



Guessing game with a difference

By Daphne Chamberlain

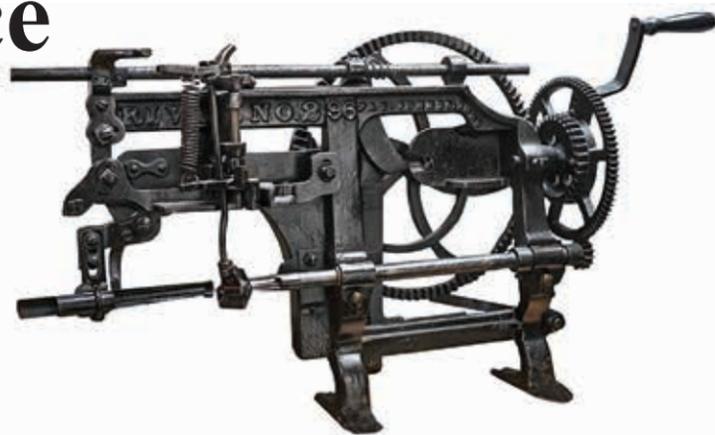
On the borders of Muswell Hill and East Finchley lives a man named Maurice Collins, who owns a huge collection of gadgets, contraptions, leaflets and posters totalling more than 3,000 items in all.

Maurice has no trouble in loaning items to museums across Europe. He was the co-founder of Kith and Kids, a charity that supports families dealing with learning disabilities or autism, and runs online presentations of them for that charity. He showed some in a free Zoom event presented by the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association last month.

Maurice's collection covers the century between Britain's two great exhibitions of 1851 and 1951. He began by physically digging for bottles, pot lids and match strikers but nowadays says he can happily immerse himself for the day in eBay. Well, who wouldn't want an automatic marvel like a clockwork-powered self-pouring teapot?

On the call, we were intrigued, and mostly baffled, by 20-odd items for which we had to guess the use. Who would have imagined a hot water-bottle for a horse, drink-holders like binoculars on ribbons for racegoers, or a thumbsucker stopper?

Maurice's story began in



What's the gadget: can you guess what this device from Maurice's collection was used for in Victorian times? Find the answer at the bottom of the page.

Pages Lane, Muswell Hill, where he was apprenticed to a printer. We saw shots of him laying paper into a treadle printer, and setting letters by hand from a compositor's tray. In a non-digital age, booklets, leaflets, posters were what caught people's attention. One advertisement for Pears' soap used the optical illusion of sets of 'spinning' circles.

Other printed matter included recruitment posters for the First World War. These had to be compelling, as there was no compulsory

call-up for the first two years of that dreadful conflict. One gave the promise of baths, bed and breakfast, which has a hollow ring in hindsight. "I've always been fascinated by how words make people act," said Maurice.

MHFGA hope that Maurice Collins will show more of his collection to an actual meeting once Covid restrictions are over. Meanwhile, can you guess what the object in the photo was used for? Find the answer at the bottom of the page.

Helping hand

Disability charity MyAFK, based in Crouch End, has been awarded £100,000 by the Barclays 100x100 UK Covid-19 Community Relief Fund to support its

work with disabled young people and their families through the pandemic. AFK, formerly Action for Kids, is using the funding to move its education and employability programmes online.

Future plans

Barnet Council has launched The Barnet Plan outlining its vision and priorities for residents over the next four years. You can read it online at: www.barnet.gov.uk/the-barnet-plan

The council says the plan sets out four ways it will improve life in Barnet, and it has been developed following telephone surveys with 500 residents and in response to the wide-ranging effects of Covid-19 on Barnet's communities.

What's the gadget?
The gadget in Maurice's photo is an apple peeler from about 1880, which does just one apple at a time. When you put the apple on the end prongs and turn the wheel, it could do about 10 a minute. A very large machine for such a simple job, about two foot long, with lots of cogs.

Time to come clean on housework

By Diana Cormack

A recent report comparing the various effects coronavirus has had on men and women revealed that women have borne the brunt of housework during the pandemic. No surprise there then, as it is what previous articles on the topic have always told us anyway.

What has surprised me is the women of my acquaintance who have cut down on what they do about the house since the lockdowns began. I happily confess to being one of those who can now look at dust gathering on the furniture and let it be. After all, nobody will see it except my husband and me.

Of course, necessary tasks such as toilet, bathroom and kitchen cleaning can't be ignored, but other things can. However, with the approach of spring, will I feel drawn to join the annual cleaning fest like our ancestors before us? My paternal grandmother did, even though she took her opinion on housework to the grave.

Grandma died in 1970 at the age of 82. Among her effects was a poem which she had kept for many years. I believe she cut it out of the *Radio Times* decades before the feminist movement hit the headlines. Although Grandma never expressed them, she must have secretly shared the writer Mary Knight's views on housework. This was long before vacuum cleaners, washing machines and dishwashers were the norm, yet reading it I realise just how much I take after my grandma!

A Psalm of Home Life

(For the Other Listeners who find the Household Talks oppressive)

Tell us not in mournful numbers
How to keep our houses clean:
When to leave and seek our slumbers,
How to fill the hours between.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
Spotless homes are not its goal;
Who dusts, and then to dust returnest,
Leaves no rest for sole or soul.

Not enjoyment – surely sorrow
Is their destined end and way
Who so plan that each tomorrow
Is the same as yesterday.

Housework's long, and time is fleeting,
Must our wives, though stout and brave,
Go on bottling plums and beating
Carpets to the very grave?

In the world's broad field of battle
This seems a depressing strife.
Be not like dumb driven cattle!
Get some pleasure out of life!

Learning thrives in a new way

By Daphne Berkovi

Hampstead Garden Suburb's U3A is going from strength to strength by using Zoom to keep its group activities running for members in the comfort of their own homes.

U3A, or University of the Third Age, is a national organisation for the over-55s where volunteers come together to teach or learn new skills or areas of knowledge.

Thriving particularly well in the Suburb is a current affairs group led by Marion Godfrey who, prior to lockdown, used to squeeze in a maximum number of 14 members at her home but is now regularly meeting with more than 20 members online.

Marion says: "We usually end on a light-hearted note; for example, recently I held a news

quiz and we have had jokes, anecdotes and there has been a great deal of laughter in these troubled times."

Other groups have hosted topical talks on subjects as diverse as Art Nouveau architecture, 'How spies think' and a climate emergency session with BBC environment analyst Roger Harrabin.

This U3A has a full programme of speakers planned until the summer months and expects to continue its timetable online for the foreseeable future. To find out more, visit hgsu3a.uk

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

May the Farce be with you

A long time ago in a city far far away, a new threat arose to challenge the galactic order and force the Knights of the Data to reveal themselves to the world. Yes, folks, welcome to the long-running franchise that is the Virus Wars. Or that's the way it feels in lockdown land.

We begin, of course, with The Phantom Virus before moving through The Attack of the Virus and the Revenge of the Virus until we get to the one where Boris Skywalker gets his light stick in an episode called A New Hopeless.

"May the Farce be with you," say the knights, and a darkness descends across the galaxy as the lights go out in shops and pubs. But all is not lost as Dom Solo travels across the stratosphere in his Millennium Rover to get his eyes tested and the Farce returns.

In the next episode of the franchise, the glorious summer sees happy, laughing people in bars and restaurants eating half-price food as Skywalker celebrates victory. But this is not called The Virus Strikes Back for nothing. Soon things are worse than ever and even Dom Solo has abandoned ship. What can save the galaxy?

Next in The Return of the Data, Skywalker is handed a new secret weapon in the shape of The Vaccine. Now the galaxy can be saved, light sticks can be waved and a road map to freedom presented to the people. But there is a problem. The E-Ewe are angry and Skywalker has to pacify them before the Vaccine can be unleashed and victory secured.

Yes, there will be that grand moment at the end of the movie where someone gets a medal, Skywalker gets the girl and Darth Virus is consigned to history. But then again, if he's got the map upside down or he's using a dodgy satnav we may be heading for another sequel as The Farce Awakens.