

Weekly Sparkle

3 – 9 May 2021

On This Day



Bing Crosby

Who was the most popular singer and entertainer of the 20th century? A lot of people would plump for Bing Crosby. He had a mellow voice, bags of charm and an easy manner. And when he sang, you felt he was singing just for you.

Bing Crosby was born on 3rd May 1903. By the 1920s he was touring as part of a vocal trio. But it was soon clear that Bing Crosby was the star of the show. He went solo in the 1930s, and he never looked back from then on.

The only thing Bing liked better than singing was playing golf!

On This Day



Daily Mail clock

For years, the *Daily Mail* has been one of our most popular newspapers. Like most papers, it came in big sheets. They were called a broadsheet. Other newspapers had gone over to smaller pages. They were known as tabloids.

The smaller pages were easier to handle, and the *Daily Mail* was worried it might lose readers. So, on 4th May 1971, the *Daily Mail* went tabloid. Readers soon got used to the smaller size. The only snag was that it was now harder to hide behind the newspaper!

Today, only the *Daily Telegraph* is still a broadsheet.

On This Day



Medical research staff, Mill Hill

This photograph was taken in 1950. It shows technicians and scientists in lab coats. They were all working at the National Institute for Medical Research. It had just moved to a new site at Mill Hill in North London.

The new building was opened by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 5th May 1950. The work done there has helped save lives, and it has made breakthroughs in medicine and biochemistry.

Today, with the nasty coronavirus outbreak, medical research is even more important than ever.

On This Day



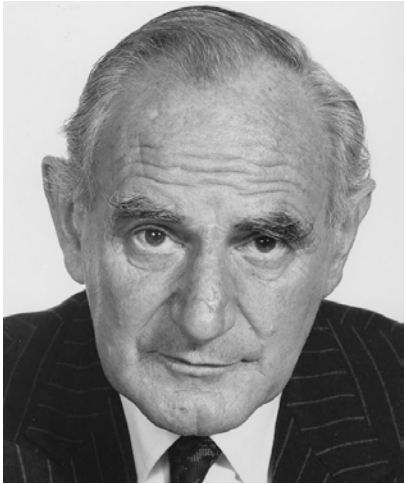
Jim Callaghan and Jimmy Carter

This photo was taken on 6th May 1977. The chap on the left is the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan. The chap on the right is the President of the United States of America, Jimmy Carter.

The two men were in Washington. No, not the capital of the USA, but Washington in County Durham. It was a visit to cement the ties between Britain and America.

The schoolboy in the photo has just given President Carter a miner's lamp. In those days there were still coal mines in County Durham.

On This Day



Huw Wheldon

Huw Wheldon was born in Prestatyn in Flintshire. He was born on 7th May 1916. He organised the Festival of Britain in Wales in 1951, and in later years he was an executive with the BBC.

But he made his mark in children's television. He presented *All Your Own* on the BBC. He even organised a nationwide television conker competition for youngsters.

Serious stuff followed that. He presented the influential BBC arts programme *Monitor*, which ran from 1958–1965. It was rather more highbrow than conkers!

On This Day



Thames Barrier

On 8th May 1984, the Queen opened the new Thames Barrier. It had taken ten years to build. It was vital to have it, to save London from flooding by the North Sea.

It was thought it would only be used once or twice a year. But, in fact, it is now often needed six or seven times a year.

With global warming, sea levels will rise. Many people think a new and bigger Thames Barrier will be needed. But the one opened in 1984 continues to do its job. It protects millions from being flooded. It is indeed a brilliant piece of engineering.

On This Day



Joan Sims

We all need to have a good laugh from time to time. A bit of humour does us good. That's why the Carry On films were so successful. They were full of innuendo. But it was all good, clean fun!

The star of many of the Carry On films was Joan Sims. She had a wonderful sense of comic timing. With Sid James and Kenneth Williams, she gave us all reason to smile.

Joan Sims was born in Essex on 9th May 1930. She made her name in music hall comedy. Then along came the Carry On films, and she never looked back!

The Way We Were



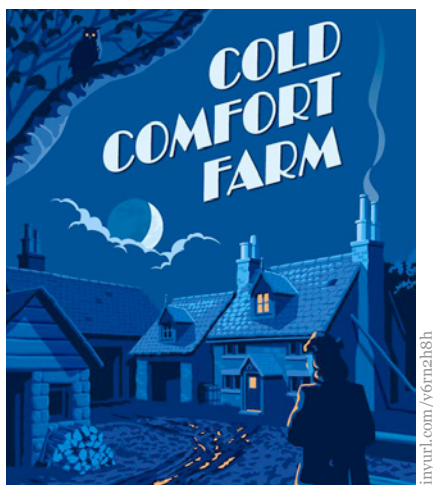
Roast chicken

Chicken used to be something that we only had as a roast on special occasions, such as Christmas or Easter. I suppose it's today's intense farming methods that have turned it into an everyday ingredient.

Sometimes we used to get a boiling fowl – a hen that was past laying, that was good for soup, with plenty of vegetables and barley in the pot. Or you could make a chicken stew, but it was sometimes a bit stringy.

Mushrooms went well in a chicken casserole, but the children hated them. I had to cook them separately.

The Way We Were



Cold Comfort Farm

I like re-reading my books. Some are real favourites, and going back to them is like bumping into an old friend. *Cold Comfort Farm* by Stella Gibbons is one of those.

It's written as a parody of the novels known as 'loam and lovechild', which deal with rural families having dark secrets and facing disaster. It is about a sophisticated modern young woman who is orphaned. She goes to stay with her relatives at Cold Comfort Farm, a run-down place full of strange relatives.

It's so humorous. That's why I've read it many times.

The Way We Were



May flowers

Whenever we have a particularly wet April, I'm reminded of the saying I first heard at school, 'April showers bring forth May's flowers.'

Well, here we are in May, and the signs are good! It's my favourite month in the garden because so many flowers are at their best.

The smell of lilac on a sunny day, the sight of the delicate aquilegia moving in the warm breeze, or the lily of the valley hiding in the shade, all lift the spirits. May flowers grow in great abundance, so there are always plenty for flower arrangements in the house.

Now And Then



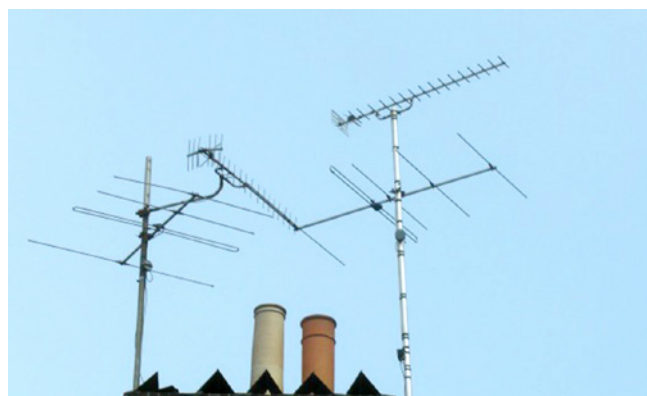
Castrol oil

It is interesting how people tend to stick to one brand of things. Take my father: he would have no other engine oil except Castrol. There were other oils on the market, but Dad insisted on Castrol.

Dad once had the car in at the garage. Normally he changed his own oil. But this time he asked the garage to do it. They used Duckhams oil. Dad was furious! He nearly made them change it. Of course, the car ran perfectly well on Duckhams. But it was Castrol again at the next oil change!

The funny thing is, I still prefer to use Castrol myself. I feel reassured when I see that green and red sign. Dad would be pleased with me!

Now And Then



TV aerials

Do you remember when TV aerials started to appear? They looked as though they were sprouting from chimneys. Not everyone had a television at first, so it was a source of pride to show off a television aerial on your chimney.

By the 1960s, nearly every house had a TV aerial. They were like a forest of masts across the rooftops.

I remember when we got our first telly. Dad was up on the roof with the aerial. Uncle Fred was tuning the telly. The picture was all lines. "A bit to your right," Uncle Fred shouted up to Dad. "No, a bit to your left now." This went on for an hour. Finally, we got a perfect picture!

Now And Then



Masonry drill bit

I've been having a sort-out in our garage. For ages I've been meaning to put up some solid shelves, and I've finally got around to it.

The garage is built of bricks. So I had to use a masonry drill. The drill bits are chunkier than normal. They have a wide ridge at the tip, and they are made from hardened steel.

Even so, an ordinary drill wouldn't do the job. Luckily I have a hammer drill. That soon made holes in the bricks. Then it was in with the Rawlplugs. They hold the screws in the wall. I had some strong brackets. Finally, I cut thick planks for the shelves and I screwed everything together. Job done!

Colours Puzzle



What colour goes with each of these things?

1. Fire engine
White or Red
2. Police station lamp
Blue or Green
3. Lawns
Green or Purple
4. Lumps of coal
Yellow or Black
5. Royal Mail letterbox
Red or Grey
6. The Conservative Party
Blue or Orange
7. Motorway signs
Blue or Black
8. Tarmac
Black or Pink
9. The Labour Party
Green or Red
10. Slates
Grey or Brown

Word Quiz



All today's words begin Ju.....

1. Ju _ _
Keep milk in this
2. Ju _ _ _
In charge of a court
3. Ju _ _
They decide whether guilty or not guilty
4. Ju _ _ _ _
A sweater
5. Ju _ _ l _ r
A circus act
6. Ju _ ct _ _ n
Found on railways
7. Ju _ _ l _
Tropical rainforest
8. Ju _ _ l _ _
Can be silver, golden or diamond
9. Ju _ _ o
Name of an elephant
10. Ju _ _
Leap in the air

Comparisons Quiz



1. Which is hotter, Gas Mark 3 or Gas Mark 5?
2. Which is longer, a mile or a kilometre?
3. Which is higher, Mount Everest or Mont Blanc?
4. Which is older, Stonehenge or Westminster Abbey?
5. Which is worth more, a penny or a pound?
6. Which is colder, ice or steam?
7. Which is taller, Blackpool Tower or the Eiffel Tower?
8. Which is shorter, an inch or a centimetre?
9. Which is lighter, white or grey?
10. Which is heavier, a stone or a pound?

That's Entertainment



Pat Boone

I had a teenage crush on the singer Pat Boone. People used to say he had a voice as smooth as velvet. His biggest hit was *Love Letters in the Sand*. I used to listen to it over and over again.

When the song was in the charts, a boy at school sent me a love letter. I was only 14. It seemed like the most romantic thing that had ever happened to anyone! My mum said I was too young for boyfriends. But I kept the letter. I hid it in my dressing table.

It's lovely to receive a love letter. I had a few more as I got older. But I only kept the ones from my husband, and I still have those.

That's Entertainment



Porky Pig

I loved the cartoon character Porky Pig when I was a child. He was in the *Looney Tunes* cartoons. Porky was shy. He wore a little jacket and he stuttered when he talked.

Porky Pig was often in the same cartoons as Daffy Duck. Daffy was zany and Porky was sensible. Daffy always got Porky in trouble. But I preferred Porky!

At the end of every *Looney Tunes* cartoon, the theme music played. It was a fast tune called *The Merry Go Round Broke Down*. Then Porky Pig would burst through a drum and stutter, "Th-th-th th-th-th that's all, folks!"

Over To You



The Roman Baths of Bath

Dear Daily Sparkle,

I grew up in Bath. When I was younger, I thought all the Roman connections were rather boring. I was more interested in football. It was sometimes annoying that the city was so busy with tourists.

As I got older, I got much more interested in the history of my home town, and when I came back after three years away at college, I saw it with fresh eyes. The Roman Baths are so well preserved. They have been there since about 60 AD. The heating system and the layout look so similar to the ones we have in the twentieth century. And the rest of the city is really lovely too.

Best wishes, from Ralph

Over To You



Football from the 1940s

Dear Daily Sparkle,

Recently there has been quite a lot of talk on television about the danger to young lads heading footballs. (And girls as well nowadays, since it's getting to be a popular sport for them too.) It set me thinking about the footballs I used to play with and train with as a lad.

They were made of sections of leather sewn together. They were alright when dry, but when they got wet they were incredibly heavy. I know what it felt like to head a wet leather football – like being hit on the head with a boulder. I think it's a good thing that we are a bit more safety-conscious now.

Best wishes, from Harry

The five articles and the quiz are all written to provide reminiscence and to trigger memories. We also provide background information as well as suggested questions to ask. Listen, reassure and acknowledge each person's contribution. It's a great opportunity for the quieter ones to express themselves.

On This Day • *through the years*

PAGE 1 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 3 May 1903 ~ Bing Crosby, singer and entertainer, born

Background: Bing Crosby set the standard for popular male singers in the mid-20th century. He was a very familiar voice on records, the radio and in films. We may be in the month of May at the moment, but *White Christmas*, which he first sang in 1941, became one of the biggest-selling songs of all time. His films included *Road to Bali*, which he starred in with Bob Hope, and *Holiday Inn*.

Questions: What are your memories of hearing Bing Crosby? How would you describe his style of singing? Which of his songs did you know and like best? Did you ever see him in films? Which films were these? Which male singer(s) do you like best? Which of their songs are your favourites?

PAGE 1 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 4 May 1971 ~ The *Daily Mail* newspaper goes tabloid in size

Background: National newspapers in Britain all started out as broadsheets. The so-called 'red-tops', the *Daily Mirror* (*Daily Record* in Scotland) and *The Sun*, made a big success of going tabloid. The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, battling for the middle-ground readership, soon found they had to follow. All but the *Daily Telegraph* of the high-brow papers, *The Guardian*, *The Times* etc, have now followed suit.

Questions: Which newspaper(s) did you read? Which paper did your parents read? Did you have a paper daily or on weekends? Do you still like to look through a newspaper? Which one? What did you think when the *Daily Mail* changed from broadsheet to tabloid? Which size of newspaper do you prefer? Why is that?

PAGE 2 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 5 May 1950 ~ National Institute for Medical Research opened

Background: The National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) was set up as long ago as 1913 by the Medical Research Council. The move to the new site in Mill Hill was delayed by the Second World War. The NIMR is now part of a partnership of research groups based together at the Francis Crick Institute at a new centre in St Pancras, London. Breakthroughs at the NIMR have included isolating flu viruses in 1933, developing new flu vaccines, discovering interferon, and developing gas chromatography.

Questions: Why do you think medical research is so important? Are you interested in this sort of research? What new treatments are there nowadays? How has medicine changed since you were young?

PAGE 2 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 6 May 1977 ~ Callaghan and Carter visit Washington, Co Durham

Background: Relations between Britain and America had been somewhat strained by the Vietnam War, and coolness between leaders such as Wilson and Heath on one side and Johnson and Nixon on the other. Relations became much closer again under Callaghan and Carter, and then Thatcher and Reagan. Washington is a new town near Sunderland in the old County Durham, then part of Tyne and Wear.

Questions: Why would President Carter of America be interested in visiting Washington in County Durham? [*George Washington was the first President of the USA*] How important do you think it is that Britain has close ties with America? Do you or any of your family come from County Durham?

PAGE 3 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 7 May 1916 ~ Huw Wheldon, Welsh broadcaster, born

Background: From the 1950s to the 1970s, Huw Wheldon was a well-known face on television, and was then responsible for commissioning much of BBC TV's output. He presented *All Your Own*, a forerunner of *Blue Peter*, from 1952–1960. One of the talents that got a start in TV on the arts programme *Monitor* was Melvyn Bragg. Before TV, Wheldon took part in D-Day and was awarded a MC for his bravery.

Questions: Do you remember the broadcaster, Huw Wheldon? Did you or your children ever watch *All Your Own*? Or did you ever watch the arts programme, *Monitor*? What did you think of them? What were the best things on TV back in the 1950s/60s? Who was your favourite broadcaster? Why was that?

PAGE 3 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 8 May 1984 ~ The Queen opens the Thames Barrier

Background: The need for a Thames Barrier to prevent high tides and storm surges inundating London was highlighted by the terrible North Sea floods of 1953. It then took nearly 20 years to come up with a workable design, and a further ten years to build. The Environment Agency believes the existing Thames Barrier will be enough until 2070, though some climate scientists think that may be optimistic.

Questions: Have you ever seen the Thames Barrier to the east of London? Do you live near it? Why do you think it is needed? Why might it have had to be used more in recent years? What do you know about climate change and global warming? What do you think should and could be done about it?

PAGE 4 ~ ON THIS DAY ~ 9 May 1930 ~ Joan Sims, English comic actress, born

Background: The Carry On films were mainly made from 1958 to 1978. The humour is of its time – they can appear corny, but they still have real charm and can still raise many a laugh. Joan Sims had worked in comedy reviews in theatres and music halls, and she was very successful in pantomime.

Questions: Do you remember the Carry On films? [... *Up the Jungle*, ... *Camping*, ... *Nurse*] What did you think of them? Did they make you laugh? Do you remember seeing Joan Sims? Was this at a theatre, or was it in a Carry On film? What sort of thing makes you laugh? What sort of comedy do you like best?

Activity: Residents choose one of the Carry On films to screen for a film afternoon.

The Way We Were • from Mary's point of view

PAGE 4 ~ THE WAY WE WERE ~ Chicken – no longer served just for special occasions

Background: Nowadays, chicken is a cheap source of protein, although battery farming makes it unappealing to some people. Free-range poultry has a better flavour. In addition to whole birds, chicken is now sold in supermarkets as breast meat, in strips, thighs, legs, etc, that can be cooked quickly. The carcass can be used to make stock for soup. It's almost impossible to find boiling fowl or capons these days.

Questions: Do you like chicken? If you were ordering a roast dinner in a restaurant, would you choose beef, lamb, pork or chicken? What do you like to serve with your roast chicken? How else can chicken be cooked and served? In your opinion, is gas or electricity better for roasting meat and poultry?

PAGE 5 ~ THE WAY WE WERE ~ The novel *Cold Comfort Farm* by Stella Gibbons

Background: *Cold Comfort Farm*, published in 1932, was written by Stella Gibbons. She was a journalist and this was her first novel. She wrote more than twenty novels after this, but none were as successful as this first one. It's full of memorable eccentrics, like Aunt Ada Doom who 'saw something nasty in the woodshed', and Urk who is obsessed with water voles.

Questions: Have you read *Cold Comfort Farm*? In general, what kind of books do you prefer? [*historical novels, thrillers, family sagas, sci-fi, etc*] If a book has also been made into a film, which would you rather see first? Which do you think would be harder to write, a funny humorous book or a detective story?

PAGE 5 ~ THE WAY WE WERE ~ May flowers – helped on by April showers

Background: It's true that the right combination of early watering followed by a rise in temperature, no more ground frost, and some sunshine, provides the ideal growing conditions for lots of flowers to be at their best in May, in both parks and gardens. British gardens are admired the world over for their abundant flowers, from the humble marigold to prize-winning roses.

Questions: Are you a good gardener? Which flowers grew in your garden in May and early summer? Did you grow them from seed? What are perennials? [*plants that come back every year without re-seeding*] What reasons made you choose particular flowers? [*pleasure, height, colour, scent, flower arranging*]

Now And Then • *from Jimmy's point of view*

PAGE 6 ~ NOW AND THEN ~ Engine oils, and preferring certain brands such as Castrol

Background: Castrol has been the market-leader in engine oils since before the Second World War. Duckhams were the other major British oil manufacturer, with yellow signs and cans, though the oil was in fact green in colour. For some years both brands were owned by BP, who bought out Duckhams in 1970 and then acquired Castrol in 2000. Duckhams is now an independent brand again.

Questions: If you owned a car, a van or a motorbike, did you change your own oil? Or did you get the garage to do it? Which make of engine oil did you prefer to use? Why was this? Why do you think people often stick to the same brand for years? Did you have a brand that you always swore by? Which one?

PAGE 6 ~ NOW AND THEN ~ Getting your first TV and putting up the TV aerial

Background: Few people had a TV before the year of the Coronation in 1953. Televisions had to be tuned in to channels manually – no automatic tuning! In any event, there only was one channel, the BBC, until 1955. The aerial had to be pointed in just the right direction to pick up the signal. Getting that right was a tricky operation, otherwise there was just a lot of interference on the screen and in the speakers.

Questions: Do you remember when TV aerials started to appear? When did you get your first television? Who put up the aerial? Do you remember having to manually tune the television? Who did this? How easy or difficult was it to get a good picture? What sort of programmes did you watch in those early days?

PAGE 7 ~ NOW AND THEN ~ Masonry drill bit for making holes in stone walls

Background: Many people, perhaps men especially, will have used masonry drills at some time on brick, stone or concrete. Many electrical drills now have a hammer mode, where the drill bit not only goes round and round, but also is quickly hammered in and out of the hole just a fraction.

Questions: Have you ever used a masonry drill? Did you have a hammer drill? What were you using the masonry drill for? Did you use them regularly as part of your work? How would you go about putting up shelves in, say, a shed or a garage? How often, if ever, have you put up shelves? How did you get on with it? What sort of things might you put on shelves in a garage, as opposed to a shed or inside the house?

That's Entertainment • *memories of music, films and television*

PAGE 9 ~ THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT ~ Pat Boone's song, *Love Letters in the Sand*

Background: Pat Boone was an American singer popular in the late 1950s, and at one time second only to Elvis in rock and roll record sales. He often covered hits by black artists like Fats Domino and Little Richard. *Love Letters in the Sand* was a song originally written in the 1930s, and has been covered by many other artists. It spent several weeks at the top of the charts in 1957.

Questions: Did you like Pat Boone's records? Do you know any of his other songs? [*Ain't That a Shame, April Love*] Have you ever sent or received a love letter? Did you keep it? Do you think it's easier to court someone romantically in person, or in writing? Have you done any other kind of writing? [*creative, factual*]

PAGE 9 ~ THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT ~ Porky Pig from the *Looney Tunes* cartoons

Background: Porky Pig was a regular character in *Looney Tunes*, often appearing as a sidekick to Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny. He was a 'straight' character, who the other characters often got into trouble. He is best known for appearing at the end of every *Looney Tunes* cartoon with his catchphrase, "That's all, folks."

Questions: Who was your favourite cartoon character as a child? [*Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Tom & Jerry, Micky Mouse, Tweety and Sylvester*] What was it you liked about them? Where did you watch cartoons? [*cinema or TV*] When you were younger, did you get into trouble a lot, or were you well behaved? Did any of your friends ever get you into trouble? What happened? How did you feel about it?

Over To You • *readers' letters*

PAGE 10 ~ OVER TO YOU ~ City of Bath – appreciating your home town in later years

Background: Many young people can't wait to get away from their home town to experience 'pastures new', but as they get older they often look back on it as not such a bad place after all. Perhaps people also develop a feel for local history as they get older, and recognise their own part in the continuity of a place or a community. Bath has a particularly strong Roman connection as well as newer Georgian architecture.

Questions: How did you feel about the place where you lived when you were in your teens? Did you stay there or did you move away? How did you feel about your home town when you grew up? Did you move back there? Are you interested in local history? Have you ever been to Bath? What did you see/do there?

PAGE 10 ~ OVER TO YOU ~ Leather footballs, and heading the ball

Background: Any sports that risk head injury – boxing, rugby, heading footballs, etc – have had a bad press recently. Cycle helmets for children and hard hats are all part of the same thing. Some people feel that you shouldn't wrap children up in cotton wool, because a few scrapes and tumbles and minor injuries teach them useful life lessons, but not everyone agrees. Modern footballs are lighter – made of PVC.

Questions: If you played football, do you recall heading a ball? How would you describe the old-fashioned type of football? What do modern ones look like? Do you think football is a suitable game for girls? Are parents and teachers over-protective or not protective enough of children engaging in sports?

Quizzes • *for fun*

PAGE 7 ~ QUIZ : Colours Puzzle

Answers:

1. Red	2. Blue	3. Green
4. Black	5. Red	6. Blue
7. Blue	8. Black	9. Red
10. Grey		

PAGE 8 ~ QUIZ : Word Quiz

Answers:

1. Jug	2. Judge	3. Jury
4. Jumper	5. Juggler	6. Junction
7. Jungle	8. Jubilee	9. Jumbo
10. Jump		

PAGE 8 ~ QUIZ : Comparisons Quiz

Answers:

1. Gas Mark 5	2. Mile	3. Mount Everest
4. Stonehenge	5. Pound	6. Ice
7. Eiffel Tower	8. Centimetre	9. White
10. Stone		