houses from selling coffee, tea, or chocolate, but this failed through massive popular resistance. It was certainly not helped by the fact that Ozdina's chocolate house on St James's Street was a favourite haunt of the King and his mistress!

Samuel Pepys mentions hot chocolate, including as a hangover cure! This will have been a fairly bitter concoction, but sometimes mixed with spice.
*"Went to Mr Bland's and there drank my morning draft of chocollatte."
"Waked in the morning with my head in a sad taking through the last night's drink... so rose and went out... to drink our morning draft, which he did give me in chocolate..."*

Later in the century, Sir Hans Sloane, president of the Royal College of Physicians, visited Jamaica where he was introduced to cocoa. He found it 'nauseous' but mixed it with milk to make it more palatable and brought the recipe back to chocolate to England.



1828, van Houten developed the first cocoa powder producing machine in the Netherlands to separate the greasy cocoa butter from cacao seeds. This left a purer chocolate powder behind which was easier to stir into milk and water.



From there it was only a step away from today's hot chocolate - just a couple of hundred years, the addition of lots of sugar and a few massive marketing campaigns! So enjoy the luxury and the long and noble history. We all need a treat sometimes...

With Valentine's day yesterday, it would be churlish not to include a few songs about aspects of love. This mini quiz traces one course of true love to the (perhaps!) happy ever after... Answers at the end as usual.

Love and marriage...

1. An Italian view. rather lacking in poetry! 'When the moon hits your eye, like a big pizza pie, that's
2. Elvis is decidedly more romantic: 'Wise men say only fools rush in...
3. The Beach Boys thoughts turn to cohabitation, or even marriage, but it seems a long way off...
4. And after a while, honesty and realism creep in: 'I may not always love you, but long as there are stars above you, you never need to doubt it. I'll make you so sure about it...'
5. So who is 'Goin' to the chapel and we're gonna get married'?
6. There'll be all the excitement of preparing for the wedding - and for the stag night beforehand!
7. And various tensions on the day: will the bride be late, and might she be left at the altar?
8. But with luck all will go well! Which two classical composers wrote famous wedding marches?
9. Abba know the appropriate words for the



- occasion!
10. Then there'll be the first dance. So many choices, but when I only have eyes for you, only Frankie Valli will do...
 11. And with luck they'll live happily ever after! Who sang the classic version of 'Unforgettable'?

I began writing this on Shrove Tuesday and at that point there should really have been a recipe, but surely you all have your own favourite way of making pancakes? Did you top them with lemon and sugar? Nutella still feels wrong to me...

This week we sang on February 13th (luckily not a Friday but there *were* a few dramas!) which started me thinking of some of the superstitions and beliefs which are so much part of our language and lives.

- Horseshoes are lucky if hung upwards (u) but unlucky (n) if hung down as all the luck runs out.
- It's unlucky to walk under a ladder - not just because of the pot of paint ready to fall on your head. The Egyptians left ladders in tombs so that the deceased could climb to the heavens when they were ready. They believed that the space between the ladder and the wall was home to good and evil spirits, and if disturbed, the spirits would be angry.
- If your clothes are inside out or back to front, don't change them or you'll change your luck!
- Magpies, but if you see even a single bird you should say 'Good morning Mr. Magpie' to ward off bad luck.
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Can you complete the following sayings?

1. - one for sorrow, two for joy...
2. - a pinch and a punch....
3. - marry in May and...
4. - but ' happy the bride....
5. - no pain
6. - needles and pins, needles and pins...
7. - early to bed and early.....
8. - Friday flit ...
9. -- a friend in need
10. - coughs and sneezes
11. - good night, ...

Love and marriage quiz

1. That's Amore
<https://youtu.be/OnFlx2Lnr9Q?si=PZK4ugNuQLRLcbqt>
2. Can't Help Falling in Love
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGJTaP6anOU>
3. Wouldn't It Be Nice? - the Beach Boys
<https://youtu.be/ID4sxxoJGkA?si=Kly -PNRG6yjG8qR>
4. God Only Knows - The Beach Boys
https://youtu.be/NADx3-gRxeK?si=NABsDUE_exgMABKd
5. Chapel of love Dixie cups
https://youtu.be/rTq7w8P6_2I?si=REhg8bx1wI2NRNDM
6. Get Me To The Church On Time - Frederick Loewe
<https://youtu.be/hj7O7EwCqec?si=AOArB6-PaRtzGkhM>
7. Waiting at the Church
<https://youtu.be/zS-I2uz6d6c?si=SJYbeiDXMKp8eMOe>
8. Mendelssohn
https://youtu.be/UxUsmAL2HO0?si=5b75SL_O7vPzesm3 and Wagner
<https://youtu.be/5C5FOW2ekHo?si=fb9gkFZOA9ptlwr>
9. I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do - Abba
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW3HN_pvbE4
10. Can't take my eyes off you
<https://youtu.be/J36z7AnhVOM?si=QwttVJ0OlxpDhNXS>
11. Nat King Cole
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFyuOEovTOE>

Sayings...

1. ...Three for a girl and four for a boy
2. ...for the first of the month
3. ...rue the day!
4. ...the sun shines upon
5. ...no gain
6. ...when you get married your troubles begin
7. ...to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise
8. ...short sit!
9. ...is a friend in deed
10. ...spread diseases
11. ...sleep tight (from naval days when sailors used to sleep in hammocks. It meant you should make sure you were well fixed into the hammock and didn't fall out, especially in rough seas. Or perhaps from the time when mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes, the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer.)