

THE BRADLING STONE

THE NORTON IN HALES MAGAZINE



Issue 16—July 2020

A Return to Some Form of Normality Beckons....

There's no doubt that we're all very relieved that the lockdown has now started to ease and life can begin to move towards a new normality. At this time of the year, the first page of the magazine is usually packed with village activities. Sadly, this can't currently be the case, but even so, I'm pleased to report a couple of events for your calendars, both of which have a gardening theme. Firstly, Norton Parish Council is running a front garden competition in August, and this is followed by the village show in September. Details of the front garden competition are shown in the article below, and this month's In Bloom article gives details of the village show, which will be held on the 12th of September, subject to the prevailing lockdown and social distancing conditions.

Lockdown has meant that many of us have had more time on our hands, which has enabled the collectors and hoarders among us (I stand guilty as charged!) to go through our treasured possessions, often under severe pressure from our other halves to 'get rid of all of that (*insert suitable unsympathetic noun*)'. On my part, there's been much sorting and cataloguing of endless boxes of my 'stuff' that's been stored, untouched in the loft since we moved into the house 20 years ago. All of this 'stuff' is now much better ordered and despite strong 'encouragement' to 'let go', I'm pleased to say that not a single item has left the house! On the contrary, thanks to the sterling work of the postman and the army of delivery drivers who service the village, there's been a steady stream of more 'stuff' coming into the house!



If you have also been going through your own 'stuff' and would be happy to share your collecting history with the readership of the magazine, please send an article with suitable photos to editorbradlingstone@gmail.com. This month, Dick Walton shares the story of his 'philatelising' (made-up word) - stamp-collecting to the uninitiated!

Front Garden Competition



The Parish Council is pleased to confirm that the annual front garden competition is going ahead this year as usual. The event has been held for many years, whereby all front gardens in the parish are judged from the roadside. You do not need to enter, as all gardens are judged, but the competition gives everyone the chance to get their front lawns cut and the weeding done, so that theirs, and in fact, the whole village, look at its best. There have been many different judges over the years, all of whom have their own particular favourite style preferences. There are no specific judging criteria - the winning garden will be the personal choice of the judge.

The competition will be judged during the week 10th to 16th of August by Mrs Jo Spencer-Jones. Jo is a very keen gardener who has just finished work on a new garden at her house at Shrawardine, near Shrewsbury.

Jo has also been involved with Horatio's Garden at the Orthopaedic Hospital at Oswestry. This is a new sensory garden for long-term patients who have suffered life changing injuries. The main garden wraps the spinal unit on two sides, with the planting in the existing courtyard areas being enhanced so that all patients' bedroom windows have a view of nature. The garden is all on one level, with smooth paths throughout ensuring that it is easily accessible to patients in beds and wheelchairs. The essential design features are a social space, private areas for patients to seek solitude or share with a family or friend, flowing water in a rill, a garden room, a garden therapy area, greenhouse, wheelchair skills area and children's play area.

Jo is more than happy to come and talk to us about her own garden and the sensory garden at some time in the future when more normal conditions return.



Ding Dong! The Bells are Gonna Chime!

It's nice to have some good news in these difficult times, so I'm pleased to report that repairs to the clock, chimes and carillon at St Chad's are getting a bit closer to starting.

For any work on the fabric of a church, "faculty approval", which is similar to planning permission, is required from the church diocese. This has been applied for and public notices are on view on the village noticeboard and on social media. Any objections to the works need to be made in writing to Alan Dutton by 13 July 2020.

Assuming that the work is permitted and sufficient funds are in hand, the next stage is to get the work ordered, with a view to completion as early as late October

Grants to help with the cost have been applied for and we have already been granted up to £3,000 by ChurchCare, subject to certain conditions, which we are confident can be met. A grant application to Shropshire Historic Churches Trust is also under consideration and is awaiting a decision. Sadly, Norton Parish Council is not allowed to help because under an 1894 law it is forbidden to make grants to churches. All Heritage Lottery fund applications are, for the moment, suspended.

The ChurchCare grant recognises that the Carillon installation at St Chad's is of national significance and is worthy of funds to restore its almost unique contribution to the atmosphere of the village. Another reason for Norton being on the map and something that we can all be very proud of!

You will see from the picture of the funds thermometer that we are well on the way to reaching our £20,000 target. Very many thanks to all who have contributed so far. However, we still need more money to get the project under way and any further contribution from parishioners, however small, would be very welcome. Also, bear in mind that if you are a taxpayer another 25% is added to your contribution through "Gift Aid" if you fill in the form below.

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Sort Code: 01-05-48

Reference: Carillon Fund

or, of course, in person to Alan Dutton, 5 Bearstone Road or Mel Rees, The Old Rectory.



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Any gift you make, be it cash, cheque or online should be accompanied with this completed form. The envelope with the completed form should be given to a Church Warden, Mel Reece or Alan Dutton. Cheques should be made out to: **Saint Chad's PCC.**

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If you would like to become a patron then please contact the secretary: secretarybradlingstone@gmail.com

Nature Notes

On the 4th June, the clear blue skies finally gave way to the grey/black rain clouds looming across the horizon, ready to dampen the spirits and bring a return of the wellingtons from the cupboard. It was a welcome rain though, bringing much needed water for flora and fauna alike. Have you ever wondered how wildlife survives in really dry times? Putting out water bowls, just as we put out bird food in winter, is actually a good plan, as birds need fresh, clean water for drinking and bathing almost daily. For many farmers, it was also much needed rain for the re-growth of the first and second cut silage leys. Unfortunately, there are relatively few traditional hay meadows filled with the variety of grass species, wildflowers and herbs needed for a rich diversity of nature, so visit the Shropshire Wildlife's Molverley Meadows near Ash Magna and see it there. To quote the Wildlife Trust's website, Molverley has 'dense hedges, crowned with mature oaks, ash and horse chestnut, enclose small fields that hum with insects and brim with different grasses and flowers'.

We were also at the 'longest day' of daylight on the 20th June with the 'June or summer solstice' which marks the official start of summer. The word solstice, Latin *solstitium* from *sol* (Sun) and *stitium* (still or stopped) signifies that the sun appears to stop "moving" at the peak.

A meander along the paths currently may bring the rank smell of the fox, an unpleasant musky odour which, once identified, is never forgotten. Alternatively, your walk may be accompanied by the perfume of the honeysuckle, especially in the calm of an evening, or the many-faceted aromas of rain-soaked woodlands. Scents often evoke powerful memories, whether it is newly mown grass, damp woodland or one of the myriad other things that often arouse those deeply hidden archives. I find that mine generally bring a smile.



Common Damselfly (Male) CuriousRaven, 2020



Mushroom on 2nd segment

CuriousRaven, 2020



Dog Rose

CuriousRaven, 2020

Across a wet area in a meadow a damselfly was flitting around. There are quite a few variations, even of the blue specimens. The image is a male common blue; the male is differentiated from the female by the black mushroom shape on the second segment (closer image), as opposed to a thistle shape on the female. Dragonflies themselves are separated into two sub-orders: the damselflies (or Zygoptera) and the Dragonfly (or Anisoptera). Sometimes a concern due to their large size, but neither sting.

The dog rose (*Rosa Canina*) is also flowering now and is often seen growing in hedgerows with white or pink flowers. These provide a good source of nectar for insects and the rose-hip berries are a good food source for blackbirds. The hairy seeds inside make you itch, so some of you will remember childhood pranks with those. During WWII, as imports of oranges had stopped, the collection of rose hips was promoted by the government, so that a syrup could be produced which provided a valuable source of vitamin C.



Hare

CuriousRaven, 2020

I have seen several hares (*Lepus europaeus*) this year, more particularly, the young leverets. Hares are solitary mammals often seen loping across the fields. They can run at up to 50mph over short distances and around 35mph over longer distances. Unlike rabbits, the hare produces its young in depressions in the ground called 'forms', and does not have underground burrows. Brian Plummer produced a book about the Hare called 'Lepus', but this is not to everyone's liking, with Plummer being a rat hunter of renown.

Please report your images and sightings to:

Nature Notes

I also came across a sexton beetle (*Nicrophorus investigator*) several days ago. It is a common and widespread beetle in the UK and lives off rotten carcasses. This species *N. investigator* is differentiated from other similar beetles by the almost unbroken upper orange band. Apparently it is able to smell and locate a carcass from over two miles away. The outer orange-banded shell, *elytra*, hides the extensive wings. Unfortunately, walking along the footpaths in the morning dew is sadly often accompanied by the crunching of banded snail shells underfoot. As the snail is common near field edges, hedgerows and gardens, becoming active in March after a winter hibernation, it is almost impossible to avoid until too late. You may also come across the cockchafer/May bug, as seen by Sue Mayer. This was a major agricultural pest and was almost completely eradicated by the use of pesticides. It is now on the increase, which is a blessing but also a concern.



The 'bugle', *Ajuga reptans*, and the foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, were both seen on a roadside verge. The bugle is a common perennial preferring a damp woodland, shaded or unimproved grassland areas. The foxglove was originally named by Fuchs (English translation is Fox) in 1542 because a fully grown flower will fit a finger (hence fox glove), but English folklore turned it into a myth that foxes wore them on their paws to tread silently whilst hunting. Foxglove is best known as the original source of the heart medicine digitalis, or digoxin, so beware the leaves, flowers and seeds, which are poisonous to humans and some animals and should never be ingested.



As the grass is cut for hay and silage, the normally hidden wildlife/foxpaths are revealed. Even the light constant tread will consolidate the earth, which reduces the evaporation from the soil, holds moisture more firmly and gives good root anchorage.

Sightings: Nigel and Sally P spotted a red kite in the fields near Forge Lane and skylarks, including young, around Napley Hill, whilst Sue Maher spotted the cockchafer reported above and purple hairstreak and skipper butterflies.

If you wish to send one of your own images for inclusion in 'Nature Notes' then email to: iggbradlingnature@outlook.com and we will include them where feasible, along with your name.



Curious Raven

In Bloom

If times were normal, the Bloom Group would be anxiously awaiting the visit of the Heart of England judges to Norton for their assessment of the village in the annual competition, which we had entered again this year. Discussions would be taking place as to whether the floral displays would be at their best and what jobs needed to be done before judging day. But of course, times are not normal and there is no Britain in Bloom 2020.

The group could have sat back for the year and started again in 2021. That, however, is not what Norton in Bloom is all about. It is great to win gold medals, and even be chosen as national Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions, but that is just what keeps you on your toes, striving to be a little better each year. The basic reason that the village group exists is people's pride in where they live and a wish to lift spirits with the lovely year-round horticultural displays. The Parish Council pays a contractor to cut the grass, but of course, every thing else is done by volunteers who give their time to maintain the attractiveness of the village. Let's be grateful to the many residents who help and have carried on during the virus outbreak, working their way around the restrictions.

There were some problems obtaining reasonable-sized plants for the village displays this year because the growers were fearful of having lots of unsold annuals on their hands. The newspapers were full of reports of early plants remaining unsold because garden centres were closed down, but the surplus was from early batches. As a result, many fewer later batches were started by the nurserymen, who were worried about having even more unsold produce on their hands, which then led to a shortage, certainly from our usual supplier! As a result, the displays around the village have been planted with small plug plants and will be a little later coming into bloom this year. It's a good job the judges are not coming!

Something that is coming, relaxation of lockdown permitting, is the village show. This will take place on 12th September and the Fruit, Vegetable and Flower part of the schedule was published in the March Bradling Stone. The full schedule will be in the September edition, but it can also be found now on the village website, www.nortoninhales.org (Click on the link in 'Featured Posts') . Please have a look to remind yourselves what is on it and see what the domestic and other items are. One is for a local wildlife photograph, so there is chance to get busy with the camera between now and September. It is hoped to publish the winning photograph in the magazine. Something to keep the children occupied is Class 41, for children aged 7 and under: 'Paint a Stone' – a medium-sized pebble, or for children 8-11: A Handmade Sunflower out of any medium or craft. They can, of course, enter any of the other classes but will be up against those aged 12 and over.

Now is the season for strawberries, raspberries, etc, so it is also worth asking everyone to get their jam kettles out for Class 35: Soft Fruit Jam in any size of jar.

Many people comment how good their gardens look this year, having had so much time to spend tending them, so it would be marvellous to have a bumper number of entries in the September show.

In Your Garden - July

There is still plenty to do in the vegetable garden during the month of July. The growing tips of courgettes and squashes should be taken out to encourage branching and, of course, they need watering very regularly. Some seeds can still be sown, and radish germinates very quickly, so it is popular with children, but you might get a late crop of carrots or beetroot by sowing now. It is also the last opportunity to sow some French beans. Plants of purple sprouting broccoli and leeks can be planted now. For some reason, bought broccoli never tastes anything like that grown at home. It is probably to do with the varieties that commercial growers use. The side-shoots of tomatoes should be taken out regularly. They are growing strongly now and will need feeding once a week with plenty of water being given in between. The growing tip can be pinched out at about five trusses because the later ones will not ripen before the late autumn.



There Will Be No In Bloom Meetings Until Further Notice

In Your Garden - July

On to fruit, and rhubarb plants deteriorate after a few years, so now is the time when you can lift and divide them. The outside of any clump of rhubarb, or any perennial plant, will always be the most vigorous and is the part to replant. Plum trees can be pruned now to keep them in shape. If you are lucky enough to have a grape vine, then the shoots should be cut back to two leaves after the last bunch of fruit so that the energy goes into the developing fruit and avoids mildew.

Deadheading and watering seems to take up most of the time in the flower garden during July. Nearly all plants benefit from the removal of the spent flowers because if the plant sets seed it thinks its job is done. However, if you remove the seedhead (known as deadheading) then it knows it has to produce more flowers in order to produce seeds. Generally, the fewer flowers that a plant has on it, the larger they will be, so by restricting the number of flowers you will get better blooms, and this can be done by dis-budding, (i.e. the removal of flower buds). For example, to grow dahlias for cutting, take out any side shoots near the top of the stem, and if you look at the flowering tip there will be several buds. All but the large top one should be removed.



Dis-budding a Dahlia. In this photo the two flower buds near the top should be removed along with the side-shoots growing from the leaf 'axils' lower down the stem. More stems will be produced from near the bottom of the plant.

Autumn-flowering bulbs, such as Nerines and Amaryllis, can be planted now. Plants with a carpet like growth, for example some alpines, have the centre dieback over the years. These dead centres can be rejuvenated by the application of gritty compost to encourage regrowth.



Last month, I recommended a visit to the Dingle garden in Shrewsbury. This month, I will comment on how fantastic we thought Abbeywood Gardens on the edge of the Delamere Forest in Cheshire were when we visited last year. I see that they are open again now on a limited basis, but the highly rated café is, of course, closed. For full details it is advisable to do a Google search. Here is a photo I took, which is just a small part and perhaps does not do it full justice! There are several gardens within the garden.

Bowls Makes a Welcome Return

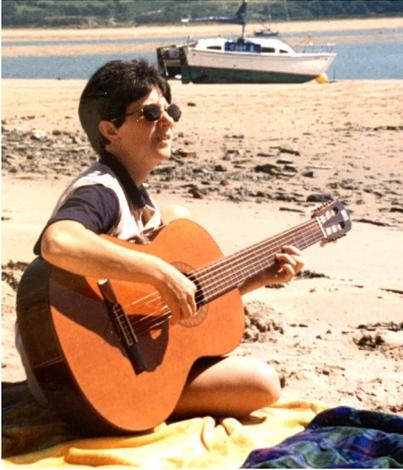
Bowling has now resumed on the green, post lockdown, albeit in a limited form. However, the league season has been cancelled and no league matches will take place this season.

At the moment, up to six people can play social bowls on the green at any one time. They have to follow strict guidelines and are not allowed to use the clubhouse. All members have to book a time slot with the secretary (myself) to keep a record for track and trace purposes.

Quite a few members are taking advantage of this to get out in the fresh air and play some bowls.

New members are always welcome, and some people have already joined to have some fun trying their hand at a new skill.

Classical Gas



The first time I held a guitar I was around three years old and, according to my Dad, I could knock out a tune that resembled the 007 James Bond riff. I only have my Dad's word for this as I don't remember!

I developed a liking for music later, around the age of thirteen, when I begged my Dad to buy me a guitar. He borrowed one from his friend who had stuck some psychedelic wall paper over it (well, it was the 1970's!!!), but I loved it and found I could make sense of the sounds.

Around this time, I started to listen to music more. I grew out of the bubble gum pop stuff and my influences were Cat Stevens (I loved his 'Teaser and

the Firecat' and 'Catch Bull at Four' albums), Ralph McTell ('Streets Of London', 'The Hiring Fair'), and, of course, Simon & Garfunkel. I learned to play all of my favourite songs off the many albums my pocket money allowed me to buy.

It was a couple of years later when I knew that I wanted to teach music, so I studied at The North Staffs School of Music and Drama, where I was trained in classical guitar. I studied the likes of Andre Segovia, John Williams, Julian Bream, Julian Byzantine and other great classical guitarists. I also developed a liking for Baroque music, Bach and Handel being my favourite composers of this era.



When I wanted to listen to music for music's sake, I loved Genesis and 10cc, then in the 1980's, Howard Jones, Tears for Fears and The Thompson Twins. I guess I have a pretty eclectic taste in music and I could go on to name many other influences!!

Over the years, I have had many guitars, but my current pride and joy is a handmade bespoke Fylde. I have waited almost TWO years since visiting the luthier in the Lakes until receiving it at the beginning of lockdown. It is just beautiful and the sound is incredible. He also made me a Ukulele!



I don't get much chance to play classical guitar these days, but love writing songs with my musical partner in our band called The Time Stealers. I have also met some amazing people in my musical career and made my closest friends.

Life for me would be very dull indeed without music!

Anji Hollinshead-Bland (*Specialist guitar and ukulele teacher*)

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Smokestack Lightning



This spectacular photo, taken by Rob Flint on 13 June from his house on Main Road, looking south towards Napley, made me think about the many references to lightning in music, particularly in Blues and Rock. The rather cheesy title of this piece, Smokestack Lightning, is the classic Blues song written in the 1930s by Chester Burnett, who is better known as Howlin' Wolf. Wolf

said that the song was inspired by watching trains at night: "We used to sit out in the country and see the trains go by, watch the sparks come out of the smokestack. That was smokestack lightning." The song was recorded by Wolf in 1956, but has been covered scores of times, and probably featured in the live sets of almost all of the bands that emerged from the British Blues Boom in the mid 1960s that Nigel Passmore wrote about in a previous issue of Bradling Stone. Even if you have no interest in blues music, it's worth a few minutes of your time checking out the original version of the song by Howlin' Wolf on YouTube. He was an enormous man with a voice to match.

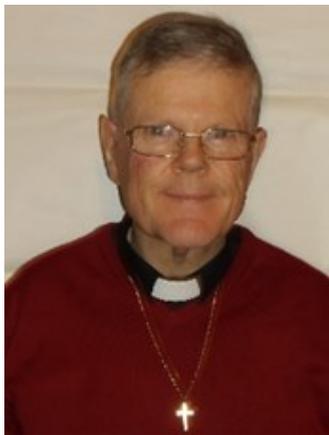
On a personal and rather nerdy level, for me, lightning in a musical sense can only refer to 'Lightning to the Nations', the first independently recorded and produced album by Diamond Head. Hard to believe that it was 40 years ago in the summer of 1980 that I saw an advert for the album in Sounds magazine and sent off the princely sum of £3.50 to an address in Stourbridge. The band didn't have enough money for a printed sleeve or labels, so the record arrived in a plain white sleeve signed by the band's guitarist, Brian Tatler, with the song titles hand-written on a white label on the back of a cardboard record mailer, which I still have.



I saw the band live many times and even joined their fan club (oh, the embarrassment!). They should have been massive, but poor management decisions put paid to that, although things didn't turn out too badly for the songwriters in the band, as several of their songs were covered by Metallica, the royalties from which are probably a very welcome and substantial pension.

Lightning's not the only link between Howlin' Wolf and Diamond Head as both have great songs with the word 'evil' in the title: 'Evil' by Howlin' Wolf and 'Am I Evil?' by Diamond Head, the response to which for rock fans of a certain age can only be 'Yes, I am!'

A View From The Vicarage



And so it continues. “Three weeks,” they said. Then, “three more weeks.” Four months later and we don’t seem much farther ahead on the road to recovery. Statistics say we are, but the deaths continue and the gloom remains. When will it end? We are tired of this tribulation! We wonder, sometimes in fear. “Inspire me Lord!” I cried. So I opened my Bible randomly and saw before me 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and read: “*Paul Boasts about his Sufferings.*” Paul wrote, “Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea, and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” I paused. “Really Lord?” was all I could say.

I thought, “Saint Paul *boasted* about his trials and tribulations. He didn’t complain.” And then it hit me: The Lord responded to Paul by saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” [12:9] I felt humbled. All through this pandemic, I have been trying to be strong on my own efforts. I have done my best not to let fear and danger invade my personal space. I wanted to be strong. Four months on and I don’t feel as strong as I once did. Doubts and fears are creeping in, especially when news arrives of someone having the disease or someone dying from it.

There was a beacon of hope on the horizon in New Zealand. They locked down early and it seemed like the right strategy: Covid-19 was gone. Then a couple of new cases appeared because they let their guard down. That unleashed a black cloud over me! “It’s hopeless. It can’t be stopped.” Fear and trepidation hit like a tsunami.

That’s when God spoke to me about Paul. God reminded me that He is in control, not us. We might try to live without Him and try to do things our ways, but ultimately, we need Him. Through the pandemic I have often listened to a CD by Steve Green with the song, *People Need the Lord*. The opening verse says, “Everyday they pass me by. I can see it in their eyes. Empty people filled with care, headed who knows where. On they go through private pain, living fear to fear; laughter hides their silent cries, only Jesus hears.” The chorus includes the line, “When will we realize people need the Lord?”

Day by day, the Lord reminded me that I need Him! We ALL need Him! The pandemic has brought not just sickness and death, but fear, uncertainty, upheaval, anxiety, loneliness, and a whole host of other emotions. None of them are beneficial. All of them drag us down into a pit of darkness. And that is what Satan does best. He unleashes the darkness into our world to block out the light of Christ—our hope for eternal life far beyond the span of years we might have in this life. He wants us to feel abandoned by God and unloved by our Creator. He wants us to give up on God and to think only of ourselves and how to survive. In reality, we need the Lord. It is only God’s love which can uphold us and strengthen us and bring us through this “valley of the shadow of death.” (Psalm 23)

St Chad’s has re-opened for personal, individual prayer on Wednesday and Sunday mornings from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon. If you feel the need to do so, please come along to the church and sit in the presence of God and seek Him. Talk to Him. Unburden yourself of the fear and anxiety you might be harbouring. Ask for His Holy Spirit to fill you and inspire you. There won’t be any services for a while yet, but sometimes some people just need to be in God’s house to feel closer to Him. Many can do this anywhere, anytime, so they won’t need this open time to be with God. Either way, I encourage you to know that we all need the Lord. The Good News is that He loves us and is waiting and when we call out to Him, He will come running to be with us again. And with God with us, all things are possible and like Saint Paul, we will also find all things are bearable. God bless you and keep you!

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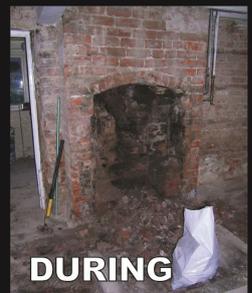
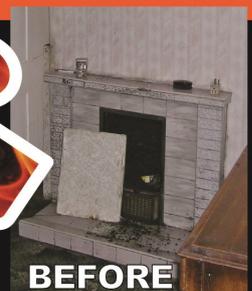
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Recollections of a Lapsed Philatelist



It was interesting to read in last month's Bradling Stone that stamp collecting started in Belgium – because that's exactly where my interest in the hobby started. Our family spent long summer holidays staying with my Belgian grandmother in Brussels and, at the age of 8 or so, my father bought me a huge packet of stamps from one of the many stamp shops in the city (most of which are still there) and that was that. A summer sorting them out into their various countries and starting my first album.

The hobby continued through my teenage years. In 1964 my (English) grandfather died leaving a trunk full of unsorted stamps, which he had planned to sort out in retirement – but never did, despite being retired for over 20 years. This is where my Penny Black came from and also a whole raft of Commonwealth stamps. Back in the day, he had worked in the City of London for a Chilean Nitrate company. Amazingly, he had soaked off all the stamps that came into the office – around 50,000 of them – and bundled them into packs of 100. They had very little value and in the end I sold them to one of those companies that put together stamp packets you could buy in Woolworths at the time.



Another memory was of an uncle who, as a Christmas present for me, had gathered as many of the 1946 series of Victory stamps issued by ALL the Commonwealth countries. It must have been quite a task.

I carried on actively working on my collection until the late 1980s. Mostly I have concentrated on UK and Commonwealth, Belgium (my grandmother sent me all the First Day issues until she died in 1987) and also Jamaica, where we lived from 1973 to 1978. But parenthood at that time and other priorities and interests have meant that for the last 30 years, the collection has been tucked away in a cupboard, though still in good order. At one of our (very occasional) de-cluttering exercises, there was talk of selling the collection, but in the end I couldn't bear to part with it – too many memories!!



Dick Walton

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