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LIFE, LOVE & MEMORIES



MEMORY LANE

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This month we have some good news to share with our readers as we welcome you to our May Newsletter. Nicola Shore, our Life Story service manager, has raised over £4000 for Age UK, Oldham by running the London Marathon. On the next page you can read what Nicola has to say...



**WELL DONE NICOLA
FROM THE LIFE STORY VOLUNTEERS**

Thanks to everyone who donated, cheered me on in London and stalked me online on Sunday! It was so lovely to know so many people were supporting me!

I finished the London Marathon in **4 hours 48 minutes and 15 seconds**. That was a personal best by 6 whole seconds with a last-minute spurt as I glanced at my watch and realised I could just scrape a few seconds off my best time. It took a supreme effort to 'sprint' to the finish but I found a tiny bit of energy from somewhere!

It was an amazing atmosphere passing so many well-known landmarks and so inspiring to see all the runners battling to the end, some in bonkers fancy dress. So I did take a few moments for some photos...maybe cost me a few seconds...or maybe slowing down for those few seconds gave me the energy for the final 'sprint'.

My total fundraising is around £4000 with a few bits and bobs still to collect. This was way beyond my expectations and will make such a huge difference to **Age UK Oldham**.

Massive thanks also to the Age UK national team who were fantastic in their support leading up to the event and for the post-event reception. Lovely to meet some of the team and some of the other Age UK runners on the course, have a place to meet family and friends and get a sports massage (so needed at that point!)

Roll on Leeds Rob Burrow Marathon on 12th May 🙏👤



If anyone would like to contribute to Nicola, the 'JustGiving' page is: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Nicolas-Secret-300km-Runs

If you have a smartphone you can scan the QR code above to go to the page. .

In Britain, May Day likely originated from the Celtic astronomical holiday called Beltane, which marked seasonal changes. Similar to Groundhog Day, Beltane involved singing, dancing, yellow May flowers, bonfires, and the iconic maypole, which still exist to this day.

May Baskets:

Another old tradition was the anonymous May basket drop-off. In the 19th and 20th centuries, people would leave baskets of spring flowers and treats on their neighbours' doorsteps, knock, and then run away.

International Workers' Day

In 1890 the May Bank Holiday became associated with International Workers' Day as the Second International (1889–1916), *an organisation of socialist and labour parties, formed on 14 July 1889 at two simultaneous Paris meetings in which delegations from twenty countries participated*, organised a day of protests in support of an eight-hour working day. After that the 1st May was linked with protests and became an official holiday in 1978. In America, May 1st is known to this day as "Labor Day". Canada celebrates it's equivalent on the first Monday in September.

International Workers' Day



Sir Brian Clarke

Sir Brian Clarke is a world renowned British painter, designer, and printmaker known for his large-scale stained glass and mosaic projects and symbolist paintings.



He was born on 2nd July 1953 in Oldham. His father was a coalminer and his mother a cotton spinner. He has two brothers, John and Barry. Brian attended Limeside Primary School. He failed the 11+ so then went to Clarksfield Secondary School. Twelve months later at the age of 12, he was awarded a scholarship to the Oldham School of Arts and Crafts where he was considered a prodigy.

In 1968 he and his family moved to Burnley and, too young at 15 to gain entrance to Burnley College of Art, he lied about his age and was accepted on the strength of his previous work.

In 1970 he enrolled in the Architectural Stained Glass course at North Devon college of Art and Design, graduating with a 1st Class Diploma in Design.

In 1974 he was awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Travelling Fellowship to study architecture and contemporary art in the United States.

Brian received his first architectural commission at the age of 17. However, his suite of 20 windows for the Church of St Lawrence, Longridge (1975) is considered his first mature work.

In 1976 he received a large-scale commission from the University of Nottingham to produce 45 paintings, vestments and a series of stained glass windows for a multi-faith chapel in the Queen's Medical Centre. The process of design and installation was filmed by the BBC as material for a documentary.

Between 1978 and 1979 the BBC filmed Brian's studio practice and life for an hour long documentary, "Brian Clarke: The Story So Far". The programme and subsequent press coverage, including his appearance in the front cover of Vogue, brought him to greater public attention.

Later in 1979 he became a presenter on BBC 2's arts programme "Mainstream" and the BBC Radio 4 programme, "Kaleidoscope" conducting interviews with people such as Andy Warhol and John Lennon.

In 1981 he completed a suite of stained glass windows for the Olympus European Headquarters Building in Hamburg. The same year he received a commission from the Government of Saudi Arabia for the Royal Mosque of King Khalid International Airport.



Also during the 1980's he produced the cover painting for Paul McCartney's solo album, "Tug of War", designing the cover with Linda McCartney. He also created the stage designs for Paul McCartney's World Tour (1989-90) and New World Tour (1993). One of the sets is a collage of stained glass through the ages.

Brian developed a new type of mouth-blown glass (Zaho-Glas) which was first used in the ceiling of Pfizer (the pharmaceutical company's) World Headquarters in New York.

In 1993 Brian designed a huge stained glass skylight, inspired by Sir William Walton's "Orb and Sceptre Coronation March" for Spindles, Oldham.



The skylight
in Spindles

In 2010 Brian designed stained glass windows for the new Papal Chapel in the Diplomatic Embassy of the Holy See to Great Britain, for the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the UK, the first ever visit made by a Pope to Britain.

In 2020 it was announced that a new Blue Coat School was to be built in Oldham named the Brian Clarke Church of England Academy, to provide free school places for 1,200 pupils. Its first intake of pupils was in September 2023 after completion of its construction. Last year he designed and fabricated large-scale stained glass windows for it.

His current exhibition, “A Great Light” has been on show at Damien Hurst’s Gallery in London and celebrates his 70th year with a collection of works from 2002 to the present day.

This year sees him working on a commission for Bahrain Airport.

Brian receiving
his knighthood
from the
Princess Royal



Brian met his wife fellow artist, Liz Finch, at the North Devon College at Art and Design. They divorced in 1993.

He has homes in New York, Rome and Germany as well as in London where his studio is.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. What is a smorgasbord and from which European Country does it originate?
2. Who was 'Peeping Tom the Tailor' gawping at when he was struck blind for his impudence?
3. Which letter is used most frequent in the English language: a,e,i,s,t?
4. What are spring and neap tides respectively?
5. Why is an unmarried woman often called a 'spinster'?
6. Who or what are the 'grass roots' of an organization?
7. Differentiate between the verbs 'feint' and 'faint'?
8. Who would you address as 'Your Grace'?
9. What is the opposite of enervating?
10. How are a group of lions collectively known?
11. What happens when somebody 'meets their Waterloo'?
12. Which cricket scores are called 'Nelson'?
13. In rhyming slang, what does 'taking a butcher's' mean?
14. How fast would you expect a viscous liquid to flow?
15. Fondue is a melted cheese from which country?
16. Where might you find Freshmen and Sophomores?
17. In the navy, what is a 'dogwatch'?
18. What Spanish town is renowned for fine sword blades?
19. What does RSVP invite someone to do?
20. Why might a bleb be irritating?

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. A traditional spread of food from Sweden.
2. Lady Godiva.
3. 'e'
4. The highest and lowest tides.
5. Young women used to prepare for marriage in the 'spin house'.
6. Rank and file members.
7. To feint is to pretend, to faint is to swoon.
8. A Duke or Bishop.
9. Energising.
10. A pride
11. They are decisively defeated.
12. 111 and its multiples
13. Having a look.
14. Slowly.
15. Switzerland.
16. At an American University.
17. Either of the day's two watches.
18. Toledo.
19. Reply (repondez s'il vous plait).
20. Because it is a small blister.

THE PENSION POEM

(This poem was composed by Pam Ayres when the retirement age for women was 60)

A letter came this morning and it fluttered to the floor

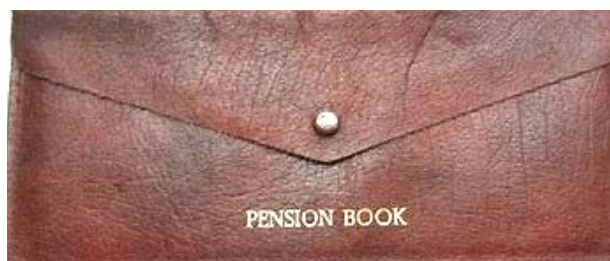
I picked it up and read it as I've done countless times before

Well I laughed! I doubled up! I stamped my foot and slapped my thighs

I couldn't get my breath the tears were streaming from my eyes

I mean they'd got the right address, they'd even found my proper name

But the heading said 'STATE PENSION' - IT IS TIME TO MAKE YOUR CLAIM'



State pension! Well I ask you! You know I'm not one to scold

But this was meant for some old dear with silver threads among the gold

Some doddering old fogey long ago turned out to grass

With enormous varifocals and her gnashers in a glass

Some elderly old personage who shuffles round the shops

With a little tartan shopping bag and porridge round her chops

Well it's not me I can assure you to whom this claim refers

I won't be a pensioner for ages, in fact for years and years

My life has hardly started, it's not finished that's for sure

I've only got two kids.....well I might have a couple more!

I've got a sense of humour but they ought to take more care

Someone in Human Resources needs one up the derrière!

(cont'd)

Imagine sending that to me, it must have been a prank

It's probably my husband, yes, it's him I've got to thank

I'm not getting old I'm staying young like Peter Pan

So don't you pension me like some incontinent, old gran

Take back this application with no further 'ifs' or 'buts'

And think along the lines of where a monkey puts his nuts

A pensioner! A pensioner! Well that would be a treat

Imagine my excitement as I sit and soak my feet

A timorous old biddy with a handrail up the path

And a ruddy great device to get me in and out the bath

A pendant round my neck which I just have to press and then

Haring up the stairs come General Custer and his men

Well that's not me! That is NOT me! I've kept my youthful figure

These aren't age spots on my face, they're freckles.....only bigger!

It wasn't long ago that men competed for my honour

So let's have no more nonsense, I'm a goer NOT a gonner!

For ME to be a pensioner I say with some relief

I'll be 60 in 07.....wait a minute.....OH GOOD GRIEF!



‘MAYDAY’ THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MONTH OF MAY

Mayday! The word itself carries an air of urgency, a desperate plea for help. But where did this internationally recognized distress signal originate, and why is it used by airplane pilots, boat captains, and emergency responders?

Mayday is indeed an emergency procedure word used globally as a distress signal in voice-procedure radio communications. It serves to signal a life-threatening emergency primarily for aviators and mariners, but it’s also employed by local organizations such as firefighters, police forces, and transportation agencies in some countries.

Let’s delve into the fascinating history of this distress call:
The Start of a New Air Distress Signal:

- After World War I, air traffic between Britain and mainland Europe increased significantly. With this surge in aviation, nearby nations needed an internationally recognized distress signal that would alert authorities to urgent aircraft problems.
- The standard maritime distress call, “SOS”, was unmistakable in Morse code due to its three dots, three dashes, and three dots. However, aircraft pilots used radio calls, and “SOS” could be misheard as other letters, like “F.”

Thus, a new distress signal was sought for aviation and **Frederick Stanley Mockford**, a senior radio officer in London, was tasked with finding a suitable distress signal.

Given that much of the air traffic flew between Croydon (in Britain) and Le Bourget Airport (in Paris), Mockford decided to use a derivative of a French word:

He came up with “mayday”, which is the French pronunciation of “m’aider” (meaning “help me”). The phrase itself is a condensed version of “venez m’aider”, or “come help me”.

In 1927, the United States formally adopted “mayday” as an official radiotelegraph distress signal, recognising its connection to the French expression.



FREDERICK STANLEY MOCKFORD

Born 8 December 1897

Died 1 March 1962 | Age 64

A true story by Dee one of our Life Story volunteers

MY GRANDAD

During the depression it was my mum's job to take her dad's suit to the pawnshop every Monday to get money to last the rest of the week and then she would go and get it redeemed on Friday after he got paid.

Peter was out of work for long periods in the 30s and was on the dreaded 'Means Test'. Proud working men had to go cap in hand and beg for money for food and clogs for their children's feet. My grandad Peter Webb was born on a farm near Christ Church in Chadderton in the early 1890s. He was the youngest of twelve children and developed rickets, a disease caused by malnutrition which was common in the days before the NHS.

As an adult he was less than 5 feet tall with the bent legs typical of rickets but he always took great pride in his appearance. He worked in the foundry at Platt's engineering but supplemented his income by singing in the many pubs and clubs in Oldham at the weekends.

He always wore a dinner suit and when playing somewhere new his opening joke was, "I went to Phil Cohen's (a well known Oldham tailor) and said, will you mek (*make*) me some trousers Phil? He looked at my legs askance and I said, don't worry Phil, you mek 'em and I'll bend 'em.

Peter was still able to get weekend work on the sly as he was a very popular entertainer and as my grandma Amy was a notoriously 'bad manager' that just about helped to keep their heads above water. One night he arrived at his booking and went over to the pianist to hand over his sheet music, (pubs often had resident pianists in those days.) To his horror the pianist was the clerk of the Means Test. I think it's a mark of the respect people had for my granddad that the man assured him that he wouldn't tell on him.

Even that didn't help in the end. One day my mum arrived to find her mother in tears with a neighbour on hand to comfort her. She had got heavily into debt and my granddad, who was legally responsible for his wife's affairs, had been carted off to Strangeways. My mum remembered visiting him there and it left an indelible mark. She was so distraught at seeing her beloved dad in that position that as an adult she always made sure that she had money of her own put away in case of hard times, a lesson she inculcated in me.

cont...

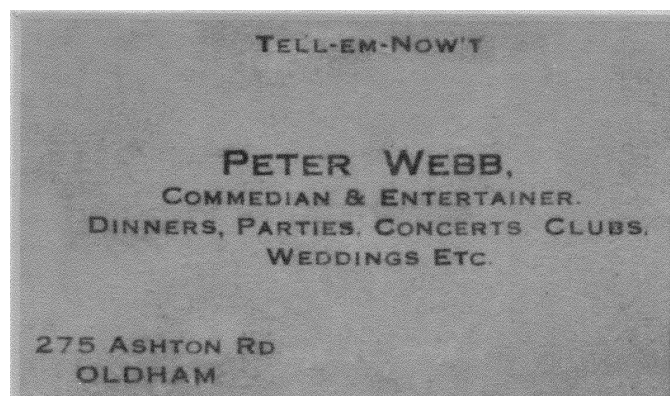
Cont...

Peter died when I was seven but I have vivid memories of the time i spent with him. I used to comb his thick, dark hair putting partings in different places. He could do beautiful copperplate handwriting and had a bottle of white ink which he used on dark book covers, I thought this was fantastic. He was very patient and would spend whole afternoons playing Snap and Rummy with me and he also taught me how to clean shoes. The shoe cleaning things were kept in box on the fender round the 'black lead' fireplace and I loved the smell of the polish and the feel of the different brushes. People really looked after their clothes and shoes in those days because they had to last. I still think of him when I clean my shoes and I have the 'last' that he used to mend the family's shoes.

His chest was bad every winter and he always said that February, his birthday month, was the worst and that if he could get through that he would live another year. He became ill when I was seven and they brought the bed downstairs. I remember visiting him and my mum putting brandy on his lips as he fought for breath. When he died, a week before his birthday, I wasn't allowed to go to his funeral as it was considered too upsetting for someone my age, I think that was a big mistake as I had no way to process my grief. For months afterwards I kept thinking I'd seen him down the street but I could never get to him.

I feel very privileged to have had him in my life, however, briefly.

My Grandad Peter
centre wearing a
bow tie and
glasses.



Jean's recipe:

Apricot Shortbread

12 portions.

Ingredients:

6 ozs flour,
1½ teasp. of baking powder,
1 tbsp. of milk,
3ozs sugar,
1 oz margarine,
1 egg,
¼ lb dried apricots - stewed.



Method:

Rub the margarine into the flour.
Add the sugar, beaten egg and milk.
Knead with hands.
Divide the paste into two portions, one larger than the other.
Roll out the larger piece and line sandwich cake tin.
Spread with sweetened stewed apricots.
Cover with the rest of the paste.
Bake in a moderate oven until lightly browned.
Turn out when cold.
Serve with whipped cream.

RAIN, RAIN & MORE RAIN

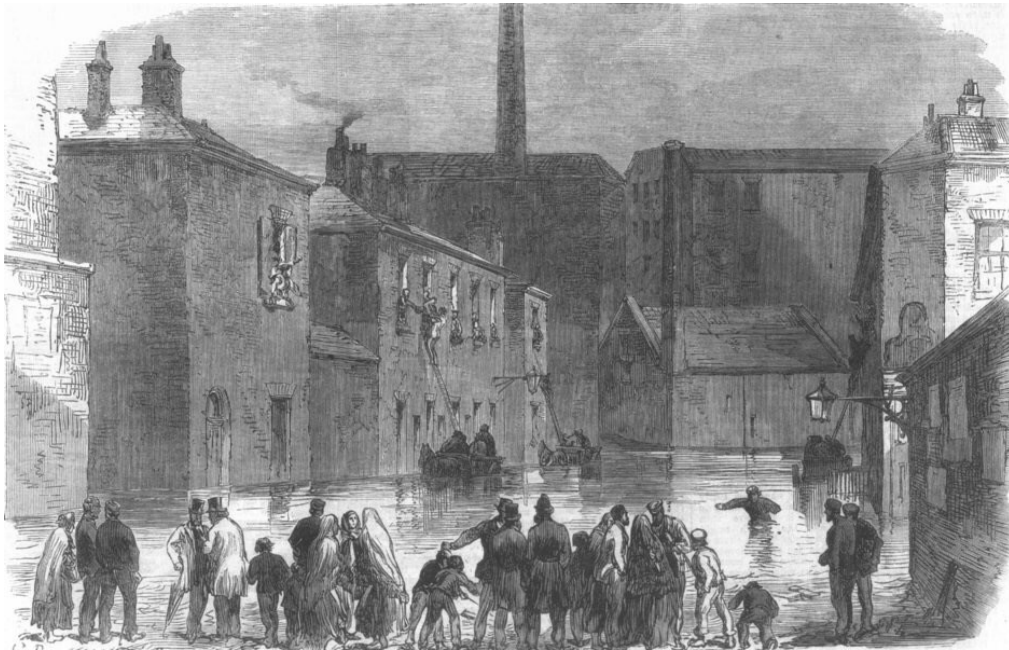
Recently it seems to have been raining forever but was it any different in days gone by?



Waterloo Street, 1930's.



Flooding in Mossley 2016



1886 Floods in Manchester and Salford



Middleton after a catastrophic flood in 1927

BYGONE PLACES OF OLDHAM

YORK CASTLE

You may never have heard of it but it existed and not that far from the town centre:



York Castle which was a beautiful piece of local eccentricity; a castle complete with battlements, turrets and a clock tower – right in the middle of a street of terraced family houses.

The “castle” was built in York Street, off Manchester Street near Oldham town centre, in 1883 by Joseph Ball, who had started life with little education but with an astute head for business. He had made a fortune as a “lightning conductor manufacturer and erector, and church spire and chimney restorer” according to an entry in Kelly’s Directory of 1882.

Joseph wanted to include a theatre in his building but this was turned down by the council. However, much later he did take over the Gaiety Theatre in Union Street (which became the Victory Cinema). He brought a number of top line artistes there including Vesta Tilley, Marie Loftus and Jenny Hill.

The Castle remained in the ownership of the Ball family after the early death of Joseph in 1906 and his son Walter a few years later. In the 1960s it was turned into three houses, the middle one being occupied by Joe’s grand-daughter Mary Ball.

York Street was demolished in 1968.

ANIMAL CORNER

MEERKATS



SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Suricata suricatta*

TYPE: Mammals

DIET: Omnivore

SIZE: Head and body: 9.75 to 11.75 inches;
tail: 7.5 to 9.5 inches.

WEIGHT: Up to 2.2 pounds

There are few animals on Earth who work as well together as meerkats. These squirrel-size members of the mongoose family live in groups as large as 40, and everyone in the mob participates in gathering food, keeping a look out for predators, and taking care of the babies. Meerkats live in the deserts and grasslands of the southern tip of Africa. They are extremely cute, with bushy, brown-striped fur, a small, pointed face, and large eyes surrounded by dark patches. They average about 20 inches (50 centimeters) long, including their tail. These extremely social animals live together in burrows, which they dig with their long, sharp claws. Living underground keeps mob members safe from predators and out of the harsh African heat. These burrows can be 16 feet (5 meters) long and contain multiple entrances, tunnels, and rooms. A group will use up to five separate burrows at a time.

In recent years Meerkats have become popular since they were first seen on the introduction to 'Coronation Street' followed by other adverts and now they are depicted on greetings cards and ornamental figures are available to buy. A big rise to fame for such little creatures.

Don't be fooled by the cute looks they can be aggressive and deliver a really nasty bite. They are especially aggressive to people they don't know. Of course, **these aren't ideal traits for a household pet.** They dig: as meerkats naturally spend hours every day in the wild digging for food or making new burrows, this can become problematic in the home.

Meerkats are much smarter than they look. A study at St Andrews University – Scotland – found meerkats use complex coordinated behaviour, which rivals that of chimps, baboons, dolphins and even humans.



Baby Meerkats
(Pups)

SPORTING EVENTS

The Kentucky Derby

The Kentucky Derby, known as “The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports,” is a prestigious horse race held annually on the first Saturday in May.

This event, inaugurated in 1875, is the oldest continuous sporting event in the United States and forms the first leg of the American Triple Crown, followed by the Preakness Stakes and the Belmont Stakes.

Taking place at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky, the Derby is renowned for its rich traditions, including the lavish hats worn by attendees, the singing of “My Old Kentucky Home” during the pre-race post parade, and the mint julep, the traditional beverage of the race.

The race features three-year-old thoroughbreds competing over a distance of 1.25 miles (2 km).

My Old Kentucky Home

The sun shines bright on my old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the people are gay;
The corn-top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom
While the birds make music all the day.

The young folks roll on the little cabin floor
All merry, all happy and bright;
By 'n by hard times comes a knocking at the door
Then my old Kentucky home, Good-night!

Chorus:

Weep no more my lady.
Oh! Weep no more today!
We will sing one song
For my old Kentucky home
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

MINT JULEP



2 cups sugar
2 cups water
fresh mint
crushed ice
bourbon whisky
julep cups

Boil sugar and water together for 5 mins.

Let cool in a container and add 6-8 sprigs of fresh mint.

Refrigerate overnight.

Fill each Julep cup with crushed ice, 1 Tbsp. mint syrup and 2 oz. of Bourbon Whiskey.

Garnish with a sprig of mint and a fun straw.



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Life Story

Every life has a story...

