

On Saturday March 19th 2020, I had suggested setting up a Facebook group, based on the Politics & Current Affairs Group in Hampstead U3A. This did not happen but I did gather a number of e-mail addresses, to which some other U3A Members added theirs. Because of copyright issues, I cannot add their comments but these are all the essays I wrote during the Coronavirus pandemic.

### **Monday 23rd March 2020**

Lovely day. Pity the advice is to stay in but I did go out to Sainsburys, as they are doing 07:30 for NHS staff & 08:00 to 09:00 for Crumblies only. I had to flash my bus pass. Most but not all the shelves were stocked, even the poultry, so tomorrow, it's Ken's Chicken Tagine (layer of red onions in the bottom of the slow cooker, scrape stock cube over them, stack chicken thighs draped in stiff honey, coriander & cinnamon round the outside/inside if you see what I mean, fill the middle with chopped mushrooms) served with rice to sog up the gravy.

Bozo the Clown says it will all be over in 12 weeks. How does he know? Even his Chief Scientific Advisor disagrees & he is just a flack from Big Pharma. (He used to run GSK). People are talking about 'returning to normal'. That is the last thing we need. This is an opportunity to recreate the World Order for ordinary people & get rid of domination by the rich. I gather that the odious Crispin Odey made millions by shorting airline shares, when it became obvious that travel was going to be restricted. Perfectly legal: morally despicable. The people on zero hour or no contracts (of which there are several in my circle because they are musicians or thugs - no concerts, no need for security guards) still have no idea when they will be getting any money because the telephone lines to the DSS are not being answered. I've handed out some cash but not going into details because, as Martin Luther said, trying to impress god with your good works Is A Sin.

The wisest thing I said in the past year (I think) was that everything that can be free, should be, as a way of increasing equality. Now, in particular, that should start with the TV & Internet, as being vital to keep people isolated from going bonkers & extended to food rationing. Then, no going back after. As for food rationing, the Civil Service should have had plans in place in case brexit went wrong (as it surely will). Were they forbidden from working on it? I think we can rely on the Tory Party itself getting rid of Bozo the Clown fairly soon, as it is dawning on them what a liability he is. Keep healthy.

### **Tuesday 24th March 2020**

Another lovely, sunny day. Yesterday, Avis made cauliflower & broccoli cheese for lunch. I keep my demands on her cooking days simple now. After, I took for a drive through the Chilterns, self-isolating in our nasty car. Later, I caught up with Tim Shipman's Sunday Times item about Cummings thinking that if our P&CA Group die, that was a price worth paying to 'save' the economy. Then, we have Bozo the Clown on the telly, doing his Churchill tribute act & looking ridiculous in the process because, no matter how hard he tries, we all know it's B the C from "Have I got News for You", pretending to be a Prime Minister. You can tell from the content. Yet more imprecise instructions. How do we prove to a policeman that we are taking our 'short exercise'? In Italy & Greece, you have to print off a form from the government web site & fill it in to go outside at all. How soon will we find, as the Spanish police have, a 'care' home full of dead people, who presumably starved? Then, there is the draconian bill, giving powers that I would hesitate to give Jeremy let alone Bozo & with Raab as Deputy PM, who has made it clear since the outbreak, that his top priority is to Get Brexit Done, one fears for what deals are being done in secret already.

Bozo's speech would only resonate if given by a trusted PM to a country which trusted them. One doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. Cheers & keep well, Ken PS. How about you lot joining in the discussion?

**Wednesday 25th March 2020**

Crumby hour at Sainsburys. I kept the queue amused with a selection of stories & quips. New quip of the day is 672 years old, "Ding-a-ling, ding-a-ling. Unclean, unclean" for the alley bottleneck before you get to Sainsburys, where things look better than they are because they are spacing out the shelves. Still no olive oil (which I always think just might be my brother's from his market garden in Greece). No cheap shampoo either. Back to student days & washing up liquid, it is.

Elaine got in first today & asked some questions. Here are answers: yes, the government's advice is still ambiguous. Bozo the Clown is in crisis. Nonsense he has believed all his life is questioned by the actions he has been dragged, kicking & screaming, to take. There is still nothing for the 5 million self-employed. Steve M (who has been very quiet, probably because he, too, has been sunk in the realisation that, for years, he has been talking crap in P&CA) quoted an 'official' i.e. propaganda figure of 900,000 for zero-hour workers, while I quoted the true, Resolution Foundation, figure of 3.7 million. This leaves 1.3 million without contracts. Some are rich lawyers. Some are poor lawyers & someone said of the French Revolution, "Beware of poor lawyers". The rest include many that the Japanese call the Water Trade, like musicians. I'm supporting one & another has gone home to Mum, who must be pushing 80 now.

Elaine's 2nd question. Selfishness is not innate (read Rousseau) but was deliberately fostered by Thatcher & Reagan but acts of selfishness tend to stand out, while small acts of kindness from the majority go unnoticed.

Elaine's 3rd question. Ken Clarke (no hero of mine, despite us agreeing about the EU) got the prison population down to 43,000. It is now double that or more. This is ridiculous. Some could be tagged. Many others need to be in school or hospital. As for women (I'll have to consult my mate Denise on this & get back to you), I doubt if those that need locking up get far into triple figures. However, since Chris Failing privatised the Probation Service, there will not be enough probation officers to deal with the new load.

Elaine's 4th question. Trump is not nuts. He is just an extreme case of greed & entitlement but such people need suppressing. So is Bozo the Clown, who compares himself to Churchill. Both are more comparable to US Presidents Millard Fillmore & James Buchanan. Not heard of them? There is a good reason for that, although Buchanan is often described as the one who made the Civil War inevitable.

Elaine's last point. I don't know how to make a cappuccino but we really miss going to the Islington Green Social Centre aka Caffé Nero. I just hope the girls have not been left without visible means of support.

Thank you for your contributions yesterday. I copy them into my Diary, with just your 1st names, as historians in the future will be interested in how we coped with the situation. The U3A will be contacting members, advising them to contact co-ordinators who are thinking of ways to keep the show on the road on-line. Jim will doubtless add to our mailing list & then, he can take over the newsletter (eh, what?) I will knock up a course of sorts for my group. Stay well, Cheers, Ken

**I sent an evening newsletter that Wednesday:**

Lots of kindly suggestions on Facebook as to what to do with one's lock-down time but this one, oh dear! "Organise the closet?" Mega-challenge.

"They told the young man it couldn't be done,

They said they knew it.

So he tried this thing that couldn't be done,

(long pause, please....)

& couldn't do it"

(Beatrice Lilley).

Avis grilled sea bream for lunch with my red cabbage fried with onions & a baking spud. For much needed exercise, I dragged her along the canal as far as Sturt's Lock & back, telling her it was for her own good. Everyone was religiously (except us, atheistically) keeping 2 metres apart.

I should have commented on Matt Hancock's sad appearance on Tuesday's "get your orders here" slot. How dare he ask for volunteers when the Tories have cut all those proper jobs in the NHS? They always try to get stuff done on the cheap/free, like firing British Waterways & bringing in the scabs of Canal & River Trust. They are always surprised when I bawl them out for scabbing on the water professionals. It never occurs to them.

I said I would get back with Denise the Thug's comments about women in prison. This is they: "I don't know the exact statistics any more, but the vast majority of women should not be in prison. Very few are in for violent offences; many are in for drugs related issues, which of course require care and rehab, not prison. Most of the things that women are sent to prison for are the things they are forced to do to survive every day life, and many are from poor backgrounds or abusive homes." Thanks, D.

I would not have done this extra newsletter if it had not been for tonight's (Wednesday) "get your orders here" slot, with yer actual Bozo in the hot seat. He kept repeating his stay-at-home message & saying nothing new, boring everyone stiff. When it came to questions, the journalists started to toughen up....at last. Even Tory plant Laura Kuenssberg stuck the knife in. The two Knights briskly swerved the questions about preparedness, making it clear that there had been an insignificant amount & Bozo had got his figures wrong. No change there, then. After, Jeremy Hunt, the guy who wrote that book saying the NHS should be privatised, started getting his revenge in. Occasionally, just, he sounded a bit Prime Ministerial, certainly more than B the C. But all through, the dodging of the matter of the starving 15% of unprotected workers was apparent. A friend-of-a-friend said he was 112,000th in the queue for the DWP to answer his telephone call. From the DWP's point of view, the telephone software uses a full word to store the waiting calls number, which means they can go up to 4 billion odd before they cycle round to zero again. With only 65 million Brits, that will be no problem. Meanwhile, Facebook is clogged with desperate medics saying they are not getting the stuff & some of the protective equipment is wrong. It's almost as if Bozo the Clown wants to thin out the surplus population. Perish the thought.

#### Thursday 26th March 2020

The good thing about my garden is that time working in it is self-limiting, as the Sun comes round by 10:00 & makes it difficult with my somewhat limited eyesight. Teetering on the top of a ladder manipulating the long pruners reminds me that, while still a member of the Swiss Alpine Club, my qualification for membership is now iffy, although they are happy to take the vast subscription.

We, meaning my pensioners & people in the same boat, are currently waiting for the handouts to the self-employed & slaves. There is a perfectly simple solution, which is an un-means-tested handout to everyone with a National Insurance number & increase the basic rate of Income Tax to claw it back. This has been suggested to Rishi Sunshine but he rejected it out of hand, to protect the rich, currently scheming as to how they can keep control of a situation inimicable to their thinking. We should also, if we are going to keep using wartime metaphors, increase the upper rates of Income Tax to Wartime levels: a top rate of 99.5% it was.

Good to see Steve M joining the conversation, as it helps to have the view of someone nostalgic for a World that should have died in 2008. As usual, his figures are wrong, being more or less the World War I ones. The WW II ones were 67,100 civilian (not far off) but "only" 382,600 military ones.

Now for something that might be a bit controversial. I see the airline business is still lobbying for

special treatment. They should get it but not in the way they want. Just shut most of it down. It's really anti-Green. Most flights are trivial (including so-called business flights which are just swannees). These days, most business can be done over the Internet. I did this back in the Nineties, schon. Possibly, half a dozen flights per day per country would cover all essential air travel. Ban all private aircraft as well. The essential non-airline flying should be reduced to fire-fighting, medical & sea rescue. Any other suggestions? Since joining the U3A, we have done 2 (two) return flights. One was U3A to the Budapest Spring Music Festival & the other, taking a pair of Islington Château Socialists to my brother's farm as a thank-you for trips to their château. Before anyone jumps on me, cruise ships are 35xgreener than aircraft (& they sure teach you about paranoid hygiene). As so often these days, Greta Thunberg shows the way. If you must cross the Atlantic, use a boat/ship. She didn't even make any CO2. Ok, the tourist industry would have to have a Big Rethink but they should be given time to do that. Keep well, Cheers, Ken

**Friday 27th March 2020**

The Big Event today is my little brother (he's bigger than me) Geof's 72nd Birthday. He lives on Skiathos in the Aegean Sea. I've attached 2 photos, one of him & one of the house he designed & built on his Market Garden. The thing in the latter photo that looks like a little Greek church is our parents' tomb. Many Happies, bro.

Ouch, Elaine! Assuming we are all monarchists. Well, I was the Webmaster for "Republic" in the nineties. I still have a web site for my campaign for President!

The Sainsburys queue for Crumblies was about twice as long this morning, presumably as people realise that, with the Weekend coming up, there won't be a Crumby Queue until Monday. I only took my day-sack (but remember, that has to accommodate water, spare wooly, snack, crampons & ice-axe) but filled it. Still no shampoo but that is hardly mission critical. I asked Tony on the till, how it felt to be a Key-worker. Proud, he said. As compared to an Options Trader?

Two big disappointments yesterday. The alleged bail-out for the self-employed is plagued by the tory obsession with the undeserving poor getting something for nothing. What does it matter if a few hundred shysters among the poor game a system when shysters among the rich are part of the system? The system I outlined yesterday would not have the bureaucratic hang-ups Rishi Sunshine's will. The sadists at the JobCentres were having their work cut out already, without another 3 million or so applicants & there will still be holes for people to fall through.

The other disappointment is the award of the ventilator contract to Dyson, who has never made a ventilator & is only now designing one. Of course, he is a tory party donor. Dyson makes an interesting case study of the allegedly deserving rich but this plays into my own experience. Both he & I worked hard at innovatory stuff & we loved every minute of it.

**Geof & his house**





He made big money & I was paid as a wage slave, reasonably well but the work was its own reward. Then I was fired, we started our own business, did much less interesting work easily & here is the punch line, were paid a Lot more for it. So, we didn't do too much, which left time for the real & largely unpaid work, writing music & making fine art prints (which actually made much more than the music). Keep well. Cheers, Ken

### Saturday 28th March 2020

A normal Saturday for an hour & a half, soaking in the bath & reading the New Statesman but no going out for Saturday lunch on our rota of approved restaurants here in Islington until when? Avis will grill salmon. Yesterday, I made 'trash fish sauce', that is Sainsbury's Basics (or as I rudely call it, poverty) fish in a sauce of onions, mushrooms & a small amount of curry powder, light soy sauce, add the fish then crème fraîche. Served with rice & broccoli. (It would have been beans: I'm a beanzaholic but the broccoli looked Sad). The light soy is from a half full jerrycan with a best before date of 2009, so that should see me through to 2030.

The bath soak was to Record Review on Bach's E major Violin Concerto, one of my 2 Bach favourites, a really Sunny work. (The other is the Art of Fugue, where one cannot fail to be lost in admiration of the technical ingenuity but is still a great listen if you switch the brain off, if you can take 80 minutes of D minor). There has also been quite a bit of obscure Beethoven on Composer of the Week, too. Given that his 250th birthday isn't until December, maybe there is a lot more I don't know. These guys - I don't know why I bothered. I usually explain it's OCD.

Talking of mental conditions, Annette poo-pooed me when I said Bozo's problems go back to his Mum deserting him when he was 9 but it is a well-known fact that going to boarding school early causes psychological problems & when exacerbated by Mum running off, it's no wonder that he is totally self-centred & desperate for control. People were quick to disparage his diagnosis of coronavirus, thinking this a ploy with 2 positive advantages for an egomaniac. 1. He would get sympathy & 2. he could blame everyone else when it all goes pear-shaped. Some people, some millions on Social Media hope he dies. Not me. I want to see him tried for his crimes, principally of omission & delay, generally bungling this crisis. As for taking scientific advice promoting Herd Immunity one day a shortly after, going for lock-down suggests he should have talked to real scientists, not Big Pharma hacks. Even now, the testing is being bungled. Obvious cases are being tested, not all the staff.

I have fun on a Facebook Group called, "Ready for Rees-Mogg", winding up the loonies, who call Bozo, "The best PM since Churchill". I'll have a few words to say about our group Bozo Appreciator tomorrow, who has never been completely frank with us. By the way, I put these letters on Facebook, too.

Earlier on, I mentioned my diary, occupying 95cm of shelf space, A4 10point Palatino = 6,171,747 words, some of them yours & excluding these. Keep well, Ken

### Sunday 29th March 2020

Avis' bedside clock updates automatically but my 50-odd year old one doesn't. There were a couple of letters to the Grauniad last week suggesting we drop the time change this time. Although one signed himself 'Professor', he could have no idea how much work that would involve, including every single computer system, the number of which now exceeds the World population. When we had Summer Time all year for a few years at the end of the Sixties, the World was a simpler place & anyway, not all countries changed on the same day. I welcomed all-year Summer Time because we had an hour's more daylight in the Winter, which made Winter mountaineering that bit safer. I wonder how Spain is getting on. They used to be on GMT (like Portugal) but Franco (a long way the worst of the dictators), wanted to be on the same time as Hitler (who couldn't stand him). Now, they are contemplating going back to GMT, which does make more sense.

I have occasionally mentioned my late 1st wife Jane. Here are a couple of pictures of her from the late 1970s. The Black & White is her Official Civil Service one that was sent out to 3rd World countries before she went to sort out their food problems. The message was clearly, "Don't mess with this woman". That applied generally. After she died, one of her colleagues (male) said, "Ken, I think you were the only person in the World who wasn't scared of her", possibly correctly.



The colour one is a painting I did. This is a reminder in a way of the 3rd Geology lecture we had at Chelsea, when the lecturer (funny, I can see him still but not remember his name) put a fossil in front of each of us & said, "Draw it". Shock, horror all round, as everyone knew they couldn't draw. Well, if they wanted a degree, they had better learn & we all did.

We are apparently, all going to get a morale-crushing letter from Bozo the Clown on Tuesday. Shoot the messenger, not the postman. The £15,000,000 postal bill would have been better spent on ventilators. I'm a bit short on invective this morning. I'm trying something new for dinner. If it works, I'll let you know what. If it doesn't, I'll hide my pen in shame. I don't like doing things I'm not good at. Keep well, Ken

**Monday 30th March 2020**

**It's Monday. Is anyone out there?**

Looks like the newsletter discussion group had died a death, not, hopefully, from Covid-19. Just to update, trying chopping a tin of ham (I know you're not all Jews) up, mixing it with tinned pineapple & leaving overnight before popping it in the microwave & serving with peas & rice, worked a treat or, at least, Avis thought so.

The Crumbly Queue at Sainsburys was much shorter today. I suspect that some small-scale hoarding went on last week & people are less panicky now. One pleasant thing: more people are shouting Good Morning across the street. In that past life BC, no one did to strangers on the street but some did along the canal & more, on the Heath. A nice lady from the Council rang to ask if we were all

right. I refrained from saying, no, we were all left but, after being grilled on our circumstances, I did point out that we had already paid for our funerals, which got a laugh.

The nice lady did agree that my resisting Avis' demands to be taken out in the car was right. Although the car is self-isolating, stopping at petrol stations & having to shove through the micro-market to the bogs is out of order.

Still working on my talks, currently chasing the French out of Canada. If anyone thinks Bozo the Clown is the most lying, mendacious leader this country has ever had, for which you can make a case, I suggest reading a good book about King Charles II. If you shook hands with him, you really did need to count your fingers. While talking peace & alliance with the Dutch, he did back-channel negotiations with their deadly enemy, France & got a cash subsidy from Louis XIV. That's just one example. Meanwhile, the government propaganda machine, backed by the Depress, Fail, Torygraph & Sin, are saying that stuff is getting to the medics is countered on social media by the medics saying it's no stuff or the wrong stuff & all in pathetic quantities. I'm looking forward to the Public Enquiry after this lot is over. Keep well & keep in, Cheers, Ken

## Tuesday 31st March 2020

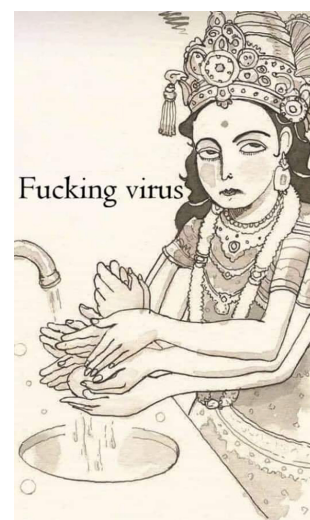
First things first: let's hope Big Geof's granddaughter gets a job soon. If you're wondering why my musician friends can't get jobs in supermarkets too, they have to practise & we will need their skills big time when this business is over if the World is not to be a dreary place. Avis grilled plaice with beans & a baking spud but it wasn't enough, so I had to make her High Tea instead of just Tea. I also need more ways to stop her going Stir Crazy.

Elaine raised the question of NHS equipment yesterday. This is dreadful. Medics have been posting pictures on-line of stuff with new date stickers over old ones. These dates are not like supermarket "Best before". They are "Chuck away after" dates, which can clearly be seen through the new stickers, like 31/5/2019.

It's the end of the month & tomorrow, I will have to do the Accounts, both personal (Stan will be pleased I keep a domestic cash book & nominal ledger) & the Company Annual ones. Although the HMRC tax year ends in a few days, I keep ours aligned to the month, being tidy-minded. They are not bothered. One revealing thing is, while February's expenditure (this is both of us) was £1,435.58, March's was £1,105.10. That's half a month's lock-down for you (us). The Company accounts bring up the question of crime & sin. If a crime is not a sin, who's rigging the rules to their benefit? The same applies if a sin is not a crime? Charitable donations to registered charities are tax-deductible. We do them through the firm as easier to manage than the messy Gift Aid system. Some of this money goes to 'administration' rather a lot, in some charities we avoid. Money directly granted to needy people, either street beggars (those, who I don't think are part of a 'begging ring' run by entrepreneurs who let out good begging spots at a price) or hand-outs to friends caught up in the current impossibility of getting onto Universal Discredit owing to the jammed telephone lines, is not tax deductible. I doubt if HMRC will notice I have done just that. I don't see why I have to subsidise their inefficiency & meanness. That is a crime but it is far from being a sin. If any of you think it would be 'public spirited' to grass me up, shame on you. That would be a sin.

I went for my permitted walk last night. While there were about a dozen people on the canal towpath, there were only 4 on the streets. Eery in the gloaming. Keep well, Ken

## Wednesday 1st April 2020



### Wednesday catch-up

Yesterday's curry went down a treat. Fry the onions first, then chopped mushrooms, add Korma paste. Fry the chicken in the mess & add crème fraîche. Meanwhile, fry more onions in the other pan with Madras Mild curry powder, add mushrooms & chopped peppers. Later, I added tomato paste, as I had no chopped ones open. In the microwave, peas, mature cheddar cheese (for lack of goat's cheese), crème fraîche with tandoori powder. Serve with rice. Get kissed by wife. Error in yesterday's 1st para. It's Avis who is getting stir crazy, not me. She puts things away. Then, in this well-oiled machine of a household, I have to find them & put them away where they belong.

No recipe today, as I have extracted 2 Boxes of Mystery from the freezer. When they have thawed, I will know what to do, meanwhile boiling some small spuds, as I will sauté them to go with the Bs of M. Wednesday Crumbly Hour at Sainsburys getting calmer. I hope I don't have to go again until next Monday. Cheap shampoo has shown up, so I don't have to resort to washing up liquid.

Now, something that really pees me off on Facebook. I get these every day:

"Have you been affected by Medical Negligence? Take our No Obligation Free Claim Assessment and Find Out if you Have a Claim Today!

- Specialist Medical Negligence Solicitors
- No Win No Fee Services ...at this time of all times "

In May 1756, Admiral John Byng had been sent off to Menorca, then British-controlled, by the Prime Minister, the Duke of Newcastle. Byng was supposed to repel a French invasion. His ships were in bad condition, in desperate need of a refit & they were about 1/3rd under-manned. Not surprisingly, Byng only scored a draw in the battle with the French, who went on to occupy Menorca. When he got home, Byng was court-martialled for not doing his utmost with his crappy fleet, found guilty & shot. He was a scapegoat for Newcastle's mendacity, as he knew he was putting the fleet in danger. Fortunately but too late for Byng, Newcastle fell from power shortly after & was lucky not to get lynched by a crowd in Portsmouth. History rarely repeats itself exactly but bungling Prime Ministers have got the chop since, the latest being Heath & before that, Eden, both Tories.

On the bright side, George Monbiot's article in today's Grauniad is a delight. Anyone looking forward to 'things returning to normal' had better do a big rethink. 'Normal', never again! Keep well,

I then added the cat cartoon with "I forgot to attach this, which will be familiar to all members living in their cat's house". Cindy had posted a video of 8 Canada Geese walking down a road in Las Vegas.



My comment:

We have the same problem. Two Canada Geese have a bit of leg-over = 6 more Canada Geese. There was a suggestion 21 years ago to cull them in Battersea Park. Public outrage. In my Mayor of London campaign, I said I would do an annual Xmas Goose Feast for 2,000 pensioners at the Royal Naval College. No public outrage but same result. But I didn't become Mayor.

### Thursday 2nd April 2020

The Boxes of Mystery in the freezer turned out to contain 1) chicken curry, which we'd had on Tuesday, so I squirted tomato ketchup into it & put it in the microwave (my curries never turn out



the same, anyway) & 2) couscous a la Ken. I fry cumin in marge, add salt & boiling water, then the couscous & sultanas, couscous on its own not being very thrilling. All served yesterday with sauté spuds & fried cabbage. Avis is grilling salmon today, so no recipe tomorrow.

One source of entertainment is the government's daily briefing, where now, a succession of ministers haplessly lie. Gove's performance was a picture. From photos now widely shared, Bozo the Clown's irresponsible performance on visits shows that, until he was forced to declare a shut-down, he really did believe that Public Schoolboys did not get Covid-19 & that the unscientific 'herd immunity' was only for the common herd, us. This wasted at least a month & a half, when they could have been testing, testing, testing, as the Chinese & Koreans did & the Germans are now doing. It is clear that there is a catastrophic lack of protective clothing for NHS & Care Home staff. NHS staff have been banned for talking about this but they are. More people are talking of the necessity of a National Care Service. Wrong. It should be integrated into the NHS, who's budget should be more than doubled. Tories of course, hate the NHS because it looks like the undeserving poor (us) getting something for nothing but it isn't, National Insurance being what it says on the tin. As for the alleged shortage of chemicals, the industry says there isn't one. (A 'reagent' is a chemical you want to use at a particular time. I've worked in a chemical factory, where I met my 1st wife).

One reason I joined the Labour Party in January 1965 was that I'd landed a good job & could pay my subs. Another was the realisation that the private sector could be trusted with anything that didn't matter much, like the production of consumer goods, witness today the constant race to produce a mobile 'phone with even more gadgets in it. Anything important had to be regulated by the government to make sure the public was not being ripped off. Or even, created by government, as 4 years & 10 months later, the Internet started up, entirely a government initiative. Goodness knows what I'll be on about tomorrow. Meanwhile, it's back to my Seven Years War talk. Keep well, Ken

### Friday 3rd April 2020

Friday's named after Freia. In WWII, the Germans used the code word 'Freia device', telling everyone who knew their Norse myths that they had invented radar. Panic after that war about giving away the 'secret' of the Atom Bomb was futile. There was only one secret - that it worked & after Hiroshima (or rather, the Trinity Test), that secret was out. Then, scientists can put two-and-two together & replicate something. There is a lesson here today. Waaaay back in January, the Chinese found & released, the DNA for Covid-19, so everyone could pile in & have a look at its vulnerabilities.

Today. I've got a brick of my spaghetti sauce out of the freezer. Because of the shape of the Chinese take-away plastic box I cast it in, it really does look like a brick, a sand-faced fletton. It had been in the Slow Cooker all day: pork mince lightly fried, chopped tomatoes reinforced by Sun-dried tomato paste, mushrooms, stock & mixed herbs, to be served with cabbage & Sainsburys fake parmesan. I'm currently confident of the electricity supply, so I could bulk-cook for the freezer. Not so in December 2018, when, to the derision of my friends, I built up a two-month stockpile for the Brexit I was sure would create a famine. I was also sure that the EU would rally round & rescue us from our folly in that time. Since, we have been eating off the front & restocking the back, which is normal shopping, so no panic-buying now. We also have stocks of cleaning materials and, yes, bog rolls.

Anthony E. who gets this on Facebook, where I post it after giving the U3A Group a 3 minute start, kindly corrected my spelling of Crème (ok) Fraische (not ok). Yes, it's Fraîche. Fraische is a bodge-up of German, where it's Frisch. A 26 letter alphabet just doesn't hack it. There must be at least double that number of sounds we make & have to fix, like th & ch & that nightmare for people learning English, 'ough'. Bernard Shaw high-lit this by spelling 'fish' 'ghoti' (as in, tough, women, nation). Then, there are the actual sounds. I just can't do the German 'gschn' properly, while they have no problem with that but keep doing the English 'th' as 'zer'.

I see Matt Hancock is back, seemingly having learned something in quarantine. I described the other day what, & why what happened to Admiral Byng. Hancock's admission that the government had got something wrong pretty well guarantees that he will get the blame for everything when this is over. I'm really glad that Elaine got it & got over it, so she's apparently immune now. She's got a good heart. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 4th April 2020**

I've got too many mushrooms. This is because Sainsburys loose mushrooms are all wrinkled, as it seems they leave them out until someone buys them. I used to count out the right number of mushrooms but had to buy a box. Fortunately, I have a crisis tin of corned beef from my Alpine days, usually carried as a food hit if things were tough, so I can make corned beef hash. Normally, we don't eat beef at all unless force-fed by Joanna or a French restaurant without a menu & where you eat what Madam serves. Really chop up an onion & fry. Bash up some spuds, pre-boiled. Similarly mistreat the corned beef. I've got half a giant carrot left & am going to grate that. Put this mess in the pan & mix up with some seasoning. I put in mixed herbs but I would. Fry a couple of eggs (in a tiny separate pan I have). Fry the mushrooms separately, too.

I finished the 1st Seven Years War talk yesterday, from 1754 to 1758 inclusive. Now, I have to do 1759 to 1763 (work it out) After that, I already have the Haydn talk, so will do Angelika Kaufmann & other painters, a rest from boys with the toys.

Someone has saved us a bit of work with this, which has been viral on the Internet:

Govt: We're talking to supermarkets....Supermarkets: You're not  
Govt: There's a shortage of chemicals....Chemicals companies: There isn't  
Govt: The science has changed....Scientists: No it hasn't  
Govt: We never got the email....EU: Yes you did  
Govt: 25,000 tests per day....PHE: 7,000 tests per day  
Govt: Ventilator companies are making ventilators for us....Ventilator Companies: you never got back to us. Dyson are though  
Govt: We've got 30,000 ventilators coming....Dyson: actually, it's 30 for now  
Govt: PPE has been delivered....NHS: No it hasn't  
Govt: We've built the Nightingale....Nurses: but no one can staff it though  
Govt: Unprecedented economic package!....Self-employed: Not until June!  
Govt: Banks will give you short term loans....Banks: 40% overdraft rates and we want your home as collateral  
Govt: Save the NHS....Me: You bastards have been killing it for the last decade  
Govt: We are not pursuing herd immunity....WHO: Yes you are  
Govt: We are not lying....Media: oh ok, good job old boy

Now, even the right-wing media are getting impatient & actually criticising the government. Maybe they've worked out that public dissatisfaction could ruin their hegemony. When Hancock said that 4 doctors & "some" nurses had died, that struck a chord. It's too late for him to unsay it.

Denise can't go to her cousin's funeral. No one can. Normally, an Irish funeral attracts 100 close relatives & another 100, not so close. On top of that, she needs to take her refresher Advanced Thug's Certificate course & can't, so no moonlighting but there are no gigs, so little call for security.

Now, the punch lines. We, the Labour Party get a new leader this morning. The people who did not vote for the previous one, Jeremy Corbyn, should hang their heads in shame. All the policies he proposed have been adopted by Bozo the Clown & his Circus, except one: they can't bring themselves to believe in them because, when the chips are down, only Socialist policies provide the answers. If a government is not Socialist (yes, For the Many, not the Few), it's not a government, it's a racket.



## Sunday 5th April 2020

First, a thank-you to Shirley, who has spent some effort on discussion with me in public. About Michèle, my best friend: she knew exactly what to do when Jane (first wife) died. So did some others in my circle, including my brother but the rest of the family hadn't a clue. My secretary Chrissie was a big help but possibly, sent me out to 'chase women' a bit early, hard on AG, the 1st one 'caught'. She had her own problems. It will be trash fish with a different sauce today, not sure what yet. "Trash fish" is what the trade calls the apparently non-commercial ones. Jane went out to Mexico, having learned Mexican Spanish in 3 months on one of those crash courses, to find ways, which she did, of getting this valuable source of cheap food into slum dwellers. Fish cakes was the answer. Kathleen Newton has joined the conversation. There's usually another one on Facebook.

The company accounts balanced to the last penny. I did have to look for half an hour for the last 8p but that was quicker than usual. Turnover is about double what we trouser (before tax), so that was a lot of amounts. It's very satisfying, running your own business but it can be hairy on occasion, waiting for one's ship to arrive the other side of the Tax Year. I always emphasise co-operation in P&CA & relied entirely on co-operation in our Glory Days. In these difficult times, there is no time for anything else. I have been queasy for decades about the number of jobs lost to automation. There was Marx' "Fragment on Machines" of, I think, 1849, which he did not follow up, having other issues. Then, in 2013, there was "The Future of Employment" by Frey & Osborne. I gave my copy of that to our MP when she was Shadow Employment but never got it back. Both papers are on the Internet, if you're interested. So, if any of you think I say whacky things about jobs etc, I've done my homework & am thinking well ahead.

I gather the owners of the Excel Centre are charging the NHS £3,000,000 a month rent for Nightingale Hospital. Shame on them. On the bright side, Philip's Wisteria, largely covering our house, is nearly out. (Philip has been to P&CA but now, comes to my EU History class). Keep well, Ken

## Monday 6th April 2020

### Cheer up - It's Monday

...as I often say to people on the bus to the Heath from Kentish Town on a U3A Monday & usually, getting a smile. I'm always early, as I never know what state the Peter Samuel Hall tech. is going to be in after they have let it out over the Weekend. Well, I won't be doing that again, as I can't image we'll be back in the Summer term, after which, the hospital is throwing us out. Suzi Kwok has booked us for the Summer Programme but even that is iffy, I should think. Amazingly, I keep getting cheap offers for cruise ship cabins but I very much doubt if our one, booked for July 24th, is going to happen. I was also hoping to take the horrid car down to the Alps before the Autumn Term, as suffering from Mountain Sickness. We never know.

Still no face-masks to be had although Prem, our (Indian extraction) Pharmacist has promised to ring us when he has some. I tried using a scarf today to Crumbly Hour at Sainsburys. It either slipped or steamed up my glasses. The positive result was it concealed my attempt to trim my hair at the back with my beard trimmer, the result a quarter way along the scale from comedy to tragedy, which you don't get to laugh at for weeks, it seems. Jane used to cut my hair, after I had a professional haircut shortly after we started going out when she & her Mother hooted, "He's had his ears dropped", whereupon I invited her to do better, which she did for 16 1/2 years. Then, it was a lesson in inflation when I found haircuts had gone up from 7/6d (in 1964) to £3.50 (in 1980). Now, I go to the refugee hairdressers here for a cheap £9 slash & burn.

We've got a new leader. I did not vote but posted this on Facebook, where it's got 100s of 'Likes': "Priority is getting rid of Bozo the Clown & his Circus. I'd get behind Guy the Gorilla if we'd elected him. (Member for 55 years)." Actually, I seem to remember a picture of Guy holding a baby very gently in his arms. Keep well, Ken

**Tuesday 7th April 2020**

### **Counting blessings on Tuesday**

A sharp reminder from Suzanne Moore about flat dwellers trying to isolate in just a few square metres. She quotes Cicero (another right-wing bastard) saying if you have a garden & a library, you have everything you need. Well, the garden is 18 feet by 40, enormous by Central London standards & the library takes over the house, which house gives us space, another blessing. I'm in my Study, half surrounded by 4 computer screens, 2 on "Ken", which is business, diary, domestic accounts, e-mail, Facebook & ripping off music sources (!). There are another two on "Rena" (a cousin). This is the Server & Fun: the web site & editor; lectures; the vast photo library & music libraries. There are others: "Avis" with the music editor I have not used for some time, having run out of ideas & "Bess" (step-grand-daughter) used as a scanner server. There are laptops, some out on loan but the main ones are "Fred", Avis's workhorse, named after a grandchild currently at Uni & mine, "Vic" after my Grand-dad. At the U3A is "Pip", after Freddie's brother I use for my talks. They are networked, so need names.

The biggest blessing of all is my wife Avis, the one person I am currently allowed to kiss & cuddle. She may have dementia, which can keep me on my toes sometimes but still does some cooking. She is now starting to understand that, no we can't go out because of the plague but this has taken some time. I find it hard, no, distressing, to try to imagine what it is like for those of you who no longer have partners because I think back to when I lost mine in 1980, another World but with Youthful (37?) Resilience.

To anyone parroting that they wish Bozo the Clown a speedy recovery while secretly hoping he drops dead, nobody ever learned a lesson by dying, so don't wish it on anyone. Ok? He certainly has lessons to learn, which brings me on to Exit Strategies. Unwinding the lock-down is going to need some delicate planning by, I hope, the Civil Service. The government are so imbued with the idea that everything should be left to the Market that they are going to need good advice. We also need a much bigger Exit Strategy, from an economic system that is a 500 year Ponzi Scheme that finally ran out, as they always do, 12 years ago.

I'm dressed for gardening & unshowered, as I'm going to clean up & rub down a drinks trolley Avis used in the Studio. I'll repaint it & take it to the recycler's reusable section, unless any of you need a white, wooden drink trolley? Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 8th April 2020**

### **Super Wednesday**

Well, it used to be Avis' favourite day, with P&CA, my talk & Joanna's lunch. Avis went to the film as well, while I got on with other stuff. Monday's rations had been mundane, sausages fried in onions but with lentils & red cabbage in red wine warmed up. Some of the wine had escaped, so I gave it more welly by adding tsiparo (Greek brandy my brother likes but I think only good for cooking, paint stripping etc). Today, I hit a mushroom crisis. While Sainsburys loose ones are already tired, I have to buy a box & get them eaten before they go wodgey. Previously, I could count out exactly how many I needed. Now, I have none, as I didn't go this morning to Crumby Hour. I regard every trip as a hazard to Avis, as I could bring something 'extra' home. So, try something a bit different. That red cabbage has lasted ages, so I'm going to shred it (instead of mushrooms), fry it with garlic & black pepper, add prawns, tinned salmon (pink - no point in using posh salmon for this mess), sun-dried tomato paste (this is Islington) & crème fraîche. Meanwhile, boiling pasta shells, which I then tip in, stir up & serve.

We now have a constitutional eh? what? errr... For years, I was on the Council of Charter 88, demanding a written constitution, a proper one, not that book the Head of the Civil Service keeps tucked in his back pocket & does not address the case of a disabled PM. The alleged deputy does not get the powers, thank goodness one might say, as he is one of the loonier brexiteers, who said after

the Covid-19 crisis was under way, that brexit was still the top priority. It was different in 1943, because Alanbrooke carried on running the War & Attlee already had full powers to run the country. Before anyone even thinks in despair, that Gove might be better, I have a friend (top scientist who invented the "geo-physics") who has had dealings with Gove. He is extremely polite & doesn't listen to a word you say, presumably because you're an 'expert'.

More & more journalists are asking the question of how we value 'key workers'. The rule until now is, society is a pyramid. The more people in a layer, the less they are paid because you are easier to replace. That's the market. As I said earlier, you can't trust the market with anything important. A question always nagging at me is, how much is anyone worth more than anyone else? We may have different attributes but we inherit those. We don't acquire them. Keep well, Ken

#### Thursday 9th April 2020

I gather the former Formula One boss is donating 1 million free meals to NHS staff. We should not know about this. He should just have done it, not advertised it. A quietly muttered, "I'm pulling my weight" would be sufficient. A hilarious review by Lucy Mangan of "The Countess & the Russian Billionaire" last night on the telly. One question, amid all the WTFs she dodges is, who, if anybody, are we supposed to feel sympathy for? All Russian oligarchs without exception are crooks who asset-stripped the ex-Soviet Union to cheers from Western economists who should have known better. After a huge spendathon, the Countess went back to her shop, which, at least, she had, although being tourism, she will have the usual problems at the moment but that was beyond the scope of this very watchable film. The only victim, weirdly enough, is the Russian State, which is owed \$1,000,000,000 by this rogue, although its methods of placing its demands ("We'll cut your childrens' fingers off") are right out of order. As the saying goes, power corrupts but so does money & there is a lot more money than power sloshing about.

Avis is doing Eggs Florentine for dinner-at-lunch. She had done it often before but reached for Delia Smith this morning. I'm going to have to supervise this the way I used to manage, subtly, which I can do as my excuse for being in the kitchen will be sautéing spuds to go with it. Management reminds me: we have a member of the group who parrots right-wing stuff, particularly about the virtues of competition, with an air of effortless superiority, a front he only once dropped when, before Xmas, I accused him of never having had a business but just being a Tory plant. He claimed to have had a sweatshop of 200 staff in Curtain Road but, unfortunately, I did not catch the number or I would have followed it up. Lacking knowledge of the company name & any openness on his part, I make some assumptions, such as, he must have gone bust through his vaunted competition with cheaper sweatshops in Bengal. So, how did he come out of it & what happened to the 200 staff? Presumably, since he is a Tory supporter, strongly excusing Bozo the Clown, he has unencumbered assets of more than £10 million. As one of the group's leading Loudmouths of the Left, I have been fairly clear that, while not approaching that, I have more money than I need, clarity necessary because, if I had concealed it & someone had found out, it would not look good. It's time he (who is on this mailing list) also opened up. Keep well, Ken

That went down very badly but I had had enough of this character a long time ago. One member told me I was 'increasingly deranged'. Huh!

#### Monday 13th April 2020

##### **The quietest Easter Monday of our lives, hopefully**

Even the Crumby time was very sparse, especially when compared to Good Friday. I was restricted in my shopping list, not by Sainsburys but by the fact that our 'fridge chose this weekend to die. It was fairly ancient anyway but talk about the malevolence of inanimate objects! Now, I've got to lever the magnets off it, an odd collection: Bomberg's 'Mud bath'; Joseph Haydn; Lisbon Castle; 2 of us,

well scrubbed-up on cruise ships; Martin Luther; Christina von Bora; Vitebsk; Old Cartagena; "Republic".

As for my "self important missives have become more and more deranged" (©Stan 2020), there was nothing original there anyway & they are coming more & more mainstream, at least, in the Guardian & Financial Times. Since my talent in business was not coming up with anything really new but knocking other peoples' woolly ideas into something usable, this is not surprising. Spain has pledged to bring in a Citizens' Wage & the Guardian today talked about a moral dimension to politics. Everyone in their commentariat agrees that poverty is a bad thing & encourages pandemics, although most seem to come down the Silk Road. Ok, puzzle for today. Attached is a photo on the Silk Road but by the look of it, Marco Polo could have been on one of those camels. What is the giveaway that it could not be 1300 or thereabouts? (discounting that it is a photo) Keep well, Ken

The correct answer was that the Silk Road had been tarmaced, although you did have to look carefully to spot that.

## **Tuesday 14th April 2020**

### **Tuesday is normal?**

Even if it was, living with Alzheimer's bring its own surprises, particularly when you don't have a 'fridge. There are New Rules in an already rule-based household when one member is incapable of learning new ones. I first came across this seriously when, back in 2018, the busiest loo (on our bedroom floor in that bathroom) decided to misbehave unless you held the button down until it stopped. If you don't, it trickles continuously. Avis had had a last-minute pee before we went on holiday & it trickled £200 of water while we were away. No chance of teaching her a New Rule, so there is a plastic flower pot on top of the cistern marked Don't Flush, that being my privilege. I've taken it apart, cleaned all the components (it's terribly complicated, the KISS rule having been ignored) but that made no difference.

So, with no 'fridge, all perishables go in the under-street loo, not where you'd expect except milk, which goes right outside, where it survived overnight. No point in telling Avis this. I just have to make sure she does not get into the kitchen in my absence. She did at tea-time yesterday evening, risking wasting food. Because of my upbringing with ration books, that is the ultimate no-no. One takes the oath: in sickness & in health & that's binding.

On top of all this, of course, we have the plague & my dread of picking it up outside shopping & bringing it home to Avis. We are still being comprehensively lied to by our hapless government, about the number of deaths, excluding as many as they can & the amount of PPE, where they talk about quantities but not what that means per person on the Front Line. I had a master class in lying in the High Court in March 1979. I was a witness. The guy being sued could not remember which lie was operative at any one time but one can always remember the truth. Bozo & his Hapless Handcolite had better remember that lies come back to bite you. Keep well, Ken

## **Wednesday 15th April 2020**

### **Wednesday - usually Avis' best day of the week**

Stephen B & Elaine, kindly as always asked if we have any help. I don't know how much I've told who, so apologies for any boring repetition. I've been working on the Carer Project & have a promise from Denise, our ex-Prison Officer & part-time Thug friend that she will move in when practical. One job now done is clearing out & re-decorating Avis' Print Studio. (It's got an en-suite bathroom). This is for Denise when she's finished caring for someone else but the someone else has had their operation postponed & goodness knows when that will be. I've told her that we can wait for now, as he is a higher priority. It would be an unnecessary health risk for her to commute between Islington & Lewisham, especially as she has an underlying, non-contagious, health condition, which is a normal employment hazard, as you can be fired for going sick in the first 2 years of employment

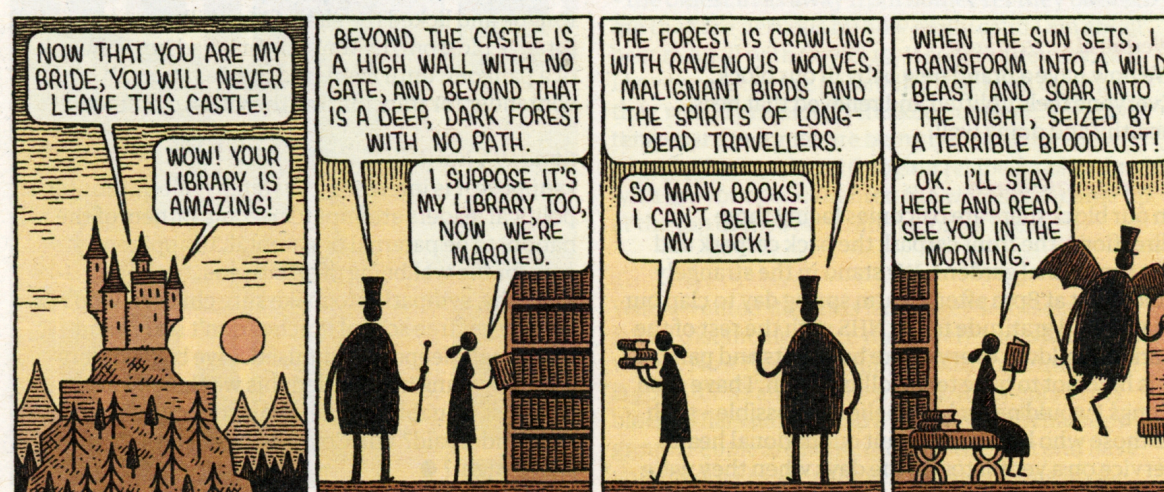
under our wonderful, caring government & she has been. I told you before Xmas. Even so, this is a perilous time to Make Plans when we have no precedents since 1918.

Talking of plans, could Stan, our left-wing accountant friend or anyone else, explain what the Central Banks are up to? They seem to have torn up every rule-book since, who? John Law? If he comes up with something, I'll post it here.

Rations. On Monday, I finally got rid of that cannonball of a red cabbage by dicing it, frying it with onion & a small amount of Madras curry power, just enough to make a difference without tasting like a curry. This, with rice & a different trash fish sauce with herbs, coriander & mushrooms. Yesterday, I warmed up frozen chicken tagine, tarted it up with stock & tomato paste with rice & proper (green) cabbage.

I emptied the dead 'fridge & put it out in the street. This involved pushing it up the stairs, which zig-zag. The secret is putting down one's decorating sheet & using the power of knees to shove it up on its more or less smooth door, now minus magnets. Alas, the Haydn one fell apart. I bought it in Eisenstadt, where he had worked in the palace. Of the top 6 composers, he was the one who had everything: drama; consolation; intellect (very); warmth & the one the others are weaker on, a sense of humour, not just the so-called "Joke" quartet but some of the symphonies. Try the last movement of no.80 (in d minor, of all keys). If you've got the blues or gone stir-crazy, try Haydn or Schubert (careful with the Schubert, though, definitely not Winterreise). Tom Gauld's cartoon from the Guardian review last Saturday, somewhat refers to Denise's fate (given the size of our library). Now, I must go curl my teeth & comb my face, like a good werewolf. Keep well, Ken

### Tom Gauld



Friday 17th April 2020

### Friday plusses & minuses

Yesterday, I managed to get Avis to ring the Health Centre about her painful, inflamed right leg to hip joint. It was a long while before a locum doctor rang back but she did & like all loca, prescribed hammers to hit it with & said she would send the prescription directly to Prem's Pharmacy. Like many local businesses, we go back a long way & I introduced Prem into cruising. They seemed to be instantly effective, a powerful pain-killer & Ibuprofen for the inflammation, which I am surprised that Sarah, one of the regular doctors, had not prescribed before the plague arrived & Avis' problem fell off the radar. Alas, the net result yesterday was Avis had a bad attack of stir crazy, lamenting that she has lacked all (not quite true) human contact & activity since the lock down. I prescribed telephone calls. We have Margaret's number & I would be glad (for a start) for Elaine's, Catherine's & John's, as being the folk most like Avis. You could e-mail them to me if agreeable. As Avis had a

very bad night, I've sent her back to bed for now. The delights awaiting her at lunch include veg. curry, Mutter Paneer made with Welsh goats' cheese (apostrophe assuming the involvement of more than one goat) & a chicken curry, Korma with ginger, garlic & Elmley fake cream.

### Sunday 19th April 2020

Avis has lost a bedroom slipper. Think about it. Some items live inexorably in pairs. You may sometimes, especially in these strange time, feel like the lost sock in the launderette of destiny but that's in the launderette of metaphor. Socks live on feet, of which, most people have two. When they don't, they live in a dream embrace, curled up together in a drawer. Slippers are usually in ranks or on feet, put on & taken off together. I have two pairs, ones for normal use & their predecessors, tatty & spattered with paint & glue for wear while doing mucky jobs around the house, as I am about to do, sweeping the roof terrace. Actually, I have another pair living in my suitcase for cruises: black leather & look like shoes, for slopping around the ship. They stood in for formal evening effectively, when a shoe lace broke. After that, I will find my electric beard trimmer in the bath, where I put it last night or I would forget that topiary is necessary before having a shower. Otherwise, I would only remember too late, while dripping. My memory (you had better believe) is not that great these days. This is going to be tricky again. I look like a Koala Bear now (with particular reference to hair & ears & without the cute) & will have to go out in public soon.

Later & clean. Not too sure if the reappearance of ears is a success. Avis, as usual, went back to bed after breakfast. So, where the @%&\* is that slipper? How do you get separated from One slipper? She has a 'round' these days, which does not include all of the house, usually kitchen, kitchen loo, dining room, drawing room, bedroom, main bathroom & snug (spare bedroom where the telly is), not her study (full of brexit supplies) or mine (full of Stuff), nor her Studio (empty, awaiting our Carer) & definitely not the Cellar (under the street). Duh!

This, from the Sunday Times (no, I didn't buy it): "Boris Johnson skipped five Cobra meetings on the virus, calls to order protective gear were ignored and scientists' warnings fell on deaf ears. Failings in February may have cost thousands of lives". When the Murdoch papers jump ship, you know you're toast or more appropriately, the frog in the saucepan who does not realise it is heating up. It's worth following the Artist Taxi Driver on Twitter @chunkymark. Otherwise, I don't use Twitter. No thrilling rations today. I'm just warming up one of my frozen kedgerees. Keep well

### Monday 20th April 2020

Elaine wrote, "I don't have posh lunches like Ken and Avis." Nope. Nor do we. This is store cupboard, Sainsburys shelf (if I'm lucky) cookery. Jane & I developed a whole load of peasant food recipes, as our rule was, first home cooks the dinner, both having jobs where you needed to finish what you were doing or waste an hour the next day, catching up. It worked out roughly equal, although I suspect she died owing me a few but then, her work was more important than mine, hence lower paid but not by much. The thing about peasant food is, it needs to be fuel-efficient, cheap & of easily obtainable material. In the Middle Ages, labour was cheap (one & a half old pence per day for a labourer) & bought food, expensive.

Another reaction to Elaine's newsletter: heightened emotional reactions under lock-down. Lots more music sets me off at the moment, even some of my own. Yesterday afternoon, while revising some of my lectures, I listened to Brahms' German Requiem, Faure's Requiem & Bach's b minor Mass one after the other & I'm not even religious, that not being the point, Bach not even being a catholic. But, on another side, do listen to my mate Maiko on this Youtube:

Maiko Mori piano Mozart/Say Turkish March "Jazz Fantasy on Mozart

Mozart would have been amused, as he did this to other peoples' music. Maiko's own jazz-inflected piano pieces are very good, too. I last heard her live doing Brahms' 2nd Piano Concerto in Camden.



Skipping politics today, as the government beggars belief. Organised Crime would do a better job.

## Tuesday 21st April 2020

### Tuesday's child is full of Grace.

(We are both Tuesday Children). They needed to be. Avis had a bad night with her hip/leg inflamed joint & I tried to take her out for a drive but every slight bump in the road gave her gyp. We only got as far (& remarkably quickly) as Hammersmith Broadway before turning back. New information about Charles I's calamitous reign means I need to revise a talk, which will keep me off the streets, so will some repainting in the main bathroom. I had taken the bolt off the door. You may not know this but 1/3rd of people die on the loo, thinking they need a dump but in fact, having a heart attack. Meanwhile, I can't take Avis to the Health Centre because they have other concerns at the moment.

What's worse in a way is that a number of fake Twitter accounts, using genuine NHS staff photos but of immigrant workers (as unlikely to complain but one has) of fake personalities saying everything about PPE is fine, have been traced back to the Tory Party propagandist team. This story is on-going but invisible in the mainstream press. The other invisible story is that Bozo the Clown was not treated by the NHS at all but by private doctors from abroad, who had to sign the Official Secrets Act. Two refused & were thrown off the team. (That much is fact).

Why the Official Secrets Act? Did the spooks think Bozo was going to blab the Nuclear Codes under anaesthetic? (I doubt if the MoD have given him the real nuclear codes anyway, given his record for trustworthiness). It does add credibility to the conspiracy theory that he was never ill in the first place & ducked out of sight, so when the reckoning comes, McCavity wasn't there. Maybe that is a bit far-fetched but is a great plot for the next James Bond film, with a bit of working up. Now I'm on speaking terms with my actor step-son, perhaps we should knock up a script. I don't need the money but I do need the laughs. Avis to do the rations, so just grilled salmon, baking potato & broccoli. Tomorrow, I might simply go to the Kebab Centre for a couple of donors. We haven't eaten 'out' since ever.

PS Chris E thinks I said I was not a lover of dogs. That was someone else. I don't mind dogs but have issues with Lola, a savage, Ken-hating (I don't know why) chihuahua. Lola would take on an elephant, though. Her husband Max (small terrier) loves everyone on sight, though, but he wouldn't leave the Dog Shelter without Lola. I'm more of a cat person, even though they put me in my place.

## Wednesday 22nd April 2020

I took Avis for the trip in the country planned for yesterday, with five strategically placed toilet stops, so it all went fine, except that, although clearly getting better, she still is having pain from that joint. I stuffed her with pain-killers at the best placed spots. It is a glorious day & the fresh green everywhere was a treat.

A remark in the Guardian, that for Covid-19 lung cases, it was like being halfway up Everest reminded me of stuff. That would be over 4,000 metres but without at least, a night's acclimatisation in a hotel a mile or more up (e.g. in Zermatt or Saas-Fee). I have always suffered from shortness of breath. The 3/4 mile 'road run' that concluded PE at school was always a nightmare, finished by walking & getting a rocket from the carefully recruited sadistic PE master, as the school (local State Grammar School with pushy Headmaster) tried to emulate a Public School, so sports were overrated. Over 4,000 metres, I always slowed up noticeably & only did 5 4,000ers altogether. I had a wry laugh on the Europaweg high level footpath from Grächen to Zermatt where, at one iffy point, there was a 4 language sign say, "Cross the danger zone quickly". At 2,600 metres, I don't have any "quickly". (Picture of an easy part of this path on the right). So, I have lots of sympathy for anyone with C-19 lung problems.

I see Sir Simon McDonald (no2 Foreign Office Civil Servant) grassed up the government prioritising

brexit over PPE yesterday to the Select Committee. I bet all those firms who's PPE is not being ordered are one's that do not contribute to tory party funds (all perfectly legally after a vote at a shareholder meeting). It's all a question of priorities.

Lots of sympathy for Shirley. As I have said before, I have 3 pairs of glasses & would miss any of them. If I shut my left eye, I can see every 3rd word if lucky & a lot of good, that is. Jim's hope for a vaccine should note that, from the 80's, all the best brains tried to find an HIV vaccine & never did. As noted in Mara's letter yesterday, the Pasteur Institute is locked down, so they are not working on it either but she is working on new antibiotics, anyway. (mara, my niece, is a top biochemist). Keep well, Ken

## **Friday 24th April 2020**

### **Fried chicken Day**

Well, roasted to be precise, dressed up in an ally foil breastplate & bootees, to stop the limbs burning, evocative as I'm doing the talk on Witches at the moment. Ok, that's tasteless joke of the day done. Since I do Marxism tendency Karl at the U3A, I do miss doing Marxism tendency Groucho in the queue at Sainsburys, Caffé Nero, on the bus & wherever. As part of a virtual Pub Crawl on Facebook, We had this:

Francesca: I don't really like prosecco... but I'll drink it.

Me: What wouldn't you drink?

Francesca: Sambucca & ale

Me: What's wrong with Sambucca?

Francesca: It tried to kill me one time. Can't stand the smell of it now

Me: You don't drink the whole bottle at once.

Francesca: Wishing someone had informed me of that as a kid

Me: No one is responsible for their bad upbringing. You should have met my Mother. (No. Perhaps, not).

I was really a good boy this morning, though. After collecting my prostate bashers from Prem at the Pharmacy, I stuck together two kitchen chairs, both plotting to turn lock down into let down. I'd been shirking this job for weeks but with the now imminent arrival of Denise, who is quite big, I can't risk getting off onto the wrong foot or in this case, bum.

Catherine asked: I read about Trump's pearls of wisdom re bleach this morning in The Times. I could scarcely believe it. Do you think he might try it out on himself?

It was disinfectant, Catherine. I think the answer is that he has shares in Dettol. From today in Britain one could apply for a Coronavirus test if you're a Keyworker or their family. Whoops. The bookings were closed at 11:15. Keep well, test kits permitting, Ken

## **Saturday 25th April 2020**

### **What John & Chris had to say**

John first, about Brave New World: Huxley was explicit that the title of his dystopia was a quote from The Tempest & clearly, ironic. He could not have foreseen in 1931, a world where we would freely give vast amounts of personal information to commercial concerns, let alone, the government.

Chris' theory (mostly about wiping out people in Old Peoples' Homes) is consonant with the idea of Herd Immunity, that is, just let the surplus population be killed off. This was the idea for 11 days from March 13th to 23rd inclusive. Then, suddenly, Bozo the Clown realised that, if 250,000 (his scientific advisor's figure) died, he might be called to account for that & there was a swift U-turn to a lock down, which should have been done a month earlier & probably, a month earlier than that. Even so, if the Financial Times (a responsible paper) says that deaths exceed 40,000 already from

calculating from figures which have been published, we are way ahead of Italy & Spain in the butcher's bill. The government is clearly terrified of telling the truth. You only have to look at Hancock's rabbit-in-the-headlights look on the telly to see that. This is called 'not trusting the population'. I believe that, in their heart of hearts, they know brexit is going to collapse, that to get back in the EuroUnion, we are going to have to introduce Proportional Representation & the Euro & they & their ilk will never form a government again. Bring it on.

Incidentally, I hope no one thought I was implying Denise was fat yesterday. Those chairs, now safely reglued up, would have collapsed under Tinkerbell, let alone any normal human. I'll have to find something amusing to say tomorrow but deep in a witchcraft talk at the moment.

## Sunday 26th April 2020

Avis & I eat different breakfasts. Mine is 1/2 a tin of fruit (for Stan's benefit, I actually discard the tin bit) on bran flakes soaked in milk & Greek yogurt on top. (The bran flakes might suggest something about my alimentary canal, details available on request). Avis crunches up two Sainsbury look-alike weetabix, adds milk, cuts fresh grapes in half (!) & puts crème fraîche on top. I tend to reserve crème fraîche for cookery, as later this morning, as I'm making somewhere between gratinée & duchess potatoes. Fortunately, I have a mandolin, kitchen, not music room variety, so slicing the spuds is a doddle. This, with chicken meat balls in chopped tomatoes. (What's happened to chopped tomatoes? Unobtainable).

My American friend Paul, who I've only met once in the flesh but joined the circle by asking an alpine advice question off my web site, is resident in Australia, maintaining aircraft, or not. He said, the stupidest purchase of 2019 was a 2020 Wall Planner. This begs 2 questions; 1) how could you possibly tell? and 2) it depends how you write on it, permanent or wipe-off marker, the former being pretty dumb. As Harold Macmillan (for the sake of my non-British fans, British Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963) used to say, "Events, dear boy, events!" In our case, an event, on-going. We have two events actually scheduled (meaning financially, like we've paid for them), both cruises & either of which we may have had to modify, depending on when Denise come aboard the house. (I nearly lost Avis, spotted wandering off in Funchal when I had stopped to take a photo, so next time, I'm going to need Denise around. A job's a job these days, as I once said to the Chair of Shell when he told me what his job was so, Funchal. Tough). My current bet is neither cruise comes off, not even the Xmas/ New Year one.

Which brings me to tomorrow (& tomorrow & tomorrow), when, if he doesn't funk it again, Bozo the Clown will be back at the Circus & under pressure from his back-benchers to slacken off the lockdown, as a few more dead grockles would be a cheap price to pay to stiffen up their share prices. I have an idea what is on their minds, as my savings are in two lumps: building society money, normally, a bad idea, as the interest (if any, these days) does not keep up with inflation & a custom Unit Trust, organised by the Nationwide & which, between end-December 2019 & end-March, had sunk by 15.088%. That's off our modest piles (Avis has a similar set-up but a different Unit Trust). So, the cabinet & all the rich bastards who sit behind them will have lost zillions. Not a ha, ha, as a lot of other people who thought they had made provision for their Old Age will be in the same boat. They won't get any help from the government, who will probably correctly calculate that most of these people would sooner die rather than vote anything but tory.

Chris wrote that there is no such thing as a failed artist, aimed at Avis. Thanks but the wrong target, as Avis has sold a lot of prints over the decades but, until she married me, had to teach (or whatever, in other cases) to make a living. That is normal. Even Beethoven had to teach but my musician friends have lost all their pupils. Keep well, Ken

**Monday 27th April 2020**

**Don't we all love Mondays?**

Well, we used to, as the 1st item on the agenda was the U3A in the Peter Samuel Hall & for me, after a walk up the Regents Canal & across the Heath, what sort of surprise their crap technology held for me to fix, then what sort of surprise was the external speaker going to be? Then, not quite finished because of the Plague, Chris Dean (another member of our U3A History Faculty) on Germany, although he should have handed over to Robin the Bug Man on viruses (viri?) & bacteria.

On that subject, my friend Berni is a hard line vegan, always posting farm animal non-welfare atrocity stories on Facebook with shocking photos. For her benefit some time ago, I felt inspired to point this out:

Every day, each escherichia coli bacterium has 1,180,591,620,717,400,000,000 descendants (a few more but my computer ran out of floating point arithmetic). We have billions in our gut & they turn food into us. Fortunately, they don't live very long & become shit. An awful lot drown when we have a dump, as they are still living. When we have a shower, a lot more bacteria either drown or have their skins broken open by soap, equally fatal. Even if you eat vegan, an awful lot of life forms hit the deck, including some living on the surface or inside vegetables. That's just the way it is.

Not that I have anything against vegans but if they choose to be winders-up, they must expect to be wound up in exchange. I note that Chris asked yesterday: What do we term rich? Answers by e-mail or written on large denomination paper banknotes (no plastic). Keep well, Ken

**Tuesday 28th April 2020**

The garden needs the rain, so don't knock it. Apropos Chris' note last night, if you haven't done so already, most of Avis' art work is on the web at our web site <http://www.art-science.com> You can also play my music. Because the Tate knows about her, I imagine the vulture dealers will be round soon after the Grim Reaper in due course. The reason is always that they know there will be no more production (there hasn't been for a while, anyway), which means they can charge more & get higher 50% commissions. One thing Avis did not manage to persuade Chris Smith to do when he was Secretary of State for the Arts, was bring in Droite de Suite, whereby the original artist gets a percentage of further sales, the dealers having said that this would send the Art Market to New York. Another problem for women is many of the dealers are Gay & Know there is no such thing as a woman artist. I told Chris (Smith) that & his eyes came out on stalks.

We had visitors yesterday morning. Oooo, wicked, except that builders are still allowed to build & I need help to put blinds up in the Attic dormer windows because of my eye-sight. Peter is a builder & Denise's Dad. Keep it in the extended family.

Rations will be: boil pasta shells. Fry prawns in garlic & olive oil (running out, alas), make into a sauce with 1/2 tin (contents, Stan) of pink (cheap) salmon, sun-dried tomato paste, Elmleigh fake cream (straight from grass to cream, cutting out the cow phase) & seasoning. Bung in the pasta shells & stir. Don't, whatever you do, ask what it looks like. Actually, I think I've posted this one before.

Our Beloved Leader is back, asking us to trust him, as he is not going to consult us or tell us what is going on with respect to the Exit Strategy. Well, sorry Bozo. You have a record for trustfulness & your non-chlorinated chickens are lined up on the runway, ready for take-off, so keep a sharp eye open on the Downing Street garden. One eye. Use the other to watch your back.

I'm going to have to go to Sainsburys for the things I forgot yesterday. The rucksack was heavy enough as it was. Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 29th April 2020**

**Wednesday has to be a Rant**

I was not going to do a Newsletter, as I am just so furious with Bozo suggesting that they had "done well" when they have been catastrophic before March 23rd. People have been saying that there will inevitably be a Public Enquiry after. Don't hold your breath. As the government has a majority of 80 & have proved themselves entirely self-serving, there won't be any enquiry. John P had sent a newsletter, asking a question about a New Beveridge Report. That is not going to happen either. We (non-government supporters) could do one ourselves but during WWII, there was a coalition government & the Tories had already indicated then that Beveridge (the Architect of the post-War Welfare State) was unaffordable. Now the government consists entirely of RBs intent above all, on protecting the tax havens, nothing will develop or change. What will happen is that the NHS will be blamed for all the failures of government, as additional evidence that what we really need is an insurance-based, all-for-profit health disservice on the American model. With their powerful propaganda machine (Goebbels, eat your heart out), they will strive to get that message over. Don't forget that Bozo was treated PRIVATELY for his Covid-19 & the doctors had to sign the Official Secrets Act.

I have been saying for years what a New Beveridge Report should contain - large increases in equality, partly by a Universal Income & partly by making everything free that can be. In practice, that would mean things like so-many free cubic metres of water, so many free kilowatt-hours, up to a level where you can use your discretionary income to pay for more. Totally free Internet, as the running costs on the internet are quite small once you have the infra-structure & we do. Ditto TV.

I've just finished our Partnership Tax Return. Borrrrring but the personal ones are worse, because of the desultory pace at which P60s roll in. (For Americans, these are forms saying how much you've been paid & how much tax has already been taken off. Sometimes, you get an actual refund. We get more bills because the business income is not already taxed). Keep well, Ken

**Friday 1st May 2020**

**Sunny Friday (morning, so far)**

Up with the lark (not) to join the Crumbly Queue at 08:08 but still rather long. They are trying to limit the number of peeps in the store at once, not, it would seem, with much success. I did not witness but heard a fight break out in the queues for the tills. A lady said to me it was a bit early. I thought any time would be a bit early. An essential item is 'treat for Avis', a cheesecake but I forgot the treat for Ken, biscuits even though they were on the list but put off by the violence.

A different treat for Avis yesterday, as I went to Taj Stores in Brick Lane, as Sainsburys were (is Sainsburys singular or plural?) fresh out of basmati rice. I was well soaked on the walk from Shoreditch Station & my Italian jacket proved not to be sufficiently waterproof, so my book, on an inside pocket got damp. Brand new it was: Aly Smith's "Spring", a bit of a weepy. I take the same care of my books as of my women & have some (books) over 60 years old, looking new except for yellowing of the edges. Come to think of it, that applies to some of the women as well. The Smith book seems to be about loss, so far & the not-much-of-a-hero is contemplating the time up to the death of a rather (17 years) older woman friend, who is a great character. I always think one of the saddest sights is a child, who's mother did not tie a helium balloon to their wrist & watches it sail away for ever. This sort of thing sticks in some peoples' minds & maybe, comes back to haunt them on their death beds.

At Taj Stores, the heart sank at the sight of stacked 20kg & 10kg bags but I did spot some teensy-weansy 5kg bags on a top shelf. Good thing I'm still a member of the Swiss Alpine Club. 5kg is 66 meals for me & mine. I bought more sesame oil as well & on the way out, a 1kg tin of Gulab Jam for Avis but she might find it too sweet. I won't, though. The proprietor told me that, during the panic buying, people were going out with 20kg of rice under each arm. Must have been circus performers,

which brings me to....no it doesn't.

Instead mention of the Swiss Alpine Club brings me to yesterday's rations: grilled tinned bacon, served with fried courgettes & rösti al a Ken. I grate onion with the potato before frying it, to give it a bit more welly. Today, I'm warming up veg. curry, making a different chicken curry, mutter paneer & brown rice. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 2nd May 2020**

**Saturday has the Guardian Review**

Avis either lost the New Statesman or it has not come yet. She certainly lost yesterday's Guardian (in a little house like ours???) The review has a questionnaire for writers, so, lacking anything else to write about without steam coming out of my ears, I thought I'd do it:

**The book I am currently reading:**

"Spring" by Aly Smith, 3rd of a quartet with contemporary resonances. The last, "Summer" has not been published yet & might need a re-write!

**The book that changed my life:**

CP Snow's "Strangers & Brothers" series, which had got to "Corridors of Power" when I read them first. Not brilliant writing but from my somewhat claustrophobic lower-middle-class background, it revealed a world I had no idea existed.

**The book I wish I'd written:**

Often, the last I read but usually, I could not possibly have done so through lack of background e.g. Sally Rooney's "Normal People". I did write 2 novels in the '80s but only 1 in 110 books ever gets published. I did fictionalise the diary of my Parliamentary campaign in 1986-7 but it's still too libellous to try to publish.

**The book that changed my mind:**

"The Communist Manifesto" by Marx & Engels. Everything my Mum had told me about politics was crap.

**The book that made me cry:**

Lots. Some bits in the one I'm reading now.

**The book that made me laugh:**

Any by Jonathan Coe, the better because they are really serious as well.

**The book I'm ashamed not to have read:**

I still haven't finished "Time Remembered" by Proust but I'm nearly halfway through it. Must have another go.

**My earliest reading memory:**

Beacon Reader book One at Primary School. We were supposed to be on book Three when the smart-arses like me had read all six. I remember looking at a book my Mum had of Bauhaus buildings very early.

**My comfort read:**

Nicholas Freeling or Simenon crime.

**The book I give as a gift:**

Last one was Sally Rooney's "Conversations with Friends". Depends on the recipient & what I think suitable.

**Monday 4th May 2020**

**Monday is not a Bank Holiday**

....but how could we possibly tell? Sainsburys Crumbly Hour would have been on anyway, a somewhat lighter load today, despite washing powder. I'm starting to recognise 'regulars' on a Monday & indeed, greeted one lady with the classic, "We have to stop meeting like this". So, far, none of the staff have caught the plague, thank goodness. I have now learned to work the Washing Machine, which used to be & to some extent, still is an Avis chore. Actually, Bank Holidays used to be a piss-off, as it meant no U3A on a Monday & all places, events & exhibitions (not to say, parking) clogged with the Still Working Classes & to be avoided the way they are at the Weekend anyway.



Stephen claims not to know what day it is. The 1st thing Avis asks me every morning is , "What day is it?" & I usually know. Today's lunch (one of my trash fish sauces with beans & sauté spuds) will be on the Kitchen white board. Which reminds me, I'm going to have to finish this after preparing the lunch. I've found an old jar of Chinese stir-fry seasoning, so that's going in the fish sauce with half an onion, chopped mushrooms & 3 crystallised ginger lumps also chopped up.

One thing in Bozo the Clown's returning speech last Monday got right up my nose: his suggestion that the "wealth creators" need to get back into action. Wealth creators are scientists, engineers & artists, not the wealth absorbers he was indicating with their piles of useless cash in the Cayman Islands but he would not know anything about wealth creations, never having done any himself. Then, we hear that Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, is making himself \$15,000,000 an hour, because people are being forced to buy on-line & he has 40% of the market. He uses his money to increase his market share to, errr, make more money. Now, \$15,000,000 per hour is about a dollar per day per American. I wonder what an American National Health Service would cost? A dollar per day is about 1/8th the cost of our NHS so, let's rub this in, one man is raking in 1/8 the cost of an American Health Service, something which does not actually exist. American friends, please note. Anyway, to get back to Bozo, he is anxious for hoi polloi (since he is fond of Greek) to get back to work to make him & his mates, more money. However, that risks a resurgence of the virus & consequent unpopularity. Never in his life has he had to make a serious decision before.

If I have my sums wrong, please feel free to clobber me for it. Keep well, Ken

**Tuesday 5th May 2020**

**Tuesday's Babe strikes again**

Don't, whatever you do, load the government's Covid-19 tracker app. The contract, for an outrageous £250,000,000 has been let to a mate of Dominic Cummings. I'd have done it for £250,000 & thought myself a scoundrel. Apart from that, it would be used to harvest all your personal data & store it on a government or private Tory party data base. It won't work as a tracker if it cannot. Martin thinks it will make crime very difficult. I'm not much of a libertarian but the unaccountable data mining potential without even parliamentary oversight is over the top. Apple & Google refused to write the app, as being an attack on civil liberties too far. The Chinese did this & it helped them keep the number of fatalities so low but no one wants the Chinese system here. There is no real substitute for labour-intensive track & trace & it would have been much less so if they had only done it in January, with an early lock-down as successful countries, particularly South Korea, have done. Will the government, which is obviously scared of us, ever stop lying & obfuscating? The 100,000 tests by last Thursday was a lie so transparent that it hardly lasted a day.

On the funny side, Petronella Wyatt, one of Bozo's discards, put an ad in a paper. I've attached it. Avis' turn to cook & will be grilling salmon.

I always get upset when people split up. It seems such a terrible thing to happen. I am in a dreadful bind myself, as I have to take care to outlive Avis, as she would inherit, despite my best efforts & a book of instruction in my study clearly labelled Dead Ken also containing Wills, Inheritance Tax docs & receipts for our grave slots & funerals, pre paid, a mish-mash of paper: money, financial instruments & Deeds which, with Alzheimers, is not something to be tackled lightly. Best Friend Michèle's husband Alan would help but he is over 70 now himself. So is my Bro Geof & he lives 1,500 miles away, as the 737 flies. The alternative is I am where I was in 1980 but a lot less resilient & having been perhaps, a lot more emotionally dependent on Avis (as in, madly in love still). Last time, my friends rallied round wonderfully, although one of the best is dead himself & another, 4,000 miles away. I just hope the gang (largely, different gang, except for Michèle) would be there for me again. On that cheerful note, I must get into the Garden & clear up. Last night, I had a beer with Philip. We take turns to pass a bottle of Proper Continental Lager through the trellis & have a chat. He's in my Euro-History Class at the U3A & had been a friend for 28 years now. Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 6th May 2020**

**Failed Wednesday**

You can't win them all. Lovely day. It's 13 days since I took Avis out in the horrid car, so scrutinise the AtoZ to locate all bogs & set off. Down the A2 & across to Maidstone & down the A229, getting as far as Staplehurst. Loo closed. Road blocked. Now, these main roads follow the old smugglers tracks & there is not a lot of West-East interconnection between them. Struggle across to Headcorn. No loo in garage. Station loos locked. Sabotaged. Head North & success. The garage North of Sutton Valence (interesting castle) has a functioning bog. Too late to go South again, so back on the M20/A2. The usual pit stop at the Black Prince Holiday Inn shut for lock-down but the garage bog on the Ratcliffe Highway (famous in unsavoury Victorian novels - all whores & footpads) is open. Back by 13:25, so I cook dinner. The idea had been to lunch on a garage sandwich & devour dinner at dinner time. Still, 110 miles of unnecessary (say all the illuminated road signs) journey & a lot of fresh green seen. Dinner was my ham-pineapple thing.

The official micro-miniaturised death toll is now the worst in Europe, let alone the real one, which, according the numerically reliable Financial Times, is double that. The government of course, says you can't compare countries, just managing to avoid saying true Brits cannot be compare to a load of Wops & Dagos. They must have a good lawyer, somewhere. Like the phony test figures rigged for last Thursday, to show they had done 100,000 test, which they hadn't, when will Bozo & the Circus realise that We Can See Right Through Them.

I must go off to the Harringay Homebase for cable clips, where they have a marked queue & hand sanitiser, like a cruise ship. I'm running 100MB Internet up to the Attic. Must get my tools out. In Avis' Study, there is a wardrobe with three doors including one with a mirror. Girly things? Open it & it's WTF time. Tiny chests of drawers with nails, screws, widgets of all sorts, a tool box & shelves of boxes with more stuff, paint brushes, drills etc. DIY paradise. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 7th May 2020**

**Cheating on Thursday**

Indeed. I'm going to Fish Central at 16:30 to pick up some genuine British fried fish. Not chips or potato-flavour (slightly) common wool. I've already boiled some to sauté. I hope they've got mushy peas, though.

I'm going to have to go on about the plague, as alarming things are not getting high-lit. A 7 day moving average of deaths (the only sensible chart, as reporting is very irregular) shows only a slight decrease in the death rate, so we should not even be contemplating loosening up lock-down. The Italians (with whom I am in close touch through my cousin in Milan) have only loosened up to where we have been for over a month. Even if we upped testing to 100k, which it is nowhere near yet, that is only 1 in 650 people tested once & some need testing regularly. It has been handed over to Deloitte, experts at gouging the Public Purse. So have other NHS functions, quietly.

The driving force for loosening up is to get the economy going again but one thing that this plague has shown is that great swathes of the economy are not essential & some, like the airlines, downright undesirable, no matter how much we may desire them. Certainly, the World has become a lot Greener recently. Now, Rishi Sunshine wants to cut back on his 80% furlough payments. They peak at £2,500 per month but there is no floor. There should have been a minimum payment, as 80% of bugger all is, errr, bugger all. To distribute it through employers, some of whom are (surprise!) not honest, was a mistake. I have asked my 'payroll' to report back on their experiences of Universal Credit. In one case, the system assumed they had been given their back pay owing & they weren't but there's not a box for that on the form, so computer says, nothing. One is a foreigner, so gets nothing, despite having paid National Insurance but being in the gig economy, as a University lecturer & performer. The other has said she will keep a diary of how it goes but so far, applying for Council Tax relief brought the reply that her address was 'not recognised' & yet, she's been paying it

for decades. I have asked one gig economy friend not on my payroll to participate but she has not come back to me yet.

The draft 'loosening up' rules are hopeless. As usual with the Tories, they are full of subjunctives. They can never bring themselves to say to business, "You must...". It is always 'guidance' & 'suggestions'. Without the force of law or Trade Union action, of which, there is now, precious little, employers of currently, low-paid labour, will do nothing in the way of increasing work space & safety equipment. What is needed is a firm directive that you do these things or we put in managers to do it for you. If the business cannot afford the inevitable additional costs, then the government would have to assess whether the business is of sufficient national value to keep going or not. If not, then the government would need to offer the displaced workers alternative employment (goodness knows, there is enough work that needs doing, in the care 'industry' & greening industries among others). Pension funds depend on the stock market, so will need to be underwritten by the government. Who's going to pay for it all? A lot of business run on this way will generate money but governments do not run the purse like you & me. What they cannot raise by tax or borrowing, they print. It was ever thus. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 8th May 2020**

**My friend Jim (who's about ten feet tall) has gone into shorts!**

Shorts? Never but I've been slopping around in the gym trousers I used to wear in the mountains (photo right). You keep that sort of Sun off yourself. That is also what the brolly leaning on my rucksack is for. I could appear quite respectable in hotels, as I had some light slacks in the rucksack & a silk tie of my Father's. The shirt I am wearing was 1 of 2 made of terylene by Jane for me. 28 years old, it wasn't going to last much longer. Then, I used walker's tee-shirts which wick-off the sweat & had to use Sun cream on my arms. The boots are almost on their harrumph, last legs. Legs ok, but the boots ended up in a waste bin at Sembrancher Station the next year when I was doing more of the Chamonix-Zermatt Walk. The path disappearing off to the right comes out above Zermatt eventually, where there is a choice of ways down. This is the Europaweg I mentioned earlier, where I had no 'quickly'. Most of my walks in the hills are available in personal guide-book style on our web site. Stay well, Ken



**Saturday 9th May 2020**

No New Statesman yesterday, so back to work, you dog! I swept & tidied up the roof terrace, then did some work on cable management - there's miles in our house (& down the front). I had soaked lentils in red wine overnight & grate carrots in with them before boiling this mess up. Sausages fried in red onion & thin beans make up dinner, with what has become a new institution in lock-down, cheesecake for pud. The inevitable daily encounter with the big bathroom mirror has not yet

detected any deleterious effects, not yet...

I had observed the 2 minutes silence yesterday &, as usual, thanked my lucky stars that my Father had had lucky stars, being an essential worker, although he had volunteered on Day One. I quite missed the show on TV but some of my friends posted that it was very good but brought back memories of their parents. I'll be putting all their comments in my diary for the record. Having to ban Avis from going into the freezer, I had other things on my mind at the show time. Don't ask!

The other evening, I gave Avis Talk 63 to test the timing. It contains what I think is the Most Romantic Gesture in history as far as I know. King Peter of Portugal dug up his murdered mistress Inez & had her crowned as Queen of Portugal. Then, he arranged their tombs facing each other, so they would be the first thing each would see on Judgement Day. Beat that! We're talking late 14th Century.

### Sunday 10th May 2020

My Fan Club on Facebook were not pleased at no letter last Sunday, so I mustn't disappoint again or (as 'President' Trump is keen to point out) my ratings will drop. I have not yet achieved the final solution to the lentils problem, though adding light soy sauce certainly helped yesterday. Today: warmed up spaghetti sauce (slow-cooked slightly fried pork mince, fried onions, mushrooms, herbs, tomato purée, sun-dried tomato paste, seasoning. I make 5 goes at once) broccoli & spaghetti.

Yesterday, with much drilling & bashing, I installed plastic channelling to get cable-speed internet up to the Attic, the cable for which should arrive RSN. That's 'Heath & Safety', at which, people have stopped laughing since the plague arrived, one in the eye for the Daily Mail, who generated this disdain, as Health & Safety created costs unnecessary when there was a huge 'reserve' workforce available to fill in for the dead. The new motto, "Stay Alert", is stuffed with the vagueness I complained about earlier this week. The Gerries & South Koreans have back-tracked from slackening their restrictions, as cases have increased. I don't think Bozo has the political slack to do that.

I caught up with the Queen &, despite being an ex-member of the Republic Committee, thought she struck the right note. Below is a bit of film Elaine, one of our U3A e-mail tree found, which will at least show my foreign subscribers the intellectual depth of our government. "Those the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad."

Yesterday, I actually got Avis out for a 1,000 pace walk but she is rather slow now. Of the two cruises booked for this year, one is a certain write-off & I will have to be very circumspect about booking excursions at the Xmas one, if that actually happens. The scientists sound dubious & there is not yet, much 'science to follow'. Meanwhile, I am updating some of my talks to create a completely uniform look & feel i.e. your Job (Peasant, Duke of Exeter, whatever) is in 52 point type.

### Monday 11th May 2020

#### "Back to school?":

In a French school that did not lock down before the Easter holidays, a German virologist found:- **38% of the school's pupils** had become infected - and among school staff, **43% of teachers** and **60% of non-teaching staff** caught the disease. And across the school and the households of the school students tested, an average of **40%** were infected.

At least, they got tested. The report does not give the death rate. Anyone talking about reopening schools before the virus is eliminated in talking through their R's. Keep well, Ken

**Tuesday 12th May 2020**

### **Tuesday confuseday**

One thing you learn very quickly in a 5 storey house is never go up/down stairs with an empty hand. Indeed, there are occasions when one envies Kali (I refer you to an earlier cartoon). Ladder, polyfilla, mixing bowl & putty knife: that's 3 hands. This was to fill in the damage created by putting the Internet up to the Attic. You don't need to do Alpine training if you live in a house like this. The floors may be small but there are plenty of them.

Thinking Alpine, I was obviously irritated by Bozo using Alpine metaphors & totally puzzled by his reference to 'tunnels'. In the Alps, these are all man-made, although there are lava tunnels in volcanic areas. Most are railway (which, presumably, he is too posh to use) & with a couple of exceptions, the Mont Blanc one being notoriously dangerous, dual carriageway roads. He's right about going down being more dangerous than going up, so why is he not being more cautious about removing some lock down? I doubt if he's ever done a mountain. (British climbers ask, What have you done, German speaking ones ask Wo haben Sie gewesen? Where have you been?. Had me fooled at first).

I'm not keen on military metaphors either. Covid-19 is not an 'enemy' to be 'fought'. Viruses don't have brains, like bacteria & both try to evolve to make the best of their situation. We are all stuffed full of both viri & bacteria with whom we have come to deals that suit us both. Covid-19, like its Chief Opponent Bozo here, is a bit of a failure, as it sometimes kills its landlord, unlike its cousin Common Cold, which is a nuisance but does not do anything so daft.

Military metaphors may suit Bozo's self-aggrandisement agenda with plucky Dunkirk Spirit but also allows the blaming of us, the troops, for lack of moral fibre, which is what just about every commentator has spotted today is the purpose of the 'stay alert' slogan. I did some work in the 80s on colour for computer screens, so am very unhappy about changing the red for the green. That is blatant but anyone coming to my Euro-history talks may not have realised what is going on where I do a rare powerpoint or family tree slide. The yellow background to the government's slides convey a very authoritarian message as well.

To hark back to last Thursday's newsletter, after which I was accused of Great Leader Syndrome, is there really any point in Rolls Royce, for example, going back to work making aero-engines? If they switched to tidal turbines, that would make sense but the government would have to instruct them to do so. Government is very keen for private companies to do stuff that Local Government would do so much better if funded but not keen to boss companies around, even proven incompetents like Serco. They do want kids back in school, so their parents can go back to work, whether the work has any social utility or not. The country's number one priority, to seems, is to prop up share prices.

**Wednesday 13th May 2020**

### **Wednesday neither Politics nor Current Affairs**

....not at our U3A, not until Hell freezes over, which may not be before next Winter, the way the hints are going. I've got this 'thing' that feels a bit like a scab but does not go away. Being on top of my head, I can't see it & Avis' descriptions of it are not helpful. Every time my comb snags on it, I'm reminded (damn it) of the Beatles song, "I'm fixing a hole where the rain gets in & stops my mind from wandering, where it will go". I sometimes sing the chorus of Schubert's "Ungeduld" (impatience) to Avis &, since there is a melismata on "bleiben", this is not necessarily, a pleasant noise. Two more Schubert thoughts: I have asked for "Hurdy-gurdy Man" at my funeral, as being suitably gloomy, not that I'll appreciate it but the other one is weird. In 1958 on our way to my first Lake District trip, Mum pointed out the Langdale Pikes in the distance from the train & the opening of Schubert's 9th Symphony swept through my head, unbidden. At that time, it was thought that it had been written in 1828, although it should have been obvious, stylistically, that it was earlier. Later, it was discovered from the watermarks in the paper (a hidden audit trail), that he had written it on a walking trip up-country in the Austrian hills. Spooky. Jim provoked me into sartorial discussion a



few days ago with his confession to wearing shorts but I did not suggest why I might be wearing gym trousers in the hills, except to keep the Sun off. What did I think I was doing, wandering around up there by myself? (The photo had been taken by people going the other way).

I have walked (& somewhat, climbed) thousands of miles in the Alpine hills & been up 5 of the 4,000 metre peaks but none since Jane's death, after which, most of the walking took place. Talk about spiritual regeneration sounds pompous, especially as Switzerland is mostly, a suburban country. You can rarely not see a building somewhere in the view, if only a hay barn. But I can still recall the exhilaration of what I call my best day in the hills, 7/9/1977, when we did the Balfrin Ridge from the Ulrichshorn (3,900m) to the Gross Biegerhorn (3,625m) over the two Balfrinhorn on the way, see my web site. We were 14 hours on our feet, going to Grächen, after having done the Nadelhorn (4,327m), my top hill, the day before & stayed at the Mischabelhut.

This is not remotely difficult stuff (no bragging rights, here) but you do need to know how to handle Alpine equipment, including a rope. I found out the hard way in 2015, that my balance was 'off', inconveniently, on the South (Italian) side of the Matterhorn. Still, Avis & I have been back to look at the hills, like bloody tourists & had been hoping to do so in September. Dream on, I think. One thing you do know in the hills, is to stay alert & what that means, such as, watch where you are putting your feet &, if you want to look at the view, stop & look at it. Keep well, Ken



#### Thursday 14th May 2020

##### Short Thursday miscellany.

Paper late, so I burned the spuds. I've done that too frequently recently, putting things on the gas & forgetting them. I also need a haircut, don't we all? As for Avis, one look & I think I need to send her broomstick to Heathrow Maintenance Base for servicing.

As for the political scene, it was almost hilarious to watch Keir Starmer forensically filleting Bozo like a skate, expecting to find a backbone. Skate are elasmobranchs. They don't have backbones. Apparently, we nearly got a brexit extension when Bozo was in hospital. Then, he came out. I think Bozo would like to scupper the whole brexit nonsense but he's painted himself into a corner. He had hoped to get a reputation like Churchill's. Well, he got the right-wing buffoon bit right but not the war leader. There was never a Prime Minister of such crashing incompetence to compare Bozo with. We've had bad people as PMs (Jenkinson, Thatcher) but they were competently bad. That's enough for today. Keep well, Ken

#### Friday 15th May 2020

##### Currying favour with Avis

...at lunch. Curried tinned tuna with onions, mushrooms, Herbes de Provence, mild curry + more cumin, served with frozen veg. curry, one of my bulk fries. Avis said it was 'lovely' but she usually does. Being one of Sainsburys Crumbly Hour days, I was there with my rucksack. Now, this is a newer & somewhat bigger one than you saw on my back on top of that hill. I fill it up twice per week, averaging about £30. So we each devour a sackful per week. Since, in the Past, I would tend to pop in & out of Sainsburys, I did not have such a detailed illustrated grip on the amount of rations, although it's all in my accounts & find myself somewhat amazed.

I had to look before crossing Upper Street (the A1) to get there, as there was a lot more traffic, suggesting that desperate people are going back to work, whatever the risk. I also heard that the



government has hired much more mortuary space, so they are expecting a jump in deaths as a result of their ill-thought-out lock-down release. I noticed the Daily Fail saying 'militant unions are stopping teachers going back to school' although a huge majority of teachers think it unsafe.

I did go for a walk yesterday evening & stopped to chat (@ 2m) with Dean Flynn. I think every town has a Dean, who knows all the rumours, knows where you get stuff & which plumbers are crap. The Flynn's are a tribe, presided over by Jean, a great Gran 4 years younger than me & of immense proportions. I am greeted by, "Arar, Ken? Arz Avis?" (All right, Ken? How's Avis?). You really need to know your Town Dean. I was caught out, doing my applause in Charlton Place. So, far, not a single person I know or of, via the Tribe, (there are the Baccaros, living next to the Flynn's) has died of CV & many of the Flynn's have underlying health problems. They have all the other indicators of risk & crammed into the two matriarchs' Council Flats, usually when their marriages (if they had bothered) break up. I have known this lot for 30 years & Avis taught their kids to draw. Dean looks my age & is 21 years younger.

### **Saturday 16th May 2020**

I see Shapps, the Transport Minister thinks fares should go up to pay for a bail-out of Public Transport. Now, they may want to discourage people from using it because of the plague danger but this is daft. Ok, one of my hobby-horses is that desirable public goods should be free but, if fares go up as a temporary discouragement, the announcement should go with a promise to make them free & knock car use on the head. I gather they are plotting to get rid of our Freedom Passes, a right-wing target for a long while. Just present your Freedom Pass & refuse to pay fares, although best to stay off Public Transport. for your health's sake.

Another daft thing: using dodgy private companies to do testing. The obvious units are the Local Authorities. Haven't the Tories realised yet that the Councils are better at this sort of thing? For one, there are more of them, covering sensible sized areas that they know well. Apparently, there has been a cock-up with some American company (oh, wrong - it's just been sold to the French) failing to warehouse appropriately & deliver efficiently, PPE. The Army had to sort them out. Again, the Councils should have PPE stocks. All sorts of action has been taken by community groups, showing that the will & person-power is there but usually, not the funding. From this experience, we should be learning more about how a country should really be run than it is at present. Germany has done quite well but it has 16 powerful regional governments, with many devolved responsibilities. Obviously, that is what we need but this is scarcely news, as we were pushing for this in Charter88, 30 years ago.

I am currently in a delivery cock-up by UPS. Yesterday, they put a card through the door *without having rung it*, as our raucous Ode to Joy bell or its repeater can be heard all over the house, Avis being a bit deaf. UPS gave the supplier & the web site, different times for the attempted delivery. This is what happens when you privatise postal services. The parcel weights 16kg, so I don't look forward to eventually carrying it back from the depot. Grrr. Keep well, Ken

### **Sunday 17th May 2020**

#### **Sunday in the Garden**

Not in one of the chairs but clearing up the next load of fall-out from the wisteria & freeing our Acer from intrusions from Philip's vine, our honeysuckle & some huge fleshy succulent from the garden at the end, who's only attention is mine. I e-mailed by cousin Liz in Milan, where they are creeping out of lock-down

To an item about Bozo throwing Northern Ireland under a bus, which was "England has left (the UK) already ..according to my Invernorian mate. It's clear from their handling of Covid 19 that London has no conception of life outside the Home Counties never mind Wales and Scotland. It remains to be seen when this will dawn on the DUP though." I made this comment: The government has no

conception of life in London itself. You're right about the Home Counties (there's a name to conjure with - everywhere else is the Away Counties, including The Six, as in Northern Ireland). With a majority of 80, the DUP can go & do the other thing. Someone else said that Snarlene has found that while she could be bought, she can also be sold, a lesson also for the Red Wall constituencies that ratted to Bozo in December.

It is now getting quite scary, as the government's ratings are starting to slide, as while they were over 50%, 'dark forces' were inhibited. If faith in Bozo fails (as it should), I'm not confident that anarchy will not prevail instead. We have eased lock-down much too early but they want people back to work to prop up share prices.

Apropos anarchy, on the bright (I hope) side, while it is 19 years since I took down a knife man, it's only a year since Denise last did that. She will be moving in on June 13th or 14th. We have been discussing accommodation for the cats.

Meanwhile, I hole up in the kitchen. Yesterday was clear-out day. Fried sausages plus bubble & squeak with a bit too much pepper, onion & garlic. Today is similarly mundane: chicken meat balls with courgettes & mushrooms on basmati rice, nothing to thrill there. Avis will grill fish tomorrow. Stay well (& alert for...if you find out, let me know), Ken

**Monday 18th May 2020**

**Monday, another week of opportunity, errr...**

Had to get up 10 minutes early to plan the meals, before going to Sainsburys. This is Maigret's fault on ITV last night. While I knew the story anyway, it was a good dramatisation. I thought of having a go at the Guardian's Celebrity Q&A, despite not being qualified. If you've been to my History classes, you know that my answer to my ideal Dinner Party would be: the architect of Stonehenge; Jesus Christ & King Arthur, with spouses of course because I want to know what Really happened. I think I would have to serve beef (we don't eat beef normally), boiled worts & bread. They would be puzzled by spuds, which did not arrive here until about 4,100 year after we built Stonehenge.

I would expect the architect to say something like: we dressed the bluestones in Wales on-site & pulled them on rollers to Salisbury Plain. Ditto, the sarcens. You're reconstructions using ropes & levers are roughly correct as there is only really one sensible way to do the erection. It did take about 40 years. We did import food from all over Britain to the temporary work camp at Durrington. (Now, here's a guess) I drew the plans on boards with charcoal, which is why they have not survived.

From Jesus perhaps: Mary Magdalene has been traduced by the Catholic Church. I was an Orthodox Jew of the Royal Family, so in accordance with tradition, I married her at 36 in what you call 29AD, before I went on my mission. Mum bribed the Romans to take me off that cross, which was bloody painful & the spear was a later invention to account for the fact that it take 3 or 4 days to die on a cross & I was taken down after only 9 hours. Yes, I did send Salome, who had been funding my mission, in to zap John the Baptist. He was a dangerous rival & had to be sorted. I only wanted to introduce Judaism to the Gentiles but had to keep a low profile when the resurrection story spread. It all got out of hand, thanks to my son-in-law Paul. I was about three score years & ten when I died in Rome.

From King Arthur perhaps: All through the 4th century AD, the Saxons had been a nuisance & after the Romans left in 383AD to march on Rome & put Magnus Clemens Maximus in the purple, briefly, we got organised. Gildas, who was very rude about the so-called Five Tyrants, the last of which was me, had an agenda. We did indeed keep them out at the Battle of Mount Badon (hopefully, he would say where that is) for a century when they had shown signs of settling. In Heaven, we all had a good laugh over the stories of the Knights of the Round Table. If only.

I could, of course, be completely wrong. Keep well, Ken.

**Tuesday 19th May 2020**

**Tuesday spin**

....as in, taking Avis out for her fortnightly essential trip in the car, this, to stave off stir-craze. As the routes are bog-oriented, we got to Tonbridge rather slowly, as having to call in the Gravesend services on the A2, then the A21 one South of Pembury. I'll spare you further details but we went to Rye, then across Romney Marsh & stopped at Brookland, which now has a by-pass (it's on the A259 Coast Road). This is not quite nowheresville. I stayed with my family & cousin twice in the early 1950s, before I had a camera, so did not snap the church, an unusual Norman one with a detached wooden belfry, attached. It has been on my bucket list for ages but this bit of road has fallen off the map for us. Today was an opportunity to expose Avis to amazing greenery & Sunshine. Then, up to Ashford & whizz home on the M20.

Everybody else is doing a good job demolishing the government, so I shall leave them to it today. Those cynics who say Jeremy Corbyn would not have done any better should consider the two advantages Labour has over the Tories in a crisis: we Believe in the NHS while they wrote books saying it should be privatised and secondly, we Believe in governmental action & they still won't use the existing network of local government to handle the testing & tracing, handing it over to the private firms with bad records for getting things done. Remember that the biggest change/advance of the late 20th Century is the Internet, a government initiative. Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 20th May 2020**

I have seen nowhere in the mainstream press (not in the Guardian even) that France took some schools out of lockdown on Monday & put 7 straight back in again because CV19 was back. Yesterday, they put more than 50 back. I'm wondering how many will go back today. At least, President Macron tells the truth on the telly. Here, it feels as if we are under occupation by a foreign power, the international regime of Money, resembling the Catholic Church, power without responsibility across the World. Back to France: under Nazi occupation, industry was run full pelt to feed the war effort & to hell with Health & Safety. Here, everybody Left of Genghis Khan understands that schools have to reopen to get parents back to work. It will probably be down to Grayson Perry to produce a tapestry of teachers & children with, along the bottom like a Trades Union banner, "They died to prop up share prices".

Exact dates are interesting. On March 11th, Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO & specifically qualified in Public Health, said "test, trace & isolate". The very next day, Bozo the Clown, gave up on containing the virus that way & went for the genocidal Herd Immunity, which you can't do (as his scientists advised at the time) without a vaccine but why should British Chaps take any notice of Ghebreyesus an obvious Wog with a name like that (actually, he's Ethiopian). Here's a prediction: there will be no Public Enquiry after the pandemic subsides without a change of government, as the reason they rotate the Evening Update round the Cabinet is to make sure they are all equally implicated in the disaster unfolding. They will, of course, blame the scientists but the only one of them who has a scientific background is Coffey & she's hanging on to her job.

I note that Rolls-Royce are going to lay off a load of workers. A responsible government would immediately order tidal turbines by the thousands & keep those skilled workers doing something Green. No chance. When Bozo came out of hospital, he talked about getting the Wealth Creators going again but they're not creators, they are extractors. They don't have to Do anything. I should know - in my tiny way, I'm one of them with my flats but at least, I am really pulling my weight on the charitable giving front.

Yesterday, I made a chicken stir-fry (with onions, mushrooms & peppers) using tinned chicken which is not so thrilling as using fresh chicken, frozen but the tin was out of Brexit Stores, so getting used to it. Today is my fried prawns in garlic mess I've described earlier. I'll have to give up on recipes, as what went around, comes around. Now, to clean the horrid car & vacuum the first floor. Then, cook.

**Thursday 21st May 2020**

Prime ministers Questions yesterday reminded me of the Story of XF (stands for ex-friend). I worked with him in the 80s. He left a year after me to set up his own company, for which, I naturally gave him advice. It was in a different industry sector from mine. He had a small staff & saw his job as getting them work, whereas I waited for work to come to me via the grapevine. Then, I was offered a task for which I had the know-how but not the premises. XF had the opposite, so we split the job. He administered the results in his office & I did the software. Win, win. By this time, however, he had (one might say) outgrown his nice mumsy wife, the mother of his two children, who split over it & had run off with a very intelligent pretty lady, who was also a Lib-Dem Borough & County Councillor in this tory one party area. She had this medieval house, which was quite a nest (a bit like ours!). They had a son, probably the last chance for Mrs.XF.

He also got elected to the Borough Council & this is where it gets interesting. One at a time, he picked on the tory Chairs with very well researched & documented attacks until he had made their lives a complete misery. Obviously, they tended to be replaced by younger, greedier bandits but by that time, XF had moved to the next victim. Then, one day I rang up, to arrange my next visit. These were monthly, as XF had an off-shore copy of our business & personal archive i.e he was a trusty. The telephone was picked up by the now teenage son, clearly upset. I was told that XF had bolted again with another woman. I arranged to come & pick our stuff up, so I had a brief chat to the deserted Mrs.XF & was told he had dumped all his friends on his way out, including, of course, Avis & me. XF clearly has his flaws but don't we all? They do say that, if you marry your mistress, you create a vacancy, but not necessarily at once. Mrs.XF was rather sickly but it says something about that in the marriage vows. As one does, I lost touch with her, too. Later, I heard that the tories had dealt with him by making him Town Clerk (although he is not a lawyer) & there had been some scandal about Council land but the story died & I heard no more.

I don't see Keir Starmer running off with anyone's wife but I do see him making Bozo's life a complete misery. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 22nd May 2020**

I'm not co-operating with the tree I set up. In response to my praise of Jeremy Corbyn for at least getting the membership up vastly higher than ever before, someone who claims to be a Labour supporter raised the tory/daily mail/right-wing canard that he was anti-semitic. Again. She is Jewish but so are most the group. I wish people would let that drop until at least, we have a reliable internal report on the subject, something the tories would never dare do or they would probably find anti-semitism was a majority attitude & islamophobia even worse. Certainly & on the record, the Prime Minister made islamophobic comments on the dress code some Muslims follow, as if that was any of his business.

Endemic anti-semitism in Europe is a result of the teaching of the Catholic Church, down the millennia, part of an effort to disassociate Jesus from Judaism. This resulted in a mixed message to Jews in Europe, who have been variously supported or persecuted, with no confidence as to which way the latest monarch would jump. King Edward I of England threw them all out, while King Denis of Portugal defended them. Enrique Trastamare of Castile overthrew King Pedro the Cruel, a good thing except for the fact that Pedro supported the Jews, while Enrique did not.

When the ghastly duo of Ferdinand & Isabella in Spain in the 1490s started barbecuing Jews in a big way, including ones who had converted to Christianity on the off-chance that their conversions were not 'sincere', the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II sent the entire Turkish fleet to Spain to rescue the Jews & ship them either to Africa, if that was where they wanted to go (& have to wait 4 centuries to get their citizenship back) or to Constantinople, where there were plenty of jobs for them. Generally, the Muslims have behaved better to people of other religions. The Turks not only did not mind, provided you paid your taxes but set up the Millet System, whereby people could live under their own

religious laws & it also contained Social Security aspects.

Something completely different: Cambridge University is going to give all its lectures on-line. This is not 'going to University' for which, these days, you pay through the nose. My experience was not that great but it was a valuable right of passage &, while it took me some time to sort myself out afterwards, I think it fitted me to do so, helped, I am sure by the girl (that's Jane 25/5/1942 - 2/9/1980) who soon became my wife & who, to her mother's disquiet, became 'engaged' (remember, people used to do that) to me when my prospects seemed very poor. One problem I had at Uni was my course. I had outgrown Chemistry & was no longer interested. It soon turned out that I was ideally suited to job that hardly existed at the time & for which, there were certainly, no University courses. Never mind. As I said to my staff later, "It'll be ok on the day". Keep well, Ken

## **Saturday 23rd May 2020**

### **Saturday missive...**

...to self in a year's time. The Guardian has these in its Saturday Comic by some somebodies. Well, here's one from a nobody.

Dear Ken, I hope you & Avis are at least, still as well as you are now, maybe a bit better in your case, as there was something clearly wrong with your balance letting you down occasionally, which stopped you climbing in 2015. The family were all well in May 2020 & with luck, they still are, as Geof at least, is in Greece where they tackled the virus most effectively in Europe. Hopefully, getting Denise in was a triumph & not a disaster & she is getting on well with Dr. Olga for her own health issues. In my dreams, Covid-19 has retreated or disappeared, though I doubt if there is a vaccine. Maybe (niece) Mara has made one, though.

Did your U3A Class restart with at least, the same members as before or did you have to start from scratch in 9,500BC with a new class? Did Politics & Current Affairs restart without you getting expelled? Is Avis no worse or have more labels on cupboards saying, "Avis Keep Out" appeared, to stop her being helpful? Have Joanna's wonderful meals restarted at the U3A? How is your own cooking going? Are fresh vegetables available?

What is the political scene like? Was the government overthrown? If so, by whom & how? It's very difficult to get rid of a British government, unless they are dismissed by their own party, as May's was by Bozo the Clown. The Queen showed herself spineless last year when she signed that illegal Parliamentary Prorogation but only she has the power to dismiss a PM arbitrarily, as she did in Australia all those years ago. I fear that Brexit went through, Cummings is still de-facto Prime Minister & we would be under Emergency Powers, with the Army, expanded by every right-wing nutcase, keeping order on the streets after having opened fire on a demonstration. Hopefully, Starmer is PM, we have Universal Basic Income, the Arts are government pensioners, as in a paper I submitted the Chris Smith in the 90s, we are back in the EU or negotiating it, Ireland has reunited, the economy has Greened & Trump lost the US election.

Are holidays back on the agenda? Did we get away at Xmas? Were we able to drive down to see Liz in Milan? I look forward to catching up with, well, me.

Written in my Study, where I seem to spend most of my time surrounded by technology, writing or preparing talks. I suppose I still will in 2021.

## **Sunday 24th May 2020**

### **Fast-moving Sunday, so a short one today**

Actually, it's not moved an inch but it's Ten O'Clock in the morning, so still in the middle of the fascinating Dominic Cummings (or Goings) Saga. He's still not resigned or been sacked & this is a good thing, because Bozo the Clown is digging a deeper & deeper hole for himself, the longer he

leaves the inevitable. So, hang on in there Bozo. Keep digging & not doing, because it's your own grave. Since the Spectator has called for Cummings to go, even his own wife has dumped on him.

For the more general political situation, may I refer you to my brother's posting this morning. Go to "Geoffrey Baldry" on FB & for my comments there. Although he lives 1,500 miles away by crow, we have the disconcerting habit of thinking the same thoughts at the same time & we're no way identical twins. While referring, try "Suzi Woods Music" (another of my girl-gang) for her contribution to Rock the Lockdown, up on FB today. Keep well, Ken

## **Monday 25th May 2020**

### **Monday New Dawn**

Well, here's hoping. Even I am surprised that I find myself thinking, will Bozo the Clown survive the week as Prime Minister? Funnily enough, on another computer at my elbow is Sultan Selim II, another fun-loving duffer but Selim was surrounded by competent ministers & therein lies a difference from Bozo, who's only competent minister is the one under question. Gove has been touted as a replacement but, while having a decent amount of brain-power, he also appears to be clinically insane. I've never met him but one of my pals has & he said Gove is extremely polite but doesn't listen to a word you say. Needless to say, my friend is an 'expert', the inventor of the 'geophsy' they are always invoking on "Time Team". One of our class has posted two key paragraphs from the Guardian, which has devoted many pages to the Cummings Scandal:

"The sight of Tory MPs beginning to turn against Cummings, and thus to some degree, against Johnson, is a sure sign that a political project is foundering. The ultimate irony is that Cummings, who came to power at the head of a populist, anti-elite uprising over Brexit, has now been shamed by an act of supreme elitism and disdain for ordinary people. When it came to the crunch the great despiser forgot that the moral law applies not just to all the rest of us – but to him as well.

Bad behaviour and rule-breaking have got Johnson a long way in life. This evening's free pass to Cummings suggests there is to be no going back, no learning from mistakes, no attempt to grow wiser with new responsibilities. It is a reckless endorsement of an overmighty adviser, a snub to elected politicians on both sides of the Commons, a declaration of war against much of the press, a defiance of the institutional balances within Britain's system of democratic government and a self-centred, self-indulgent signal to the public that the rules no longer really matter"

To the wider issue: It is generally agreed (at least, among the intelligentsia) that Brexit was all about dodging EU scrutiny of tax havens, allowing the setting up or, more to the point, expanding Tortola on Thames. (I've been to Tortola. In the capital, almost every building seems to be a bank). In 1990, Ted Honderich (someone I didn't take to personally) wrote a book called "Conservatism". At the time, he was Grote Professor of the Philosophy of Mind and Logic at UCL &, apart from defining the subject, was looking for a moral basis for conservatism. Surprise, surprise, he couldn't find one & concluded that it was just selfishness. Shirley in our class said privately, that I behave in the Politics & Current affairs class as if I was fighting an election. I knew what she meant but my attitude to Conservatism is not just opposition. It is contempt. For me, an election is not just a battle for votes, it is a war against evil. With leaders like Trump, Putin, Bolsonaro & Bozo, you can surely see my point.

## **Tuesday 26th May 2020**

### **I can't believe its Tuesday**

....& Cummings is still in his job. But of course, I can. The pictures of Daddy's estate in the paper speak the message of privilege & exceptionalism, which motivates Bozo as well. I was ridiculed in our Politics Group for stating that Bozo's problems all go back to Mummy running away when he was 9 but now, you read it in the press. It was not rocket science. Any fool, including this one, could see that. Brought up to believe you would be (in his own words) King of the World & then have Mummy run off, was bound to layer neediness on top of privilege. We are ruled by an upset child



who behaves like....an upset child. To be fair (?) one day, I might write about my problems with Mummy, if I have nothing more interesting to write.

My friend Herbie has praised Douglas Ross, a junior Scottish Office Minister, for jumping ship over Cummings, as an "old fashioned One Nation Tory". Nope. There is no such animal in Bozo's government, all hand-picked Brexit & Bozo loyalists, so Bozo thought. But loyalty is a one-way trip round Bozo. Never forget what happened to Julian Smith, when he successfully got Stormont going again without the involvement of Bozo. He went straight under the bus. As Ross had been described as a 'rising star', it is almost certainly the first stage in a leadership campaign by one who has detected just how badly wounded Bozo has been by his desperate defence of Cummings. I thought it strange that Gove, the obvious beneficiary of Bozo's eventual downfall, did not see this coming when he defended Cummings on the radio this morning. While it may not work for Ross in the short term, it may well do so in the long term. Looking back to 2016 (so distant....), I thought Bozo put Gove up to 'stabbing him in the back', as Bozo realised that it was not yet his time & got out of the leadership contest with the best sort of deniability. As I 'go to press', there are stirrings in the Scottish Tory ranks over Ross's move. Keep well, Ken

### **Wednesday 27th May 2020**

#### **Wednesday - getcha'aircut....**

....you horrible little man, as the textbook Sergeant Major says. If only. On the government's unlockdown list, there is no sign of dentists (a filling has fallen out) or hairdressers, the subject of a multitude of jokes & comments on Social Media. Avis could do with about 4 inches (100mm in new money) off but I don't think my now limited thatch looks too bad. Jane used to cut it in the Old Days but she was a great DIYer. She made all her own clothes (except bras) & some on mine, too. National Dress usually means peasant clothes & for English, you need to look at Holman Hunt's "Strayed Sheep", quilted skirt & embroidered blouse or in Jane's own version, attached. Jane was a Scientist of the "What's going wrong here?" variety, so she would gather data, analyse it, test it & sort the problem, which is just what the Covid-19 scientists are doing, starting from very little data, apart from the genome the Chinese handed out at the beginning.

When the Clowns in Charge say they are "following the Science", they don't know what they are talking about. Their worthless PPE degrees fit them only for Politics, where everything is negotiable & too many Civil Servants also believe that. In Science, nothing is negotiable. Either your results are reproducible or you're talking bollocks & the whole World will soon know through publication. Sometimes, I may seem a bit dogmatic but I'm (or was) a Logician, the world of "if this & that but not this then...", which can be quite helpful when there is an insufficiency of data & the Covid-19 guys had to do a lot of that at the beginning until the data built up. But the original message of "Test, trace & isolate" which was fatally abandoned on March 12th here for weeks, is what scientists do to get more data, quite apart from cutting the death toll. Now, we are supposed to be doing it, preparatory to easing the lockdown but the idea of doing any of that next Monday (NEXT Monday), is crazy, as the mechanism for doing the testing is not in place, is almost organised for failure (lots of different firms involved), so yearning for dentists & hairdressers is but a pipe dream. Stay well, Ken

### **Thursday 28th May 2020**

Expecting a delivery too big to collect in the car & it's so easy to miss. It's a cat kennel & seems quite luxurious to me but whether Smokey will think so I would have no idea. Silly name but Smokey & the other one (indoor cat) are Rescue cats, so they come with names attached. These are Denise's. I'm quite looking forward to having cats around the house again. I used to say that I married one woman (Avis), two step-sons & three cats, named Charlie (Karl Marx), Leo (Leon Trotsky) & their mother, Rosa (Luxemburg). I had to put a contract out on Charlie, as he started attacking the others. Leo caught Mange off the Fox & took himself off to next door's cold frame to curl up & die. Our window-cleaner found him & gave him a decent burial. Rosa came with us to Islington, got cancer, so alas, we put a contract out on her.

The on-line tracker said the parcel did not leave until 08:38, so safe to listen to Matt Hancock weasling round the Cummings Story while trying to give us our new orders. There being no other news, he had to struggle for about a quarter-hour of relentless interview. How much punishment can a man take before he finally snaps & says, "Enough" & says it the way it is. In the long run, if he doesn't jump, he will be pushed under that bus & lose his plushy ministerial income anyway. As his Master Cummins' puppet Bozo, with his worthless Classics degree could tell him, the Ancient Romans always knew when to slash their wrists. Meanwhile, the BBC have dishonourably reprimanded Emily Maitlis for saying it as it is, while tolerating Laura Kuenssberg's sticking to the Bozo party line about Cummings.

Add the Foreign Office to the hypocrite list. Instead of beating their breasts over China's changing the rules over Hong Kong, they should stand back & take a historic perspective. I lecture on European History. While the testosterone flowed & countries or, essentially, family fiefs took a county or two off a neighbour or worried about who was to be the next King of Bohemia, the real criminal activity started when the Portuguese invented the overseas empire in the 15th century. (They were also the last to give theirs up). Taking Hong Kong into the British Empire was a particularly bad crime, as it was part of forcing China by war, to accept opium, a Class A drug. Approval or otherwise of the Chinese Government is beside the point & disapproval is fairly easy when its behaviour in Tibet & Xinjiang (which is Turkic, not Han Chinese) is reprehensible. We had no business in Hong Kong in the first place.

Having been there, we did nothing useful with it. Globally, it is part of the location of "The Book" of financial transactions which moved from London to New York to Hong Kong & back to London, so The Book is open 24 hours in the day, making money out of money but not making anything usable. With the Internet, of course, trading happens 24/7 anyway but the Big Bank buildings are still in the 3 hubs. While feeling sorry for the inhabitants, Hong Kong as an institution is as big a disgrace as the City of London. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 29th May 2020**

### **Wave again Friday**

Up early, in order to get outside my breakfast before Crumbly Hour at Sainsburys. There are at least a dozen 'regulars' I recognise now & nod to. This gave me time to go through the Guardian, looking for the item about Covid-19 cases. There was no item. However, yesterday, more or less on schedule after Bozo's car-crash TV speech on the 10th, there was a sharp up-tick in plague cases in London, where it had appeared before on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) graphs that we had beaten it. Presumably, Bozo's back-to-work call lead to more transmissions on the packed tube & buses, which are now starting to show up as hospitalisations. I've attached the graph provided by CHES, Covid-19 Hospitalisation in England Surveillance System, where you can see the London (yellow) line jump. If you look further back on the graph, it shows the much greater number of cases we had in London (about 15% of the population of England) than the other 5 regions. So, all talk by Hapless Hancock about preventing a second wave is too late. The horse, ridden by that horseman of the Apocalypse, Pestilence, is out of the stable again. Maybe, you are reading this here first but CHES is a reliable source. Even the iffy government scientific advisors are saying the 'R' factor is too high, yet yesterday, Bozo announced a whole new load of slacking of lock-down. It looks like Herd Immunity is back on the agenda, if it ever left it, so I won't be ringing the Dentist on June 8th.

Nothing much about rations recently in my newsletter. This is because what went around, comes around & the freezer is stuffed full of my ready meals. Today is a thawed kedgeree, one of five in a giant batch but I'll serve it with fried courgette, with a dab of sun dried tomato paste on each slice. Tomorrow, there will be fresh lamb mince korma curry with mushroom & garlic, served with a whatever veg-has-been-lying-around-looking-sad curry & rice. Yesterday, Avis made cauliflower & broccoli cheese. I have been serving Sainsburys cheesecake as puddings but today, it will be Gulab Jam, on account of kedgeree being an Indian word (as being on the Veranda of my Bungalow in

Pyjamas, so many others).

Keep well by ignoring the government & staying at home. Ken

### **Saturday 30th May 2020**

#### **Not me this Saturday.**

I'll leave the newsletter to Martin Hammond, Bozo's Master in College at Eton in 1982. Hammond wrote this to Bozo's father:-

"Boris really has adopted a disgracefully cavalier attitude to his classical studies. It is a question of priorities, which most of his colleagues have no difficulty in sorting out. Boris sometimes seems affronted when criticised for what amounts to a gross failure of responsibility (and surprised at the same time that he was not appointed captain of the School for next half). I think he honestly believes that it is churlish of us not to regard him as an exception, one which should be free of the network of obligation which binds everyone else."

Thanks to the Yorkshire Post for digging this out. What could I possibly add, except to point out that Bozo was 17 then & nothing about him has changed. I was an insufferable little shit at 17 (as one is) but, because I did not spend my Uni time smashing up restaurants like Bozo, I managed some growing up during my right of passage. Keep well & if you see Bozo on the street, give him 200 metres. Cheers, Ken

### **Sunday 31st May 2020**

#### **Sunday dread**

I had a scientific upbringing, so I really do follow the science, knowing what I'm looking for, so when Bozo says it's ok to do more things tomorrow & all the reputable scientists say it isn't, I'm scared. Everyone in the commentariat that I read (i.e. not the Daily Mail) has twigged that Bozo's announcement was to take the heat off the Cummings Story & has nothing to do with 'the science' but not all have looked at the detailed implications on the ground. I have because I've been keeping Avis out of harm's way as best I can. This means she never gets out except for a fortnightly spin in the horrid car, (due next Tuesday) where she gets minimal exposure in motorway service stations & less minimal in garage shop loos. With the somewhat relaxed opening up & the scandal of Cummings behaviour, we have no idea what the increased risk is in those two types of location from people slightly flouting the new 'advice' or even, just following it. Nor do I know what increased risk there is on my weekly two trips to Sainsburys, Avis' other, if indirect, source of exposure.

The real potential bummer in all this is that, we can expect another jump in infections & deaths at the end of the week after next. Denise is supposed to be moving in over that weekend but, if there is a renewed clampdown, that may not be a goer. Presciently, there is a review of Yeats' "Second Coming" in yesterday's Guardian Review (which I always save for Sunday breakfast, not having a paper). You know the one: full of quotations like 'the centre cannot hold' but essentially, the 1st verse is about the collapse of authority, which we seem to be undergoing now. When the 'centre' was on offer last December (Jeremy Corbyn clearly being well to the Right of Clement Attlee), it was spurned in favour of a self-centred fantasy nicely exposed when I quoted someone else's letter yesterday. You can't run a country on fantasy & it's ironic to have to reference a Right-winger like Yeats in the circumstances. Keep well if you can, Ken

### **Monday 1st June 2020**

#### **Monday looking into the abyss.**

My friend Jim quoted: 'Violence is the language of the unheard.' Yes. Comment by me on the murder of George Floyd is superfluous but I do remember an observation by a visiting American (mother of a friend) who, uniquely for her, found herself on a bus. She said the Black people on the bus 'did not

look angry'. Inter-racial respect has still a long way to go in Britain but, clearly, it has hardly started in the USA. On Facebook, Denise pointed out the effectiveness of rioting, citing gays (like her), women (ditto) & slaves but it wasn't slaves revolting that freed them, except in Haiti. That did not go as well as it might have done, as France demanded & got crippling reparations from Haiti. What ended slavery was the realisation by smart slaveowners that it would cost less to 'free' their slaves & hire them back on pitiful wages. These days, we call that a 'zero hour contract'.

Which brings me to points I made in the past, to derision, about equality. I used to say that the fastest way to bring some equality was to make as many things as possible, free. Ideas that seemed Utopian (or lunatic, if you're a free market obsessive) are now creeping onto the agenda, as thinking people realise we cannot go back to 'normal', normal having been a shit-show. This is not the same, quite, as a Universal Basic Income, although that is looking increasingly necessary & gives people some market choice but the first real glimmering of extending 'free' from just the NHS, was free Internet in the Labour 2019 manifesto. From there, it could be extended to Sport & the Arts & so on. Talking of Sport, football has been turned into a racket of club ownership by investors (who, largely, cannot play top football themselves) because of the TV revenues. If all TV was free, there would not be "TV revenues" & the so-called clubs could return to being clubs (they actually are, in Germany) & not businesses with shareholders.

Somebody is going to say, how is this all going to be paid for? which brings me back to the NHS, the most successful Marxist organisation in the World, which is why the Tories have been working so hard to try to wreck it. It's free. On the dark side, remember George Osborne as Chancellor, demanding "efficiency savings" of the NHS? This squeezed slack out of the system. If your Health Service does not contain slack or, if you prefer 'inefficiency', it could be taken by surprise by, guess what?

Shortly before I was fired by Reuters (my last wage-slave job), I was flying back with a much more senior manager & told him, "I don't know why you don't do as I say. I'm always right". There was a brief silence. Then he said, "Yes. You are". Actually, I'm not but I try my best. Keep well, despite the un-lock-down, Ken

**Tuesday 2nd June 2020**

### **Tuesday History lesson**

I only saw the picture of the Queen on horseback after writing yesterday's newsletter but (although I'm a staunch Republican) it brought up all sorts of resonances, the first being the rather good address she gave to us on the telly recently about the plague. Working back in time, there is King Christian X of Denmark, saddling up every morning & riding through Copenhagen under Nazi occupation, to remind the people he was still among them. A German officer remarked that he had no bodyguard, to be told that he had 5 million. Back to the later 17th Century & Queen Hedwig of Sweden, wife of Karl X. She would buckle on her own bullet-proof breastplate, go off with Karl on his wars & get stuck in. Next back is our own Queen Elizabeth the 1st & her speech at Tilbury that we all know. A bit further, at the end of the 14th Century, we have Jadwiga, crowned King (Rex, not Queen) of Poland. Having defeated Duke Wilhelm of Austria, who wanted to marry her, she went off & conquered Western Ukraine (today) but, alas, died of childbirth at 26. Unlike Queen Joanna of Naples, who ran South Italy for 39 years with varying degrees of success but ended up strangled by her successor, who became the father of that fierce Queen Jadwiga. Last for now, is Matilda, Queen to our King Stephen. She looked at if butter would not melt in her mouth but she was Stephen's 2nd best General. Today, a woman needs to be twice as good as the best available man for a job. Imagine what it was like in the past.

I've put a chicken tagine in the oven for all day. It doesn't seem to work well in the electric slow cooker. I put a bed of red onion in the pot, smear the boned chicken thighs with honey mixed with cinnamon & coriander & stack them round the wall of the pot, then fill the middle with chopped mushrooms & some chicken stock (as the onions & mushrooms will go to mush), herbs & seasoning.

Then, I'll take my Sweetheart out for a drive in the country to the South-West of London & we'll see how the tagine comes out this evening.

To come full circle, there really does appear to have been a Queen Dido who founded Carthage but no Aeneas alas, despite two magnificent operas by Purcell & Berlioz but Dido lived to 80, dying in 759BC. We'll see what sort of mess her namesake makes of Trace, Test & Isolate shortly. I'm surprised the name is not more common (it is in Tunisia) & I've only ever met one Boudicca, although I've heard of others. Ok, we're about to jump in the horrid car. Byee, keep well, Ken

### **Wednesday 3rd June 2020**

#### **Wednesday news thanks to Liz**

My cousin, who lives in Milan, married to Paolo. Their son Ricki is finishing school (he's 19) & hoping, with some confidence, of going to Greece with school friends, an Italian rite-of-passage. You can extrapolate more from my (somewhat edited) reply to her, my Best Friend in the family after my brother:

Dear Liz, Thank you for the newsletter. Compared to here, it sounds like absolute Heaven. I've actually met Gareth several times (Liz' best friend). We have just finished on telly, the serialisation of "Normal People" a fantastic strung-out rite-of-passage book by Sally Rooney. One of the heroine's failed temporary boyfriends is called Gareth & reminded me of yours. Both book & film made me cry & I had to keep reminding myself, "It's only a story". Going to a restaurant! In our dreams! Actually, social distancing in restaurants is something I just didn't do in the Old Days (14 weeks ago). I'd get conversations going with other tables & even, try each others' food. Unbelievable now. Today is the anniversary (37th) of the 1st time we realised we might be each other's dream partner (2nd time for me but 1st for Avis). Your government seems to be handling the delicate matter of unwinding the pandemic precautions well. The other government in Europe to do well, in fact, best, is the Greek one, both unexpected but both countries were the leaders in European Civilisation at one, quite long, time.

You may laugh at Bozo the Clown memes. We have to live with the fact that, unlike yours, our Prime Minister is the 2nd biggest menace stalking the country at the moment. In fact, he holes up in the Downing Street Bunker, physically invisible most of the time, not even leading the 'daily briefings', where, usually, the hapless Health Minister has to come out to lie to us about the number of cases, the number of deaths (best to assume, double what he says) & worst of all, what stage we are at in getting on top of the virus. We did not have a proper lock-down at any time like yours but they are relaxing it without medical evidence that it is safe. I am expecting a surge in deaths at the end of next week & sticking to our routines: holding my breath when I pass anyone in the street or the supermarket; keeping Avis in except for a fortnightly drive into the country & only going for a short evening walk occasionally myself. Sometimes, one sees 2-metre parties, people chatting in the street but keeping their distance & sometimes, I join in. That's it. I try out my lectures on Avis for content, grammar (who, he?) & timing but my rate of production has slowed down. At least, it amounts to "work I can do at home".

It is actually, quite terrible having a government who's every word cannot be trusted & who are clearly, afraid to tell the truth because they are scared of us, the people. One only has to look at the USA today to see where that leads. (& more family stuff. I also copied the "letter to myself in one year's time from May 17th). Love to all & keep well, Ken

The last point is, for the likes of me: white, middle class liberals, a very delicate one. Basically, what do you do to help without being patronising or a complete prat? In my case, it is also because I have a bit of history with black ladies after Jane died. It seems best to keep one's head down but jump on anyone making a racist remark, telling them it's out of order.

**Thursday 4th June 2020**

**Thursday thrill**

BBC Radio 3 at 12:00 all this week has been on Beethoven's last 5 String Quartets, one at a time. It has been very well done, taking a movement at a time, with a bit of comment in between & some of the history of the 1st performances. These are top candidates for the Best music ever written so far & today's is the best of the lot, Op.131 in C# minor is the one today, so hi-fi on at 12 or headphones in the garden, as the promised rain has not arrived. (I actually watered after breakfast). I can't imagine how the Beeb will handle it, as Op.131 is continuous for about 3/4 hour. I once took a colleague to a Barbican Lunch-time Concert of just this work & people asked what we had been drinking when we got back! I've written 3 string quartets myself & finally gave up writing music ten minutes into a 4th, trying to answer questions about form which have been flying about for a century but, compared to the Beethoven 16, they are tripe, I suppose. Anyway, today, it's the perfect break from the turmoil, overt & covert, around us at the moment. Apart from that, the best entertainment to be had is Prime Minister's Questions if you're turned on by the School Bully himself getting beaten up in the playground. Nuff said on that subject.

**Saturday 6th June 2020**

It has been fascinating reading the letters in the Grauniad. Lots from GGs (Great & Good). I've restrained myself, using Facebook more. Very sensibly, GGs are calling for a Public Enquiry before the plague is over so that "lessons can be learned" for the second or perhaps, infinite, stage. I've got news for them: there is not going to be any Public Enquiry because, if there is, Bozo the Clown & the Circus are going to come out of it very badly indeed &, since it needs parliamentary approval to be set up, that is not going to happen, unless & this is quite a big unless, Bozo is overthrown by the Tory Party itself. This has happened so often historically that it might be quite soon. However, Bozo still has a huge fan base, not just in the party but also in those seats stolen from Labour with false promises. There would also be the problem for a new leader about who they recruit to serve in their government. They presumably would not want any of Bozo's Circus but the parliamentary party is woefully short of talent. They may be forced to take some of the Circus Clowns but there won't be many that a Public Enquiry would not throw under the fashionable 'bus'. Somehow, they would also have to navigate Brexit & the Scottish Elections due next May. It's a big ask.

I am still wondering if our Summer cruise is 'on'. Sweden is the only European country with a worse per million COVID death rate than the UK or rather, England. Even if we were to set sail, would it be safe to enter any ports? If not, it rather renders the whole exercise pointless, not that sea air ever did anyone any harm, provided the boat actually stayed afloat, which is not guaranteed with cruise ships. The guitarist on the doomed Costa Concordia was in his second shipwreck. In his first, the Captain left first. The guitarist found himself on the bridge & radioed to the Shore for helicopters, which came after he convinced them that he was the 'senior officer' still aboard. He left on the last helicopter but did not get the George Medal he should have been given. Having given up ship lecturing, there's no risk I would find myself in that position but never say never. The last ship I lectured on was then called the Azores. As the Stockholm, in 1951 (it's a really old banger, built in 1948 & riveted together) it rammed & sank the Andrea Doria cruise ship. It was the Andrea Doria that went down. I won't tell you what it is called today! Stay well, Ken

**Sunday 7th June 2020**

**Bad news Sunday**

This starts with Liverpool. There was a rumour that Covid-19 was still rife in Lancashire. Aintree Hospital has confirmed that it has run out of body bags & R is at 1.1, meaning the virus is spreading again, thanks to the early slackening of lock-down. So, to get Cummings off the front pages, a new slaughter was started, if it had ever stopped. At least, the more cautious Scots & Northern Irish had no more deaths yesterday. Before leaving our shores, the Sunday Express has the headline "Boris wants to fix unfair Brexit Deal", sub-heading being "Barnier warned that he's not referee of talks...



he's just a player". Just? The story below is that we're not getting our cake after having ate it. Surprise. If we get the 'no deal' Bozo craves, every other country will understand that they have us over a barrel. Just suppose, nobody offers us a trade deal. Word is that, if there is 'no deal' the pound will tank. Someone joked (I think) that if no one picks the vegetables, people in the South-East could pop over to Calais to shop. I replied that, with the likelihood of 10 £s to the €, that was not an option (quite apart from the fare). Pulling up vegetables is back-breaking work, something omitted from the government adverts trying to get people back on the Land. I heard that the only reason that Bozo brought in lock-down was that President Macron said that, if Bozo didn't, he would close the border with Britain, so it was nothing to do with "following the science", Why has this been kept quiet? It was not even in the Guardian. Incidentally, the Cuban Health Service (possibly the best in the World, note, you Americans) has contained the plague.

Today, we had David Malpass, the World Bank President getting all woeful about the prospects for the World Economy after the plague is over. I'm not sure how much power he has but he certainly lacks imagination. He should first pick the low-hanging fruit, which in this case is to cancel all governmental foreign debt. That would give the 3rd World some slack. He warned of increased inequality & hunger. Both of these could be tackled by someone not hidebound by "the way things were". A start needs to be made on ensuring that clean water is available to all. This has been estimated to cost \$35 million. Peanuts. Green initiatives need funding from, if necessary, the Magic Money Tree. There is no need for Malpass' "devastating blow".

Just to check what impact the coronavirus had had on my consciousness, I scanned my diary. The 1st mention was on January 28th, when I went to Chinatown for lunch, as people were shunning it because of the virus & I thought that was ridiculous. Next was having my Parkinsons lecture gig cancelled on February 12th. On Feb 27th, I posted this of Facebook: "The UK PM sees Coronavirus as a way of getting rid of useless paups, so has made NO preparations." After that, mentions are ubiquitous. Keep well, Ken

## Monday 8th June 2020

### Monday speechless (or nearly)

....with rage. I did the usual Monday Sainsburaid but for the first time, put a mask on in the store itself, which, with my usual shortness of breath problem, was a bit grim & my glasses kept steaming up. Not looking forward to the Public Transport edict next week but Ive hardly used it since lockdown, just one occasion. At home in time for the 08:30 news, I heard that now, epitome of evil Bozo claim that the Black Lives Matter protest had been spoiled by violence against the Police in Whitehall. What had happened was the Police charged the demo on horseback & one officer fell off, getting slightly injured. Ha, ha bloody ha. Served her right. Bozo's comment is down there with the BBC cutting & pasting film at Orgreave Colliery to make it look as if the Miners had charged the Police, when it was the other way round. While Bozo was in hospital, Avis kept asking me if he was dead, yet, while all the hypocrites on the radio were saying, poor Bozo. He has now killed about 70,000 people (ONS reliable figures, not the government propaganda ones) by delaying lockdown to protect Share prices.

I am really pleased that the Colston Statue in Bristol is now in the river. There has been years of discussion about whether it should be taken down & now, the People have cut to the chase & just done it. This is from my European History talk 139: In a public ceremony in the Gambia in June 2006, a descendant of Sir John Hawkins (initiator of the Triangular Trade: goods to Africa; slaves to America; sugar to England) Andrew Hawkins, draped in chains, publicly apologised for the Slave Trade, asking forgiveness before 25,000 Africans. The chains were then struck off by the Gambian President. In the mid 14th Century, King Magnus IV of Sweden abolished slavery for slaves with two Christian parents, thus leaving wriggle room but it was a start. King Frederick IV of Denmark abolished slavery in 1702. Then Christian VI restored it in 1733 (but Christian also introduced a universal public school system 131 years before we did with the Forster Act). The point of listing this stuff is that it is no good arguing that slavery was just a recognised activity of the time. With the

more active campaigning against slavery by groups like the Quakers & Methodist from the mid 17th Century, the immorality of slavery was on the table. However, as I've mentioned before, it was really, the recognition by slave-owners that it was cheaper to free slaves & hire them back on low wages that finally fuelled abolition. When pushed in a corner recently (by a Buddhist), I claimed I'm more of a Quaker-without-the-god-bit myself. (I had once claimed that on a Saudi Visa form, as you have to declare your religion & sect).

Back in the Interregnum (between wives), the first girl-friend, an extremely pretty Filipina, said she got a dozen racial insults a day. The second, Black African, said the 1st was lucky. She was a Nursing Sister & once, said that that day, an old white woman had screamed, "Don't let that (n-word) near me". How much further have we really moved since 1982, what with 'hostile environment' used for electoral purposes by the tory party & Bozo's appalling statement last night? Phew! Keep well, Ken

**Tuesday 9th June 2020**

### **Tuesday - Tough Talk & Tin Ears**

When politicians talk tough, as Priti 'pull up the ladder' Patel has done, you need to look for the underlying weakness they are exposing. Surveys have shown that people in places that are not going to experience large-scale demonstrations which are confined to cities, have a terror of the breakdown of law & order they think they are witnessing on the TV News. So, it plays to the advantage of politicians to look for any small signs of violence to play up to the maximum &, I suspect, the police know that, if there is no violence, it will play well with their political masters if they make sure some is created. This is where the weakness of the Patels of this world show. Elsewhere in the World, there have been scenes of popular protest bringing down politicians, so they try to make sure it does not happen to them.

This is where the tin ears come in, because while playing to their base, the cause of the apparent disorder (& I say, apparent, as being the veteran of dozens of protests, they are usually orderly & warm-hearted affairs) also cries out to be addressed. There is thus another audience but, if it is significantly smaller (like an ethnic community) than the base, Secretary of State Tin Ears may balance the electoral utility & cost of addressing the grievance against the cost to their base.

So, some like Patel, are representing the pulling down of Colston as violence. So far, no commentator has properly addressed why the statue was put up so many decades after Colston's death. It was effectively, a celebration of business success, no matter what the business was. I know I go on about loud-mouthed philanthropy being a sin but only two forms are acceptable: silent & paying your taxes when there are legal dodges you could use to avoid them, the latter hardly counting as philanthropy at all. Loud-mouthed philanthropy is entirely self-serving as Catherine pointed out in her poem about Celebrity with her line "Make sure they know it's me".

That Colston was a business success may feed into the government's deploring the fate of his statue. We know that massive business failure is going to be a consequence of both the Plague & Brexit, with consequent high levels of unemployment. We have already seen big firms announcing layoffs, many due to automation, under the camouflage of the Plague. Bozo the Clown has already hyped the "Wealth Creators" in his 1st speech about easing the lock-down, making it clear who are his priority. Memo to Bozo: wealth creators are innovators, not financiers. Given the history of the last 40 years, this excludes financial innovators, who have just found ways to get, effectively, theft, into legislation.

After the Plague has come down to New Zealand levels (if ever), what can we expect:

There will be no more money for the NHS & the workers in Health & Care (they don't vote tory).

There will be no measures to tackle Black grievances (they don't vote tory).

There will be harsh measures against demonstrations, especially by the unemployed (they don't vote tory).

Nothing will be done for the Arts (they don't vote tory. Thatcher famously asked, "What are the Arts for?").

Tomorrow, I really must find something amusing to write about or at least, one of my essays on something Completely Different. It takes me over an hour to write these rants. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 11th June 2020**

**Thursday Thursday**

Him with the big hammer. As John pointed out, Bozo only locked down because President Macron said he would close the border, whacking big corks in the Channel Tunnel portals. We would have been starving in a month. Even Bozo realised that would not look good. Now, a leaked paper shows the scientists, you know, those guys (& gals) the government said they were following, were demanding a lock down two weeks before Bozo reacted, not to them but to Macron's ultimatum. Nobody in the papers is pointing out that Macron has his hands round our throats & behind him, the whole EU. Yet, the British negotiators are clearly pressing for a "no deal" Brexit, which would mean those corks going in anyway, unless we pay usurious tariffs, not tariffs but tarcerainties.

Oh, but we'll be all right, as we will be eating cheap, poor quality american food but will it be cheap? I was a businessman & you don't quote a low price to a client you have over a barrel. You just charge them a bit less than their worst nightmare & harvest the gratitude. That's business & Trump never gave a sucker an even break.

Now I really must quote a comment in the Guardian by Chrisff2 (whoever they are) because it beats anything I might write:

"There are many examples in history of wise advice to kings or those who aspired to kingship. I wondered what advice, in times of yore, a wiser and less indulgent parent than Stanley Johnson might have imparted to Boris, at this stage in his kingship of his little part of the world. I think it might have gone something like this:

"From the Christian canon, fornicate not, be not a glutton, and be not proud. Shit not upon thy friends, or verily, even thy enemies, as ye ascend, for surely, they will shit upon thee tenfold as ye pass the other way. Treat the fair sex with chivalry and throw not wine upon their furnishings when in your cups.

"Prate not: eschew flowery modes of discourse and the speech of knaves, viz. 'picanninies' and such, and boast not that thy realm exceeds all other realms, for surely, thy subjects do don a clout one leg at a time, as do all other men. If thou knowest not whereof thou speak, say nought, especially of science and natural philosophy.

"Speak the truth in all things, and reflect on the wise words of the pugilist sage, Michaelus Tysonius, who said 'Yea, every man hath a plan, until he be smitten in the mouth', for verily ye know the truth of this by now. Lastly consider the wisdom of the Buddha of the East, whose teachings to his followers can be condensed thus: 'Try in all things not to be as a phallus'. Fare thee well, my son.'"

Puts my crap writings in their place. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 13th June 2020**

Yesterday was going to be an 'afternoon heavy' day. Fortunately, the "New Statesman" has been coming a day early, so I read it in the bath (my usual Saturday routine), then made a lamb curry with a lot of fresh garlic, korma curry paste, Italian tomato paste & crème fraîche, with mutter paneer, veg. curry & rice. That's a new lamb curry from me. Then, Denise arrived in a huge van or tiny lorry. However, it's only 3 stories to the Attic from pavement level & we all got very hot, moving stuff up. On the Lads disappearing with £240 in used fivers, we fought the bed parts into the real thing. After tea, Denise disappeared to her Mum's, so as to go today to pick up the cats (ongoing at publication time). The Attic looks like the Municipal Tip or recycler, piled with black plastic bags. They were a

joke, as one with the duvet (light) looked much like one with books, or a dozen with books. Warning: do not hire an intellectual Carer, as books are By Our Lady heavy. Staggering up the stairs, I reminded myself that at least 4 of those books are duplicates of ones we have. (On our decease, someone is going to have to deal with 1,000s of books, which, in the event, will be Big Time Not My Problem). I've attached Denise's phyzog, so if you see her around, you know who she is.

So, today's dinner was my warmed-chicken tagine, 20 minutes work. Just as well, as I had turned over the compost heap & bagged up the best stuff from the bottom. There's a pot-bond Acer that will need bedding out in October & will probably welcome some of that. After 29 years, I have now met the people at the bottom of the garden (!), separated as we are by a wall of tall shrubs. Ken & Sarah are also Crumbles & have not been out for 3 months. He knows about Quantum Theory, black arts.

I must have one moan. It is appalling that the Police are warning demonstrators to stay off the streets in case they are attacked by right-wing hooligans. Sorry Cressida (London Police Chief for my American friends), it's your job to keep right-wing hooligans Off the streets, especially when they threaten demos by ordinary, decent citizens. If they bleat about the "freedom of speech", they need reminding of the old adage that you don't shout Fire! in a crowded theatre. What they really need, of course, is treatment but there are not enough (or cheap enough) psychiatrists to sort them out. Which brings us to the prison population.

We do have hardened criminals & some Mr. Bigs who never seem to get caught but the bulk of the prison population are sad cases, who need education & support. It's no good just letting them out into a hostile world. Many just need to start by learning to read & write. Many of those company bureaucrats chopped or lined up for it could be employed to teach the basic to these people. Our ghastly prisons need replacing by ones more resembling a Travelodge, with the prisoners in en-suite rooms they can lock (the Warders having the Master Key), so they cannot be intimidated by Barons. We need to keep one hell-hole (Wormwood Scrubs?) for the Mr Bigs & the Barons as a deterrent to bad behaviour. I would expect the crime rate & prison population to drop right down if we did this. It did in the Netherlands & now, they rent out prison space to less enlightened countries. Keep well,

**Sunday 14th June 2020**

### **The Sunday Economy**

Bozo wants us to go out shopping tomorrow, as, regardless of the evidence that it is not yet safe, he wants to get the economy going. Nooooo! I don't want to go shopping, except to Sainsburys for rations first thing. That puts me on a level with the pigeons outside the Council Flats halfway along my road (a break in the line of the Georgian Terrace, where there had been a graveyard). The pigeons hang around for the bread crusts that Jean will throw out in an un-thought-out plot to give them diabetes but anyway, they & I are only out for food. (We don't have crusts. All the food that comes into this house goes out down the toilet via us. That is the World War II upbringing. Ok, except cauliflower leaves & carrot skins. They go on the compost heap). I don't want anything, meaning things. I might have wanted a book or two but I now have the opportunity to rifle Denise's library, just as she is looking forward to rifling ours.

But there is no question here of Bozo's priorities. He needs us to go out spending to crank up the economy, regardless of whether a few (thousand?) more grockles die of Covid-19. This begs a few more questions. How much spare cash is floating around to spend? Many people have not been earning anything & have spent the pitiful & ironically named "Job Seekers Allowance" on the bare necessities for Life, if they actually get it. The actual unnecessary expenditure that we make is not available to us, as the restaurants & coffee bar will not be opening any time soon. While I jokingly have referred to Caffé Nero, as The Islington Green Social Centre, with lockdown, it emphasises that that was exactly what it was. We would meet friends without arrangement there & make new ones. To sum up, Bozo has Catch 22. If you need stuff, you have not got the money to buy it. If you've got money to spare, you have also got most of what you want, if not all &, if you do the decent thing & give some of it away, that will only go on bare necessities. If he had two brain cells to rub together,

Bozo would think about exactly what sort of economy we need. Alas....

The sky is blue. Enjoy your (ahem) Day of Rest but keep safe, still 2 metres apart, Ken

### **Monday 15th June 2020**

#### **Hooray for Monday. Another week of opportunity.**

....as the shops are opening but too early. Apparently, there was a queue all night outside Birmingham's Primark. Did it have 2 metre separation, I wonder? Anyway, what's the attraction of Primark? If you pay a bit more, the clothes last several times longer. Apart from my glasses, wristwatch & the belt round my trousers, I'm 100% dressed Marks & Sparks, as, more or less, usual. Even my current Tux is M&S &, while my bow tie was Selfridges, it's 48 years old. Some things do not wear out.

I see Bozo has said he will set up a commission to look into why black lives matter (more or less). Is this kicking it into the long grass? He is keen to keep the matter one of vandalism & disorder. As David Lammy said, the brief was "written on the back of a fag packet", as it was announced in the Torygraph in an item about protecting statues. As someone has posted on Facebook, the Churchill Statue is getting better PPE than NHS staff but then, staff are replaceable at a lower cost than a new Churchill statue. Bozo then completely spoiled the gesture by saying black people are playing victim. Repeat after me, Bozo, "They Are Not PLAYING". One thing they really do thoroughly in private education is the prevention of any scrap of empathy with other people establishing itself, turning what probably start as normal kids into monsters. Shape up, be a Man, my son.

I don't know how people do "moonlight flits". The Attic still looks like the Council Tip. One thing Denise brought which was still in the Hall is a rather nice huge pine bookcase. The Lads parked it facing the wall, a bit counter-intuitive, I would have thought. Last night, we had to take it back into the street to turn it round & this morning, have moved (so far) most of the remaining Art books from the Attic into it. We went to the Pharmacy for Avis' pill mountain & my prostate bashers but also to introduce Denise as someone to be trusted with our pills. We met Pauline, one of the first Comrades I met 30 years ago. Telling her I met Denise campaigning for Jeremy Corbyn is as good a reference as you can give anybody round here.

It's warm today. Keep well by not going shopping unless desperate. Ken

### **Wednesday 17th June 2020**

#### **Rather mixed Wednesday**

The Good News is a drug that helps sufferers from Covid-19 & it's Cheap. Big Pharma (especially the rapacious Gilead Pharm) must be gnashing their teeth in frustration at the loss of hoped-for massive profits. The other Good News is Marcus Rashford's crushing victory over Bozo over free school meals. Now, let's hope this becomes permanent, not just during the plague. School meals are one of the things I feel should be free for everyone, anyway. What stood out in this clash was that the number of children in "sufficient poverty" to qualify for free meals was 1,300,000. That is nearly a quarter of all school kids. Rather more than that have no access to on-line teaching. If only Labour had won the election, rolling out greater wi-fi coverage could have been organised very quickly (not so wired internet) & reserving all laptops for sale for school children would have cut the number of cut-off children. Unfortunately, we do not make computers in this country & who's fault is that?

More bad news is the "absorption" of the Department of International Development into the Foreign Office. This is personal, as Jane was a leading scientist at DoID's Tropical Products Institute. The Tories tried this on before, the idea being to use Aid Funds to blackmail Commonwealth (mostly) countries to toe the Whitehall Line. The DoID has been disinterested, as was intended & driven by needs, not trade or politics. It is quite possible that the DoID's well-respected staff will now get fat job offers from Institutes abroad, leading to more Brain Drain.

I took Avis for her fortnightly trip into the Rural Fastnesses yesterday, intending to go round the South of London from the East but by time we had got to Godstone, it was tipping it down & 12:00, so I got onto the M25 (having been on the Old Roads) & doubled back, stopping at Clacket Lane Services for pees & sandwiches, so, rather an odd trip but still, over 90 miles. Warning: the toilets at the BP Garage on The Highway are closed, a mission-critical location on the way home. (For American friends: it used to be the Ratcliffe Highway, all thieves & whores, where policemen went in 4's. Now, it is renamed & "respectable"). On the car radio, we heard a woman in tears, who started a new business at the end of last year, which was going well until lock-down & now, she has lost everything, including her house. She said, "and I've done nothing wrong". No, she hasn't. As a new business, she does not qualify for any, ANY, government help.

Lunch today was my Lamb Tagine with couscous boiled in fried cumin & fried courgettes. Avis is allergic to cucumbers but not courgettes. A Martian couldn't tell the difference. After showing her round the Angel area last night, Denise packed me off to Sainsburys today to buy the ingredients for my Birthday Lunch. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 18th June 2020**

#### **Thursday @ 77**

It's not New Year's Day that one should sum up & make new Resolutions but one's birthday. In practise, it is going to be a bit weird around Xmas, as that is when I will hopefully reach the age when my Father died, (picture attached of him at, I think, 57). Dad had had a botched prostate operation ten years before, though, which must have weakened his system, although we were planning an Alpine Walking trip, when he checked out. Dad taught me much without realising he was doing so. He was a cordwainer (skilled craftsman) & ran his own business (ditto, eventually), all of which I observed as a kid. Unfortunately, Mum had Ideas for me & it is difficult for one to understand & cope with this as a child. I can understand her not wanting me to be the fifth generation of cordwainers in succession, (she married "beneath her"), although I do know how to repair shoes & hand-sew leather items. I did make myself a leather camera case. However, I did not know the expression "control freak" as a child. One thing I never forgot was her telling me, when I was 7 or 8, that I was not a nice person & have been trying to make up for that ever since. In practise, I've found that, if you are nice to people, the vast majority are nice back. Only a tiny minority take advantage & another, take it as a sign of weakness, which is their Mistake, as we all have faults & mine is I'm vindictive.

As for Resolutions, these are so contingent on Events. Not remotely to my surprise, the July cruise has been cancelled but I have managed to grab the last Xmas cruise cabin. We already had a booking but I wanted a 3 berth cabin to fit in Denise. Let's hope the Plague is over by then but this one has lasted nearly as long as the first outbreak of Black Death here in 1349. However, Black Death is a bacterium, not a virus & no big deal these days, although it is still around. That said, I would not be surprised if the Xmas cruise is cancelled, as we are unlocking carelessly & too early. The scary one is the employment situation. If we start losing tenants, I might have to start cutting back on the charitable stuff & since this is direct, not through organisations, the impact would be direct to the coal-face (or rather, music face). And, don't even mention Brexit.

So, what keeps me going, not something one normally thinks about? One of the questions in the Guardian weekly comic questionnaire, generally of a celebrity I've never heard of, is, "What does love feels like?". For someone with a scientific background, the correct answer is the interaction of the hormones oxytocin, serotonin & dopamine in reaction to someone else's pheromones. This hardly covers the case but does explain, 'love at first sight'. A better answer would be (as I experience it), merged identity, which explains the expression, "My other half" that people use without thinking it through. You only have to see Avis & me to realise that.

There is or was, also Jane. As obvious from yesterday's note about the Overseas Development



Ministry, I'm still fighting her battles for her. It is or was, a group of people who had been given the heaven-sent (or Harold Wilson sent) opportunity to do the right thing unconditionally & get paid for it. Now for poor countries, it will be "Get in line or starve". I may at times seem flippant about death but I've been there got the tee-shirt etc, will have my own, sooner or later & shut down discussion with that useful American expression, "It ruined my Whole Day".

Keep well, so I can hope to see you (actually, see) on June 18th 2021. Ken

## **Friday 19th June 2020**

### **Friday Frolics...not**

First, I must thank everyone for their birthday wishes. Some brought tears to my eyes. One grumble at Facebook. They put a sweet message (as in pictures of cakes & wine etc) from Maiko on my activities log but not on my timeline. Haven't their algorithms worked out who is important in my gang???

Sainsburaid. I did not need much but this week. I have taken to wearing a mask in shops. The horror, the horror. My glasses steam up & my usual shortness-of-breath is exacerbated although this might be partially psychological. Still alive, though, so nothing to grumble about. The walkie-talkies arrived yesterday & I put them on charge but only one charged up. Frustrating, as Denise & I communicate mostly by e-mail &, since I have given her an @art-science.com address, to get through some plaster & a floorboard, messages go to Vancouver in Canada & back, twice, my contribution to Global Warming, I suppose. Yesterday, she cooked us a Broccoli Curry, which was quite splendid. We are used to the odd vegan meal, as when we visit Avis' sister Alyson in Glossop (the trendy suburb of Manchester, although they would probably baulk at that description), we eat at The Globe. I never tire of going up there because after a couple of hours of M1, the next part through Derbyshire is a delight (apart from dreary Darley Dale) ending with the Snake Pass with its amazing views. Anyway, I've put some more weird food in the 'fridge & we'll see what happens. I'm doing a tuna stir fry today with spaghetti in green pesto, the stir-fry including onions, mushrooms, red peppers, salt, herb mix & a splash of light soy sauce (sell-by date 2009 - I know someone who will be horrified at that), fried in the oil from the tuna tin & some sesame oil to give it a bit of welly.

I was going to try to avoid the government today but what with Raab's terrible tin ear comment on Black Lives Matter & the abandonment of the Covid Tracker App, I can't. Given a decent spec. I'm sure my younger self could have knocked up this app in a fortnight. But then, I'm not a pal of Bozo the Clown. My friend Louis, with whom I've done something similar before, added, "I would have written the spec you would have developed it. We both don't know Bozo, is the problem." There used to be rigorous (even if sometimes faulty) Civil Service procedures about the letting out of contracts. Those were the days. One does just wonder at those un-minuted & unrecorded meetings between the Queen & Bozo the Clown. Is she ever tempted to say, "Have you considered resigning?"

Keep well, Ken

## **Saturday 20th June 2020**

### **Saturday is Midsummer's Day...**

... this being a Leap Year, so where did half a year just Go? Erwin James, an ex-Life Prisoner, said days drag but quarter-years disappear. I had rather, a strange start. It's many years since the first thing for me to do in the morning, was feed the cats but Denise was out last night at a wake for a friend who went into Intensive Care on Thursday but died straight away. After that, Denise planned to crash out at her Mum's. That is her fourth friend to die of Covid-19. We, as far as we know, have lost none. It seems to have been a close-run thing for my distant Delaforce cousin Charley, a Jazz Trumpeter. He, his daughter & wife have all had it. It had interrupted Linda's cancer treatment & had been touch & go. However I heard this morning that they are on the mend. Charley is actually, the most distant cousin I know, the connexion going back to Queen Elizabeth's time, before his ancestor went off on the Mayflower. This may be a bit suspect, as most American Forces can reliably trace back to Matthew Delaforce, born 1640. Then, it can get a bit vague. My Euskera/Huguenot line

is a lot more solid. Even so, Charley gave us 'family member discount' at his b&b in Bath. I think that actually was a thank-you for the work I have done on the family history (Mum's side).

While on family, my cousin Liz (once removed), wrote from Milan, where lock-down is somewhat removed but there are still, many precautions. The British Council called her in to take some speaking exams (she teaches businessmen English) & it was all PPE. Curiously, she suggested that the British Council might go bust (can it? It's part of our 'soft power') & if, so she loses a revenue stream. She had me in tears when she wrote that, because public transport is 'not viable' (what does that mean? it's very good in Italy), she is having her bike serviced. It was Jane's with barely 100 miles done when I gave it to Liz 39 years ago & has done 1,000s of miles since both here & on Mainland Europe under Liz' feet. It is a hand-made Ken Ryall & the bike man was very impressed. I gave mine away when we moved to Islington.

Incidentally, I get huge emails from Liz. The opposite of "lock down" is not "lock up", so Liz, as ex-Police, is not on Facebook, as some crooks have long memories. Similarly, adultery is not the opposite of infantry. Is there a philologist out there who can tell me the origin of those two words? As most of her family, except Paolo & Ricky are in Blighty, Liz has been keeping a close eye on developments here. One of her colleagues' fathers died of CV here & the doctors seemed under instructions to avoid putting CV on the death certificate. It went down as pneumonia but pneumonia is (Annette may correct me) a symptom, not a 'disease'. Today, the Guardian had new graphs which show that, for 22 days in April, deaths were over 1,000 per day. Why is the government so terrified of telling the truth? Why are they so scared of us?

While on Italy, Britain is 'world's most corrupt country', said an Italian mafia expert in the Evening Standard & that was 4 years ago. No change there, then. I once got the sack for being straight. I was told the EU did not pay my salary when I refused to ignore one of its Competition Directives & leak information to a subsidiary company ahead of general publication. They dressed up the sacking as 'voluntary redundancy'. It is rare for anyone to be told the true reason for being sacked in Britain, in case it is actionable. This certainly was & I could have sued for thousands.

I'll mention Vera Lynn Tomorrow. Keep well, Ken

**Sunday 21st June 2020**

**Sunday is Father's Day....**

....but not for me because I'm not one, alas. It was not for want of trying but Avis was 48 when we got married, an offer I couldn't refuse. Denise won't be back until pip emma, (Father's Day Lunch) so I'm going to let the Zoo out of the Attic into the House. She has been warned.

I have been in the Garden, dead-heading the roses & fighting Philip's vine back but when I've done this letter, I can get back to my talks. I seem to have rather lost my way in the 18th Century. So much went on, what with Wars of this, that & t'other, the Enlightenment & music. Fortunately, the visual Arts are mostly in England, one talk on Hogarth, the Private Eye of his time & one (I think) on Gainsborough, Reynolds (yuk) & Kauffman. I'm always careful to give the girls their due. I have modified my Caspar David Friedrich talk to fit in at the turn of the Century. Then, there is the start of the Industrial Revolution, Slavery (I have done Piracy, connected), the End of Poland, the usual Great Power scrambling for bits of Italy, the French Revolution & rise of Napoleon. All these pieces have to be fitted together, with the knowledge that the 19th Century is going to be worse. Fortunately, I already have several music talks.

Meanwhile, although lock-down is to be eased, we still have to get through to the next Academic Year sane. On May 2nd, I did the Guardian author's questionnaire for your benefit (?), so, how about some long-read recommendations? Top of the list is Robert Musil's, "The Man without Qualities", set in pre-World War One Vienna, the central theme being a committee to plan the celebrations for Franz Josef's 70 years as Austrian Emperor (which he didn't get to by 2 years). A whole load of fascinating

characters hang around this, with the Man Without Qualities providing the connexions. 1184 pages. Then, there is Hilary Mantel's fictionalised biography of Thomas Cromwell. The last volume is not yet out in paperback, so I have not read it. That is not meanness, waiting for the paperback: it's a matter of shelf space. A-n-d, I really must finish Proust. Denise has just added 305 books to the House Library, although about 20 are swaps (2 of which had been birthday presents to her & one from her to Avis). To be fair, she's brought 15 feet of shelf space as well. One book she has I must re-read (having taken it out of the Library 1st time) is Marx' "Capital".

Good on Vera Lynn, making it to 103. She (& to be fair, again, Anne Shelton) was a big morale booster in World War II, just like Churchill's speeches (while the Labour ministers got on with organising the country to win the war). Let us hope that her death is the End of an Era, when we stop banging on about our Glorious Defeat at Dunkirk & accept that, without the Empire, USA & especially, the Soviet Union, we would have been in bad trouble. However, I expect the Dunkirk Spirit to be invoked much early next year. Keep well, Ken

## **Tuesday 23rd June 2020**

I really wanted to write about something pleasant today after taking Avis out for a spin in the horrid car yesterday but I did that on Sunday, so I'm entitled to a moan today. Two things & they are connected. Looking at the paper, it seems that Black Lives Don't Matter Anymore, as the news agenda has moved on, the way it does. I really thought we were going, at last, to get somewhere on this issue. Quite apart from personal matters, the Sarah Reed affair was the last traumatic event that affected me personally. We held two vigils outside Holloway Prison, where she died in mysterious circumstances early in 2016. She had been badly beaten up in 2012 by a policeman who was subsequently dismissed. This exacerbated mental health problems caused by the death of a daughter. She was apparently (& nothing is clear) in Holloway for not co-operating with her mental health nurse. I can't see a white woman being tossed into Holloway for that reason. That was bad enough. What really upset me was her daughter crying for her Mother. This story has long fallen off the news agenda.

I said they were connected. BLM is off the news because Bozo's great triumph of easing lock-down is being announced. You can tell it's supposed to be Good News, as Bozo is announcing it himself. Labour has wisely welcomed it, providing suitable precautions are followed. However, listening carefully to Bozo, it was clear that if anything goes wrong, it is the fault of the public not using their "Common Sense". If I was PM, I would have awaited the outcome of last week's extension of shopping before risking any announcement of more unlocking.

On the bright side, I trialled a new talk on Gainsborough & Reynolds to Avis & Denise (Art A-level) with an incursion by Smokey the Cat, who fell in love with Avis, as one does. Only 3 things needed fixing out of 155 slides & I have now sussed how to start on the Industrial Revolution: with a survey of Human Energy needs over the millennia, leading up to, "How do we get water out of coal mines?" Keep well by keeping your distance, Ken

## **Thursday 25th June 2020**

### **'Tis Thursday...**

...& what happened to Wednesday's newsletter? I must be getting lazy. No. I'm getting behind on my talks, assuming I'll still be alive in 2 1/2 years, when the current one (on Energy, as in from rubbing sticks to make fire to viable steam engines in the 18thC) will be given. Have you ever thought of a bow as a stored energy device? It is. (Jim would, of course). "Still alive" assumes that the latest bungled unlock advice does not release a second wave of the virus. The scientists are not happy but most are inhibited about going too public, as the decisions are for politicians to make & so are decisions on research grants etc. But scientists are always cautious about even 'facts' that they can be fairly sure about (or their 'cook books', such as Newton's, which will get you a very long way but after that, you need Einstein's).

Clearly, it seems an odd political decision that you can go to a pub, where intoxicating liquors are sold that befuddle one's judgement about, for example, social distancing but you cannot go to a swimming pool & swim in disinfectant, as one does. Surely, that pubs are run by private businesses that kick back donations to the tory party, while swimming pools are mostly run by our beleaguered local authorities, who need the revenue, has nothing to do with it? However, blatant corruption, like giving Richard Desmond planning permission on a day that would get round a planning levy by Tower Hamlets Council, which would have provided a useful few millions to our poorest borough, seems to be ok. Although this scam has not come off, the minister responsible has not resigned & we are told to move on, nothing further to see here. After all, if a minister resigns, where will it end? We had that problem even in John Major's day & these days, those days do not look so bad. In any case, we do not need a single extra 'luxury flat' in London. We just need thousands of ordinary ones or we will end up like New York City, where you have to bus your Cleaning Lady in from 30 miles out. Unless of course, you are a rich foreigner who can bring an actual slave over to do this for you. Whatever the Law of the Land says, slavery is not finished if you can conceal it or you are on the useful side of economics. Or, if you call virtual slavery, a 'zero-hour contract'.

The last graph I saw had an up-tick in the rolling average of Covid infections a couple of days ago, the first for a long time. I was not surprised, because of the opening of inessential shopping. I am still using mail order, though: printer cartridges delivered yesterday & have just ordered a new telly, as Avis is spending much time in front of our current one. Up from 32" to 50" is more than twice as large. The old one will go in her Study (so-called but with much of our Brexit food store in it) & I'll use it as a cinema to try my talks out. This will not much help Bozo's demand we spend to restart the economy, as a slice of the profit will go to Korea. I remember the day when one could buy a British telly.

On the possibly excessively optimistic side, I have also booked a cruise round about Easter between the Spring & Summer U3A terms. Because Fred's had to cancel next month's cruise, our cabin has been promoted from Poor Devils (below the Lounge Deck) to Rich Bastards (above it), outside my political comfort zone. We'll see how well my pro-EU tee-shirts go down up there. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 27th June 2020**

### **Still unequal on Saturday**

My brother Geof commented thus:

"Of course, people are not "equal". Ken & I are brothers, we share the same DNA, but are very different people. What would be nice is equal opportunity for all. i.e. A Universal Basic Income (so no one is starving), a university quality level of education from the creche upwards, a healthcare system that looks after us all so we have the health to take our opportunities and use them for the better of mankind and the planet we share. The human race could leap forward instead of being held back by the present "system". An example, Microsoft was lucky enough to have its rubbish operating system (DOS) selected by IBM to run on their PC's. With the money MS made from that, they consistently bought up any rival operating systems, stole from them or quashed them, to become even richer. If Linus Torvalds hadn't made Linux open source, we would be reliant on MS Windows to run all the critical systems like aviation, electricity handling, the Internet, etc. etc. Linux runs all of these with a small but robust kernel, but MS Windows needs huge computing power to allow it to crash at critical moments! The present system of inequality is helping to destroy us and the planet we share."

We are not as different as he suggests but have lived completely different lives. As he notes, it is deplorable that most bank & medical systems run on Windows. The giant IBM Servers all run on Linux, which is free & you know what I think about stuff being free. Chris needs to read "The Spirit Level" or the follow-up (which I have not read, yet but probably don't need to). In fact, my reading has dropped off during shutdown, except background stuff for my talks. This was unexpected. I am

picking my way through "The Silence of the Girls" by Pat Barker, a woman's take on the Trojan War, very good as usual. Avis is making Eggs Florentine for dinner. We have to use up more of brexit stores, in this case, tinned spinach. Keep well, Ken

**Sunday 28th June 2020**

### **Imperial Sunday**

I hope the 3rd world peasantry in Mainland Europe are really listening, as the Emperor Bozo grades them like traffic lights to guide us Brits about booking holidays abroad: red for unsafe, yellow for dodgy & green for ok. So, what happens if Jonny Foreigner decides to grade other countries for safety & Britain comes up Red, what with  $R > 1$  in various hot, not so much spots as square miles? How will that work in practice? It would be nice to take the Horrid Car over the Channel but who's going to tell us the potentially bad news? Is Bozo going to come on the telly & say please go on holiday to save (the government having to support) the Travel Industry but you can't go to all these countries because they have the infernal cheek to ban British tourists? He doesn't do bad news.

I have checked the P&O Ferries web site for August. They are running a limited number of ferries but referred me to the Foreign Office. I hit the link & asked about France. This was pretty vague until I got to the bit about International Travel Certificates, downloadable from the French Ministry of the Interior web site (!) which says we grubby Brits will have to quarantine for 2 weeks upon arrival and anyway, is your journey really, really necessary? This pretty well rules out Dover-Calais at the moment. In any case, they do not have an appropriate form for Brits to download from the web site, presumably because none of us qualify to land in France.

We could visit Avis' sister Alyson in Glossop sometime this Summer, even if Andy Burnham has to throw a Wall of Restriction around Manchester, as we can creep in via Derbyshire (unless etc.). However, we would want to combine that with a trip further North unless we meet a cordon of the Scots Guards at the frontier. Knowing what they did to Agricola, Septimus Severus & King Edward II, we won't be arguing the toss. Keep well, Ken

**Monday 29th June 2020**

### **Lovely Leicester**

Well, the surroundings are pretty good, especially Charnwood Forest but this is by the by. They have the prize for starting the 2nd Wave of Covid-19 infections. I was expecting this to happen after at the end of last week, as that is the end of the Covid incubation period after "inessential" shops opened & people thought the plague was as good as over on June 15th. In your dreams. I was, am, planning to stay in lock down until at least July 14th, two weeks after next Saturday's massive booze-up, organised by default by Bozo on US Independence Day to get us used to being the 52nd State of the USA (the 51st being Israel). My old Charter88 colleague Will Hutton said that 1 in 28 Brits become ill annually from what they have eaten. Shocking. Only in the USA, which does not have EU Food Standards, it's 1 in 6 or, to put it another way, 55,000,000 US citizens are made ill by eating sub-standard food every year. That's nearly the UK population & maybe, a whole load more people are not reported, as they haven't the money to go to the Doctors, having no insurance.

I try to have an underlying theme to these rants but not today. Wheels are coming off the government machinery & will continue to do so. While the sacking of the Head of the Civil Service sends a message that the Whitehall Contraption is going to get a make-over, this is not the way to signal it. All that will happen is a lot of unhappy mandarins, backed up by most of their staff, are going to be digging trenches. Cummings is right that Whitehall is out-of-date (& stuffed full of bods with inappropriate public school education), the way to start at the top is the way the Visigoth King (Grandpa) Reccared of Spain did it in 591. What he wanted to achieve was to get the Goth minority, who were Aryan Christians, to join the Catholic Church of the indigenous Spanish & Portuguese. (I'm not going into the doctrinal differences here but they really mattered then). Instead of issuing an Edict, he called a three month conference to get everyone to buy into the idea. We know, because the

Minutes are in the Spanish National Archive.

Reorganising Whitehall for the 21st Century is going to take a lot longer than that but the more consensual the approach, the more likely it is to work. It would need a firm hand at the top to avoid cans being kicked into the long grass (mixed metaphor of the day) but it took at least a year for the crazy merger of the Foreign Office & the Overseas Development Ministry to be organised, so badly that the latter are all upset. The firm hand needs to be very experience & cool, neither the crazed fanaticism of Cummings or the palsied one of Bozo the Clown. Starting with the sacking of the Head of the Civil Service in the early stages of a National Emergency which is likely to run for at least another year, as phase#2 of the plague merges with Brexit, is daft but we do not have adults at the wheel. Keep well, Ken

## **Tuesday 30th June 2020**

You may have thought the reaction of the Mayor of Leicester pathetic in saying he had not power to do anything about locking down the city, even though the government had talked about the possibility of 'local lock-downs' when they foolishly announced the present opening-up (let alone the next). This is because of the "ultra vires" rule, whereby local authorities can only do what an Act of Parliament specifically authorises them to do, which, as a local Councillor, I was subject to in the past. Thus, the government had suggested local lock-downs but not put into place any emergency legislation to allow City Council (or anyone else) to do it &, if they had, they would have had to specify just what a local lock-down amounted to & what the Mayor or Leader can do. (Some areas have executive mayors who can do stuff & others, ceremonial mayors, who can open flower shows & that's about it). The situation is complicated by the vast variety of local authorities created by repeated botched reorganisations of local government by (only) tory governments. There are some cities with executive mayors, some 'unitary authorities', some county councils (predominately tory) with local councils beneath them. Cities like London have an Executive Mayor but moderately powerful local authorities beneath them. Then, there are the Devolved Nations, each with a different type of parliament with different powers. The last stinker in this mix is that, any councillor working outside the ultra vires powers has to pay for what they have done out of their own pocket. If only that applied to government ministers as well!

So, as usual with the Clown & his Circus, nothing has been properly prepared. What have they been doing for the last 3 months? We know. Preparing for Brexit, hence the throwing of the hapless Sir Mark Sedwill under a bus, as he was not a True Believer. Only True Believers are required. I remember the fate of my friend Gerry, who, infinitely politely in meetings would say, "Have you thought of...". He was eventually chucked out. (I used to be blunter. On being told to go away & think about It, I would say, "I have. It won't work" but unlike Gerry, I knew I was Doomed).

While on friends, about 50 years ago, I had a Primary schoolfriend who had become a Hospital Porter. He tried to stop a runaway trolley carrying something heavy in an upper story. It pushed him out of a window & landed on top of him to finish the job. Hero. Dead. Low-paid. Keep well, Ken

## **Wednesday 1st July 2020**

### **Wotan's Wednesday...**

...Frica now being largely ornamental, at which she is undoubtedly good. Consequently, I swept & washed the Kitchen floor with my new mop, then had a bath on the wrong day, before which I tried to take the hair I can't see up to the hairline with my beard trimmer. Mops are a racket, as my previous one had a replaceable head, which was unavailable by time it wore out. They won't catch me that way again, as I bought a Lifetime's Supply of heads with the mop, enough to take me to 100 at the rate I wash the floor. This is called planning ahead of which there was little in Bozo's speech yesterday to go with the misfired wisecracks. I heard something about sharks cycling, reminding me of a saying that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.

I'm not sure that flashy infrastructure projects are what's needed, as even 'oven ready' ones take time



to get started & Bozo's record, especially at bridge-building, is zero. I'm much looking forward to the usual tory nimbies protesting that their local planning powers have been taken away by Professor Cummings & eyesores are going up on their village greens. On this occasion, they will be quite right for a change. The return of benefit sanctions, a vicious policy designed to make unemployment as depressing & stressful as possible, is exactly what is not needed. Millions of jobs are about to disappear, so having to prove that you have applied for a job per day will be pointless. I don't know what I would have done in 1972, the last time I was out of work, trying to convince the present system that just telling the Computer Grapevine that I was available would soon bring me an offer, as it did after 2 months. That is not their idea of job-hunting. It was ok then, as the Dole really was National Insurance, not a whip to beat the unemployed with. I will be seeing how this plays out in my own, now 50% extended, household. Anyway, the BBC has a useful 'fact-checker' on their web site, demolishing Bozo's speech, as it was full of old money & actual cuts.

I see Trump has reserved all the Remdesivir stocks for US use only. The rapacious Gilead Pharma make Remdesivir, on which they have a patent. If there was ever a case for breaking someone's patent & making Remdesivir a generic drug, this is it. Gilead charge, wait for it, \$3,200 for 6 doses. My generic prostate basher is 16p a dose, which I don't have to pay anyway. Given their record, there would be no point in asking Gilead to 'do the decent thing'. They would not know what you were talking about. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 2nd July 2020**

#### **Thursday terrors**

The bad news about job losses yesterday is only the beginning. Society as we know it is just not geared up to deal with this. Who is doing the rethinking? Since Bozo wants the retail & hospitality sectors to restart, perhaps we need to distinguish between needs & wants. We need food, housing & clothing. As social animals, we also do actually need quite a bit of the hospitality sector. There are a lot of 'wants' that we don't really need but we do need jobs, not necessarily to make money for people who already have too much but to establish our social usefulness & self-respect. We have done much work (mea culpa) to eliminate other people's work & one of the early motivations was to eliminate drudgery, without thinking that one person's drudgery was another's self-respect. Early on in lock-down, I asked one of the supermarket workers what it felt like to be an essential worker & he said, "I'm very proud", even though I don't suppose he is paid very much. One thing we have learned is that there should be lots of jobs going in the Care Sector but there is not a lot of money over there & it has been structured in such a way that much of the money going in is to pay off artificial debt that has been loaded onto the Care Homes by private sector interests. That is another issue but....

....we must go back to Leicester & another issue. It was the first (& is it the only?) BAME majority city & we do know that some sweatshops in the city insisted on even sick employees coming in to work but here comes the Conspiracy Theory. Are They trying a local lockdown in Leicester first because it is a BAME city & They want to see what the reaction is there before maybe locking down other locations? Fintan O'Toole, writing in the Irish Times suggested that all sorts of repressive measures are being trialled by Trump & Bozo to see how far they can push an anti-democratic agenda. It is an alarmist read but O'Toole is no looney. One thing has been clear - the knee-jerk reaction of the Civil Service, reinforced by the Official Secrets Act is that any information that comes into their hands is ipso-facto secret until or unless it is considered 'safe' to let it out into the panicky hands of an untrustworthy public & this 'rule' perhaps is being applied to such test & trace data that Dido Harding's outfit gets its hands on. The FT managed to get the Leicester data, two sets, one being the hospital data available to the Mayor & another set from Harding's group. This is not helpful & one thing that the government machine has long needed to learn is that 'their' data is 'our' data, paid for by our tax money. It needs to be clearly defined what data needs to be secret (James Bond stuff, for example) & what does not, including much so-called 'commercially sensitive' stuff, where people excluding from tendering, for example, have a valid case that a contract has been let unfairly. What possible good could be served by not giving the Leicester Mayor access to the central

data as soon as it was available? Just asking. Keep well, Ken

## **Saturday 4th July 2020**

### **Suicide Saturday**

I listened to our New Churchill (aka Bozo the Clown) yesterday welcoming his own, vague instructions about how to proceed during today's unlocking. Two things stood out: each time he thought he needed to mention 'business', he mentioned it before people, advertising his priorities in neon lights. The other was the one everybody noticed: keep two metres apart unless you can't, in which case, keep one metre. Usually, the only place you can't keep one metre apart is the scrum at the bar. I gather, all responsible landlords have made arrangements to stop this happening, which they should have done decades ago. Otherwise, one metre's 'distancing' sounds something you only do in preparation for an embrace, zero distancing & a possible exchange of body fluids containing 1 million bacteria. One thing is for sure: we won't be going out to lunch & thus, not Caffé Nero after, much as we miss Elenya & the girls, let alone members of our gang. I don't want any of you to die for your country's economy, either.

Perish the thought but maybe I have a nasty mind when I suspect that Bozo is disappointed in the casualty figures so far, despite being the highest in Europe (maybe excepting Sweden per million). He was hoping for a much higher clear-out of crumbles & other useless mouths, the sort of thing he fantasised about with his Bullingdon mates at Oxford. Given the totally inappropriate & largely unfunny wisecracks he peppers even the speeches that should be the most serious, he has not moved on from there.

From the list of 'safe' countries to visit, Portugal has been excluded, although they have been better at dealing with the outbreak than Britain, not that many have been worse. This is no way to treat our oldest ally, negotiated in 1383 & ratified by both parliaments in 1386, with the usual aristocratic girl thrown in when King João (ask me personally how to pronounce that: it's unspellable) married Philippa of Lancaster. I suspect it's Bozo's vindictive nature, as Portugal has a Socialist government that a) stopped austerity & b) made an economic success of doing so, thus setting a bad example to electorates across Europe & especially in Britain, where millions must now be regretting not putting Labour into power last December. Apart from Greece, which has told us to sod off for the time being, we do not know which other countries on Bozo's list as safe to visit are not going to reciprocate, as our rolling average daily death rate is hardly dropping much. It is dropping but very slowly.

While showing off my historical knowledge, one piece of good news is the all round sacking of David Starkey, a right-wing propagandist masquerading as a historian for racism. Ok, it's in retrospect but we can now clearly see that overseas empires (Portuguese invention, whoops) & slavery were crimes. Keep well, Ken

## **Sunday 5th July 2020**

### **Sensible Sunday**

It seems that not too many people have awoken with fat heads this morning, the government fears that all hell might break loose when the reins were loosened. People are more sensible than the government, untrusting of people who did not go to Public Schools, give them credit for (except when voting). Yesterday, I took some photos, one outside The York at the Angel & the rest along the canal. Apart from the steps to the University of the Arts, everyone seemed to be behaving sensibly. Now, we just have to wait for the clock to run down on the virus incubation period &, if there is a lurch upwards in cases, that is the government's fault for unlocking carelessly, not the fault of we, the People. That's enough for today.

**Monday 6th July 2020**

Thanks to the arrest of Ghislaine Maxwell, the whole Epstein Affair is back in the news, with the vultures hopefully circling over Prince Andrew's head. I can't say I'm bothered about that & if, as reported Maxwell has Covid-19, I wish her well enough to spill the beans. Meanwhile, it appears that the CCTV tape of Epstein in his cell was "accidentally erased". Hmm. Didn't Epstein's brother commission an independent autopsy which concluded, from which bones in his neck were damaged, that it had to be murder & not self-inflicted? I'm not suggesting the Queen muttered, "See to it, 007" but it's all frightfully convenient.

While the papers tried their best to sensationalise the slackening of lockdown, I take my cue from the guy in A&E who just said it was a "normal" weekend.

I'm currently assembling my lecture (142) on "After the 7 Year's War". In our personal pasts, the Lead Standard for Prime Ministers (as opposed to Gold Standard aka Attlee) has often been quoted as Lord North, because he "lost" the American Colonies. Apart from that, North had a lot on his plate in his 12 years at the helm. It was not exactly, a "Tory" government, more one of all the talents but it did take much 'management' on North's part & he also acted as Chancellor of the Exchequer, keeping the books in some sort of order, despite the costs of the American War. North's Big Problem with the Colonies was that problems had been building up for some time owing to tactless measures by his predecessors, exacerbated by King George III's bad attitude to the colonists. North could have given the Colonies more attention but there are only 25 hours in the prime-ministerial day, although the present occupant, surely destined for the Lead Standard himself, does not seem to have noticed. One does rather thank goodness that Lord North had not come up with the obvious now but not then, solution, which was to give the Colonies local self-government, thus stuffing them with their own defence costs & relieving Britain of them. We would have had the problem then of the Colonial tail wagging the Imperial dog but we seem to have ended up with that anyway, with our All Traitor Government anxious to sell us out to Trump. Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 8th July 2020**

**A wet Wednesday**

...so far. A good thing we did not leave Smokey out all night but I will be cooking spare ribs today, unscheduled, as Denise was on the telephone all night to a friend who's sister has just died. While we have no deaths we know about so far, that makes 5 in Denise's circle. Will we go back to the U3A & find missing persons? Hopefully not. One gets to like many people & love some. Alas, this brings us back to Bozo the Clown again. Has he finally overstepped the mark, with his criticism of Care Home staff? There must be rumblings in his own party about his collapsing public support. Elaine asks why politicians never apologise. Presumably, because they fear looking weak, when they actually are. I've always found an apology a useful weapon. It completely floors whoever is criticising one, as they are expecting what Bozo does, blustering bamboozism, which makes one look pathetic. An apology strengthens one's position, even if you don't mean a word of it. As for Care Homes, more another day.

Today is when Rishi Sunshine is going to make some announcement. All the pundits are trailing what may be in it. Best to wait & see. However, we do know that there is a Treasury unit, trying to work out how to levy a Wealth Tax. Gus MacDonald, one-time Head of the Civil Service has said that only the Tories could bring one in, because if Labour did, the Tories would pledge to repeal it & the Daily Fail would doubtless have a platoon of little old ladies, who would lose out. One of the problems, apparently, is that much 'wealth' is tied up in Pension Funds & housing. Now, if they were to effectively nationalise private rented property, I would not squeal a decibel, providing no one else keeps theirs either. If it turns out that all the usual dodgy trust funds, foreign resident's tax rip-offs etc. were retained, all the mostly Tory-voting small businesspersons who, like me, bought flats for their pension fund, would scream very blue murder. No wonder the Treasury unit is proceeding with cat-like steps.

One thing I am hoping for from Sunshine, is relief for the few million free-lancers, many if perhaps mostly in the Arts, who have so far slipped through safety nets into crevices leading to black holes etc. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 9th July 2020**

**Thursday tripe**

....as in Rishi Sunshine's statement yesterday, now to be called Rishi Moonshine, distilled out of fag packets. Outstanding are the really silly ideas. 1. Trying to bribe businesses into keeping jobs with £1,000 next year was dreamed up by someone who has never had a real job. If you're running a business, £1,000 is a puff of smoke. 2. Getting everyone to move their eating out, even if they feel they can afford to, from the weekend to early in the week will just lead to ways of the hospitality sector pocketing the handout to even out their business. They will need the money anyway. 3. Cutting Stamp Duty will put up the price of houses, the last thing the housing market needs. But the biggest failing from my point of view is doing nothing to help the genuine gig economy that has always existed. Help for the self-employed only works for those with phony self-employed status, what used to be called "the lump", like building workers & who ended up with zero hours contracts. My personal concerns are musicians, which is costing me. In Alan Sillitoe's not very good novel, "The General", the general captures a symphony orchestra, who he is supposed to murder & thus, wonders what he is fighting for. What is Moonshine fighting for? (Ok, we know. Leadership of the tory party). This reminds me of the joke from Osborne's time, that a String Quartet could make "efficiency savings", Osborne great mantra, by sacking the 2nd violin.

Nor is there anything for much of the Care sector. There was an interesting item in the Guardian by Ros Altmann, tory peer & ex-pensions minister, saying nationalising the Care Sector was no longer unthinkable but it started with a monstrous porky: that Thatcher had handed it over to local authorities. No, she didn't. She got the private sector to run it for profit & so they have, with 'clever' financial engineering schemes & very low pay. Now, they are bust, having taken the money & run & looking for bailouts, rather than liquidating & forcing the government to take them over. As usual, Rishi Moonshine will not grasp the idea that, is you are going to pluck money from the Money Tree, you need guaranteed ways of getting it into the lowest paid or unpaid pockets. So, having cherry-picked the Labour Manifesto, he should go one further & create State-owned industries to fill the gaps the private sector deems unprofitable: the Green agenda. If Rolls-Royce want to sack armies of engineers, take over the plant they will not be using & make tidal turbines, free power that, for reasons unknown, is not being properly exploited, outside the Orkneys, who export power to Mainland Scotland (or Alba, as we might soon be calling it again). Keep well, Ken

**Sunday 12th July 2020**

Facebook has let me out of the Naughty Corner & I'm allowed to post again. Last night, Avis & I watched the Italian Noir on BBC4 as usual. I knew Denise was on the loose, so checked the front door, to find her & her friend Francesca having a rum & coke wake for Francesca's friend, who showed Covid symptoms & died within hours, a possibility we had not heard about. On my disappearance, Avis joined the party & we did not get to bed until at least 2 this morning. Denise's declarations of personal devotion to Avis felt like drowning in hot treacle but were good to hear again.

So, late up today. Fortunately, I don't do thick heads, even on the two occasions I have been paralytic: when we won the 1964 election & when an enemy was sacked for something he had actually done. I checked up on the girls at about 11:35 & they seemed to be asleep but someone had let the cats out. I had nicked 2 of Denise's vegan sausages for a late breakfast at 10:00 & as usual on a Sunday, read the Guardian book reviews. (If we took the Observer as well, we would get Nothing Done on a Sunday). One by Anne Applebaum (in Melting Pot America, Apfelbaum became Applebaum, not Appletree, duh) describes a dinner with Bozo the Clown before he went Circus ring-to-ring clown & became

Prime Minister. He is quoted as saying that Brexit would be a total disaster. Well, now he has the chance or certainty, of proving it. The Wheel of Fortune turns & he cannot get off it.

Two more disasters beckon, both unrelated to Covid or Brexit. One is the suggestion of a reorganisation of the NHS, as if they have not done enough damage. It seems that someone (Cummings?) has decided that the 2012 reorganisation, which was designed to make Health Centres compete against each other, was wrong-headed & which they were told by every competent observer at the time. If nothing else, Covid-19 has demonstrated that health provision only works well with maximum co-operation. If this model is dismantled, fine but what else is being cooked up behind the closed door of No.10?

The other is China Policy. Ok, and the actions of the Chinese Government in two respects seem reprehensible in Hong Kong & Sinkiang (or however you spell it these days) but these are different cases. We only introduced democracy in Hong Kong when handing it back to China was inevitable. Before, it was a British-run dictatorship. It had only become thus as a result of the reprehensible Opium War of 1839 - 42, when we forced China to import the drug, one of our Imperial Crimes. As I keep stating, overseas empires are criminal enterprises, full stop. There is nothing sensible we can do about Hong Kong, so the balance of sense suggests, don't do anything to make things worse, especially like offering asylum to 3 million people who we cannot house & likely to be treated by the brexiteers as the Yellow Peril On Our Doorsteps. Sinkiang is different but not really our shout. It is Turkey's, as the Uighar people there are Turks & have been since Ever, ethnic Turkey having stretched from the Taklamakan Desert there to the Caspian Sea & later, to the Bosphorus. (Turkey-in-Europe, which nearly got to Vienna, was an Imperial possession, with little Turkic input to the Balkan DNA).

I am more appalled by our arms sales to Saudi Arabia. In any conflict, the first questions should be, who is fighting at Home & who is fighting Away. In Yemen, the bulk of the fighting seems to be done by two Away Teams, Saudi Arabia & Iran. Ah, but think of the jobs created. Yeh, sure. Jobs for robots.

**Tuesday 14th July 2020**

### **Tuesday early drama**

Domestic concerns. Avis got up at midnight last night & fell over, bruising her bum. I can no longer lift her up (12st) but she struggled into the bathroom. Still unable to get up, she insisted she could. After half an hour of these amateur dramatics, I rang 999. An ambulance was booked & I answered a lot of questions, some about Covid symptoms without them using the word. In about an hour (00:40), a couple of paramedics arrived. They popped Avis on the loo, then put her back to bed. Then, they ran a whole A&E variety of tests on her & wanted, 'just in case', to take her to hospital. I demurred, saying she had had enough sleep loss for one night & pulled my Power of Attorney. The Night Doctor rang up about 20 minutes later & went through more questions. Denise was out for a couple of nights, otherwise we would have been able to get Avis up. I remember this happening to my Grandmother when she was 88 & Heavy but I was 33 & Jane & I got her back into bed (after a 12 mile drive). Anyway, the NHS pulled out the stops. I wonder what that would have cost us after Bozo has his evil way with the NHS?

After I had ordered the ambulance, I pointlessly e-mailed Denise in Cambridge, not thinking. She was dog-sitting while her ex-girlfriend Harriet is on a course. Since they acquired the dogs together, this is a debt of honour. Harriet has a good job with an all-girly concrete company. (Men! Nothing is sacred these days & a good thing, too). They have gaudily-painted concrete mixers driving around.

I must scrub up to go & tell the Health Centre all about Avis, as I promised the Night Doctor I would.

**Wednesday 15th July 2020**

Firstly, thank you to all of you who sent sympathetic messages about Avis' fall. She was unsteady this morning at first but seems better for getting outside her breakfast.

I'm worried about Huawei. This problem goes all the way back to Thatcher & the de-industrialisation of GB. When it comes to actually making anything, she obviously decided that this was a threat, as it made money for ordinary, Labour-voting people, so their jobs had to be taken away. This was coupled with the sale of council houses, which made people afraid of going on strike in case they could not pay the mortgage, whereas Labour councils would be more sympathetic about the rent. By the time her depredations had finished, people only made money out of money or worked for foreign-owned factories, where they would be replaced by robots as soon as practical. The one World-leading business that could have saved us from the Huawei predicament was Arm Holdings, a successor to the BBC Micro. They design nearly all the processors in mobile 'phones worldwide but have recently been flogged off to the Japanese for peanuts. But what Arm did was design & then, licence chip foundries to actually make the processors, as we do not have any chip foundries in Britain. This means that we rely on firms like Huawei to provide physical infrastructure for modern living. An American asked a couple of decades ago, "What happens when everything is made in China?" & no one seems to have answered that.

So, to satisfy his mate Trump, Bozo the Clown has dictated that Britain is to slip years behind the rest of the World in fast Wireless Broadband (aka 5G), going to the extreme of ripping out existing infrastructure. Ok, a prediction. 5G is going to turn Africa, which has already taken to the mobile 'phone to skip the generation of copper-wired telephones, into an industrial powerhouse, with the sort of increases in standard-of-living that most of the Chinese have experienced in the last 30 years, while Britain slips further behind.

This is all too long-term to affect Bozo but the NHS is not. In his anxiety to smash it as soon as possible, he will try to hand it over to the US. The protest will make the French Revolution look like a tea party. Cressida Dick should be thinking even now about her reaction when push comes to shove, as the Army say. There are two guaranteed ways of going down in History, hero & villain, with some being both. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 17th July 2020**

I took Avis out for a trip yesterday, so no letter. Warning - between Newhaven & Brighton, all the garages have closed their doors, "because of the pandemic". Eh? Fortunately, there is one at Preston (North Brighton suburb) on the A23 that is open & do good sandwiches as well. (They asked if I wanted fuel & from my Standard Joke Book, I said, "I'm trying to give it up").

But yes, spies. The whole world is laughing at the coup that put the nasty right-wing but competent Julian Lewis in as Chair of the Spook Committee instead of Failing Grayling, Bozo's patsy. However, Bozo's reaction in kicking Lewis out of the Parliamentary Party demonstrates that this is no democratic government but a right-wing dictatorship.

The Shared Learning Project has been soliciting Lock-down Diaries, with a specific brief about how people have felt. Now, I could go through my diary but, partly thanks to your contributions to the debate, is running at nearly 237,000 words this year. The Project closes in 14 days time, so I could only get my diary if I went full-time on the job. I don't think this is going to happen somehow but I might try something from scratch. I also get comments on Facebook as well from some of my 97 friends. (100. 3 are on twice, somehow).

I do get constant reports from the USA in particular, from people who believe Covid protection measures are an assault on their freedoms. Where was they educated? We are Social Animals. Sure, you have freedoms but these do not include any freedom to do anything that harms anyone else. I

once bawled out a guy in a cruise ship loo who had not washed his hands. Hw said he always did before meals & I had to say, "It's not about you, it's about the rest of us" & so it is with horrid masks, which I have been wearing in shops while my glasses steam up (& none of the helpful suggestions work). We locked down too late for, perhaps, 70,000 people because the libertarian Bozo did not want to interfere with peoples' freedoms, especially to go to the races, which most people could not afford. To the likes of him, the State is always, the Nanny State. Quite: that is the rôle of the State. They never question the existence of an expensive Defence Department but that is only one job for Nanny. The NHS is another & they have made it clear that they loath that. We need to wait for New Year's Day for the full implications of this attitude to strike home. No guesses needed.

## **Sunday 19th July 2020**

### **Slothful Sunday**

Should be Slothful Saturday. We tried out the new World by going to Oregamo, Islington's posh pizzeria, which is usually on our Saturday circuit of 4 restaurants & is the one nearest home, as Avis is not too steady on her feet now & needs an arm to lean on. We were the only clients for quite a while, then two more couples arrived. This place is often too rowdy for comfort. We had to leave our telephone number, in case of test, trace & contact, something which is still not going well. After, to Caffé Nero, as the old usual. Not many there, either & none of our gang. It was good to see Clara behind the counter again but Elenia (2nd best looking woman in Islington) had gone back to Italy.

Apropos Huawei, I gather Nokia in Finland, have said they can supply all the 5G infrastructure we need but there might be a problem, as they are in the EU & Bozo might ban trade with the EU "in retaliation" for them not giving him all the access he wants to their market without paying his dues. When I started in computers, there were a lot of electronics firms: Marconi; English Electric; Elliott; ICL; Plessey to name a few. Bush & Sobell made tellies. I'm sure you could add others. They were part of the White Heat of Technology.

I have not posted since before Bozo's fatuous speech. You need access to James O'Brien's comment on Youtube for an analysis of the contradictions but I'm interested in something else. "If your employer thinks it's safe, go back to work in your offices, otherwise, work from home". What? Your employer is an epidemiologist? And offices? Where does Bozo think the work is done? Mostly, offices facilitate the work of workers or robots. They are an overhead. Some productive work is done where offices are actually factories, such as creating computer systems (my old thing) or design work but I seem to remember countless meetings, one where the Minute Taker wrote, "The meeting postponed the taking of no decision" in the early 80s. I doubt this was a slip of the shorthand. (The good news here is eventually, she got a real job, no longer having to take down bollox to circulate to chaps (mainly) who wouldn't read it anyway. She is still a friend of mine). Anyway, where you work in a pandemic is not your employer's call, not unless they have reached an agreement with the Trades Union officials & if the firm is not unionised, then you are in a perilous position, especially if your post could easily be filled if you die of the virus you may have picked up at work. Keep well, Ken

## **Monday 20th July 2020**

### **Monday mystery...**

....which is, where does all the time go? You would think with shedloads of normal activity unavailable, there would be plenty for everything. I was expecting to read a lot of books & write many more talks. As it is, books read has gone down (I note them in my diary). Another mystery is how issues I raise in these rants appear a couple of days later in the Guardian (Nanny State & being forced back to work unsafely, today). Maybe, there's something in the water.

The day is creeping up when we crumbles are no longer entitled to free TV licences. I don't know how the BBC intend to collect them but, if a form arrives in the post, I suggest, using a fat magic marker, you write (expletive of choice) OFF! on it & post it back. We have the worst pensions in Europe & Bozo the Clown says it's deplorable of the BBC but he forced them to do it. It's time for yet



another U-turn, Bozo. Short today, as I'm busy cooking. Keep well, Ken

## **Tuesday 21st July 2020**

### **Tuesday triumph**

This is for me. I have a dental appointment for next week (so soon!) & I had a haircut yesterday at the Refugee Hairdressers. A Brazilian from Brasilia, he charged me £9, 12.5% more than usual but he'd had his work cut out (!) so I gave him the full tenner. The floor looked like a fox had got into the sheep pen, even from my age-reduced thatch. My not having been to Brazil, we talked about Portuguese-speaking places I had been to. He tested my Portuguese, which amounts (in phonetic spelling) to Doysh char fash favour, Portuguese being like Geordie Spanish (don't tell them that: a fiercely independent lot & our oldest allies since 1283).

Not so good news for health workers, though, a pathetic pay rise without any new money, meaning cuts elsewhere & nothing for nurses, because of the lousy 3 year 'deal' that they were bullied into in 2018. Not a word about Care Homes, except that they were in the Private Sector & the ministerial buffoon on Radio 4 said, short of nationalising the sector, which would not happen, there was nothing they could do about it. Why not?

Elaine circulated about the COVID Symptom Study. Currently, the app is only for mobile 'phones but a web-based one is on the way. I checked.

I commented yesterday about getting behind with my reading. This includes "History Today". The June one has two useful articles: one, the usual 4 historians answering a question, which was (apropos our current situation) Does boom always follow Bust? The consensus was, "Nope" & one pointed out that some societies in the past had entered a Death Spiral after a Bust, citing two examples, Axum (Ethiopia) & Himyar (Yemen) & a permanent weakening of the Eastern Roman Empire during the 6th Century arrival of Bubonic Plague. Sounds familiar & they did not have an equivalent of Brexit to contend with as well.

Still, it's good news about haircuts & dentists. Keep well, Ken

## **Wednesday 22nd July 2020**

### **Wednesday's whitewash**

To describe the damning report by the Spook Committee as a whitewash may be going a bit far but bits were redacted, so they must have been appalling. The other thing commentators don't seem to have picked up on is that, even if the effect of Russian interference in the Brexit Referendum had maybe been 'minimal', that would have been enough to swing the close result & there is no suggestion that it was actually 'minimal'. Clearly, if Bozo had had his way & Failing Grayling was now the Chair of the committee, this report would have been shredded.

The other thing of interest in June's History Today was the everlasting struggle British governments have had with devising a Poor Law that works, provoked by the bad effects of Universal Credit & the permanent prejudice against poor people by the toffs or at least, well-educated, who form governments. Most poor people are unlucky (& remember Napoleon's question when someone was put up for promotion, "Is he lucky?"). Since human dignity is in large measure found in one's contribution to society, usually in 'work', getting put into a badly-paying or no job, is something one would want to get out of. In my young day, I signed on as unemployed twice at the Labour Exchange. They had no jobs of offer for the likes on me but I was not bullied into applying for jobs, the way people are today, as they left me to get on with it in my own way & at my own pace, which worked out, meanwhile giving me my dole. I've mentioned this before.

**Friday 24th July 2020**

**Bank robbers Friday**

....as in, compulsory mask wearing day today. I took Avis to lunch at Gallipoli Again (Gallipoli 'proper' only doing takeaways) yesterday & Caffé Nero after. A few more people around. I think Le Mercury is now off the itinerary, as it is even further & Avis has become frail in the lockdown & needs my arm, consequently failing to fall over a few times & taking little rests on the walk. Avis has yet to be in a mask-wearing situation but soon will be, as we frequently stop on our little journeys into the country at garages, where the bogs are in the mini-supermarket. I carry a spare for her in my pocket & she's not going to like it! On Wednesday, I made my first venture into Oxford Street (for foreign friends, it's London's High Street) to M&S for new bedroom slippers for Avis, which was like going through catacombs & the Apple Store, where they had queues outside one for buyers (me) & one for people with problems. My temperature was taken & I was escorted to what I wanted. All very efficient & faster than usual but it was a relief to take my mask off between stores & tube on the way back.

Getting into our area is now difficult, as the traffic is calmed to somnolence. Many places are closed off but there is one honey trap, where you could drive through, get photographed & fined. I am ok with this, as the Council needs the money. Apparently, it is all because of an app called Waze, which shows all the rat-runs on your route. I remember Exchange & Mart's Rat-run Atlas, which I described as the Most Evil Book after Mein Kampf, especially the Islington pages & feel the same way about Waze. Fortunately, so does the Council Leader, Richard.

One thing has struck me as a bit odd. The Russians have been accused of hacking into Covid Vaccine research. I understood everyone was sharing everything, Pugwash-style. If this is not the case, it's a disgrace. It does not matter who gets there first & there will probably be several types & several failures. I would be interested to know what my Niece Mara makes of it but don't want to interrupt her efforts with stupid questions, as vaccines are her field. You keep well, Ken

**Sunday 26th July 2020**

**Weekend wobbles**

Someone give me strength. Now, they tell us that being overweight makes you vulnerable to Covid-19 & Bozo the Clown & his Circus are dithering about whether to ban adverts for junk food until after 21:00 on the telly. If they are so bad & they are, just for goodness sake, Ban Them. My Food Scientist 1st wife would have agreed. The trouble is, B the C is a Libertarian & does not like telling people what to do. What does he think the advertising "industry" exists for? Ok, let's tell him: it exists to get round peoples natural inclinations not to self-harm, either by not getting into debt to buy things they don't really need or, in this case, to eat stuff which is Bad For You. This is what the State (aka Nanny State) should be protecting people against. One could make a case that someone can only be a "Libertarian", if one is at ease with allowing people to self-harm, as is their free choice. No, it isn't. The second best psychologists go into the Health System: the best go into advertising or....

....they go into political campaigning for really bad people, who, if their intentions were undiluted or undisguised by these rogue psychologists, would never get to be Parish Councillors, let alone Presidents or, in our case, Prime Ministers. I think I must have read all the reviews of the book by Trump's Niece, Mary by now. I will buy it when the paperback comes out, not because I'm mean with money but I sure am with shelf space. The gist of the book seems to be that Trump the President is a monster, carefully crafted by his father, Fred Senior because his eldest brother was considered a weakling, as he allowed human sympathies to get in the way of the real business of life: making money. The weird thing is that Fred Senior failed in that. If Trump the President had just put the money he inherited in a boring old savings bank, he would be richer now than he is, having lost more than he gained. I imagine that, next January, President Biden is going to have to send the army into the White House to get Trump out, if he has not finally done the decent, thing, as Hitler did. He might, as the thought of being dragged out in handcuffs is just the sort of humiliation his niece has

written he would not be able to cope with. Meanwhile, I suggest you look at some of the video from Portland, Oregon of what Trump's Stormtroopers did to a peaceful BLM demo. In the USA, policing is a local responsibility but there are some National forces like the Drug Enforcement guys & the very dodgy Department of Homeland Security or MI5 in English but MI5 do not have police powers, whereas the DHS does.

Our problem is similar but subtly more difficult. The public image cultivated by Bozo is not the Great Leader but the faintly (very) amusing jolly buffer, an image Trump would die rather than present. However, the underlying Will to Power is exactly the same. Bozo makes himself easy to underestimate by this ploy. Even his habit of starting sentences with, "We will have the greatest, World-beating...." and never actually delivering, is all part of this image-building. He is as ruthless & fundamentally evil as Trump & it was a National tragedy that Covid-19 did not kill him in the spring. I am a naturally kindly person but anyone who disagrees with that is a hypocrite or so deluded as to need counselling. Keep well, Ken

### **Wednesday 29th July 2020**

#### **Blissful Wednesday**

From this, you can gather that Chez Baldry are having a good week. It started quite well on Sunday, with me taking Avis out into the Chilterns & a bit further in the Horrid Car. The M4 was closed after Junction 6, which promised fun-&-games tomorrow, unless they are doing one of those quick bridge swaps, as they are finally having to widen it. I had not been through the Slough-of-Despond Trading Estate for, maybe, 4 decades. The new buildings made the old look even grottier but a job's a job, you've gotta take what's going (as I once said to the Chairman of Shell, when he told me what he did). Never mind, I intended, & did take Avis round the Thames from Maidenhead to Henley & would have come off at Junction 7 anyway. Nice day. As Denise was still self-isolating, I made a veg. curry to her formula & now I know why hers taste more Indian than mine - she puts coconut milk, cream of coconut & cheese in them. This one was basically fried tofu, which I had marinated in light soy sauce (sell-by date 2009). I dumped a portion outside the Attic door for her. Something learned.

On Monday, Denise's Covid test results came back clear but, in the evening, she went off for an Irish celebration with her Mother & has not been seen since! On Tuesday, I contacted Elizabeth-Jane, my Harpy cousin & we've arranged to go down to Dartmoor to see her on August 22nd.

But today, oh joy! oh bliss! I went to the dentist, something I had been looking forward to for, it must be, months now. A nice Ukrainian girl, she was delighted we had been there, which always gets one off on the right foot & the same reaction from her Polish assistant. She cleaned my teeth pearly white & booked me in tomorrow for the filling, which had fallen out, so I'm over the Moon. (Which reminds me: one of life's little pleasures is teaching native German English teachers, who usually reveal themselves if I'm speaking Bad German in a café, that the opposite of Over the Moon is, Sick as a Parrot). Keep well, Ken

### **Sunday 9th August 2020**

#### **Ken's been quiet**

Elements of normal life are still thin on the ground, as I keep Avis out of harm's way as much as reasonable. A couple of meals out per week & maybe, three trips to Caffé Nero, mainly to give her some exercise. Social distancing is maintained, partly, I suspect, in the Caffé by lack of custom although we have seen my friend Aysh from Algeria twice. Super-beauty Elenia has come back from Italy to behind the bar. Two more meals out planned this week, both connected to Avis' 85th birthday next Thursday.

Lesley put me on to Heather Cox Richardson's American newsletters some time ago. There has been a battle in Congress between the House (Democrat) & the Senate (Republican) about giving aid to struggling Americans. Now, Trump has stepped in using Emergency Powers but it is not clear if

what he is proposing will save a single job or prevent a single eviction. Presidents cannot spend money the House has not voted. It's one of the safeguards on the Constitution. Quite how "Emergency Powers" fit into this, I'm not sure but the existing money ran out on July 31st & that's History now. It is, of course, all about the election & trying to paint the Democrats as "extremist".

Heather deplores the Covid-19 rate in the USA but it's worth our remembering that their death rate is about half ours at the moment & Bozo claims we have had a "success". We now have a not so controlled experiment for Brexit going on in Lebanon. As an aside, in World War One, we blew up the Messines Ridge with much less  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$  than blew up Beirut Port, although it had some aluminium powder in it to give it a bit more welly. The IRA bomb that caused (in today's money) over £1,600,000,000 of damage in Bishopsgate was 'only' one ton of  $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ . It will be worth watching further developments in Lebanon, as a country with a worthless currency &, now, insufficient port capacity, tries to import the food it does not grow itself. When the explosion of a no-deal Brexit devastates the landscape here, we are likely to feel parallels but hopefully, will have "learned lessons", as the saying goes. Keep well, Ken

### **Monday 10th August 2020**

#### **Monday on Morals.**

I remember when Smart Weapons were brought in & described as "fire & forget" but plenty of people have commented on Bozo the Clowns use of the words "moral imperative", while his moral imperative is "father & forget", so I won't expand on that. However, he spoiled it all by referring to "the Economy". We all know they're linked, kids in school = parents back at work, producing what Marx called, "surplus value", i.e. work done they don't get paid for which goes to rentiers usually, the shareholders. Ok, I'm involved on that side but, if we had decent pensions in the UK, I would not need to be.

What is alarming is the refusal of the government to put a test-trace-isolate policy into schools, which they have actually announced they will not do. Surely, this is imperative? However, that the National TTI system they set up unnecessarily under Telephone Girl (Dido Harding) appears to be a failure, when they should have funded Local Authorities to do it. So, let's look at that "should have".

Bluntly, the government does not have the "moral tools" to deal with any of this crisis, let alone the Brexit one to follow. A lesson from History: there was a famine in Ireland during 1782-3. The Tory government had just fallen over losing the American Colonies &, for the second time, Wentworth, Lord Rockingham briefly became Prime Minister. He got a grip & closed the Irish ports to keep the grain in Ireland. The Tory lords & grain dealers hated this but Rockingham was a Whig, so sod them. Come the 1845-9 Irish Famine, the Whigs had been infected with Free Market ideas, so even after the Peel Tory Government failed, the incoming Whigs thought the Market would provide. It did - for the landlords, who evicted their indigent, starving tenants & found a legal way to strip small farmers with a quarter of an acre or more of the land they actually owned. Meanwhile, thousands of tons of grain were exported to England, unlike 60 years before. Moral: if you rely on Market Forces to deal with a disaster, you will exacerbate the disaster but make a few people Very Rich Indeed.

Another lesson from the Irish Famine is that it has never been forgotten or forgiven. The population before was just under 9 million. Even today, it is about half that. However, 45 million people Worldwide are entitled to Irish Passports & currently, have right of residence in the UK, not that any are likely to take that up in the present circumstances. Keep well, Ken

### **Thursday 13th August 2020**

#### **Thursday & Avis is 85.**

Rather hard to believe, except that she has slowed down somewhat & uses me as a walking stick when I'm available. Otherwise, she gets herself around ok. We have clocked up 37 years together & the only thing we ever argued about was the 2nd Gulf War. I said it would make things worse & it

did. The celebrations started on Monday when we (including rent-a-daughter Denise) went to Hillingdon to feast with my rent-a-little-sister Michèle & her husband Alan. Michèle has 43 years service in my gang. Yesterday. Avis' grandson Freddie came to lunch at Gallipoli (our tactfully-named Turkish restaurant, not). Having got his degree, one project he was on was instantly hit by the lock-down but he does not appear to be starving, yet. Tonight, we are going to Islington's poshest restaurant Fredericks (run by a socialist) with Denise & Philip-next-door. (below, photo Denise)



I can't avoid the news: the World-beating economic disaster record to go with the World-beating Covid death record. The figures for the latter were already rigged & they are rigging them again but there is no way they can get them down to less than 50% more than the next worst set from the USA. For clarity, the real figure is the excess deaths, not the certified CV deaths, so if someone dies of something that would have been treatable if CV had not gobbled up all the resources, that death was caused by CV. Dying from an indirect cause is like dying from a ricocheted bullet. So, only the Office for National Statistics count is real. I'm surprised they have not been shut down. The last disaster is the exam results but that is still unfolding. I'll come back to them another day. Related: someone on Facebook totted up what they had had to borrow to get their degree: £45,000 but when he checked his Student Debt, it was £69,000. This is another time-bomb to add to the exploding ones.

I have been following Heather Cox Richardson's reports from the USA (Google her). They are bit like mine, only daily, longer & wiser. She has been going on about Biden picking Harris as his Running Mate & what a good idea that was. Trump does not seem to know how to react, except with one of his Primary School level taunts that she is 'nasty'. That, in right-wing American circles just means 'black', hardly news & not going to turn anyone not already in his base vote. As a prosecutor, Harris was very tough on crime, so they cannot get at her that way. Hopes for a positive US Election result have just increased. Keep well, Ken

**Sunday 16th August 2020**

**Sunday - school?**

It has to be the exam cockup & some little-commented upon curiosities but first, that algorithm. They are not yet or ever going to publish it, yet algorithms include the prejudice of the writer. While as consumers, we can usually trust the design of consumer goods who's inner workings most have little idea of, like mobile 'phones, when it comes to tools used as aids for professionals, a very high level of confidence is required. That includes knowing what is going on inside them. The people assessing the results of, "Computer say..." should have a clear idea of what Computer is thinking & use it for advice, not decisions. One of the failings of Universal Credit is the inability for JobCentre staff to override "Computer says No". (I wrote a huge AI program to help me write music. It was helpful & worth doing but never quite right).

The most alarming thing about this grade allocation system or whatever, is it appears to be biased in favour of private schools, which have enough bias without artificial help. Grades for some of their pupils were increased, something that does not appear to have happened to anyone at a school for the peasantry. None of this would have happened if the creepy Michael Gove had not wrecked the multi-input grade assessment system during his spell as Education Secretary, with his distrust of "experts", which is what teachers are. No one who has not taught has any idea of the professionalism of teachers. I've only taught highly motivated people & I know that teaching school is a whole higher level. (That lot was written before breakfast. On the news, we are told they are changing the rules on grades yet again. This is not a Carry On film). Gove's advisor was the ubiquitous Cummings, with his amateurish fingers in every pie. I say "amateurish" because in his greatest "triumph" so far, the Brexit vote, he was losing, using his so-called analytical methods & had to resort to crude racism in the last few days to get Brexit over the line, read Tim Shipman's, "All out War".

Yet, the private schools are not 'good schools', as supporters always say when anyone proposes abolishing them. They are very bad schools, as they reinforce a feeling of superiority in pupils who's only recommendation is the money of their parents. Then, these pupils become people who go on to select others similar to themselves & the public wonder why the 20th Century was a time of continuous decline in Britain, on-going. One wonders if Bozo the Clown & his Circus see these artificial grade settings as an opportunity to roll back some of the "damage" done in their eyes to the Social Order by the 1944 Education Act, where the far-sighted Rab Butler (Tory) realised that the country was going to need far more bureaucrats than the private schools were producing & facilitated the education of scum like me (possibly saving me from a lifetime of shoe-making, which may have been a better use of my time than making the banking system more efficient).

While I am on schools, I deprecate the use of the term "children". It has been noted that Primary School children seem less liable to the Covid-19 virus than secondary school "children", who react more like adults. The reason is obviously that, apart from some in the 1st 2 years in secondary school, these are not children. They are capable of breeding & are therefore, adults. One reason 13-year-olds are so difficult at school is just that, raging hormones. My Father & my Wife's were out at work at 13. It used to be the age of maturity or round about that in the past. You could find yourself ruling an Empire at 13 in centuries past. Keep well, Ken.

**Monday 17th August 2020**

**Monday - I have nothing to add...**

....to Nesrine Malik's article in today's Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/17/anyone-left-government-blame-woes-covid-minorities-teachers>

...except that the blame lies not with the government, who's worthlessness & crookedness had been demonstrated before the election but with anyone who failed to vote Labour at that election.

Keep well, Ken



The headline was, "Soon there won't be anyone left this government hasn't blamed for its mistakes". Quite.

## **Sunday 30th August 2020**

### **Sunday - Time for a new newsletter**

In South Mimms Motorway Services yesterday, nearly everyone was wearing a mask but in Islington, maintaining social distancing in Upper Street is difficult, with few masks in evidence. There had only been one person without a mask in Sainsburys on Friday. So it is hard to tell if people think the worst is over or what? The indication that it is not, is that the government has started to indulge in massive lying about the figures. They downgraded the number of deaths recently to only include people who had died within a month of the infection being diagnosed, whereas we have heard on the news of people who have survived on ventilators for three months & been cheered out of hospital. In fact, the only true figure is the ONS number of excess deaths, pushing 70,000. This is because if you died of, say, cancer because the hospital was clogged with Covid cases, you died Because Of The Covid Pandemic. The second form of lying is the daily figures. For Saturday, they claimed No, Zero, Zilch new cases, when there were 1,106 & there were 1,522 new cases on Friday. The trend is upwards, just as it was after the first phase of Spanish 'Flu in 1918 & that did not go well (if you'll excuse the pun).

So, is this the time for the government to be driving pupils back to school & people to their "offices", with threats of fines & sackings? Marks & Spencers have had a massive outbreak in a sandwich factory, because the workers are so poor, they cannot afford to isolate if they are feeling unwell & no one without savings can survive on sick pay. Scotland & Northern Ireland, which have been more cautious, have seen 53 school outbreaks already. The foreign presses are laughing like drains at the ineptitude of Bozo & his Circus. So, it would appear, is the Vice-Chair of their 1922 Committee but he's not laughing, as Labour have caught up in the polls & about time, too.

So, here's a modest proposal: The £13 per day for people isolating is worse than an insult. As they are under government orders, that surely makes them government employees pro tem & they should receive at the least the minimum wage. Last weekend, we visited my Harpy cousin Elizabeth-Jane on Dartmoor, staying in the pub, as her house is tiny. She has, at my request, noted down her adventures with Universal Credit since lock-down. It is a pitiful sum & the JobCentre+ people then whittle it down as much as they can, as they get a bonus for doing so. I slip her a few bob occasionally, which is not my responsibility. It is the State's. When this is all over (& I hope, not by a return to the dreadful previous "normal"), we will publish her record.

Which reminds me to remind you - I have never suggested a possible government policy that would do other than cost me money if implemented. For your schadenfreude, rents are going down in Central London. So much for our pension fund. Cheers, Ken

PS re: Land of Hope & Glory (words which Elgar hated), I'm only ever invited to sing it on the last night concert on a cruise ship. I have always thought that the lines:

"Wider still & wider,

shall thy bounds be set,

God, who made thee mighty,

Make thee mightier yet."

were a reference to cruise ship food. Lock down has not helped me work off the rations from the last Xmas cruise.

## **Monday 7th September 2020**

### **A new week....**

Lots of stuff to comment on. On Saturday, Denise left & has gone to Stockport. Although it was all kisses & cuddles, I think that she had not really worked out her rôle here & was not comfortable with

sharing the rest of the house, so was a bit cramped in the Attic. The cats did not help, either. Never mind. Back to the Drawing Board. I still had to get & send her pills oop North today.

Alarming news about Brexit. Bozo intends to rat on the agreement he signed to get out of the EU by passing a new Act of Parliament unwinding the border down the Irish Sea. This kills the Good Friday Agreement, undermines Sinn Fein & gives credibility to the Continuity IRA & their ilk, as in, look, we told you so, never mind what the Eire government thinks (which we are being told). The other big result is that other countries, with which Bozo intends to trade, now know that a deal with Britain is not worth the paper it's written on, so won't bother to get into one. So, where will be getting half or so of our food from? A famine will certainly thin out the surplus population.

Which brings me to Covid. Only in the alternate press are the figures for school closure since they reopened last week published. There have been a lot of immediate reclosures. Is there a D-notice on the figures? The government have been rigging figures before anyway. In deaths, it seems that India (population 1 billion) has caught up with Britain (pop. 65 million i.e. 1/16th of India's). Commentators have noticed that the new rise in infections is different from the first rise. Obviously. Covid took the 'low hanging fruit' the 1st time, hence the carnage in Care Homes, so it is now attacking a different population & the young now seem more vulnerable. There is much talk about the risk of 'taking it home to Granny' but Granny may be immune, as not culled the first time round. On the other hand, the first wave of Spanish 'flu was not that deadly. The 2nd, 3rd & 4th waves were but the 4th wave did not affect Britain much. The thing about 'flu is that it has the wit to realise killing its hosts is a bad career move & mutates to something less deadly. We don't know what Covid does, yet. Anyway, talk to anyone in the NHS below top level & they are dreading the Autumn. I'll make a risky prediction: Avis & I, despite our 'underlying health problems', never catch these seasonal respiratory diseases, despite (in my case) ongoing breath issues. This suggests we have the right antibodies anyway. We shall see. Note that in 1918, the German Army's high Spanish 'Flu rate was exacerbated by poor rations, which brings us back to famine.

I'll be going quiet (sighs of relief all round) from Wednesday for a few days. We, too, are going oop North on a photo trip to various locations for my History talks, on which I have been 'working from home' & keeping sane. First stop is Kettlewell & the Tor Dyke, if I can find it.

### **Wednesday 16th September 2020**

#### **Lost for words**

In Sweden in 1766, the Caps Party won the election, ousting the Hats Party, who had been in since 1738 & had, among other things, run 2 disastrous wars. (About the Party names, I jest not). Much to the Hats (right-wing) horror, the Caps called a Budget Audit, uncovering widespread corruption (surprise!). The Caps were peasants & clergy, so not exactly left-wing.

After Ed Miliband's roasting of Bozo on Monday (see it on YouTube), we (Labour) should be calling in all the expensive contracts, let to irrelevant companies (probably friend of Cummings) for stuff that does not work at unbelievably high prices without going through the usual Civil Service commissioning procedures & the excuse of "commercial confidentiality" will not do. The app that never worked allegedly cost millions. If someone tried to charge £100,000 for an app to the spec. given, that would raise eyebrows in the tech industry. There is so much relevant code out there free of charge that I could probably have knocked the app up in a fortnight, if I was still in the business & so could many others. (I'm a bit out-of-date now). That is before we start on the PPE, test & trace & other disasters.

It won't happen. The Opposition have no power to force an audit. What they can do is press on the fact that, having had half a year so far, to prepare for the worst, the government has just kept its fingers crossed. While Miliband had Bozo sweating on Monday (& Bozo fled the Chamber as soon as he could), this was on the breaking of the Law. Otherwise, best to steer clear of Brexit issues until after the disaster happens & concentrate on the Covid debacle. We peasants just have to wait on



events while worrying about fresh vegetables.

What happened next in Sweden? I think you should be told. The King was useless & was, effectively, a constitutional monarch. He died & his son told the parties to get their act together in the National Interest. No way, so he ran a coup in 1771 & became an Absolute Monarch (Gustav III). This shows the risks an elected but totally incompetent government runs. Watch out for the Man on a White Horse. Cheers, Ken

#### **Thursday 17th September 2020**

##### **Loyal toast**

The National Anthem's 18th line is "May she defend our laws," she being the Queen. Last Summer, when Bozo tried to prorogue Parliament illegally, she did not & it was up to the Supreme Court to do so. So, what is our (the peasantry's) recourse when the Law is broken? Well, we go down to the Nick & complain. Until that Bill has gone through all its stages in Parliament, no law has been broken, although I wonder whether it amounts to a conspiracy. The law on conspiracy is notorious vague. Anyway, once Brenda has signed the Bill, it becomes an Act. Then, we can all go to the Nick, ask them to charge the Queen & then, all of us, e-mail all the papers & BBC, telling them what we have done & about the likely frosty answer we got from the cops.

#### **Sunday 20th September 2020**

##### **Tales out of School**

On Radio 4, this was on Friday morning just after 8, Hapless Handcock was being interviewed. It may have been a slip of the tongue but that is when the truth crept out. The virus is out of control. This is not new News but admitting it was. No one else in the Media seems to have spotted it. Certainly not the interviewer. However, by this morning, over 1,300 schools have had to shut, not the 300 we have been told. As usual, we have been made promises about the number of tests 'soon' to be available. Yawn!

We have been told this morning that people who do not self-isolate are going to be hit with swingeing fines. Apart from people like Avis & me, who have no plans to self-isolate, meaning how will we get fresh vegetables, quintessentially, non-self-isolators are people who cannot afford not to go to work & so far, 'schemes' to make sure they can so not afford by giving them money, have all failed. Ask my musician friends, the ones not on my 'payroll'.

At PMQs on Wednesday, Angela Rayner took advantage of her own experience to punish Bozo the Clown, Maybe she is unique in the Commons by having worked for a living in the Care sector. Bozo had no idea what she was talking about. This was not quite the spit-roasting that Ed Miliband had given him but it was her first PMQs as Acting Leader & Leaders have to seem a bit more measured than anyone else. As Foreign Secretary, Bozo had learned to fear women on top of their game from Our Emily, who acted as if she was a fox in the hen house when questioning him.

Bozo has got to decide whether the arrival of the Second Wave (not that the First Wave had receded that much) is good news, as in, it will maybe bury the brexit news when it arrives, or bad news, as in, it's all his fault (which it is). However, Labour is refusing to be dragged onto the brexit playing field, where Bozo thinks he rules supreme.

Pity the poor people (however wealthy) trying to navigate the rules. I'm not sure if the Rule of Six applies in Islington. Yesterday after lunch, Avis had gone on ahead & I accused (?) a woman taking photos of buildings of being a tourist. No, she came from Highgate (there's posh). The conversation resulted in me taking her home for tea, in which Avis soon joined us. We exchanged stories for a couple of hours, all sitting a bit too close in our kitchen, I suppose. She was 61, so we were all presumably, 'vulnerable'. Did we break any rules? I think we were one metre apart. On Friday, Philip passed me a beer through the trellis. Was that ok? We often pass each other beers, as there is an

unspoken rota.

Various areas are now in one form of lock-down or other but that last thing the government seems prepared to do is lock down a pub. The Tories used to be notorious for representing the brewers' interest (the Beerage). Old habits die hard. So do the grouse. You can only photograph them in a group of six but you can shoot them in any size group. The rule is that, if you want go twitching as a group of 7, carry shotguns. You had better load them, too, in case the police want to check if you're a genuine 'good chap' or just faking it. That makes sense, doesn't it?

**Monday 5th October 2020**

### **Viral tales**

Let's start the week with something from the USA (where they have nearly caught up with Britain in cases per million). Some one called John Cammo posted this on September 18th, well before any of Trump's entourage contracted the virus:

"Trump's October surprise will be the announcement of his "infection". Fake, but quite dramatic This twist will blow Biden off the screens the "Trump COVID watch" dominating every minute of every day. Then 14 days later, Trump will emerge, 100% cured by hydroxychloroquine."

How prescient but enough from the Colonies. But something much more serious has been exposed, to deafening media silence, an Amnesty International report, available on

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR4531522020ENGLISH.PDF>

...all on one line It is entitled:

"UNITED KINGDOM: AS IF EXPENDABLE: THE UK GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PROTECT OLDER PEOPLE IN CARE HOMES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

It exposes that the policy of sending Covid-19 cases from hospitals to Care homes was a deliberate gerontocidal policy or mass-murder in plain English. In a recent essay, I said the virus had taken the "low-hanging fruit" in the early stages, not realising at that time that this had been deliberate. Death rates have indeed dropped but cases are skyrocketing. All this talk about "computer glitches" is the natural product of bulls, as they have doubled again today (22,961). Even on the rolling average, cases last week were greater than the worst of the April to June.

When we visited Scotland last month, I quipped several times, that the only souvenir I wanted to take home was their Prime Minister. Twice the reaction was, "You can have her" but it fell silent when I said we would send ours back up for them. Whatever one thinks of Sturgeon, she has levelled with the Scots. Down here, the government is scared to level with us & then, wonders why we don't trust them.

To finish, there are Conservative-voting areas with higher rates of infection & not under lock-down than Labour areas which are locked down. You can check this: West Lancs 137 cases; Barrow 112; Darlington 110; Craven 109 & Newark 84, all with Tory MPs & not locked down. Chorley 73; Wyre 71; Lancaster 66; Oadby 63 & Wolverhampton 56, all Labour & all locked down. They are taking the mickey. Cheers, Ken

Thursday 8th October 2020

#### Thursday - Spreadsheet analysis

Since this was close to my line of business, I suppose I am expected to comment on it. Spreadsheets, the 1st personal computerised one being VisiCalc on the Apple II in 1979, have always been used by accounts on paper. They are really useful & my accounts, both domestic & business, run on linked spreadsheets because the scope of the company is sufficiently small to be able to do that but there is nothing small about Test & Trace.

However, in the broader IT Business, I think we've all met smart-arse idiots, who think they don't really need an IT department because they can do it all on Excel, so why spend all that money on boffins? Here's an example of why. I even had bankers ask me what were all these files the system was generating & I had to explain (to bankers, FFS), that they are the audit trail. The ones called the date & IN are what came in & the ones called the date & OUT were what the system sent out. People who do not understand IT systems should not be allowed near IT tools that they don't understand.

Classically in Britain at least, departmental managers try to conceal what is going on in their department from the IT people because they don't want to reveal stuff & don't want their data subjected to the safeguards & integration with the rest of the company's business because they want control & sometimes, to play company political games to further their own careers, the latter usually back-firing on them in the long run.

There are two alarming things about the shambles, revealed in penny packets, in Test & Trace this last week. The first is broad brush - why were they using Microsoft software for anything? It is notoriously flaky, being subject to easy security attacks. This is because it is based on the old DEC (remember them, little for the time, PDP-x computers from the later 1960s & long since gone bust?) VAX Operating System VMS, written in the days when security concerns were the least of their worries. However, VAX VMS was written after Unix, not before & Unix (& Linux, which is an open source clone of Unix), being designed to run the infant Internet on, was grounded on security issues from the bottom up. Incidentally, the first run of the Internet was on October 30th 1969. No government system should run on other than Unix or Linux. Apple, who had also written their own operating system in the early 1980s, gave up on it & built an Apple-like user interface (what you see on the screen) on top of Unix, which is why Apple systems are so much more secure than Windows.

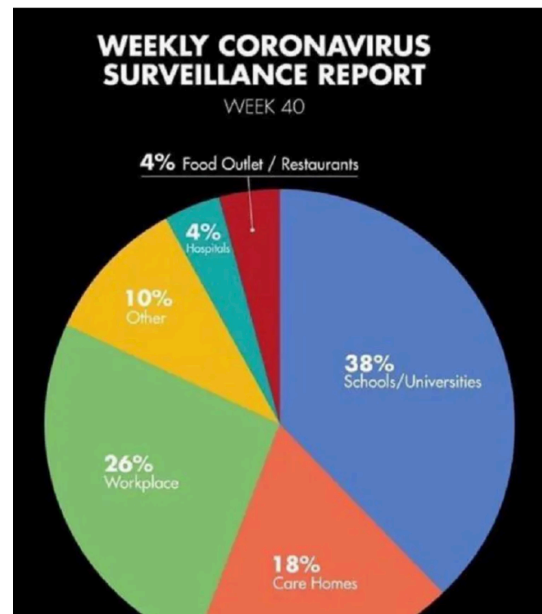
The second alarming thing is why were spreadsheets being used anywhere near the Test & Trace system. Presumably, this was an attempt to do it on the cheap but they would still have had to pay Microsoft. If Excel cannot scale up from a million lines, a free spreadsheet program that runs under Linux (where all the code is in the public domain) could have been scaled up to accommodate the whole population, 65 million lines & the corresponding data base, which should have extracted the spreadsheet data to build a map of contacts, scaled up in a similar manner. For those of you who think that free software cannot be as good as stuff you have to pay for, you should consider two things: 1. Linux is exposed to constant peer review & bug fixed on-going & this is the killer 2. All big IBM systems & the servers that feed you the Internet all run on Linux.

Connected to this shambles is the fact that Test & Trace was put out to the private sector, Telephone Girl, a Tory peer married to a Tory MP without competition. In Bozo's Conference Speech, he suggested that after the pandemic & by implication, Brexit, the private sector will roar ahead to rebuild Britain. This is a National Crisis. Last time we had one, the Second World War, the government ran everything because that was the only way we were going to win, which we did. The Private Sector did as it was told. What holds the private sector back is not Brussels & Health & Safety Law, all of which has never done the Germans any harm since the War but a lack of managerial skills & imagination. You will recall the Lucas initiative, where the Trades Unions at the Lucas plant put forward a scheme to make socially useful products, which would have made the company shedloads of money. This was rejected on the 'principle' that the workers' job was to do as they were told & not infringe managerial prerogatives by coming up with ideas of their own.

Friday 9th October 2020

### Please just level with us

The on-line newspaper Skwawkbox, which is usually reliable, published Public Health England's own pie-chart of from where Covid-19 infections have spread. Only 4% have come from the Hospitality Sector but that is the one threatened with massive closures & job losses. I have attached the pie chart for people who don't believe me. Most revealing is that the government has been bullying people back to work & education, where 26% & 38% of infections originate. That is 64% or nearly 2/3rds. 18% is Care Homes, the most vulnerable. Clearly, by focussing on eating & drinking out, the government is trying to cover up their massive failure to take the right action. Looking at the graph of infections, the sharp increase we have seen this Autumn starts when schools went back, so it is obvious what the cause of the increase in infections is. Another factor adding to the rise will be the number of people who went back to work when their student offspring went back into education. No one seems to mention this I am surprised that Public Health England, which is on the government's chop list & the Office for National Statistics, have not been prevented from publishing the correct data that they have to hand.



What does get wider publicity are the government's phony death figures. By limiting them to people who have died from Covid-19 within a month of diagnosis, something like a minimum of 22,000 deaths have not been included. Whether someone died OF Covid-19 or as a RESULT of the pandemic (i.e your cancer was not treated because a Covid patient was in your hospital bed), they are still dead, when otherwise, they would not have been. That is what is meant by excess deaths (the ONS figure).

All the time & perhaps the cause of the graphs never going to more or less zero, will be those workers who should be isolating because of their symptoms but cannot stop working because they have no money. For many people, this is incomprehensible because they have never been in this situation, where money out = money in & there is nothing left or less than nothing. These are people for whom, any break in income spells destitution. I do note that Sunshine has just done a screeching U-turn on Furlough, which will crash the price of Sunshine shares among the tory MPs. I'll write about the solution to this in a later essay.

Many people in the Arts are in this situation & only this week Rishi Sunshine effectively said the people in the Arts should get a proper job. The guy, mega-rich as he is, must also be a cultural desert. I am reminded of Alan Sillitoe's not-very-good novel, "The General", where the General had been told they were fighting for the preservation of civilisation, poetry etc but not to take prisoners. Then, he captures a symphony orchestra....

One of our U3A Group wrote to me that there are members who still think the government are doing their best in the circumstances when, by international standards, they are clearly doing the worst. These people do not have a 'best'. Even Trump (who does have the advantage of a more spread-out population) is not doing quite so badly. Some people cannot see the facts before their eyes because their brains are clogged up by prejudice about other members of the population, specifically, those they do not consider as part of their class. Have a nice weekend. Eat out. It may be your last for a while. Cheers, Ken

**Wednesday 14th October 2020**

### **Dither kills**

Back in March, the government dithered over lock-down, fatally for a large slice of the 65,000 excess deaths & now everyone understands that they have just dithered for another three weeks while looking at & rejecting "the science" that they claim to have been following. You can't just turn your back on the SAGE members when they demanded what has become called the "circuit breaker", of a short but total lock-down. Yet, with the largest cause of infection spread being in Educational institutions, the government still refuse to mandate on-line only teaching. This morning (Wednesday 14th Oct.), the Labour Party, which has been excessively responsible in backing the government, has come out in favour of the circuit breaker. This is the right thing to do but will guarantee that it will not happen. This is because this government would rather do anything, no matter how counter-productive & stupid, than take advice from the opposition, on the 'principle' I outlined with reference to the Lucas workers two newsletters ago.

Now we have new but inadequate restrictions, another problem arises, not a new one but an oven-ready old one.

This is the "two-thirds" of your pay. One of the causes of the present rapidly escalating Covid case numbers is people going back to work because they have no money if they do not. When you can barely live on three-thirds of your pay, two-thirds is a bad joke. That is, if you were even to be offered it. There still seems to be nothing for some of the most valuable people in the country, those in the Arts & many of them in the Performing Arts work all the time, even if they have no gigs or students. It's called "Practice".

The economist Robert Skidelsky has come up with a solution, not for this pandemic in particular but in general to fix our broken economy. A necessary part of this fix is for the Minimum Wage to be a genuine Living Wage, which the current one is not. Given that, the government have to provide minimum wage jobs (goodness knows, there is enough that needs doing), so no employer is able to offer less than the Minimum Wage. To adapt this idea to the pandemic, all Rishi Sunshine has to do is taper his back-up pay, so that it bottoms out at the Minimum Wage, where people on his deal get 100% of their pay. This would substitute poverty for destitution, one step up the social scale. This is not "Basic Income". It is something else similar. Keep well, Ken

**Thursday 15th October 2020**

Startling news this morning, incorporated into my newsletter:-

### **I couldn't make it up**

In my newsletter yesterday, I condemned Rishi Sunshine's so-called help plan but used quite moderate language to do so & made a sensible suggestion as to how to improve it. If I had said that his plan would mean children going to school shoe-less & their mothers being forced into prostitution, you would have said that Ken has lost his marbles. Well, that is precisely what Dame Louise Casey said on the radio this morning. (For American readers, a Dame is a female Knight & these days, knights outrank barons in the order of honour).

Dame Louise has a lifetime of experience around issues of poverty & social work & is widely respected across the political spectrum. However, Bozo sacked her. She has worked with all sorts of government as the person who tells them what they do not want to hear but know they need to hear. Not Bozo though. He does not want to know.

Thatcher, the evil genius of much of the present tory party, wanted to bring back Victorian Values & her acolytes seem Hell-bent on bring back Victorian social conditions. This is not surprising, as people like Bozo the Clown never leave their own Circus. The Mayor of Bury was also on the radio. He was protesting the ludicrous three-tier lockdown liable to hit his town shortly. Bozo will

completely ignore him because he has a Lancashire accent. Nobody Bozo knows has a Lancashire accent, so this up-country Mayor, elected by his peers in his own town, does not count.

I would be curious to know what the misguided people who voted for Bozo & the Circus, think of his performance, especially those who warmly welcomed his General Election win. Saying Jeremy Corbyn would have been worse won't cut it, as Labour actually believe in local government & would have harnessed them from the beginning. Nor would they have corruptly given huge contracts to their friends inadequate companies to carry out essential anti-pandemic work without following the proper procurement procedures. One thing is for sure. What I have been saying for over 55 years: that the private sector cannot be trusted with anything important has been proved correct over the last year. Keep well, Ken

## **Sunday 18th October 2020**

### **What is money?**

Yesterday's situation in the North-West was that Bozo the Clown was black-mailing the Mayors into putting into place ill-thought-out anti-Covid measures that the SAGE Committee, also known as "The Science" say are inadequate, as in, they are not being "followed". At least, this morning, he has coughed up some more money to support the failing test-and-trace system in Liverpool. Bozo is torn between the demands of Doormatt Handcock, who does want it fixed & Rishi Sunshine, who does not realise that money grows on trees. For the last I-don't-know-how-many-years, the printing of money had been left to the banks, where it has largely been wasted propping up or increasing asset prices.

This is how it works: the banks lend money they do not have (it's called 'leverage') i.e, they print it. The government, which should reserve the right to print money themselves, let them do this. The borrower has to pay interest on the money the bank's didn't have but use it to buy real things, like houses. Ultimately, the money disappears, as things wear out (consumer goods in particular) or it actually goes down the toilet, as it is used to buy food. Only a little of the latter is recovered, as the sewage works composts sewage & sells it back to you for the garden. Money, like people, has a life cycle. So, if the Chancellor is worried about debt, he should rein in the banks & print the money himself. If "the science" says shut down the Hospitality business, he should pay their wages himself if he wants to keep the economy turning over.

An interesting example of the unreality of money was given by a friend's friend some months ago, when they said their rent had gone up because the value of the flat had gone up. The way they put it was, "The landlord has more money, so I have to give him more money". The flat had not changed, so the value of the money had gone down in theory but the landlord could spend it on things that had not gone up in price, so he was just reserving more wealth for himself. But this cuts both ways. The rent on flats is going down because of working-from-home, which means not so many flats are needed in City Centres, so they are not so valuable. I have just let a flat for £1,150 which used to fetch £1,300. (Please do not weep for me: it would be embarrassing).

Just a warning for Rishi Sunshine, the first person hanged from a lamp-post during the French Revolution was Doué, the Finance Minister. Enjoy your Sunday. Ken

## **Tuesday 20th October 2020**

### **Stand-off**

Let's go to Manchester. On second thoughts, let's not. It's a battlefield between a local leader, the Region Mayor, who happens to be Labour, Andy Burnham but let's not get hung up on that, because in his battle with the Circus of Bozo the Clown, he has the backing of the local Tory MPs, including (you couldn't make this up), Sir Graham Brady, the ultra-right Chair of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs, the lot who are not ministers. This is not just a political punch-up then but a battle between the centre & the local.

This would not happen in Switzerland, a place I have visited often (& am still a member of the climbing club). There, everything that can be handled locally, is. If the village or town cannot, the Canton does it. If the Canton can't (e.g. foreign affairs) the Federal Government does it. This is the direct opposite from the situation in the UK, where the local is only allowed to do what the central government legislates (the Ultra Vires rule) & if you, as a local Councillor, go beyond that, you are financially liable. It is hardly surprising then that, at an early Council meeting of Charter88 (on which I served), Tom Nairn (Scot Nat) said it was difficult to campaign on, "Give me subsidiarity or give me Death". Still, we got the nations their own parliaments but again, with crippled powers.

This morning, Switzerland had had 1,837 deaths, equivalent to about 18,000 deaths in the UK. We have had (if you unscramble the real ONS figures from the government propaganda ones) over 70,000 deaths, so who has the better system?

Underlying all this is the total contempt of not just Bozo & his Circus for the local in Britain but going all the way back to Cameron & Osborne's stripping on localities & the NHS of the cash they need to function. This was made more explicit in Bozo's Conference speech, where he characterised the hardships caused by the pandemic & by implication, those about to hit us from Brexit, as something we need to get used to as the State prepares to "step back" & let private enterprise run the country. We know, from the corrupt contracts let to firms like Serco this Summer (& remember G4S' failure to manage the 2012 Olympics) where that leads. The Social Security Secretary, Therese Coffy recently said it was not her job to stop people from starving. FFS, what does she think her job is? Those on the right-wing who sneer at the Nanny State need to be told: the State is the only nanny the vast majority of us have ever had.

Back to Manchester. Is Bozo going to send the Army in? Enjoy your blood-bath. Ken

## **Monday 26th October 2020**

I have not posted to the U3A tree for a while, so I have cannibalised two Facebook posts to start with: London Mayor versus Bozo the Clown

Please send this viral: I call upon all Transport for London employees to stop collecting fares & let everyone travel free if the Prime Minister does not give Sadiq what he needs to keep London moving. (Bozo hates Sadiq for 2 reasons: Sadiq is a much better Mayor than Bozo was & worse still, Sadiq is not 'white').

You will remember at the 2019 Tory Conference, Bozo shaking hands in a reception line only with the white people, skipping pass the blacks foolish enough to be there. The other post was...

Duly horrified by the Clownocracy's refusal to feed hungry children in the holidays, I have donated a substantial sum to Islington's food bank. If you have any spare cash, I cannot think of a better thing to do with it. (If anyone getting this thinks I am 'virtue signalling', get the fuck off my friend list NOW).

This one has gone viral. The problem has even shaken the conscience of some tory MPs (very few) & tory councils. The usual suspects have revealed the normal tory attitude by saying that food vouchers get sold on to buy crack cocaine. I expect a few do. So what? But it is quite clear why the Clownocracy is holding out against extending free school meals. They say it often enough: that it extends the "dependancy culture". One way or another, we all depend on others & that is why we are organised into societies. Ultimately, the tory party only exists to protect the rich from the just demands of the poor. It was ever thus.

What these two problems all play in to are my suggestions, poo-pooed in the past, that everything that can be free, should be & the cost clawed back through the tax system. This is the simplest way of making a deep cut in inequality. Free the fares in cities & give free school meals to all pupils. We used

to get free school milk when I was a kid.

hile Tory MPs & ministers say you can apply for Universal Credit, this is a bad system exacerbated by cruel rules. Apart from the 5 week wait for anything, it is means tested. In my early career, I had two spells on the dole, chasing the nirvana of technical advance in two firms that went bust. National Insurance was handed out as of right, as is implicit in the word "insurance". If that was not enough, you could apply for National Assistance. This was means-tested, which is a humiliating procedure, an attack on human dignity but, providing the floor is set high enough, probably inevitable. Universal Credit is means-tested altogether, rubbing peoples' noses in their poverty, which is mostly due to circumstances, not only out of their control but may well be in the control of other, faceless, individuals, who cannot be called to account. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 30th October 2020**

### **EHRC Report on antisemitism in the Labour Party**

Sorry to bore non-British readers with this stuff but it is worth reading the Equalities and Human Rights Commission Report, rather than relying on media glosses:-

1. the EHRC did not find that Labour were institutionally antisemitic
2. EHRC: "There have been improvements in the rate of determining cases" - all under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and Jennie Formby
3. finds the Labour Party legally responsible only for the actions of two people, even though one was retired from elected office and the other was suspended and neither was acting at the request of the leadership or party. However, even if the two cases are valid, the EHRC's conclusion makes a nonsense of the constant claims that the party's leadership was responsible for the conduct of every member - which the EHRC specifically says it was not
4. the EHRC's report shows that 'following an increase in NCC membership', the rate of determining cases grew 83%
5. EHRC says Labour improved the quantity of cases heard once Jennie Formby took over
6. Labour NEC panels resolved 242% more antisemitism cases in 2019 compared to 2018
7. EHRC noted that expanding the NCC under Jennie Formby allowed it to hear more cases
8. EHRC "The Labour Party has recently introduced reforms which improve the ability of the NEC & NCC panels to decide cases"
9. EHRC notes "improvements to the sanction system, with cases completed and leading to expulsions in the EHRC sample process tripling in 2019 compared to the 3 previous years added together
10. EHRC "The Labour Party has made some improvements, which have resulted in an increase use of sanctions for antisemitic conduct."

The report also:

- implies that the focus on antisemitism, driven by adverse media attention, had disadvantaged other ethnic minority groups: "this means that an even wider pool of members was treated very poorly by their party"
- treats describing any complaints as 'smears' as antisemitic, resulting in the worrying implication that Jewish people are incapable of making the untrue statements that all human beings are capable of
- states that in many, possibly most cases, what flaws there were in Labour's handling of complaints hurt those complained against
- fails to differentiate in its criticisms between what happened before Jennie Formby and the left on Labour's NEC had control of the party's processes and what happened after. However, its numerous references to improvements under Formby make the reality undeniable.

Bluntly, a cabal of right-wing Labour MPs & head-office staff who were appalled by Jeremy's election to the leadership, looked for any way to tear him down & sabotage our General Election chances.



What probably happened (I'm not alleging, not having any evidence that would stand up in court) is that they chanced upon Margaret Hodge's long-standing hatred of Jeremy from her days as Leader of Islington Council & the possibility of stirring up the Jews on account of his standing up for Palestinian Rights, to cook up this story of anti-semitism in the Party, leaving their own Party in a lose-lose situation.

This also left Keir & Angela in the position of being forced to make those carefully-worded statements today, for which I blame them not at all & I hope no one leaves the Party on account of them. The Leadership have been stuffed into a corner, not by the EHRC Report but by the media's interpretation of it. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 31st October 2020**

**Before the real news....**

....I need to clear up something from yesterday. Elaine (Jewish) commented: "I know of actual cases of actual people, not MPs, who experienced antisemitism." I do wonder if any of my Jewish friends have personally experienced anti-semitism, which has affected their lives at any level because Avis & I have experienced Jewish anti-goyism at a deeply personal level. This has not affected our attitude to Jews in general, because every barrel has its bad apples.

I have told this story before but I obviously have to tell it again. In our case, we were excluded from Avis' son's family because he married a Jew (& I suspect that the family thought their daughter would never marry anyone, so this was tolerable). It took a while for this to be cemented in action but at Avis' grand-daughter's funeral (aged 2 1/4) service, we were pushed back & all the front rows were occupied by Jewish relatives, some quite distant. Avis used to bake cakes with the elder grand-daughter but that was stopped. Both grand-daughters look & looked like Avis (lucky girls) & nothing like their Jewish grandmother. Anyway, although it was not my call, I broke the ice early this year & contact started to be resumed but the plague stopped us meeting the kids, one of which we have never yet met.

Anyway, I can fairly claim never to have discriminated against anyone on grounds that are out of their control (e.g. skin colour) or hard to control, given family & cultural pressures (e.g. religion).

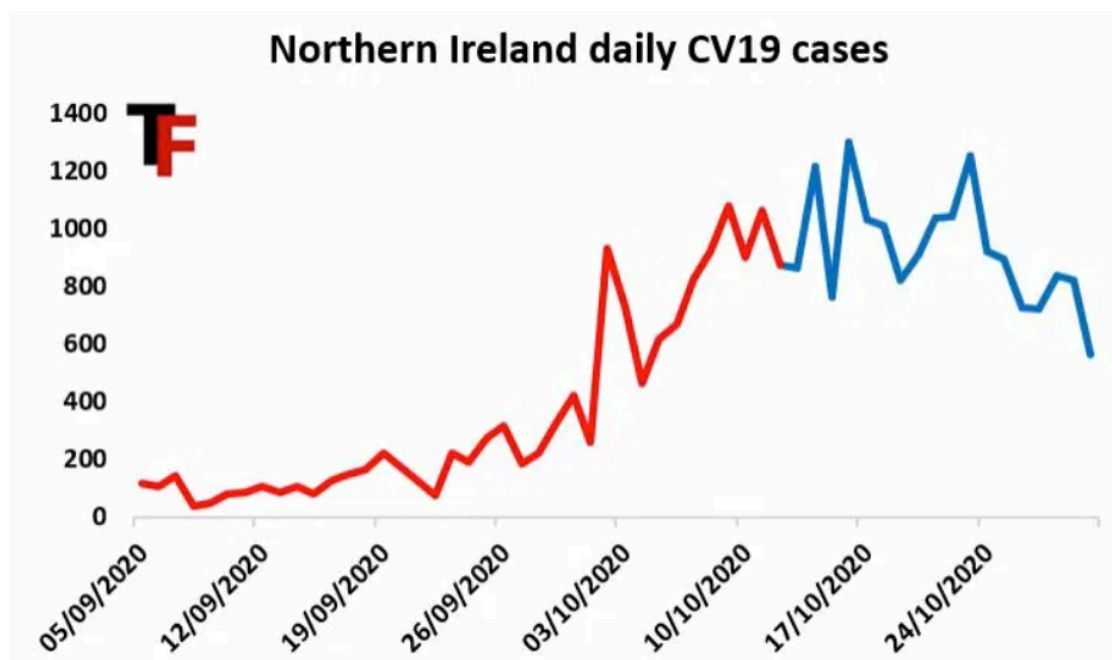
The real news today is the lock-down the government has finally been forced to do, having ignored "the science" for more than a month. Even this is being bungled. The principle source of transmission is still in educational establishments but they are not being shut, as that would keep people away from work & stop making the rich, richer. It looks like *déjà-vu* 1918, where the 2nd wave was worse than the first, much.

The only way we will get this plague under control is to form a coalition government & with Angela Rayner, probably the only MP who has experienced grinding poverty, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then, the poor would get fed & the rampant corruption of the present government be stopped. I will still have to out to get fresh food. Keep well, Ken

Sunday 1st November 2020

Ok, a fact

Northern Ireland went into lock-down, including schools, on Friday 13th October. Below is a graph of infection rates since then, as one can see, the rate of infection is dropping off after the expected



incubation period, Snarlene said it was for four weeks at the time. I have not heard what her reaction to Bozo's latest tyre-burning U-turn is but in theory, Northern Ireland comes out of lock-down on November 14th. I would say this is unlikely.

I don't know what Starmer is playing at but he is effectively saying Bozo has got it right by not closing schools. As the now "old" Tier Three measures showed, they do not have much effect if Schools Are Not Shut Down. There is so much data around now, one would have thought the Circus would have got a grip but the lack of scientific appreciation handicaps every decision they make. Listening to Stuart Rose talking about the dire effect on business of lock-down makes one despair. The "economy" is a lot of money churning around, as I pointed out recently but the money comes in from manufacturing or agriculture. Otherwise, we are all taking in each other's washing. Coffees get made (for three more days, anyway) but they don't get manufactured in cafés. I can see where Rose is coming from, though. You can't just switch a business on & off according to the whims of someone who has never worked in a serious business in his life.

This lock-down is supposed to end on December 2nd (2020). Fat chance. What I would like to see is a worked out plan for the next 6 months, consisting of something like a computer program: a tree of possibilities & actions. (I'm thinking "If this Then that Else something else"). The trouble is Bozo can't think further than the next three days & recently, like a cushion, has followed the policy of the last person who sat on him, presumably in this case, Hancock. Meanwhile, shares in Rishi Sunshine are falling, as Bozo is starting to realise that he is a menace & will have to be got rid of. Otherwise, this lock-down would not be happening. To put it in a slightly old-fashioned way, Bozo has no 'bottom' & is not 'sound'.

More alarming was the interview with Desmond Swayne, the MP for the New Forest West, going on about "freedom", clearly that perverted for of freedom that wiser people call "licence", the right to do what you want & sod other people. One rarely hears that sort of indignation in such a bad cause. Ex-soldiers are usually a bit more intelligent than that, even Duncan-Smith. Swayne puts TD & VR

after his name, both medals you just get for turning up. Fortunately for the New Forest, the other end is represented by Julian Lewis, with whom I disagree about almost everything but at least, he has a functioning brain.

I have just done an audit of Brexit Stores. We have (literally) eaten into them, so I've been to Sainsburys to start a top-up, which given that I no longer let my rucksack get over 30lb, will take a few trips. Bozo has said that there is no need to panic buy as there is plenty of food. No, there is not. Some things have not been available for months. There is tons of mango slices but not Vitamin C or Evening Primrose Oil. Some things appear fleetingly & prices are going up. Tinned ham has gone up five bob but that is 25% since March. As a rate of inflation, that is approaching Argentinian levels.

**Tuesday 3rd November 2020**

### **It's a joke**

The important thing happening today is the US Election, where we can expect a record turn-out. In some States, the postal vote turnout has exceeded the total from 2016. The rest of the World sits impotently by while something is happening which is going to affect its life & which it can do nothing about.

So let's stick to home matters. An outfit called "BRTUS: Parents United" is calling for a Parents Strike on Thursday (trust Bozo to pick Guy Fawkes Day to start a lock-down). Parents will withhold their children from schools they don't deem Covid secure. That is most of schools. Factory Health & Safety standards do not apply to schools, so social distancing is impossible. The Clownocracy has been accused by one Ian Duncan-Smith of "giving in to the scientists" in bringing in this 2nd lock-down. Quite. They should have done so 6 weeks ago. But we know that unless the schools are closed except for the children of key workers, this lock-down will indeed be a complete waste of time, which the Clownocracy will waste, just as they wasted the whole of the Summer, when they should have prepared for the Autumn & Winter. No, it's not a joke.

It has been presented as a contest between stopping the virus or ruining the economy. While pundits have been arguing that this is a false dichotomy, no one apart from Greens, has been suggesting that we just have the wrong sort of economy entirely, based on profit, not need. The presented desirability of getting on & getting rich has distorted human activity. This can only happen to a small minority, although they present the idea that getting on a bit better than someone else is some sort of success. That is a very mean society. Perhaps we should regard "getting on & getting rich" as a pathological condition, requiring mental health treatment. Back in the 50s, when it was being an Asian Tiger, Japan's top to bottom pay ratio was 6:1. When neo-liberalism crept in, the country seemed to become a basket case, although it never actually crashed. Keep well, Ken

I have not included replies above but these two, embedded in the next essay, provoked an extended response.

### **Annette came back with:**

*"If schools are closed down the poorest children are going to be dreadfully disadvantaged because they are the ones who live in the most crowded homes with the least access to online schooling and they have already lost precious learning which is virtually impossible to catch up on. Do you honestly want an underclass?*

*The school where my son is a governor has taken sensible measures to prevent infection by having the children in the same room for all their classes and the teachers are the ones who move. They have taken other measures as well, but you won't want to know that."*

Annette is right that shutting the schools will cause social problems, which should have been addressed decades ago. These cannot be done in a hurry because a decade of tory governments have exacerbated them & we don't have the resources to hand to fix them in weeks. The reluctance to follow other countries experience has been at the root of the failure to tackle the pandemic sensibly.

*Elaine then asks what I would have done to deal with the pandemic (with an implied "smartarse" in her question mark. Fair enough).*

This. The last country that had to deal with something similar was South Korea, only a few years ago. I would have got the Health Ministry to ring Seoul & ask, "What should we do?", forgetting all about we-are-the-greatest-nation-in-the-world-don't-need-to-take-advice-from-Johnny-Foreigner, which seems to have been Bozo's line all along. Then, do it. My whole career as a wage slave was grounded in co-operation.

South Korea would have said, "Track, trace & isolate", so that's what I would have done, isolating people who needed to in hotels, as Korea did & does. They would be empty because one other thing I would have done is shut down foreign travel 100%, including private jets (especially, private jets - let's have a bit of class war while we have the opportunity). I would have used the existing Public Health infrastructure to run test & trace & not let the private sector anywhere near the Health Service. Get rid of the ghastly Universal Credit system & put everyone out of work on the government payroll. Offer the Tories a couple of harmless ministries in a coalition deal to stop them carping from the sidelines. Intern Farage under Wartime Guidelines. If you think this is the wisdom of hindsight, go back to the start of the previous paragraph & read it again. Cheers, Ken

**Sunday 8th November 2020**

### **Cause for rejoicing?**

So Joe Biden has won the US Presidency in a contest between a right-wing free marketeer & a more-or-less fascist. Totting up the plus points: at least Trump is dump; Biden believes climate change is happening; if he dies in office, the US gets a female president & not before time, although she is quite right wing (this, by European standards) but the real biggy from our, British, point of view is Biden does not like Brexit & Bozo put all the British chips on a Trump victory.

The minus points include the US setup being designed to prevent anything much happening. We await the Senate vote with trepidation, because if it is 50-50, then Kamala Harris has the casting vote (as the Veep is the Chair of the Senate). This means that Biden can get legislation through but not constitutional change, (which requires a 2/3 vote of the Senate & the House) which is very badly needed. Before this election, the Republicans controlled the Senate with 14,000,000 fewer votes than the Democratic Senators had gathered. I think we all know now (in GB) that Wyoming with less than 600,000 inhabitants has two senators & so does California, with 40,000,000 inhabitants. The US system is as bent as ours. What we can be sure of is that the evil Mitch McConnell will do everything in his considerable power to obstruct anything that Biden wants to do.

Then, there is the Supreme Court. The latest new member, Amy Coney Barrett, appointed only a few days ago, having been rushed in by Trump, is borderline insane. She believes that no rights granted to the US population since the Constitution was drawn up are valid. This is called 'originalism'. In particular workers' rights & social security are not in the Constitution. Either, she keeps her head down, unlikely, or there will be trouble.

The day after the referendum, I rang my ex-Tory MP cousin, so we could do a cross-party shoulder weep, him being a Brexainer. I asked two questions, what will we eat (answer still outstanding) & what about Northern Ireland? All along, Bozo has acted as if the problem will go away & a year ago, he put a border down the Irish Sea, then pretended he hadn't. Now, he has a US President who treasures his Irish ancestry. Whoops! (Incidentally, Denise's Irish Passport will shortly arrive here & I'll have to post it on. It's taken about half a year, as they have been overwhelmed with applications). Another wild card about Ireland is that the aforesaid evil Mitch McConnell is Irish.

Now for two pleasant things:

From one of my payrolls: "(blah, blah)..... and in years to come when my current difficulties are a

distant memory, you will have inspired me to do the same for some struggling artist whose work I admire. Just quietly, without fuss in the same honourable way in which you and Avis are helping me." Yes. She's got it.

My friend Jim complained about the huge increase in scam telephone calls recently. This was my comment:

I have to watch it. Whenever I hear an Asian voice, my guard goes up against selling or a scam but that is stereotyping. It could be the Iranian Resistance to the Ayatollahs I have supported for 41 years, so have to wait for the pitch. Then, 4 days ago, an Indian voice turned out to be a Baldrey from Chennai (Madras as was). Not related to my family, they are what I call the Royal Baldreys, descended from King George III through one of his scapegrace sons getting a lady-in-waiting in the Club. She was married off to a Guards Officer called Baldry. The son joined the Army & was sent off to India. The Anglo-Indian branch became railwaymen, as so many did because they did not have a caste, as there was no suitable caste for the railways, so they effectively formed their own. The tree so far for the Royal Baldrys is on:-

<http://www.art-science.com/Baldry/pp/h29.html>

...with some stories & photos. There is a branch in South Africa, the Singleton Baldrys as well. This was Maxwell Gerald Baldrey & I am hoping he will add more to the family tree. We palled up as Facebook friends. I always address the royal Baldreys as Prince or Princess.

**Tuesday 10th November 2020**

#### **Welcome to the vaccine**

What's not to welcome? Consequences. To start with, Pfizer have a reputation for price-gouging when this should be an opportunity for governments to gang up on Big Pharma & demand the vaccine at cost. Then, we do not have the facilities to make it in Britain. The nearest factory is in Belgium, in the EU & we are in Brexit Britain. Not only that, the transporting is tricky, presumably in liquid Nitrogen. Freezer trucks don't do that. The organising of vaccination has been put in the hands of yet another tory flack without due recruiting procedure & she has no relevant experience, which seems to be a qualification in Bozo's eyes. I wonder if Biden's gut hostility to Bozo will affect that.

One thing I do not question is the priority list that Doormatt Handcock listed on the radio, although he did not say tory MPs would be at the top of the list. In the first instance, Avis at 85 & a large slice of my mailing list will get the jab but I will only get one later. I hope this works out, as I am now Avis' entire prop, doing all the things she did except grilling fish, although I have to monitor what she does in the kitchen to avoid disaster.

The result I do not welcome in any way is the notion that we can soon get back to 'normal', which, for the last 40 years, has been a disaster. Anyone who can justify a system which has enormously increased wealth disparities is out of their mind, incredibly rich or both. The graceful way out of one of our problems might have been solved if Bozo had gracefully accepted defeat of his law-breaking bill in the Lords but he has already stated that he will over-ride that, which he can. It would be a step on the way to gracefully dumping brexit altogether & resigning before he adds more mud to his place in History.

**Saturday 14th November 2020**

#### **HHhH**

That was a German saying in the war. It stood for Himmler's Hirn heisst Heydrich, Himmler's brain is called Heydrich & pronounced ash-ash-ash-ash. (Heydrich was later assassinated by the Czechs. In reprisal, the Germans wiped out the village of Lidice, buildings & people). Now it seems, our Heydrich has assassinated himself, as Cummings is out of Downing Street.

So, who is going to be Bozo's Brain now? It appears that Carrie Agrippinilla Symonds organised this

coup. The half-baked classicist Bozo has restored Rome circa. 220AD, only he does not seem to have taken back control of anything: the women have. Word is that Agrippinilla, the new spokesperson Allegra Stratton & Revolutionary Communist Party member Munira Mirza, who has also been described as Bozo's Brain did for Cummings & his mates. Unelected women are no worse than (= just as bad as) unelected men. Awaiting the outcome of this event is going to be as frustrating as was waiting for a definitive US Election result, so we'll just have to sit around & wait. Meanwhile, the official, rigged, Covid death figures soar above 50,000, say 75,000 to be, ahem, conservative.

Once again, I put my old businessman's hat on & consulted the Government web site, which leads one through pages of questions, building up a business profile for one's business. This is supposed eventually, to tell you what to do about Brexit & still leads to, "Hang about until the paperwork is clear". A good thing I'm retired. That figure of 7,000 lorries in the queue for Dover suggests that the queue starts around the South Portal of the Blackwell Tunnel.

Ok. Back to sitting around & waiting. Meanwhile, I'm off to La Divina for take-away pasta & pizza. Keep well, Ken

### **Sunday 15th November 2020**

#### **Little Worlds**

A book review in the Guardian had me thinking about these. Sam Wollaston reviewed a book about Maurice Wilson, revealing he had never heard of him. "But everyone knows about him" was my immediate thought. Wilson flew towards Everest. His 'plane was confiscated so he walked the last 300 miles & died in the attempt to climb the hill in 1934. In my little hill world, everyone does indeed know about Wilson. There was another gem in 1990, when Anthony Barnett (Founder of Charter88) said he met Neil Acheson in the Crimea, who was writing a book about Trebizond. My immediate reaction was Acheson was on the wrong side of the Black Sea. Anthony replied, "The things you know". I said everyone knows that. Yes. Sure, in the little world of amateur historians. The Greek Empire of Trebizond (more realistically, the Borough of Trebizond) hung on for some while after the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. I have others in Music & the Visual Arts, the latter providing me with my wife Avis when she realised I had a book about an artist she respected that no one she had ever met before had heard of, which is why our courtship was so brief (2 1/2 months). Inspection of our library, about 4,000 books, would also reveal some unexpected items but what I call my Weekly Ritual Humiliation, the Guardian Review general knowledge crossword & quiz reveals a woeful lack of popular culture, although not in Music. (I do know the words of American Pie but like everyone else, I don't know what they mean).

Apart from routine leaf-sweeping, I have finished the Autumn Tidy of the Garden, filling 10 (ten) of the Council's huge recycling bags out of a garden only 40 feet by 18. Plants come & plants go. The Solanum died & I have had to root it out. However, the shockingly inefficient use of land that is the English Suburb (Islington was a suburb, once) allows those nowadays, lucky enough to have one, the ability if so minded, to add a physical Little World to the ones of the mind.

Tell me about your little worlds. Keep well, Ken

### **Wednesday 18th November 2020**

#### **Famine**

....is on the menu. Some weeks ago, the Secretary for Social Services said that it was not the job of government to "prevent people dying of starvation". This was repeated in a question in Parliament. It was the job of "the industry". Then, what is the job of government? Surely, this is Number One. Now some of the knuckleheads are out of Downing Street, we are left with Bozo hiding upstairs. I bet he deliberately exposed himself to Covid, so he could take cover while 'someone else' screwed up the last ditch Brexit talks & could be handed the blame for the famine.

When I was a wage-slave manager, I would never point the finger at my staff in public, saying if the project was running late, it was my fault. This was fool-proof exercise because the senior managers would never do that themselves & did not know how to handle it. This was not managerial 'heroism' on my part. It was a trick that I knew worked. Bozo does the exact opposite but then, he has never had to manage anyone except his women.

His latest trick in the Circus ring, is to call devolution, 'a disaster North of the Border'. Too right: the Sturgeon has proved to be a much bigger fish than the Carp in Downing Street. By World standards, her performance has been so-so but by UK standards, her's, Drakeford's in Wales & even Snarlene's in 2/3rds of Ulster shames the Circus. You can be cunning without being clever. Maybe, Bozo feels he can blame the Celtic Fringe for the break-up of the Union he claims to worship while getting rid of millions of socialistic votes, leaving him with a completely secure tory Little England. After all, the way Whitehall does its accounting, the Celtic Fringe is a cost centre, not a profit centre.

However, one purpose of his law-breaking Internal Market Bill is to claw back to Downing Street, those functions of the EU which should go back to the Celtic Fringe. At the time of the referendum, I comment, "What? Take Back Control & give it to Boris Johnson?" but that was his aim all along: King of the World. Now, having demonstrated the fatuity of giving contracts to private leeches (who, doubtless, kick back some of the obscene profit to the tory party), the always efficient Labour Local Authorities want to Take Back Control & do things properly. Before anyone argues with that statement, I can assure them that, as a Labour Councillor & Committee Chair, I & my colleagues were always conscious that it was poor peoples' money we were spending. If you want careless spending, look at tory councils. It is tory Northampton that has gone bust.

**Friday 20th November 2020**

**I'm overwhelmed...**

...by the headlines. There seems to be too many & I like to give it a day or so to get my thoughts into order. Ok, the announcement of a Green Revolution is no such thing. Not a penny of new money has been allocated & this is the most important thing that is needed at the moment & for decades to come. Why stop fossil-fuel vehicles in 2030? What about 2026? That would give the length of World War II for the Motor Industry to fix it. Bring in petrol rationing with immediate effect. Only that way will the average citizen realise that this is serious & get cross-party support for it. Unfortunately, that does not give Bozo the opportunity for willy-waving, unlike his other announcement.

This really will cost real money, the Defence Review. Only, I see no review. Where is the plan? Simon Jenkins (tory) in the Guardian comes close to the truth, which is, these days, actual Defence is cheap but Attack is very expensive. Defence should be based on the principle: keep Johnny Foreigner out of our country & keep out of Johnny Foreigner's country. I have said before, the moral basis of war is: who's playing at home & who's playing away. So, how is Defence cheap? You need an army of hackers, people like me only I'm too old, to get into the Attack Systems of possible enemies & mess them up. The ideal would be to write, "Return to Sender" on all rockets. This is an arm's race between powers but, compared to the cost of military hardware, people like me come cheap.

On the other hand, Attack is very expensive, if it is conceived in terms of kit: aircraft, ships & tanks. The sort of lightly-armed foot soldiery, trained in street warfare, that would have been suitable when interfering in the Middle East lacks the glamour (& for the arms industry, the profitability) of heavy metal. But, way back in the few days of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Egyptians with cheap, hand-held rockets destroyed Israeli tanks costing hundreds of times as much. That has not changed. While tank armour has got better, at great expense, so have cheap rockets, which are still cheap, maybe even cheaper & certainly, more accurate. To explain, the horrid car is a mass of cheap little TV cameras & micro-processors. A hand-held rocket would contain a camera & shape-recognition software. (A school-friend of my brother's was working on this in the 1970s. He was not allowed to tell me what his PhD was for). Every cheap rocket will score a hit.

Even stupider is expenditure on nuclear submarines. For years, they have been detectable but the manufacture of them keeps Barrow in Furness a tory seat at enormous expense to the the rest of us. Which reminds me: nuclear power stations are horrendously expensive & the construction burns a lot of carbon. However, their real purpose is the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons, which by general agreement, cannot be used except for the aforesaid, willy-waving.

I think I have said before, that while I wanted to be at the forefront of software development, I kept away from the military on my Quakeresque moral grounds but only realised much too late, that the banks, for whom I did work, were killing far more people than the military. Whoops! Let's hope the weather is better today. Cheers, Ken

## Monday 23rd November 2020

### Another week

What is this week's scandal going to be? We will see when the successor to the current lockdown is revealed. Last week, it was our needy, incompetent tyrant failing to sack one of his brain cells for bullying. That reminded me of his terms as Mayor of London, where all the actual work was sub-contracted a bevy of ex-municipal hooligans he called Deputy Mayors. His need to be loved is pathetic, hence the imperative not to cancel Xmas too much but there is no getting away from the fact that much of it will be. Ours has been totally cancelled for months, as the ships sail, not. However, that was preferable to taking risks for other people with the plague. Here is a graphic, thanks to Helen Glanville. I hope Bozo gets to see a copy.



I had news from Cousin Liz in Milan, which is in a more severe & thus, more effective lockdown than Blighty is having. Her sister-in-law is furious that not all the Poldark books have been translated into Italian. Liz will be 55 on the Shortest Day, hard to believe. She is still riding Jane's (late 1st wife) bike. To think it's just a bike ride to Lake Como. Grrr. Keep well, Ken

## Thursday 26th November 2020

### Unheard of

A tory minster, Liz Sugg, has resigned over Rishi Moonshine's cut in the Foreign Aid budget. Didn't anyone tell her: since Peter Carrington resigned over the Falklands War of 1982, the rule for tory ministers has been the old Upper Clorss one of, "Never apologise, never explain", unless caught with your hand up the wrong skirt. True, the lady is in the House of Lords, so it has no electoral significance but even so, she has let the side down. Unfortunately, this bit of ill-thought-out nastiness will go down well with the sort of people who vote tory for no reason except their own personal benefit, as they see it. Supposing it was suggested that incompetent, venal or both ministers in the Commons should be called upon to resign? Where would it end?

Oh, yes. A minister has been called upon to resign for a serious offence but not only did Bozo fail to sack this bully, he demanded his MPs to rally round & defend who he called the "Pritster", as if was all part of a Public School prank (meaning for American Friends, a Private School: that's RBE for you). What was almost worse was Bozo, on an array of TV Screens in the House of Commons, like a scene from Orwell's "1984", calling the matter "trivial". Intriguingly, it's the reason for the bullying that interests me. Most Home Secretaries (even tory ones like Ken Clarke, who did do a good job, despite just having messed up the Health Service with the stupid 'internal market') go into the job, hoping to relieve some of the blatant fascism that seems the departmental culture. Patel seems to have accused them of not being fascist enough. Her attitude to the fairly trivial number of refugees arriving by leaky boat says it all.



Other things in the Autumn Review by Rishi Moonshine: not a word of help for the Creative Sector yet, particularly worrying after that appalling advert suggesting that Arts people should get a 'real job'. (It showed a ballet dancer & said her next job would be in 'cyber'. In the real world, it would be training other dancers if she had not yet smoked herself to death, dancers being notorious chimneys). I doubt if Rishi has ever had a conversation with a poor person in his entire life which was an exchange of information, rather than them giving orders. Everyone has already commented on the total lack of mention of brexit in his speech. Maybe, he has been ordered by Bozo to keep shtum on that subject. Maybe they are still working out how to blame the public for the likely rise in infections after the foolish Xmas break & how to spin it to cover for the expected brexit disaster.

Now, we are about to come out of lockdown, we can see that it has partially worked except for the predictable continuing rise in secondary school pupil infections. We are looking forward to that, for us, major improvement in our cramped standard of living: eating out & going the Islington Green Social Centre aka Caffé Nero.

Two brief historical notes: while the collapse in GDP is traced back as the worst since 1709, that period during the War of the Spanish Succession (which we won insofar as anyone did), had wild fluctuations in GDP from very high to very low & 1709 was not the worst drop, just the last bad one, thanks to a frozen Winter & crop failure. We were still in the "Little Ice Age" then. The other is about the celebration of the Winter Solstice aka Xmas. The current best historical information is that Jesus was born around what became Easter in 7BC, so there is no reason why we must celebrate that now. However, celebrating the Winter Solstice does make sense, although every reputable scientist views the five day family meeting orgy this year with trepidation.

## Tuesday 1st December 2020

### Marooned....

....in Europe. This is the likely fate of my cousin Liz, who lives in Milan with her Italian husband & dual-nationality son Ricky. At the moment, the Clownocracy are pushing the snappily titled "Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020" through the Lords, who won't like it, signifying nothing. As usual, the Commons will just chuck out their amendments, so it will become Law. This was Liz' reaction,

"That sounds grim. Looks like I'll have to stay here in sunny Italy then. I don't have any property in the UK and I certainly couldn't afford to move back there. My salary doesn't meet their requirements. Pretty daft situation all in all. Funny to think the Establishment once thought I was good enough to police the country and soon it won't even grant me the right to live in it. (Let alone Ricky)".

(Liz was once, a cop & that is a very pertinent point). Fortunately, the Act's provisions don't come in until March 2022 & I don't give the Clownocracy much chance of surviving Easter. If they do, well, Italy (for once) has a much better government than Britain. & at the moment, being marooned in Europe sounds quite attractive, with the clock ticking down to the No Deal, which I suspect was Bozo's objective all along.

Tomorrow, the four weeks of lockdown here end, with a drop in cases of one third. Is this enough? Was it what was expected? Did anyone make a guess at what size drop would count as a success? If so, what size? The Welsh are resuming restrictions, as their break did not work too well.

The tory MPs will be arguing about the wrong thing in the House today. While the North Kent Coast has high levels of infection, they need to be surrounded to the South by a wall of less infected local authorities, also in Tier 3, to stop the bugs leaking out. So, how do you wall off these other districts to stop people going in & out of them for no good reason? It can't be done, because it is easy to know if you are going into Kent, as there are signs at the border but not necessarily at the border of every

borough. In any case, Ashford borders Swale, the worst hit area & Ashford also goes all the way down to East Sussex. The MPs may try to talk Parliamentary Boundaries but no one knows where these are, except the MPs & political anoraks (ahem) & these boundaries are not that logical, having been gerrymandered to ensure that only Dover had the possibility (risk?) of going Labour. (Canterbury, anyone? They were not expecting that). Whoever put all of Kent into Tier 3, got it right. What Kent & similar places really need is extra financial support to get through their Tier.

**Thursday 3rd December 2020**

**Too much...**

...has happened this week, all very exciting. Tuesday was the last lockdown dinner: my Eggs Florentine, very inauthentic. Boil the tinned spinach (which seems to have died out in Sainsburys) in separate bowls, meanwhile, chop up 4 bacon rashers (vegan alternative fake bacon available for people with issues with pigs) & fry it. Then put it on the spinach. Grate cheese & put it on the bacon, meanwhile poaching eggs. Put the bowls under the grill until the cheese melts then put Hollandaise Sauce over the cheese & back under the grill briefly. Then put the eggs on top & eat with bread (& butter, to taste). Cheap, quick & very tasty. Yesterday, we celebrated the end of lockdown in the Runnymede Toby, the only time we ever eat "English".

Tuesday was also the day of Bozo's humiliation when, for whatever motive & they seem very assorted, enough tory MPs voted against his Tiers, having realised that the Clown was, in fact, a Lemon. If Labour had been opportunistic, & it's to Starmer's credit that they were not, they could have defeated Bozo.

Then, DoorMatt Handcock damages the prospect of a high take-up of the vaccines by suggesting that brexit had allowed the regulatory authority to pass the vaccine, as they were not hampered by EU restrictions. No other commentator has suggested that that statement by Handcock could be taken that the vaccine has been rushed through for political reasons to justify brexit but that idea may lead some people to think it too risky to be vaccinated. In fact, the information for approval is widespread, just as vaccine development is. These new vaccines represent the coming together of research going back nearly two decades all over the World, including in Cuba, where the Communist Government prioritised health care since they took over in 1959. (Note to US friends: Cuba has a Health Service, you have a Health Business, which is why e.g. Cuba's child mortality rate is way below yours). The Pfizer vaccine was invented by Turkish immigrants to Germany, reminding one that the Turks invented vaccination back in the 18th Century much earlier than Jenner noticed that milkmaids did not get smallpox, then a major scourge. So much for keeping immigrants out. I hope the Clownocracy has learned that they had better keep the private sector out of vaccine distribution, because if there has been one lesson that life post-February has hammered home is that the private sector is useless at providing public good.

This is even clearer when one looks at Arcadia & Debenhams, where rampant greed has cost 25,000 jobs. In case you don't know how it worked, here's how. You sell off the shops & rent them back, sending the money from the sales off to your wife in tax-haven Monaco. Then, you milk the staff with minimal pay & don't invest a penny in the future of the stores, even looting the pension fund. When the brown-stuff finally hits the fan, & it would have, sooner or later regardless of the pandemic, you just walk away. This is all perfectly legal, because the auditors these limited companies are obliged by law to employ, "advise" the government on tax law.

So, we need two measures in business law: auditors should be nationalised, which would put a stop to the invention of tax fiddles & foreign companies can only operate in a country (any country) through their wholly-owned local subsidiary, subject to local audit & paying local taxes. That would benefit the World population, as it would improve the cash-flow of all governments but would be tricky to negotiate with bandit governments in the Western World, such as the USA one, whichever party was in control.

**Wednesday 9th December 2020**

**Two questions while we wait on events**

One: Trump claims that the US election was rigged. Put aside first the matter that US elections are rigged by the Electoral College, gerrymandering & the lop-sided representation in the Senate where rural oiks get much more representation than urban sophisticates because that rigging is in plain sight. Trump is referring to dark arts rigging by hidden forces, so, if the system is riggable that way, why did he not rig it himself? He is bad enough to do so if it was possible, so it was not. QED

The other is why are us crumblies getting the vaccine first? Surely, front-line workers who have to face the public all the time should be protected first? Is the answer that front-line workers are dispensable & probably vote Labour whereas crumblies tend to vote Tory, with a possible General Election coming up in the near future, when we crumblies will all be asked to 'vote grateful' for our vaccines?

One lesson from 2020 is that whatever awful or evil scenario occurs to one, the reality turns out to be worse. Bit of grey day today. What a pity. Keep well, Ken

**Saturday 12th December 2020**

**Having fun**

Long ago, I realised that English Reserve seemed to result from no one giving people permission to socialise. I cracked this when I was in College in 1962, when the train was stuck between Knightsbridge & South Ken for 5 minutes. I announced that, "This is a Standard British Disaster & you may now talk to strangers" & lots of people did. Especially in these times, one need all the personal contact one can get within the rules.

Fortunately, the World is quite a funny place in many ways (as opposed to a 'funny old place') &, being the son of my Father, I can usually come up with a quip or many during the trivial round, the common task. The best way to cheer oneself up is to make someone else smile. Even if there isn't something ludicrous going on at the time, if someone makes eye-contact, you can greet them. If someone has two dogs that look the same, I ask if they are related. They will tell me, pleased someone has noticed. The mothers of small babies are greeted with, "A new citizen, I see". They have not usually hitherto thought about their off-spring in that way. I have a gem for Black Traffic Wardens writing tickets (which is their Moment of Maximum Danger) as Blacks are usually more religious than Whites: "Smite the malefactors, saith the Lord of Hosts". That invariably gets a laugh. Public servants, like our Postie or the Road Sweepers get Good Morning & the Traffic Wardens get Good Morning, Officer.

Spraying goodwill around like this costs nothing & you can usually spot & avoid the uptight types who 'keep themselves to themselves', either because they are snooty or socially embarrassed. That's their loss.

And stay positive. It is positive to hope for the best but prepare for the worst. At least, one is then Doing Something. One does not have to hang around waiting for Fate to make its next move.

Ok, let's list some positives. I'm much enjoying preparing my European History talks. I'm now round about 1797 & there is so much going on. Now we're only in Tier 2, we can go to Caffé Nero, which gets Avis out of the house. On Tuesday,, we met people we often see: Aysh an Algerian brought up in Former Yugoslavia & 'the lovelies' (not particularly) Maureen & Pam, in their 80s & who usually sit outside but not in this weather. If not chatting, I work on my talks, using their wi-fi or Dirty Martini's next door.

I usually take Avis out into the country once a week, which is not very 'green' I know. The Autumn Colour was excellent this year. Philip & I pass beers through the trellis in the garden to each other &

he & daughter June are coming to ours for Xmas Dinner. After 29 years, I'm sure they count as family. They certainly behave as if they were.

Keep well, keep happy & keep in touch. Ken

### **Monday 14th December 2020**

I sent on my brother's Skiathos Newsletter.

### **Saturday 19th December 2020**

#### **Been quiet for a while....**

....because I was expecting a brexit deal to appear but so far, nothing. The right-wing press are starting to talk about Ursula von Delaying but we all know it's not her. Meanwhile, something close to home for me, if not for you. I wrote recently that military hardware was a waste of money but software writers were relatively cheap. So "some foreign power" has obviously discovered & computer systems in the USA have been massively disrupted by the younger likes of yours truly having fun & being well paid for it. In this country, we have the best computer games writers in the World, so we should be able to compromise anyone's computer systems. While we mourn the death of John LeCarré, thanks to him we know what a squalid world espionage & the black arts is. Of course, Bozo wants a new tank to ride around in, witness the vulgar repainting of his aeroplane but the price of a tank could buy an awful lot of software (or a lot of awful software if he, as usual, sub-contracts it to his mates).

Another item of interest in the software disruption is the involvement of Microsoft. Why? Waaay back in 1968, the US Military realised the need for a secure software base for their DARPA Network, soon to be known as the Internet. This was Unix, the basis of all mobile telephone networks, either in its original form in iPhones or Android, based on Linux, a clone of Unix with the same security features, as in all the others except the now defunct Microsoft 'phones. Whatever Microsoft do, they will never be able to make Windows, based on an obsolete DEC Operating System, VAX VMS, secure. I assume that most, if not all, the systems which have been prejudiced, were running Windows. These days, even mighty IBM uses Linux (which is free, so there is no excuse for not using it) & Apple Macs use Unix with a pretty front end.

In Britain, we are all awaiting the definitive Xmas socialising instructions. Last Tuesday, we spent our last 'eat out' pigging in a Toby Carvery, now a tradition & at Southend this time. Stay well, evolving viruses permitting, Ken

### **Sunday 20th December 2020**

#### **The Event of the Year....**

....depends on who you are. For me, it is not the pandemic. These things come & go & are often forgotten like a Bad Dream. Remember AIDS? It is still not curable but is manageable. We still exchange cards with Chris Smith, although it is over 15 years since he was our MP. He has it but still lives a full life, now as Master of Pembroke College. My event of the year has just reached its climax. It is Beethoven's 250th birthday. He was baptised on December 17th. We don't know just when he was born. There has been so much music, many minor or casual pieces I did not know & reminders of stunning performances from the past, some in execrable recordings. In our Drawing Room (which, apart from the discreet hi-fi, looks thoroughly Victorian as befits a house built in 1840 to Georgian design), there is an etching & marble bust of Beethoven. (The other two heroes, so commemorated, are Williams Daniels, the Liverpool Artist 1813 - 1880 & Katharine Johnson 1918 - 2020). The scariest thing ever said to me was when I told my music teacher that he couldn't expect us to compete with Beethoven & he said, we all have to compete with Beethoven. Well, I failed all right, even if I did get that Professor degree.

So did everyone else. In my personal Pantheon, Bach is 2nd, who died 30 years before Beethoven's birth. Of the joint 3rds, Mozart (favourite composer of people who know nothing about music) hardly knew him, although he was impressed by what he heard (Beethoven was 20 when Mozart died), Haydn knew all right that he had been knocked off his position as Greatest Living Composer & more or less, gave up but he was already 70 then. Still, it was Haydn who got the Guard of Honour when Bonaparte took Vienna shortly before Haydn's death. The other two joint 3rds, Schubert & Wagner put up a decent show of competing with the Beethoven, who's music they knew very well.

When I sneer at rich bastards 'yachts' & private aircraft, if they don't know their Beethoven, I am much richer than them.

Meanwhile, chaos reigns, as Bozo takes on a rôle as a Horseman of the Apocalypse. The 1st we heard of Tier 4 was on Saturday, with just hours to go & one wonders how many more Tiers he has up his sleeve. Gee, Bozo, thanks for the notice. I know you don't like to give bad news, because you think it impacts on your popularity. Don't worry, young man, You No Longer Have Any Popularity. This is coupled with schools being expected to turn themselves magically into Medical Centres run by volunteers. We know that Tories, not just the Clownocracy don't like paying anyone to do anything if they can get away with it but I'd trust a volunteer medical worker as much as I'd trust a volunteer airline pilot. This is our kids & grand-kids at risk, doubly so, as they are waiving the usual checks for volunteers to weed out the crooks & paedophiles. Vaccination seems random as well. Philip has had his & he is 18 months younger than me, let alone 9 1/2 years younger than Avis. More so is Anthony Barnett & he's been jabbed. I don't resent my friends getting jabbed before us but how does this system work? As well as Test & Trace? Anyway, it looks as if our modest Xmas Day plan is still legal.

Let us hope we survive this new normal into the New Year. Unless there is a ludicrous Brexit deal next week, you won't hear from me until after what one hopes is a better-than-expected Xmas after all. Cheers, Ken

## **Monday 28th December 2020**

### **Christmas**

We did manage to have something resembling a 'normal' Xmas, although 'normal' for us is on a cruise ship, having it with strangers. With Philip next door & his daughter June, we considered that a 'bubble'. Philip is a member of our U3A & lost his wife last year to the awful Leuiy Lumps Dementia, where she was almost catatonic of 18 months. We have Dining Table for 6, so putting them at the far end simulated social distancing. I cooked a chicken & pigs in blankets, roasted parsnips, carrots & sauté spuds, peas plus Xmas pud with non-cow cream, all washed down with Philip's Prosecco & Gewürztraminer left from the last Mainland Europe trip. As a veggie, June got Eggs Florentine & claimed never to have eaten so much. After, we had a proper log fire in the Drawing Room. They had also brought Godiva chocolates. June had never heard our Romantic Story (on-going), so we told her the start of it.

The house being built in 1840, I had kitted the Drawing room out in Dickensian 1840's style, although except for a real Queen Anne sofa & the discreet hi-fi, nothing in it cost more than £60. (The Harmonium was £37 but in 1968. It was built in 1863 by Alexandre & Cie in Paris & had been covered in blanché varnish. Late 1st wife Jane removed it with turps & wire wool & waxed & polished it, bringing up the walnut veneer on oak). There is a Tudor working-class chest, crudely carved & with twisted nail hinges. It came from Jane's family. It contains Properties, mainly Jane's ethnic clothes. She made herself a set of English National Dress from old shepherdess (is that PC anymore?) pictures. In fact, she made all her clothes.

When the guests had departed, I stripped & froze the chicken, putting the remains in the garden. On Boxing Day morning, every scrap, bones & all, had been devoured, presumably by a fox, who had licked the plate clean. (I washed it anyway). Lunch was a weird leftovers curry, chicken, parsnip &

carrot in gravy. To top off the weekend, Sunday was Cauliflower Cheese, as we had had enough to eat for this festival, cauliflower being one of Nature's attempts to make water stand up by itself (like the Chorleywood Bread Process).

This is our Xmas Story. Comment on current affairs can wait.  
Best wishes (as in, fingers' crossed) for the New Year. Ken & Avis

**Tuesday 29th December 2020**

### **The Devil....**

....is in the detail & there are two sets in front of us this week. In my last essay, I mentioned the plight of school heads, having to spend Xmas with the impossible task of organising the testing of their pupils, when there are no resources available to do it. Teacher after teacher has confirmed on the media that they just cannot do it. Staff go back next Monday & the pupils on Tuesday, despite the evidence from the government's own graphs during lock-down, that schools are super-spreaders for a disease which has evolved itself into a more transmissible form. The government has allowed, in fact, insisted on schools opening, not that they care a toss about the education of the offspring of the proles but they want the proles back to work pronto, not caring for the kids. The ones who actually are kids (under 14) cannot legally be left alone at home. Any blame will be attached by our corrupt media, not to a government that has demonstrated an inability to organise a piss-up in a brewery but to the School Heads, part of what Gove, the Minister for the Brexit Cock-up but once, Education Minister, calls "the Blob", short for people who know what they are doing but disagree with Gove.

This is the same Gove who has just warned us that brexit will cause "bumps in the road". We could have, & did, tell him that, as in, earthquakes cause bumps in the road, some so big that you & the bus you're travelling in can fall into the consequent holes. How many bumps & for how long, he did not specify. It is possible that Gove has read the "deal", as he is a obsessive & aware of the miles of extra red tape involved but it is beyond the limits of possibility that Bozo the Clown has actually read it. Notoriously, in every management job he has had: Editor of the Spectator; Mayor of London & now, Prime Minister, he has been a mouthpiece but has left the detail (where the Devil is to be found) to appointees like Gove. The agreement with the EU is 1,200 pages, longer than the unputdownable "Man without Qualities" by Robert Musil (1,184 pages) & I know that I would not be able to read it between the agreement's publishing & the Commons Debate on Wednesday. I have relied on the summary published on the web by the EU. Every other commentator has mentioned the howling gaps in it, especially on financial services. Until someone rebuilds our economy & it won't be Bozo, we have to rely on the City for our foreign exchange & tax revenues, since Thatcher smashed manufacturing industry & Bozo himself said, "fuck business", by which, it was clear he meant manufacturing industry, not the spivs in the City.

On Friday, the new immigration restrictions, crafted by the nearest thing to Himmler we have as Home Secretary, will mean that anyone earning less than £25,000 in the job they have lined up in Britain, can sod off. I gather the farmers lobby have already made a hole in that but not the Care Industry. I gather the Clownocracy have declared that there are sufficient unemployed people in Britain to fill the 112,000 vacancies in Care Homes, which suggests that the unemployed are to be conscripted to do work which requires a high degree of empathy, not resentment. The Care Industry needs winding up in its present form & merging with the NHS

Still, we have had a Dress Rehearsal for brexit over the days before Xmas. The attached photo by Gareth Fuller, is of Polish lorry drivers stuck on the M20, sharing Xmas Day sandwiches, with a tree made of Heineken (& hence, green) beer cans. I'll let you know when Avis gets the vaccine but, despite her being 85, that is not yet.

Just think of the worst that can happen next year. It won't be as good as that. Cheers, Ken

**Friday 1st January 2021**

## Happy New Year

If only. Avis & I ought to be getting outside of a lateish breakfast before going for a walk around Funchal. Instead of watching the fireworks last night in our posh threads, quaffing cheap champagne, I am writing this, contemplating 3 political decisions, one bad & two very, very bad. Incidentally, Avis rarely remembers which day of the week it is & is a menace in the kitchen, if unsupervised but she is quite capable of discussing things like the agreement with the EU intelligently. She really hates the idea of leaving the EU. Dementia is weird & no two people seem to have a similar form.

So, let's go with the bad one first. We could all see this one coming, sending pupils back to school come what may. Ok, so they are sending them back later but not later enough. I've rehearsed the reasons previously & have nothing to add. As usual, the decision has been taken at the last minute, the usual dither but they still have three more days to change it again & throw the teachers into more unmanageable confusion. Last Tuesday, my friend Louis, a one time colleague at the same level as me when we were both wage-slaves, i.e. senior middle managers but who gave it up to teach, commented, "I was asked once or twice in my teaching career if I would be interested in aspiring to headship. My response was that I would need to be paid a six figure salary in order to be enticed to do so AND that the first digital does not begin with one. This is, after all, what a senior executive in a banking, insurance, law or accountancy firm would earn and most that I met during my career in the City were far from qualified to run a school." Over-stretched & under-resourced head teachers are now, the norm.

Very, very bad decision One is to interfere politically with the vaccination programme by extending the period between doses, so as to get more people with one dose before the May Elections. Bozo offers hope for April but he really means those May Elections. Reputable professors who are kept off the airways are saying that there is no, zero, zilch any evidence from the extensive test programmes that the drug companies have carried out which suggests that this is nothing but a waste of vaccine for political purposes. I would not trust Bozo with a road safety programme, let alone a decision on vaccination.

VVBD Two is the constant drip, drip of stuff coming out of the Brexit Agreement. It is now obvious that Bozo was so anxious to get an agreement by Xmas Day that he allowed Ursula von der Leyen to stitch him up somewhat rotten. While she did everything she could to ease getting EU goods into Britain, Britain has to stick to most EU regulations & if it does not, then that will be considered a breach of the treaty & tariffs will be slapped on pronto. I wondered where the catch was in allowing us tariff-free entry. Beware the Greeks when they come bearing gifts. The good news about this is that Bozo's bonfire of the "red tape that is strangling British business" cannot take place, like the much-hated Elf'n Safety, quite unnecessary when we have such a large pool of unemployed, says Mr. Scrooge Mark 1. Bozo has locked us into the EU rules & regulations in the small print, which he, notoriously, does not read. Come to think of it, the only bad news in this paragraph is that we have an inattentive PM. This ploy of Ursula's looks pretty good. Wait until the ERG work it out!

On the personal side, I am very unhappy at Labour putting its finger-prints on this deal. For the sake of appeasing (and when did appeasement ever work out well) the currently lost Red Wall voters, Labour has lost the ability to say, "You screwed this up. It's your problem". I have put up with a lot of crap from my own party in 56 years (e.g semi-racist Race Relations legislation) for the sake of the good that they have done & the Tories would not have (& recently, like Sure Start, ripped up). Historically, Labour have been let in to power to clear up Tory messes, done but not always tidily. Sooner or later, Labour will be put in to clear up this one but the lack of deniability will make it that much harder.

Last Tuesday, Denise also commented on the idea that the government intends to conscript people into working in care homes. She was horrified & gave some details of what it is like. I'll spare you them in case you're eating while reading this. Enough to say, she found being a Prison Warder on the

Riot Squad in a Mens' Prison a much more attractive proposition. Keep well & pray for an early vaccine, properly administered. PS Something more positive next time.

**Sunday 3rd January 2021**

**Told you so.**

It's not at all satisfying to write those words. I suggested that the Clownocracy had 3 days to U-turn on school openings & they duly did. Now, Pfizer have come out to say that delaying or mixing vaccines will not provide protection. To try to get everyone with one dose of vaccine before the May Elections would be a crime but then, so is letting contracts to your friends without due process, so crime is endemic in this government.

Just supposing this vaccine ploy works & the Tories do better than expected in the May Elections (although I suspect Scotland is already & irredeemably, a lost cause), they would save much money by not bothering to give anyone else the second dose of vaccine. Since we are not all in this together & the virus strikes more viciously at poor & coloured communities, then it could be left to do its "good work" on the electoral register. The death figures would have to be re-rigged but they have done that already. Although the BBC are allowed to mention, in the 'small print' as it were, that the death figures are only of those people who died within 28 days of a positive diagnosis in hospital, most people ignore that & do not dash off to the Office of National Statistics figure for excess deaths, which is the true figure, including those that died at home or undiagnosed. The Clownocracy know that if they try to rig the ONS figures, all trust in any public data will disappear & business would flounder.

To look on the bright side, the scientists will probably stop this manipulation of the vaccines & insist on the correct 2nd dose inoculation system.

In a World now flooded with information & where I can knock up a series of lectures without once having to go to the Public Library (although I use my own much), it is strange to find oneself short of data or requiring much effort. After a General Election, there is usually a book published with a detailed breakdown of what actually happened. I am interested in the "red wall" which is supposed to have collapsed. It did but how? Did lifetime Labour voters turn to voting Tory? Unlikely, I would have thought but they may have stayed at home. Did they? I want to know without ploughing through all the data myself. I have enough to do without that.

A brief look at the results show some things. Some Tory majorities are razor-thin. Some Labour MPs were saved by the Brexit party bleeding off Tory votes. There were some weird results like Ashfield where a local spin-off party from the Lib-Dems let the Tories in. There was also a change of Labour candidate from the romantic-sounding Gloria de Piero. The shocker was Bassetlaw, where the Tories scored double the Labour vote, the biggest swing in the election, but this had been a coal-mining seat where the miners scabbed on the 1984 strike. There were also selection issues on the Labour side. (I put a lot of work in on the Miners Strike, as I had a Press Company car to take food up in & was immune to the beatings from the police that some other helpers suffered. I was given a medal by my union for that). However, I'm not going to plough through all the results. I'll just get the book when it eventually comes out.

Another look on the bright side: I am wondering if it might occur to Bozo to think that, as Shelley pointed out, "We are many: they are few" & decide he can chuck the Rich overboard & actually do something for the poor, especially as they, one way or another, facilitated his 80-seat majority. This may be a tall call, as he would have to interact with poor people to discover what it is they really need, because he has no idea what poverty means. He would need to appoint someone to tell him some home truths & agree to listen to them. I have already outlined (more than once, I suspect), the fastest way to 'level up' the poor & must write to him but I won't be holding my breath.



A footnote. I have not actually heard a member of the Clownocracy say that they are going to conscript the unemployed into Care Homes. What they did say was, there would be no problem with the exclusion of low-paid foreign workers because there were plenty of people in this country who could do the jobs. If this does not mean that British people are not going to be bullied into these jobs, I don't know what it does mean. British people expect a job to pay for decent food, clothing, housing & at least, a small amount of discretionary income. Foreign workers come for the great prize we can give them: fluency in the English Language, for which they will put up with a lot. Keep warm, Ken

**Friday 8th January 2021**

### **What a week**

Maybe it was naive of me to expect only one U-turn in my New Year's Day essay. What we got was two, a particularly damaging two, as the Primary School kids went back for a day, picked up whatever viruses were going round & then, in many cases, had to go to Gran's, as the schools closed again but their parents still had to go to work & child care is a Problem & usually, Expensive. Gran may only be in her 50s but even so, that is getting towards the vulnerable decades. Now, late as usual, we have a total lockdown. Fortunately, people are still allowed (indeed, encouraged) to go to work, so our Cleaning Lady, Hazel turned up yesterday, after a 3 week gap, which gave her time to isolate from us, at least after her family Xmas bash.

Although on the good news front, it appears that two tory MPs have sent The Letter to Graham Brady, expressing no confidence in Bozo, the bad news is that other tories are rallying round Bozo & intend to pass the blame for the way the Covid pandemic has been managed from Bozo to, would you believe? the NHS! They hate the NHS viscerally as a dangerous example of successful Marxism in action (as in, From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs). I'll come back to this after....

....the astonishing events at the US Capitol building, which a mob of Trump supporters invaded & trashed the place, while Congress was confirming Biden's election. If this had been, say, France, there would have been many cracked skulls among the mob but, since they were almost entirely white, that was not an option for the thin screen of cops present, although one fascist did get shot dead. Even Vice-President Pence condemned the attack but everybody on both sides was bandying around the word "democracy". The USA is not a democracy. Like our system, it is rigged in favour of right-wing parties. At the moment, thanks (& thank goodness) to the Georgia by-elections, the Democrats will control it but this is only because Vice-President Harris will have a casting vote. Yet, the democrats have over 14 million more votes cast for their Senators than the Republicans. The Popular Vote means little in the US. Dubbya lost by half a million votes but became President, in that case, because the Supreme Court stopped the Florida recount. Trump lost by 3 million in 2016 but won. Losing by 7 million this time was enough to make him lose the Presidency. In Britain, the undemocratic nature of the system has had me campaigning for decades for Proportional Representation.

Right, so let's run the last two paragraphs together. Just suppose the tories attempt to blame the NHS for the bad response to the Covid pandemic & bring in a "reorganisation" of the NHS which amounts to abolition & bringing in a pay-as-you-go private insurance scheme. We already have an insurance scheme. It's called National Insurance & is biased in favour of the rich, as they don't have to pay their fare share. There would be protests on the street & crowds descending on Parliament Square, perhaps going into the Palace of Westminster & maybe, even lynching a minister or two.

I'm going to make a sweeping statement. Right-wing mobs such as the one that invaded Congress are never justified, whereas Left-wing crowds are normally justified. Anyone disagreeing with this had better have some good historical examples to offer. Keep well, Ken

**Monday 11th January 2021**

### **Home life**

We need to prevent ourselves going bonkers & freezing to death during this cold, Winter lockdown. The second bit means we have to supplement a central heating system installed by a stereotypical Scotsman (mean & a tory to boot). Fortunately, we still have a working fireplace (attached photo) & here is Avis curled up with a book in front of it. Maybe, it seems incongruous that I poke around with traditional brass fire irons that sit in a 25 pounder shell case from World War One while I have a recently state-of-the-art laptop & second screen a few feet away. While Avis reads a lot, I stay sane by putting together more History talks for Hampstead U3A but one cannot avoid endlessly seeing historical parallels with Modern Times.

This nearly half of our Drawing Room. Georgian fireplaces demand a disciplined approach. Five screwed-up pages of the Guardian will light it. Four will not. Six will choke themselves & go out. I have just retrieved three Xmas tree trunks, trimmed & sawn up. They take two years to season to avoid breaching smokeless zone law. Much seasoned wood can be obtained from skips, where the builders are home improving (or the opposite: the French next door have stripped out all the original features. Their interior is modernistically bleak).

Discipline is also necessary in the Kitchen. It is hard work trying to convince Avis that cheesecake, tiramisu & gulab jam are puddings, not for tea. Baking apples are not a problem, being uneatable unless cooked. There is ham, lettuce & Genoa cake of tea. (Only the Genoa cake is not imported. Duh!) Today, dinner is lentils, softened by red vermouth with grated carrot & sausages fried in red onions, boring. Yesterday was historically interesting: only grilled fish, sauté spuds & cabbage fried in onion but the fish was tilapia, which I had never seen before Sainsburys started stocking it. I don't suppose it will be stocked long, as it comes from West Africa & requires foreign exchange, which will soon be in short supply.

In the 1970s, there was a problem with tilapia. People complained that it tasted 'muddy'. I don't remember what the problem was but I do know that my late first wife Jane sorted it out, hence my interest. Tilapia tastes ok but not as tasty as plaice, which has been hard to come by. I did buy two pairs of plaice yesterday & I expect more will become available as it is too hard to export to Mainland Europe, now we have Brexited. There is a steady trickle of stories about seafood that is going rotten before in can be exported because of the red tape &, vice-versa; Tesco's dumping rotten oranges that got to Britain too late for the same reason. Brexit is proving to be, not a catastrophe but a slow-motion car crash. The destination will be the same.

By the by: Michael Heseltine said last September, that Bozo looked at the direction people were moving, then dashed in front. Nearly right. In 1849, the crowd was marching on the Paris Hôtel de Ville. The politician Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin found out &, to his regret, said to a journalist, "I am their leader. I must follow them", thus earning a place in History. Keep well, Ken

### **Wednesday 13th January 2021**

#### **Ten days ago.**

Harold Wilson said, "A week is a long time in politics". Ten days ago, I suggested that the vaccine roll-out was being manipulated for political reasons. The news today is that Joan Bakewell is about to, maybe today, sue the government in the form of Doormat Handcock, for delaying the seconds jabs. She has launched a crowd-funding appeal to pay the lawyers, something I could not do, as nobody knows who the hell I am these days but everyone knows who she is. I just saved the link on Facebook after pledging some cash.

For U3A friends, go to: <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/pfizer-vaccine-roll-out/>

....and fork out. This raises a second question which always bugs me. Why we have so many charities? Today, there are 169,779 & nearly every one does something the government should be doing. A German recently posted on Facebook, "We don't do charity. We pay our taxes", which says it all. Avis & I do charity from the company account, untaxed income, which saves fiddling about

with Gift Aid & also covers us for charity, which is not to a Charity, like handouts to indigent friends in the Arts.

Curiously, John Crace, the Guardian's acerbic commentator, has praised Prof. Whitty for telling the truth. He has not. He approved the delay in second vaccinations, despite Pfizer's disagreement. He only keeps his job as Chief Medical Officer by agreeing to be a government patsy, although he must know that he will be high on the list when the Blame Game really starts. He always looks very uneasy on his podium at the daily briefings. Surely, one day he will Man Up & say, "I'm not participating in this farce any longer!" Surely.

And now, we have our second Barnard Castle Moment, when Bozo was caught on film cycling 7 miles from Downing Street & in the Olympic Park, despite the mixture of 'advice' & 'law' that he says we must obey. Well, it appears that the vast majority of us do but if things go wrong, it has to be our fault & no one else's, least of all, the Clownocracy.

Keep well. No point in screwing up when the vaccine is imminent, Ken

### **Saturday 16th January 2021**

#### **Stirring it**

I managed to fulfil my duty in getting everyone thinking on Thursday by supporting Joan Bakewell's legal action. 26 reactions, including the Facebook ones & no consensus, which is good in a way. One of my friends, wheelchair bound but a connoisseur of conspiracy theories is disinclined to go near the vaccines & I would have thought it highly likely that, despite my conspiracy theory about the May Elections, this government is likely to make something in the range from a mess to a complete mess of any part of the roll-out that they are involved in.

In the run-up to today's jab this afternoon, I am feeling very insecure about this unscientific 12 week gap between the jabs & will say so. It is now being widely discussed that posh Eton boys with trivial Classics degrees are in no position to disagree with the Head Of Pfizer about when the second jab should be administered. He says three weeks. Otherwise & at huge expense, we are likely to have to have three jabs, this first, wasted one & two more spaced at the correct interval. How many times & how many people have to tell this government of thickoes that Science is Not Negotiable. Theory can be proved or disproved but if it is disproved, it is not in the corpus of Science.

#### **Jabbed**

Well, we went for our vaccination. Two minutes early did not seem to matter. No queue. I had my Portugal hat on & the receptionist was Portuguese, so that went down well. A Dr. Patel jabbed us & it was all over in a minute. I did mention the excessive time before the next jab & she agreed. We had to wait a quarter-hour before going. I'm not sure why. Maybe, some people have instant reactions, which presumably, the Health Centre can fix.

We went on for a spin round the Chilterns, Avis not having been out since before Xmas but we were self-isolating in the horrid car. We even had some blue sky. The stay-at-home message is obviously being obeyed, as traffic was very light. We even went through the Tottenham Court Road underpass without stopping - unheard of, even in the first lockdown, so any attempt by the Clownocracy to blame the population for the current spread of the virus is quite off the mark.

### **Friday 22nd January 2021**

#### **I thought this of interest Posted by Templar European Logistics (i.e. they do lorries)**

"So Big Dave's week goes from bad to worse, wait till you get a load of this !! Gets to clear customs on Monday night gets told incorrect LRN code so parks at his favourite cafe gets clamped £187 release fee .....he has a Kent pass so goes back to try and clear again on Tuesday morning and again gets refused so a night at Ashford truck stop £30 so same again yesterday so another night at truck stop

£30 so day after a lot of shouting we get another LRM as the original has expired and the lovely customs guys say everything ok but there is a box not been ticked and they are at capacity so can't do it tonight so Dave says ok ill come back tomorrow pulls out before he is kicked out were the nice VOSA man stops him finds nothing wrong and fines him £300 for not having a valid Kent pass Well i'll pay nothing i'd rather go to jail as we run our business spot on and this is just the final straw this week we have lost over £10k in time and same again in loads ! The Great British nation are the laughing stock of Europe and drivers are bearing the brunt I will be writing to the press tomorrow and telling them what a joke it is ! One truck 3 days same numbers and cleared 7th attempt nothing different from the 1st."

Brexit - the gift that keeps on giving. A pity Bozo did not read it (he said he didn't) before he signed it. Cheers, Ken

**Saturday 23rd January 2021**

**Vaccinations - letter to the Guardian they won't publish**

"Dear Editor, On January 16th, my wife (85) & I (77) had our first Pfizer Covid vaccinations. We should be having our second on February 6th, according to the manufacturers. However, owing to Johnson's desire to have as many people vaccinated for the first time before the May Elections, this will not be the case.

There are a number of possible consequences: our second jab, now due on April 17th, may or may not happen; we will have our second jab but a third may be necessary after three weeks, to conform with the Pfizer directions, leading to a 50% rise in the cost of the vaccinations; or simply, the earlier vaccinated "most vulnerable people" will not receive second jabs at all, as being disposable & sooner rather than later, as in, before the 2024 General Election.

This is hardly cynicism in the face of a government, who's decisions have been wrong, wicked or both. Yours sincerely, Ken Baldry"

**Thursday 28th January 2021**

**Letter from Virgin**

Not some love-lorn teenager (trying to breach my iron rule: "Never go out with younger women. They are nothing but trouble") but Virgin Media. Two letters, actually, telling me the price of broadband is going up Two, because I give free wi-fi to the people in our St.Peter's Street flats. This raises an interesting question not pursued elsewhere: with lockdown & schooling at home via Zoom or whatever, we have now reintroduced paying for education, something abolished bit by bit after the Forster Act of 1870 & definitively by the 1918 Education Act. Labour's manifesto included free broadband for all & it is now obvious to all but the government, that that was the way to go.

Charges for broadband should be coming down, especially as, once the infrastructure is in place, it more or less runs itself, so increasing the charges is just rent seeking. The costs of maintenance are offset by the cost of computer power dropping through the floor. There must be some agreement among the providers, in conflict with competition law, not to compete, the free market, as usual, not working as specified.

The government ought to act on this but there is a whole list of things they should have acted on ages ago, well, between 11 months & 11 years, when their foolish drive to dismantle the infrastructure of the country started. I see Bozo is deeply sorry for the 100,000 deaths (going on 120,000 if you ask the ONS website). No, he is deeply sorry for himself. It wasn't supposed to be like this. It was meant to be a jolly jape, where he & his friends ripped off the public purse & had a wonderful time. Oh, wait....

Either way, he should be taking his Seals of Office round to Buck House. He won't. nor will he deal with the super-spreading feature of the economy - people with Covid going to work because they would

otherwise have no, zero, zilch money. I explained in my October 18th 2020 essay why giving them more is a problem that can be solved by running the printing presses. I had no comeback from our House Accountant but as every businessperson knows, an accountant will tell you how to save money but never, how to make it. (If they know, they stop being an accountant & become a businessperson themselves). Keep well, Ken

**Wednesday 3rd February 2021**

### **Are your teeth ok?**

I do have a small problem & am going to the dentist (Oh! Bliss!) tomorrow. It was supposed to be yesterday but one of the two dentists I see has had a bereavement. I don't know which one, so I don't know what to say to who: Dylan (he's Indian) or Zorena (she's from Lviv & it's not polite to ask if she's Polish or Ukrainian). So, I have a tooth problem but not teething problems, which you get when you're about 7 & dropping your milk teeth for adult ones.

So, it seems a particularly appropriate metaphor when our leadership, which says we have 'teething problems' with brexit, seem to have a collective mental age of 7. (One of my U3A colleagues will complain that I am being 'rude' again but the standard argument of Tories who have no reply, is to complain of one's 'manners'). There has been a steady trickle of complaints on social media about the disruption to peoples' lives caused, not by teething problems with brexit but with the actual agreement signed up to by Bozo, who admitted not having read it. Lorry drivers facing the real difficulties of hanging around, not necessarily because their paperwork is faulty but because someone further up the queue has the wrong form or filled in the wrong way.

Hanging around means nowhere to eat & nowhere to pee. Dover roadsides & the A20 leading down to the town from Folkestone are getting very smelly. The queues are not that long to the docks, as they are backed up at the new giant lorry park at Ashford or at Manston Airport. Drone film does not seem to show toilets or cafés at Ashford. During the December crisis, there were few facilities at Manston Airport. I don't know about now. There are also steady reports of small to medium enterprises, one of which we had, going bust daily, as the cost of paperwork exceeds the profit of the job.

Now, an uglier element has appeared at Larne & Belfast in Northern Ireland. One would have thought that infinite pains would have been taken over the brexit agreement where the recent battlefield over there was concerned but no. It was rushed through in an unrealistic form. The truth is that there is no possible agreement about the Irish border that does not involve a border in the Irish Sea. It just cannot be done. The apparent threats to staff working the new, bizarre, border rules are from the Unionist paramilitaries, always the nastier lot because they felt they had impunity, being on the same side as the British troops. It would not be the IRA left-overs because all they need to do it wait for Irish reunion to be shown to be the only sensible solution to the border problem. In my youth, no one with any sense thought that reunion was on the cards in the theocracy of Eire but the Catholic Church is long since a busted flush, now all the scandals are public knowledge.

There is no question that the EU had behaved badly over the vaccine supply but the matter seems to be being cleared up. Bozo will claim a big triumph for the early vaccinations in the UK, which will play well to his love of trumpeting BIG & World-beating. However, only one factor redounds to his credit: when looking for a Chumocrat to give the job of overseeing the vaccine business, he stumbled on the one Chumocrat, Kate Bingham, who was actually capable, unlike Telephone Girl for example. Even so, she recruited a load of her friends in the PR business at high salaries. Surely, nobody needs a PR agent, let alone several. What do they offer for their £167,000 a year? Obviously, their first job is to persuade a sucker that they need a PR agent. Bingham is married to a Tory MP but one on the far-left of the Party & was once, nearly involved with fisticuffs with the then Prime Minister, Cayman Island Cameron.

The British World-Beating vaccinations are the result of factors in the scientific community, World-wide. The Chinese published the DNA of the virus in a very short time. I think it was still 2019, then. The Oxford scientists took it on very quickly & worked out the Coronavirus' vulnerabilities before we even went into lock-down. Then, it was a matter for producing trial samples & trying them out in well-established ways to see both if it worked & was likely to be certified. That is what took all the time. Oxford University dug into its copious funds to pay for the research. They got into bed with Astra-Zenica to produce gallons of vaccine before they were sure it worked, as that would give Britain a head start if it did. The Russians adopted the same policy &, while they were sneered at in September, it now appears that a shot of the Oxford vaccine followed later by a shot of the Russian one is even better. There is no place for nationalism when it comes to health.

Ah, Russians. I don't know if anyone is watching, "the Great", a biopic of Catherine the Great on the telly. They admit that it is not entirely historical & it certainly is not. The portraits of both Catherine & Tsar Peter, whom she overthrew, are way off. I was about to list the historical errors but it would try your patience, there are so many. Just treat it as fiction & enjoy the laughs.

A pity about Captain Tom. He did, not so much but more than enough to remind us of what the Best of British amounts to & cheered us up no end. 100 is a good innings anyway, which we can aspire to but see how it goes. Keep well, Ken

**Friday 12th February 2021**

### **Vindication...**

...for the stand I have taken over the years against competition & in favour of co-operation. Even the Clownocracy has now agreed that the 2012 Health Service reorganisation, bringing in pointless, expensive competition was a mistake & that the way forward has to be based on the massive co-operation during the pandemic, without which there would have been even more unnecessary deaths. But we did not have to start from here. If they had left well alone in 2012, the death toll would have been much smaller because the Local Authorities would still have had an important part to play, particularly in test-and-trace. This is not to say that NHS organisation should be exempt from on-going revue to bring in best practice wherever it comes from. However, the buzz coming from the clowns that more strings will be held in the limp hands of the Secretary of State is heading in the wrong direction. For nearly seven years, Simon Stephens, as Head of NHS England has tried every wriggle he can find round the stupid Lansley "Reforms" to ensure we still have an NHS. Doubtlessly, he will now get the chop.

Where did all this nonsense about 'markets' come from? The lunatic fringe of thinkers like Hayek, taken up by corrupt politicians who could see a way of looting the State. Some might have been 'true believers', moderate intelligence coupled to a drive to power of which Thatcher was a prime exemplar, scaling up the economics of her father's shop to the National level. Like Blair, Thatcher knew no history & like him, this lead her into error. Fortunately for Britons, Blair's were foreign policy errors, bad news for the locals in other countries. Thatcher's errors were economic & domestic. Markets arose millennia ago as a means of trading off (usually) agricultural goods. In other words, they were a response to a need. Other needs were originally covered (if not satisfied) by itinerant pedlars, bring iron pots etc. There was no competition because you were lucky if a pedlar came round once a year. Much production was local. For a community, a source of potting clay was almost as important as a river. If a market has not arisen, then it is because a market is not appropriate for satisfying a need. Hence the NHS & other obvious monopolies. The classic case was when Bournemouth & Poole wanted to pool some of their NHS functions & were forbidden by the competition police, known as Monitor, a whole bureaucracy of useless right-wing busybodies. I'll come back to competition in the future.

Obviously, this is not a good time to do a whole NHS reorganisation, especially one as incompetently thought-out as this one. What the clowns could do is fillet out bodies like Monitor & relax their

strictures. They could also finally work out a computer system that allows the sharing of patient data across the entire NHS but this must be done in-house, otherwise they will be ripped off by Big Computing the way they have been in the past. Working on this need not impact day-to-day NHS work much, although all interested parties would need to be consulted.

It's really cold & I'm worrying about running out of coal & kindling. Coal, I should be able to fix but kindling is harder. The stereotypical Scot who installed the central heating put in too small a gas boiler. What stops me replacing it is the gas, fossil fuel which should be replaced by electricity but current electric boilers are rubbish. Keep warm, Ken

## **Saturday 13th February 2021**

### **Time to talk straight**

One of our U3A number says we should give Bozo the Clown "credit" for being ahead on vaccinations. No, we shouldn't. In his usual Chumocrat corrupt way, he accidentally put someone competent, unelected, in charge of the roll out. This was Kate Bingham, the wife of a tory MP. It could have so easily gone the way of the "test and trace", which Bozo originally abandoned in February 2020 in favour of "herd immunity", which would have lead to mass slaughter by Covid. Fortunately, SAGE dragged him to the first lock-down, late but in time to prevent half a million deaths. When he eventually, months late, restarted "test and trace", it was put in the hands of a complete duffer, the wife of yet another tory MP and still is. It is important to remember that the worst month of carnage so far was the last - January 2021, with far more deaths than the worst last year & all due to Bozo's foolish Christmas slackening of restrictions, followed by the one-day Infection Festival when the kid's went back to school. In its last issue, obtainable on the web, the august British Medical Journal uses the word 'murder' to describe Bozo's policy but we have no mechanism as they do in the USA, to bring Bozo to judgement until the next General Election. The credit for the vaccines belongs to the scientists who devised them in record time.

YouGov have changed their way of doing surveys. They invite one to answer multiple choice questions & after each one, shows what the answers were in graphs. YouGov tends to be a small 'c' conservative organisation but to every question actually or implying judgement of Bozo, round about 70% condemn him every time. If an election was held today, he would lose Uxbridge. A book has just been published by Peter Osborne, a right-wing, Brexit-supporting Thatcherite, which condemns Bozo for dangerous, serial lying over his entire career & also says that the decent, honest, Jeremy Corbyn was treated shamefully by the Press. It is long been past the time when anyone who voted for Bozo or his lackeys should do one of two things: either find a quiet hole & weep with shame or, perhaps more cathartic, to come out publicly and admit that they did something almost criminally stupid & promise never to vote tory again.

## **Monday 15th February 2021**

### **Crackdown**

There's a lot of it about & it's usually published in the form, "Dogan Rustbucket, the Dictator of Narstia, has cracked down on demonstrators". No, he hasn't. He's sitting at a high Palace window, swigging champagne & watching his Riot Police or army or both coshing & arresting members of a peaceful crowd, not that unlike Trump on January 6th past, encouraging rioters with murder in their hearts attacking the Capitol Building in Washington, except that in that case, the participants were the other way round. I always wonder what is going on in the heads of Narstia's Riot Police, when they attack people in similar circumstances to their own in the interest of a monster. Now we know. They have been whipped up into a state of blind hatred of, what? Nothing logical. I will not comment on the vote in the US Senate not to convict Trump of something he was clearly guilty of except to say that, when your moral compass is attacked by a magnet the size of Trump, all the needles jump off their pins.

It is the job of political leaders to lead, promoting ideas which are in the public interest, not to live in fear of factions in their parties or the general public. If a politician lives in fear of not being reselected, what did they put themselves forward for in the first place? In too many cases, it was for access to the goodies of office or after they leave office. Bozo is afraid of the ultra-Right-Wing nutters he aided into Parliament because he is basically, one of them himself. Now, we have them (& they are largely, the same people as the brexit fanatics) baying for lockdown to be eased, so they can make even more money & who among them cares if a few more grockles die of Covid, as they can easily be replaced when the assistance, such as it is, has been removed & people are driven back into low-paid jobs. For once, Bozo seems to be resisting, as the science indicates that too early a release from this lockdown will only lead to a fourth lockdown.

In the future & hopefully, not that long, sufficient people will have been vaccinated that fear of spreading Covid by attending a demonstration, probably against the brexit-produced unemployment, will have evaporated. I will be there in one of my pro-EU tee-shirts, taking photos for my Diary but Bozo may well take a leaf out of the game plan which started this article.

7°C today & that counts as warming up. Pity it's so grey. Ken

**Sunday 21st February 2021**

#### **Four rulings....**

....this week, two good, two bad. The good ones are the High Court agreeing with the Good Law Project that Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary acted unlawfully by letting lucrative government contracts to his mates without following the statutory procedures put in place exactly to prevent this sort of corruption. What the practical outcome from this remains to be seen. While Hancock is just the Oil Rag in this, the Engine Driver is up to his neck in corrupt deals. Just imagine where we would be if Bozo had put Telephone Girl (who was screwed up test-and-trace) instead of Kate Bingham in charge of the vaccines?

The other good ruling was that Uber drivers & by implication (or precedent) are employees & not self-employed sub-contractors. This blows a hole in the modern slavery system known as the "gig economy" & should produce thousands of claims against bad employers. For 20 years, I have thought Gordon Brown's subsidy to bad employers, in-work benefits, was a bad thing. Massive unemployment or under-employment has given tyrannical power to employers, who can cut or remove 'hours' from gig workers. I am curious about how this will play out. I cannot see the Clownocracy rolling out the miles of Red Tape necessary.

The bad ones start with the Clownocracy trying to start a Culture War over the interpretation of History, which, in their view, is a fixed story of National Glory in which interpretation amounts to treason, particularly over the Empire. All overseas empires were crimes, bolstered by slavery, also a crime. Britain did not invent these (that was the Portuguese) but soon took advantage. Anyone disagreeing is an accessory to these crimes. There was nothing that the imperialists did that was not self-serving. The transition from trading to stealing came in the 15th Century, one of those remarkable epochs that brought in major changes, like the 18th Century.

The other bad ruling was the Queen's. Ok, so the Sussexes have had enough but taking away Harry's military involvement is to disrespect his service on the front line (whatever one may think of the cause, which awaits historical interpretation, probably several) & his starting the Invictus Games (for disabled servicemen), about which I doubt if there is any argument. I rarely find myself defending anyone in the over-privileged, under-employed Royal Family but suspect a bad smell of racism behind this one.



One of our U3A Group has gone quiet. This is Chris, a rather unhealthy chap & who's address we do not have. I hope we can soon find out if he is ok & if, not, that he gets the help he might need. Stay well, Ken

**Wednesday 24th February 2021**

### **Giving it some thought**

Bozo published his get-us-out-of-gaol strategy on Monday, so I needed some time to find the holes in it. Talking of holes, yesterday being forecast to be a sunny day, I took Avis out to see the sea, in this case, at Hastings & points East. The number of new potholes in the roads was shocking, much worse than when we last went down that way, which was not long ago. If I don't take her out occasionally, she becomes a bit stir-crazy. Anyway, back to Bozo. He claims to be driven by data, not dates & promptly filled the strategy with, what do you know? dates. It is a compromise between getting it right & getting it wrong & in such compromises, getting it wrong always wins.

So, what is wrong with the strategy? Firstly, Bozo does not have the intellectual tools necessary to analyse data. For him, as a journalist, data has always been a story to build a more thrilling story around, over & burying the original data. Remember straight bananas? Secondly, if you're not going to be driven by dates, don't publish any. This is a compromise to satisfy the tory right-wing, a bunch of mental cases but now the dates are out of the starting gate, they will run & run. Failure to stick to his dates will be a very public failure, exacerbated by the ravings of most of the Press. So whatever the consequences for the spread of the disease, those dates are set to keep running.

The first cock-up is sending the kids back to school with inadequate preparation. Their parents will be mostly in the 25-40 age range & will not have been vaccinated by March 8th. Then, at the same time, care home residents can be visited by someone, presumably a family member, provided they are tested & in PPE. This seems a tall call. Who supplies the PPE? It had better be good if the kids are bringing Covid back from school.

Another flaw in the strategy is, no attempt has been made to fill the gaping hole that has been open since the start of the pandemic: people who cannot afford not to go back to work, which also includes bad employers who insist to people who could work from home, that they will not allow it. The concept that some people just have no money is something that this government, going back to 2010, cannot get their heads around, starting with the 5 week wait for the in any case inadequate, Universal Credit. The budget is likely to be a disaster, which we can anticipate with fear & trembling, unless one does not give a toss about the consequences.

Currently, Bozo is dithering about Vaccine Passports. He does not want to make vaccination compulsory & he should, because refusing a vaccine breaches the rule (my rule) that you can do what you like providing it does not harm someone else. However, vaccination will become compulsory, as people without one will find their life-style restricted to nothing: no job; no eating out; no holidays; no friends. Bozo said there were ethical considerations about Vaccine Passports. What? Bozo? Ethical considerations? Give me a break. Actually, this is right in theory. On October 8th 1994 at the Charter 88 Council Meeting, I proposed that there should be no Identity Cards without entrenched constitutional safeguards & was shouted down by the lawyers Pam Giddy & Helena Kennedy with "No Identity Cards EVER", so we must be wary of Vaccine Passports morphing into Identity Cards but Vaccine Passports will still be necessary. An International Agreement is needed, fast.

There was an interesting programme on BBC1 last night about the (largely) London Blitz of 1940-41, hosted by Lucy Worsley, without any of her normal glee in rooting out historical misconceptions, Serious Lucy instead of Juicy Lucy. She pointed out, not just the level of co-operation but also the exacerbation of class tensions, brushed over in official accounts. The timing for showing of the programme was clearly about today & the lethal mess our government is making of the pandemic.

Deaths are currently running at more than twice the civilian deaths in the Blitz. If one adds in the deaths attributed to Covid to the carefully restricted daily published figure, the numbers are pushing 150,000, the worst in the World.

Apart from that, cheer up. If you're reading this, you're still alive. Ken

**Monday 8th March 2021**

**Too many things....**

....to comment on but let's start with the Meghan Affair. I have not seen the film yet but there are enough excerpts on the Air for there to be no surprises. A racist Royal Family. No change there, then, remembering some past comments, particularly from Prince Philip. A declaration of interest. I was the Webmaster & briefly while they looked for someone qualified, the Treasurer of "Republic". The usual creeps, like Charles Moore of the Torygraph, have made the expected comments & the word "Commonwealth" has cropped up, a way of laundering the great crime of our overseas empire, dreamed up in the Forties of the last century. Somehow, the bad smell surrounding the Royal Family never seems to stick for long. Palming off the homosexual Prince Charles on Diana, then getting her murdered when she was considered too far out of line, being made pregnant by a Saudi. (I got this from Claire Rayner, who got it from the police). Prince Harry saying his father would not answer his calls, when it was clear he was referring to Prince Charles, not his biological, clearly Janes Hewitt. You may recall Tony Blair rushing through a law making it a serious offence to make a DNA test of someone without their consent, rescuing Charles's, William's & Harry's hairbrushes from illicit pillage. This was after an article in the Guardian by the Secretary of "Republic", saying the Royal Family should be DNA tested to ensure we were getting what we were paying for. Hats off to Meghan for doing the nation a service.

Another thing is the Budget. Quite apart from the obvious deficiencies, well discussed in other media, my musical friends are still getting nothing except JSA, so stay on my payroll. As for 'super-deductions', I must iterate my general rule: if a Chancellor puts extra money in my pocket, they are doing the wrong thing.

Back to school today. Yeah: to the bullies, the playground variety & the psychopathic, ex-military PE Masters. I eventually dealt with the former by months of weight-training, which also got the latter off my case. I hope things have changed over the last 60-odd years. Cheers, Ken

**Tuesday 9th March 2021**

**Good on yer, Ma'am?**

Perhaps. If Harry & Meghan had cause to slag off the Queen, they would not have gone that far, as they need the sympathy of the population, most of who do not see the Queen as the upholder of the whole toxic system. Some of my friends, not constitutional obsessives like me, found the interview boring. Weird! Harry's suggestion that the Palace itself fears the power of the tabloid press was a much bigger revelation than that the Palace is institutionally racist. Who is surprised at that? If the Queen & not Paul Dacre (Tabloid editor for American friends) is the Head of State, surely a telephone call to the Prime Minister (a woman at the time), suggesting she lean on the tabloids would maybe have put a stop to it. If the tabloids then wanted to scream "Censorship", that would have been self-defeating.

What shocked our Barbadian cleaning lady Hazel was the refusal of security for the Sussexes & in particular, before the 19/2/2021 announcement, not providing it for Archie because he is not a Prince but the only reason he is not a prince is they did not make him one, a circular argument. This makes him a target for terrorism, especially as his father fought the Taliban. So, Harry needs a job to pay for security & he has got one. (As I said to the Chairman of Shell when he told me what he did, "A job's a job these days. You've got to take what's going").

Maybe, the Queen takes a leaf out of King George III's book. George, when not crazy, liked to play with his grandchildren, legitimate or not. I happened across this fact when George Baldrey cropped up in my rôle as convenor of the Baldry Family History Society. There is this bunch I call the Royal Baldreys, not at all related to me but whom I formally address in correspondence as Prince or Princess, just for a laugh. There are quite a lot of them & if you come across anyone called Something Singleton Baldrey, they are one of them but only one branch is the Singletons. What happened was one of King George's scapegrace sons put a lady in waiting in the family way. She was married off to a Windsor Castle Guards Officer, George Baldrey. King George continued to play with little George, who grew up, joined the Army & went to India, where he is buried at Fort St. George, Madras. He died 30/11/1869. Maxwell Baldrey recently contacted me. He is Indian & descended from George. As Anglo-Indians are casteless, he works for Ford India & also teaches music. He keeps addressing me as 'uncle'.

I did get the feeling that there is a strong relationship between Harry & Meghan. The suggestion by one of our friends that Meghan was just putting on an act seemed wide of the mark & rather mean. Actors need scripts & a selling point of Oprah's interviews is that they are unscripted. If they are living youth's romantic dream, good. So are Avis & I, which keeps us going.

Keep well (& take note of what Prof. Whitty said today), Ken

**Thursday 11th March 2021**

**What is wrong....**

....with men or should I write, Men? Jess Phillips MP is going to read out a list of women killed by men in the last year. This, she does annually in the House of Commons, Apparently, domestic violence has increased under lockdown. Does the whole miserable cycle begin in the home? I have not been a father but cannot imagine saying, "Be a Man, my boy" as if from some Victorian novel. The suspect arrested for the murder of Sarah Everard was a prot. officer & had been "vetted" for this elite group. Vetted for what? I will be interested if my friend Carlton on the Facebook copy of this & who had been a prot. officer for Princess Diana has anything to say about that (given that he is still constrained by the Official Secrets Act).

Apparently, the last footage of Sarah Everard was on a doorbell camera. The pervasiveness of technology should give any type of evil-doer pause for thought. A few years ago, a ram-raid on a jewellers here in Islington found the police flooded with mobile 'phone footage of the event.

I mentioned school bullying recently. I don't know what the current policy is but I do know that, in my day, schoolmasters were afraid to crack down on it, one reason being the chief bully (in the secondary school) was a valuable 'sporting hero', the headmaster trying to ape a public school. Surely though, the place to start work on bullies is in Primary Schools & also, examine the home circumstances of bullies, especially of boys who bully girls. Children learn by imitation & if Dad bullies Mum, so it happens. If this would be the Nanny State, a much-beloved target of the Daily Mail, bring it on.

It has been much commented on that the Right-wing violence in the USA is a result of a Crisis of Masculinity, as if this is some sort of excuse. Certainly, ex-President Trump set an appalling example but it did not start under him. The Womans' Movement get 'blamed' but for what? Similarly, Black Lives Matter challenges the masculine hegemony of inadequate men but who sets the criteria for inadequacy? If a man feels inadequate, he is applying the wrong criteria, which were almost certainly set by someone else with an agenda, not in his interests.

Britain's official Chief Bully is actually, a woman, unless 'she' is a man in drag. The Home Secretary is plotting to bring in a law effectively banning peaceful protest but that is another issue. I have sent the Good Law Project another bung over this. Ken

Tuesday 16th March 2021

**It is one year....**

...since Naomi closed down our U3A in Hampstead. I have assembled 34 more European History talks in that time, so am only just keeping ahead, by one & am thinking that I should have done better. However, the nearer I get to today, the more slides per talk there are. Over all the 168 talks so far, there are nearly 17,000 slides & some musical examples (including one composed by Napoleon's sister-in-law). Being able to work on these is one way of keeping sane during lockdown.

Another way is tending the garden, although finding a garden centre which is open (done) & has climbing roses in stock (not done) appears to be rocket science (as the saying goes but really, rocket science is very simple, it's the technology which is not, today). The Solanum just died last year but one does not replace like with like in a garden. The wisteria is not looking too healthy, either. Our French neighbour obliged me to cut it back, as it was encroaching on his clinical house. Most people appreciate wisteria. Mine actually is Philip's, reaching for the Sun our way.

Last Friday, I took Avis down to the canal, the only time she has been out on foot, except to service stations, since Caffé Nero shut internally. She tottered along to the next bridge & we came back. On Saturday, she made it to the next bridge & I must see if I can tempt her out this afternoon. I would have liked to go to last night's Parliament Square demo. in support of the women & against the tyrannical new Police Bill but I am banned, not yet by law but by the necessity of not risking arrest or who would look after Avis, if only for a day? I have been unable to get in touch with one step-son, asking for his telephone number. I have the other son's number but I gather from my sister-in-law, to whom he opens up more, that he has "health problems", which usually translates into not taking his pills or getting his injections, his health problems usually being mental. My fear is dying first & leaving Avis with a problem. In my Study, prominent on a bookshelf facing the door, is the "Dead Ken Book" with up-to-date information about contacts (like our executor), passwords, money, pre-paid funeral & grave slot receipts & so on. It also has partially-filled Probate forms. These plans are to tackle immediate problems. I can rely on our gang to rally round after the first few days.

Mention of Napoleon above reminds me that one of the roots of women's problems with men is our lousy legal system, which dates back to trial-by-combat, a very inefficient medieval system. Now, it's who can pay the smartest smart-arse lawyer in a civil case, which amounts to the same thing, see Wagner's opera Lohengrin. Mainland Europe uses the Code Napoleon, deriving from the French Revolution. This was spread by the various brothers & Marshals Napoleon put in civil charge of countries all over the Continent. After he left the scene, the Ancien Regime mostly returned but they kept his superior legal system. The only country he did not defeat was Britain, leaving us with our crap system.

People who either know no better or have not read crime novels set in Mainland Europe (Maigret? van der Valk?) think you are guilty unless proved innocent over there. More or less true if you come to Court but before that, the Examining Magistrate had been tasked with finding out what actually happened, as often opposed to what the smartarse lawyer (they have them, too) wants to present as happening. Such a system here would only benefit women in bad relationship situations, I would have thought.

A footnote on Napoleon. Republican France declared War on Britain on February 1st 1793 & that is how it stayed with a brief interval in 1802, after which Britain restarted the war on May 18th 1803. Until 1808, every war fought by Napoleon was where he had been attacked. He only turned aggressor then in Iberia, where he was trying to enforce the blockade against Britain, which was the same reason he was to fatally attack Russia, who had signed a treaty saying they would enforce it & did not. His war with Austria in 1809 was also defensive. People who still think Napoleon was nothing but a bloody tyrant are welcome to come to my History classes in about 3 year's time, Grim Reaper permitting. Ken

**Monday 22nd March 2021**

**Something stinks**

We have all seen the clips of the violence in Bristol yesterday. What was expected to be the usual peaceful march against the government's new & unjust Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill ended up in police vehicles on fire & injured cops. What really happened here?

Left-wing marches never end in violence. They, & I'm thinking of the many I've been on, like CND, anti-Trump or Pro-EU, are more like festivals, very good natured, a meeting place for friends & the making of new ones. They are also attended by hundreds of thousands & they take place in London, with coach loads of Third-Worlders from outside the M25 bussed in. They do not take place in Bristol.

Right-wing demos, on the other hand, lead by the likes of Tommy Robinson, usually are very poorly attended & do end in violence. This event in Bristol was attended by, to quote Sky News, 'hundreds'. It looks to me to be a put-up job to show how 'necessary' the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill really is. Were those injured police asked to 'take one for the job' but it got out-of-hand? One is reminded of the January 6th attack on the Capitol in the USA. Ken

**Tuesday 23rd March 2021**

**Something stinks update**

The police van that was torched was due to be scrapped & had failed its MOT. Strange that it was that one that was torched & not a more modern one. You could almost believe the police did it themselves, in order to get a 'good' riot going & help push the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill through. Perish the thought! Ken

**Wednesday 24th March 2021**

**You have to laugh....**

....about travel arrangements. You can see what's coming & there's no point in moaning. Last week, not entirely unexpectedly, Fred Olsens rang up to say the Azores Cruise for July 31st was cancelled on government instructions, the Azores being a quite enchanting look at the Portugal of the 1420s. The silver lining was that, they are putting on a series of mini-cruises which do not actually land on Jonny Foreigner's bug-polluted shore but sail past for the views. Fine. We booked two, back-to-back, to give ten nights away & from Liverpool, giving us the chance to go to the Tate or the Beatles Museum on the day in between.

Last night, the government changes the rules again. How glad I am that we are not trying to run our piddling little but mostly exporting business these days! For a shipping line, it means that the lovelies in Guest Relations had to hit the telephones again this morning, to say that back-to-back cruises have been banned, as the Clownocracy do not trust the cruise companies to sanitise the ships fully between cruises if they have back-to-back clients (my interpretation). I cannot see the problem with chucking us off with our luggage & then, letting us on again, although that might kybosh museum visits, as (at least, last time we were there) the Liverpool cruise terminal is a tent. This amounts to two changes in the rules within six days. I had to laugh, so did, then cancelled the less-interesting first mini-cruise.

To make the trip to Liverpool worthwhile, we will take the horrid car & visit Avis' sister in Glossop. Hopefully, we will also be able to take the stuff Denise left behind to her as well. Then, we can take advantage of being oop North to do other stuff, providing the advice at the time permits it. But, the best laid plans....

However, there are millions of people in Britain who would love to only have this sort of problem, particularly at the moment.

**Monday 29th March 2021**

**Tap, tap, tap....**

....from the side drum to accompany the march of British citizens being expelled from Spain, most of whom voted for brexit & now find they have no resident rights in Spain. As far back as 2015, they were warned that they would only have right-of-residence for three months if brexit took place but they said that that was just project fear. Who was it effectively told them that actions would not have consequences? Tap, tap, tap. Bozo the Clown but actions do have consequences. All those Acacia Avenues in places like Marbella, unsaleable. All those Acacia Avenues in Britain, either no houses for sale or the refugees have no capital any more to buy them.

Bozo likes three part slogans, such as Orwell's: War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery & the most important: Ignorance is Strength. Many who bought 'retirement homes' in Spain believed that Ignorance is Strength, hoping their health would hold out but, in any case, could always go back to dear old Blighty if it did not. But dear old Blighty is too expensive now. Tap, tap, tap. Many bought into the real Tory philosophy: Greed is Good; Selfishness is a virtue; Protect the Rich 'wealth creators' & fled their responsibility to the huge poor minority in Britain.

Now, they are at Gatwick or Dover, wondering where to go. Their middle-aged children have no room for them. Those that have not yet left will, in three days time, be illegal immigrants in Spain. (Maybe Spain views this as revenge for the Treaty of Utrecht, which they have always resented). How will our Home Secretary view them? Not as possible tory voters to be coddled, surely? They stabbed themselves in the back at the behest of Bozo the Clown. Tap, tap, tap. Will they forgive him? That sort of person does not have a forgiving nature. They certainly will not vote Labour. They are the sort of people who view the very existence of a Labour Party with disgust.

If the State had not been ruthlessly hollowed out over the last eleven years, maybe there would have been some slack in the system to accommodate them but 'efficiency savings' long ago gobbled that up. The charitable sector is under great strain now. Something must be done but what? Unlike many on social media, I do not think this is the time for gloating. These peoples' plight is a problem that must be solved before they become a serious problem in themselves.

Enjoy your groups of six, Ken

**Thursday 1st April 2021**

**Today's scandals**

Yesterday, a report on race in Britain was first leaked as an 800-word summary, then a full report after the papers had had a chance to say that it said that everything in the garden was lovely. Hmmm. When, last Autumn, Bozo appointed Tony Sewell, a notorious Uncle Tom, to chair the enquiry, I had my doubts. Nine out of the ten on the enquiry were well-known Bounty Bars, brown on the outside & white inside like Sewell. The report is comprehensively rubbished by Simon Woolley, now a Lord, once the government advisor on race matters & a colleague of mine on the Charter 88 Council, decades ago.

The report had been suggested to Bozo by Munira Mirza, a nut-case Downing Street advisor, once of the Revolutionary Communist Party, which had morphed into a Thatcherite group & long since had split into the RC Tendency & RC Group, the latter of which organised the Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy under the rubric of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, of which I

became a member because they were actually doing something. I did over 100 hours on the picket line while also building my business. I also borrowed a CLAAG megaphone to speak on the Charter 88 Vigil & marches when these started up in 1989.

Mirza is not the only rat in No.10. There is Claire Fox as well but Mirza commissioned the report because of concerns about Black Lives Matter. It was necessary for No.10 to rubbish this claim, not just because Bozo is a deep-down racist ("piccaninnies with water-melon smiles" etc) but because it will appeal to his red wall working class voters with local elections coming up. To trash such an important issue for electoral gain is a disgrace but par for the course.

The report suggests that the plight of white working-class youth is more important. This is a completely different issue but related in a way in another scandal. This is the enormous number of people who have had a positive Covid test but have still gone to work. This is because they have No Money if they don't. These are the people bullied to work by Ian Duncan-Smith's deliberately inadequate benefits system, designed for the purpose of forcing people into insecure employment. There is a brilliant tear-down of this in Caitlin Moran's "How to build a Girl", a 'funny' book with a lot of home truths about poverty in it. The not-poor cannot imagine a world where you have No Money at all: no shares to cash in; no bank-of-Dad; no kind neighbours (because the neighbours would-if-they-could but they have No Money either: it's that sort of post code). We have the meanest benefit system in the OECD (& the lowest State pensions). This will not be fixed under the present government.

The third scandal in the appointment of Dr. Jenny Harris to some top health job. When she started appearing with Bozo on the daily propaganda drive, it was obvious that she was another tory party flack & very evident on her Home Service interview this morning, where here answers to questions were very political, as in, answering another question, rather than the one asked. I have & had my suspicions about Patrick Vallance as well but I think Chris Whitty is straight, because of his obvious discomfort at being involved at all.

I hope you have all had time to read Edward Docx' take-down of Bozo. If not, here is another reminder of the URL:-

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/mar/18/all-hail-the-clown-king-how-boris-johnson-made-it-by-playing-the-fool>

**Tuesday 6th April 2021**

### **Vaccine passports**

A contentious subject. I am very conflicted. The positive is that they conform to my belief that freedom stops when it harms other people, so if you do not have one, you can't be a risk factor in a venue, in a workplace or on holiday. Freedom freaks would protest that this makes vaccines compulsory. Not quite. If you are misanthropic & want to self-isolate, that is your business, your freedom but you do not have the freedom to go potentially spreading a killer disease around. End of.

Not quite. In order to introduce vaccine passports internally in the UK, one has to trust the entity issuing them. This is a slippery slope to identity cards. Even if people had been sensible enough to elect a Labour Government in 2019, without a written constitution, only amendable by the super-majority of a legislature elected by proportional representation or by referendum (although our experience with referenda has not been happy recently), identity cards are a complete no-no.

You have to have a trustworthy government to have identity cards, not the semi-criminal bunch of corrupt shysters we have at the moment. The article by Edward Docx put the final nail in the coffin of the idea that Bozo the Clown might be the victim of his Mother's desertion of him when he was 9 & instead, exposed a thoroughly self-centred petty tyrant. Many people suffer from the loss of Mum

without turning into monsters of entitled selfishness. The new Police etc Bill currently before parliament is comparable to the Enabling Act of 1933 in Germany, which gave Hitler laissez-faire to ignore his coalition partners & the Reichstag. We know from the events of the Summer of 2019, that Bozo wants to escape parliamentary oversight. This Bill is likely to lead to a de-facto ban on any demonstrations &, after lockdown is over, provoke the biggest "illegal" demonstration in British history. Alas, I won't be there, as care for Avis is my top priority & I cannot risk arrest. Ken

**Wednesday 14th April 2021**

### **Looking at Conservatism**

.... & trying to do a bit better than Ted Honderich, the Grote Professor who wrote a book titled "Conservatism" that said it just boiled down to selfishness. Let's have a look. As far as I can see, the only philosophical basis I can see is that people should take personal responsibility for their lives. This requires agency &, in the present economic set-up, that requires money. Acquiring money depends on one of two things, which sometimes overlap. You need a job or you need rents. The former relies on being gainfully employed for a large slice of the week at something which reliably pays well enough for the needs & some of the wants of yourself & your dependents. How well it pays, for reasons which escape me, depends on one's abilities & these depend on the gene pool one inherits & tradable genes are not evenly spread. Why getting lucky in one's genetic inheritance merits higher pay means that some people are more capable of taking responsibility than others. So the Conservative philosophical position fails at the first hurdle.

You might think that, to maintain their position, Conservatives would strenuously move to tackle this inequality but manifestly, they do not because of the second source of money, rents. This does not just apply to housing owned & let out. It applies to any income for which one does not work, ignoring pensions, which are income delayed for old age. The buzz-word for rents in the Conservative world is 'property', which they do struggle to defend from the just demands of the poor. So, they set up tax systems, whereby the middling sort protect the rich from the poor by paying the bulk of the taxation to support the poor. Many of the middling sort realise this, so resent paying taxes & the Conservative Party are very averse to handing out money to poor people. (Some people, frequently small business-people like me, protect their old-age pension position by saving income & buying rents, in my case in bricks & mortar).

Conservative practice used to be to allow the least amount of redistribution of income to keep the tumbrils from their doors. This was a pragmatic approach, achieved by keeping ideology from the door. However, in the 1970's, they made the classic mistake of allowing ideologues into policy-making levels of the Party. These preached the 'virtues' of inequality & deprecated attempts of level-up society. Indeed, the very word was deprecated. When Thatcher said, "There is no such thing as Society, only individual men & Women & Families", someone should have taken her up in a helicopter over London & asked, "How do you build something like this without a Society?" Our present Prime Minister was quoted in 2013 saying, "Talk of Social Justice makes me sick".

Together with this institutionalised failing of social responsibility went a deprecation of social provision & a worship of the Market. This is full of contradictions, too. I have written before (& got it in the Guardian) about how I & other idealists of the early Computer generation hoped to relieve people of much of the tedious labour necessary to acquire money & how we were disgusted that, instead, all the benefit went to the rich. This is because the price of labour drops when unemployment, or more particularly today, under-employment runs riot, so we have the near-slavery of zero-hours contracts. This was exacerbated by George Osborne, when Chancellor, asking public service to make 'efficiency savings', that is, adding to the unemployed population & look where that has landed us with the pandemic.

The big contradiction here is that, if you increase your profits by reducing your labour force, the unemployed are in no financial position to buy the goods being made or, too frequently today, imported but imports are another discussion. Recently, Amazon opened a shop with no tills. Of



course, a government could tax robots as if they were people but that would be the sort of interference with the 'market' the fundamentalists decry. This will all end in tears unless....

....unless the Conservatives return to their pragmatic course & dump the ideologues. There is a Conservative Party out there but Out. The likes of Dominic Grieve, Alistair Burt, Stephen Hammond, Oliver Letwin & I suspect my cousin Tony could form the nucleus of a restored party when the present government, more a clone of UKIP than a Conservative government of pre-Selsdon Man days, reaps the consequences of the disaster that Brexit is turning out to be. Then, we might be back to the business of business being business & the business of running a society is that of the public's elected representatives.

## **Sunday 25th April 2021**

### **This week or next?**

"If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well, it were done quickly". It looks like the end-game for Bozo the Clown but this is not the Scottish Play. In Shakespeare's version, the relatively harmless King Duncan is murdered by the villain MacBeth. In reality (those who attended my lecture "Dalriada & Alba" will remember), Duncan marched on Moray & attacked MacBeth. Mistake. Duncan was cut down in battle, leading to MacBeth's largely peaceful 17-year reign. Hopefully, neither version is about to be played out in front of our eyes in the next several days.

The consensus on social media is that Cummings is working for Michael Gove. This could be, as Cummings was a disastrous advisor to Gove at the Education Department, working to bring back the 19th Century. While to some people, Rishi Sunshine is the 'obvious' replacement for Bozo, swapping in a naive boy with out-of-date fiscal ideas is unlikely to happen when he is up against a cunning operator like Gove. My suspicion is that this attack on Bozo has been long planned &, for reasons not entirely clear, it has been decided that this is the moment. It could be that the moment has been forced on the conspirators by the increasing deluge of sleaze allegations coming out from sources out of Gove's control. I have watched avalanches in the Alps. A trickle of snow rapidly builds up into a devastating torrent of snow, ice & rocks. The difference is that avalanches are often predictable - I used to quip about the 11 o'clock avalanche off the North face of the Matterhorn but politics are not natural phenomena.

Whatever. This may not be the Greatest Show on Earth but it certainly is in Blighty. We just have to sit back & watch the drama unfold. Happy viewing.

## **Wednesday 28th April 2021**

### **Is he still here?**

Yes, alas but surely, not for much longer. The press sharks, indulgent of the serial liar & serial killer for so long, now smell the blood in the water. "Them", the one's that rule "us", are still telling "us" that we have other concerns than Bozo's criminality but cash for cushions cuts through when, not only is the 'normal' allowance for the up-keep of the Prime Minister's flat more than the majority earn in this country, the excess that Bozo spent is over twice what the majority earn. This, the man who said he could not live on £150,000 a year, which is over five times over what the majority earn. Oh, but he is one of "them", the entitled, the ones who rule us in perpetuity because of a corrupt electoral system & who only 'allow' a Labour Government in when the finances are in such a mess that Labour is required to clean up the mess & is then blamed for profligacy & thrown out again. It was ever thus (1924, 1929, 1945, 1964, 1974), except in 1997, when tory sleaze forced them out.

There are now three witnesses willing to appear before a Parliamentary Committee to swear under oath that the 'piles of bodies' quotation is fact. Enough said on that for now.

Some members of our genteel U3A Politics & Current Affairs Group have accused me of being 'rude'. Hmmm. That is nothing to what journalists who have been on Bozo's case are now saying, Marina Hyde & Raphael Behr in today's Guardian for example & Hyde with her usual wit (& you can read it free on line if you are too mean to buy the paper). The word, 'tyranny' is being bandied about, hardly timely, rather overdue. I'll say it again - if you voted for this bastard, rather than the decent, honest alternative, you should be thoroughly ashamed of yourself.

One more thing. An American friend is dubious about the vaccine. Just a reminder, getting vaccinated is not just about you, it is a social duty, as the vaccine prevents the spread of the virus as well as effectively immunising. If you or I turn out to be in the miniscule number that are affected badly, we are taking one for the human race.

Otherwise, keep well, Ken

**Friday 30th April 2021**

#### **Cash for Cushions**

If you do not take the Times (nor do I), they have done us all the favour of publishing a photo of the Downing Street Flat (aka Bozo's Brothel) which has leaked onto the Internet. Goodness knows what the next occupant of this flat (hopefully shortly but it pays to be careful of what one wishes for) will make of it. I have attached it to this message.

Have a laugh, Ken



**Saturday 1st May 2021**

#### **Brexit agreement.**

The EU has almost unanimously ratified the faulty agreement that Bozo rushed through (without having actually read it, according to his own testimony), in time for Xmas.

I don't know if I've published this photo before but it is of the EU border at Melilla, a Spanish enclave on the North African coast. There are four layers of wire here, very hard to get through.

The Northern Ireland Assembly is about to get a new leader, the dreadful Snarlene being excessively moderate by DUP standards & according to her own Assembly members. A hard liner, who believes the Universe is only about 6k years old, is front runner to succeed her. Whatever, the unionists in Northern Ireland have a simple choice, put up with the border down the Irish Sea, which brought about the downfall of Snarlene or watch the EU put up a border like this. They would be quite right to believe they have been stuffed by Bozo but there is no way to become unstuffed. Their one sensible option is to negotiate the terms of a reunion treaty with the Irish Republic while there is still time to talk. I'm not putting a fiver on that one. Ken



**Saturday 8th May 2021**

**I'm no coward....**

....but would be if I did not comment on the Super Thursday election results. First: Hartlepool. Given the tory & brexit party votes in 2019, the tories should have taken the combined vote. Percentagewise, they did not. Vote-wise, even less. The turnout was down from a poor 58% to a pathetic 40%, which suggests that while 28,000 people voted, there are 42,000 votes up for grabs if Labour start to get the message right. Election results are often controlled by those who sit on their hands, especially Labour hands.

Even so, the Brexit Effect is living on. Most brexit voters still think they are getting what they voted for & the sad stories of broken businesses are insufficient to break through to the vast majority of brexit voters, yet. This may well account for the swap of seats in local councils between Labour & tory. The questions here are, how long is 'yet' & who will benefit?

We have not got all the Mayor results. The stand-out so far, is Ben Houchen in Tees Valley, who has increased his majority. He is clearly, doing something right & Labour need to check out what. Whatever it is, I doubt if it breaches the tory horror of giving money to poor people. He did take the airport into public control, a Labour-type policy, although the money would have been better spent on buses & let the airport go bust. (If we are to be serious about Greening the economy, there are going to have to be some very unpopular policies but that is another argument).

The other Executive Mayor contests will be interesting & Labour seems to be doing quite well, considering that Bozo, the worst Prime Minister of all time, is benefitting from the vaccine bounce. Note, I have stopped referring to him as Bozo the Clown, because that is buying into his agenda. While no one knows what his purpose, if any, is, apart from personal gratification, he sure knows how to manipulate an election. Who remembers that he has the worst record for Covid deaths in the World, even on the rigged number that appears on the News every night? (It's not 127,000. The small print says that is the number who died within 28 days of a positive Covid diagnosis. It's way over 150,000 people with Covid on their death certificates. This news management started in April last year when the number of deaths was approaching 50,000, with the objective of not hitting that number. That did not go well, did it?) So far, Bozo's most useful discovery is that there is, indeed, a magic money tree. Since his Chancellor does not believe it, it will be interesting to see how that pans out.

Whatever, nothing above takes away the need for Labour to get a message together, which it lacks at the moment. Ken

**Monday 10th May 2021**

**Elections**

The results, while generally good for the tories, are all over the place. Fancy Labour taking Worthing! There were other South Coast seats that went Labour. The Greens picked up seats from all of tory, Labour & Lib-Dems. I predicted 30-odd years ago, that they would eat the Lib-Dems but not that they would start eating everyone. Many tory gains are the result of no UKIP, the tories now being UKIP & some tory councillors were once UKIP ones. There was a huge swing to Labour from tory in East Folkestone, where you can watch the results of brexit go past your door. (Folkestone voted strongly for Brexit). In Ashford South, the UKIP vote split unevenly both ways, handing the tory a Labour seat. The Wirrel is very mixed: a tory gain from Labour (huge swing); a Green gain from Labour (huge swing) & a tory hold but a swing to Labour. In County Durham, a Green takes from everyone but mostly from Labour. A Green won in Sheffield the same way. You get the picture? What picture?

**Wednesday 19th May 2021**

### **Boots & Saddles**

Well, not these days perhaps but, if you want to go on holiday abroad at any time, it's best to look up the Government Advice for things like Yellow Fever outbreaks & wars. This is usually, pretty clear, as in, get vaccinated or, if you must go there, wear a bullet-proof vest (or words to that effect).

However, by time you read this, I would not be surprised if the advice on going to a Code Amber country is a different unintelligible mish-mash from the present one (timed at 15:11 on 19/3/2021). If this advice is 'designed', it could only be to protect the Travel Insurance business from claims for trips one cancels for heeding one of the several different sets of government advice, such as that from Grant Shapps, Lord Bethell or Bozo. If one does cancel, I suggest the letter to the insurance firm is time, as well as, date stamped, so your claim can be assessed against the government advice in operation at that precise moment, assuming that what one minister says overrides what another minister said a few minutes before, under the collective responsibility rule & all that.

Two thoughts. One: if PCR tests are mandatory if you have been to a Code Amber country, why are the government not providing them through the NHS? Private operators are charging between £129 - £150 for them, which looks like opportunist racketeering.

Two: Unless the government-set targets for reducing carbon emissions are not just a load of Greenwash, which I am sure they are, why have they not used the opportunity of the pandemic to shut down the taking of foreign holidays by aircraft? Only about 15% of the population do this anyway & it would stimulate the use of the vastly greener high-speed rail line via the Channel Tunnel, which is under-used?

**Friday 21st May 2021**

### **A load of nonsense**

So, a quarter century ago, a journalist used some dodgy paperwork to gain an interview in the Public interest. So what? It's the sort of thing the tabloid press do every day, in their proprietor's interests. Ok, that is whataboutery? However, her husband had given his version in an interview with Jonathan Dimbleby, a reliable establishment hack.

Diana deserved her opportunity to hit back & got it. We ended up with both versions, neither of which would remotely be any of our business, except that they are or were, members of the Firm that costs us a lot of money & we are entitled to see if we are getting our money's worth.

Not that we are, in any case. When Jacob Slime-Mold flew to Balmoral 2 years ago to get the Queen to convene a Privy Council, in order to get Parliament prorogued for ages, the Queen should have passed it to the Supreme Court, now that we have one. This is the problem with not having a written constitution, something I have been going on about for half a century. The constitution relies on good chaps not stepping over the mark. I recall in the Eighties my old school colleague Richard Shepherd, Tory MP for Aldridge-Brownhills at the time, saying of the Thatcher government, "This lot wouldn't know a convention if they fell over it". Plus sa change.

**Monday 28th June 2021**

### **Sorry....**

I have not been winding people up recently because I have a lot on my mind you don't need to know about & anyway, what more can one say about the general political scene that has not been said already? I have just been to the Pharmacy & chatted to a bloke with a house near Perpignan. He was in for a test & we talked about the paperwork mountain necessary to get to Mainland Europe, which

we can definitely write off for this Summer. (I suspect the French are really enjoying this). We did go up to Scotland (right to the top) at the beginning of June in acceptable weather & I took photos for the Highland Clearances in my Euro-history talks.

Suddenly, things have got a bit more interesting. Hancock resigns, not for rampant corruption & incompetence but because the tory membership have had enough of one rule for them (& us) & another for Hancock. Now, if I was Sajid Javid, I would not have taken the job without a written guarantee of total autonomy in recruitment & access to the Magic Money Tree. He does, after all, have Bozo over a barrel. The only other possible candidate for the job would have been Julian Smith, who had been sacked for sorting out the last Northern Ireland problem & then, committing the crime of not giving all the credit to Bozo. Cheers, Ken

**Tuesday 29th June 2021**

### **Joy & disappointment**

Let's do the disappointment first. Sajid Javid has let his semi-demented Ayn Rand worshipping libertarian nonsense cause him to burn political capital by virtually setting in stone, the July 19th Unlocking Date. If I had been him, I would have said I was new to the job & would be going through the data I'm following before I make any announcements, giving myself plenty of wriggle room. With infections rising exponentially (as in, doubling every week since Bozo welcomed the Delta Variant into Britain, let's not forget. by failing to lock down India soon enough), I would have thought ruling out further lockdowns rather rash. If he wants to be Prime Minister, a dreadful prospect but one bet is being placed on, he'll have to be smarter than that. Incidentally, Bozo is saying he sacked Hancock. He didn't. Hancock resigned. Bozo has never sacked anyone in his entire career & when he has to get rid of someone, he gets an underling to do it for him. Prime Ministers do not have that option.

On the bright side, last night I watched possibly the most amazing footy match I've ever seen, France v Switzerland, with France going out by missing the last penalty in the shoot-out. After 75 minutes, I thought it all over for the Swiss as three brilliant French goals made it 3-1 but the Swiss put in 2 before the whistle. I had been rooting for the Swiss, as a 50-year member of the Swiss Alpine Club versus the 1,000 year war with France. This was better than the last match I watched, where I had been rooting (& you have to take sides) for our oldest ally from 1383, Portugal, against jonny-come-lately country Belgium, only around since 1830, where Portugal lost 1-0.

This evening, we have the traditional battle with Germany. I had been so disappointed with Our 0-0 performance against the Picts that I did not watch the next match. However, tea-time today is a write-off & I must go & make Avis a Chicken Curry with a different Vegetable curry for lunch.

**Friday 2nd July 2021**

### **Annette sent me this:**

"Politicians and nappies should be changed at regular intervals for the same reason" Thank you, Annette.

At regular intervals perhaps but not always for the same reason. Have a look around you. Big things stand out but so do little things, even tiny ones, like litter baskets. Everything that might catch your eye from the Shard back to Stonehenge with markets & traffic signs, not forgetting war damage etc. whatever, was the result of a political decision by a politician of some sort or other, whether democratically elected, an absolute monarch or something in between. It is up to us to get the politicians we need, rather than many of the present ones, which some of us deserve.

**Sunday 4th July 2021**

**Flesh & blood people....**

...have been on offer at the Claremont Project Old Peoples' (well, over 55s) Club here in Islington. This has been going since the last Unlockdown on May 17th, in the form of coffee mornings. We have to book, as there are 3 round tables (square, actually) for 6 people each & did so for the next Wednesday. We have now been to several & it is so good to see & talk to friends, some of whom are new because normally, we only go to Claremont for the Friday afternoon classical music concerts, where students from the RCM play for us. (I used to give brief introductions to the music before they came on but the previous organiser, whom I detested as someone with a Psychology degree but who patronised us oldies, stopped them. I co-operated as best I could with her, lending her books etc. as her failings might have simply been a mirror of my own).

This being Islington, our regular friends include Sadiq, who's origins are from all over, Waldemar from Belarus & his South-African girlfriend, Harvey, quite English but his wife Shirley (retired, one might say, super-beauty) has not appeared yet & Cathy, a sad case we have known for a long time, who is only glad that we listen to her. John, who has an Art History degree, right up our street, has also turned up. New people include Rita, who is Euskera & only 62, amazed that I used a few words of the language (my Mum's earliest traceable direct Grandpa was Euskera, born about 764) & Renate, 81 & German who's real father disappeared in the War & who's mother became war booty for a British soldier. Renate still speaks German & completely accent-free English. She was born in Osnabrück & not at all surprised that I knew it was where the Thirty Years War ended in 1648 in the still-current Town Hall.

We have also visited the Jones', who gave us a remarkable 'tea'. Martin was obviously delighted to have someone (sometwo?) to talk to who was not in serious dementia, so we stayed for hours, catching up. This is not to ignore the people in the hospitality trade like Clara, Jessica, who remembered our standard order & the new Fatima at Caffé Nero. Some waiters, who's names I don't know, welcomed us back, including the Ecuadorian at Oregamo Pizzeria. Yesterday, it was almost empty but the son of the house was waiting. He is reading Architecture at Uni & we talked about 9/11, which all professionals know was a put-up job.

On the sad side, Georgette, who did my lawyering pro-bono for my Mayor of London bid in 1999, died of Covid in Ghana. Janet, very poor & very intellectual with a beautiful singing voice, died in a fire in her flat earlier this year & Michael, across the road, has had rapid onset Motor Neurone Disease such that, if he did recognise me in his wheelchair on Friday, he has no means of expressing it.

Otherwise this year, face to face contact has been limited to Prem & his staff at the Pharmacy & the staff at Sainsburys, most of who's names I know, including one who's badge says "Liz" but whom I address by her real name, pronounced Foonkay.

Thank goodness for people. Hoping to see you soon Ken

**Tuesday 13th July 2021**

**Togetherness**

Everyone asked for their comments on BBC News mentioned the Euro Cup bringing us all together, so presumably, they filtered out any dubious comments. That would mean that they abandoned their showing of idiots in the interest of 'balance'. They could extend that further than to racists. How about no-platforming climate deniers for starters? Any, I'm all for togetherness & co-operation. You cannot succeed in team sports without intense co-operation but, as Gareth Southgate's admirable pre-competition letter showed, it goes further than just on the pitch. (If you have not read the letter, it

is on <https://www.theplayertribune.com/posts/dear-england-gareth-southgate-euros-soccer> & exemplary. Some people have suggested that it is 'too well written' to be by a footballer, which demonstrates one of the social problems we have).

However, this does not suit the government. After two years of Bozo, it is clear that he is no clown but a calculating cynic. He has worked out that, providing about 44% go along with his schtick, he can wage his culture war against the 56% to bolster his position, sowing as much division between the two groups as possible & using public money to do so, like the £25million he gave to Hartlepool as a thank-you for voting in a woman who could not find in on the map. Yesterday's announcement of the stopping of anti-Covid restrictions is part of this agenda. Sensible people will continue to wear masks on public transport & in shops, while the stupid will challenge mask-wearers as being anti-British or whatever. Well, the sensible must stick together against these numpties. We know who we are. I challenged a triumphant brexiteer on the bus the day after the referendum & was cheered (& I must admit, I like being cheered).

There is clearly, another agenda in July 19th. We are to be put 'on our own responsibility'. Hmmm. Responsibility requires agency & in the society we have built, agency requires money. People have been going to work with Covid because they cannot afford not to. That is their misfortune & other peoples' too. I might have been in a similar position. How could I self-isolate & not go shopping? This assumes there are people who would like to behave responsibly but are unable to do so. What about the irresponsible by choice? There were examples on Sunday, when fans without tickets gate-crashed an inadequately policed Wembley Stadium. (Presumably, the thugs who beat up Italian supporters after the game were of a similar mentality. Film of this is on the web & all over foreign news items).

The basis of this other agenda is that it is the last chance to break the NHS, "if not now, when?". The expected flooding of hospitals with cases may finally achieve the demise of the World's most successful Marxist organisation, so hated by this government. To open up with cases rising exponentially would be insane if there was not another objective. Expect the government to eventually throw up their hands & say the NHS is unaffordable & it's all your fault for not behaving with responsibility. Hopefully, this would be one move too far & we will all show our togetherness, filling Parliament Square until they come out with their hands up. Or worse.

**Saturday 28th August 2021**

### **Spirituality**

Why was anyone surprised at the speed of the Taliban takeover after the Americans said they would chicken out, as agreed by Trump in his deal? They had a not-so-secret weapon that no amount of aerial bombardment (the US weapon of choice) could eliminate, the appeal to Islam. Their stance has a certain purity that could be used to shake the morale the troops of the corrupt but Western-supported government in Kabul. Hence, the mass surrenders of the cities.

Nothing new there, then. This is. The Taliban ban music, because they know, deep down, that music is the biggest rival to organised religion. Music communicates across cultures & languages in a way that no other medium does because music is the sole genuine manifestation of Human Spirituality. All organised religions are fake, man (& usually today, man-) made domination rackets of social control. Unlike music, none have any true spiritual validity & any use of any religion within a power structure is just that: a power grab.

This invalidates the power of any Theocracy, whether it has apparent democratic validity or not. So much for Afghanistan now, Iran, Israel &, whether they like it or not, the USA, with its preponderance of Christian nutters, exercising hegemony through the hugely undemocratic Senate, where the Democrats need to score 46 million more votes than the Republicans just to obtain a draw.

So, the inter-theocratic scrap between the Taliban & the USA resulted in a Home-team win, no matter how few of the home side inhabitants support the home-team, not an unusual result since the collapse of most overseas empires. Just remember how much preponderance in men & material was necessary to beat the German Home-team World War II, which was very necessary. There was no necessity to beat the Taliban. It will be up to the Afghans to get fed up with them & shake them off, in due course.

As for the translators etc that Bozo has abandoned, that was a debt of honour but Bozo may have read Falstaff's speech on that subject.

I won't get myself going at the moment on the government's brutal abandonment of performing musicians during the pandemic. Telling people who have been practising, in many, cases, since the aged of 4 or thereabout to re-train is an attack on Human Spirituality.

**At this point...**I gave up, as it began to seem apparent that there was no 'incompetence' on the part of Johnson but a deliberate plan to reduce the surplus population, using the pandemic & the late emergency measures. While this may seem outrageous, his own quotations, such as, "Let the bodies pile high" are up there with anything in Mein Kampf.

Combine this with the Brexit agreement, which he claims not to have read before signing (apparent incompetence) with the constant using parts of the agreement to keep Brexit dissatisfaction on the boil among his new voters, we are not faced with stupidity or incompetence but pure evil.