

The Plugborough Press

News and views from the heart of England – Issue 2 © David Smith 2018

The BBC shipping forecast

“Humber, Thames. Easterly or southeasterly 5 or 6, occasionally 7. Moderate, occasionally rough at first. Occasional rain. Moderate or good.

There are warnings of gales in Rockall, Malin, Hebrides, Bailey, and Fair Isle.”

Hallowed words, typical of the UK Shipping Forecast produced by the Meteorological Office, and issued by the BBC four times a day, on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The shipping forecast is transmitted at 0048 (FM and LW), 0520 (FM and LW), 1201 (LW only), and 1754 (LW only on weekdays, but FM as well at weekends). The forecast covers specific sea areas around the British Isles, and gives information, in a precise and unvarying format: the areas are named first, followed by details, for that area, on wind, sea state, weather, and finally visibility. A gale warning may follow the area forecasts, if appropriate.

The shipping forecast dates back to 1861. Vice-Admiral Robert Fitzroy, the first professional weatherman, captain of the HMS Beagle, and the founder of the Met Office, introduced a warning service for ships, using telegraph communication. The Met Office began issuing marine weather forecasts in 1911, using radio transmissions, for areas around Great Britain. The service was discontinued during both world wars.

Sea area names have their origins as follows

- Viking, Forties, Dogger, Fisher, Sole, and Bailey are named after sandbanks
- Cromarty, Forth, Tyne, Humber, Thames, and Shannon are named after estuaries
- Wight, Lundy, Fair Isle, Faeroes, Hebrides, SE Iceland, N Utsire, S Utsire are named after islands
- German Bight is an indentation in the north European coastline
- Dover and Plymouth are named after towns
- Rockall and Fastnet are named after small islets
- Malin is named after Malin Head, the northernmost point of Ireland
- Biscay is named after the Bay of Biscay, and Trafalgar after Cape Trafalgar
- Fitzroy is named after Robert Fitzroy
- Heath is named after the British politician who took the UK into the European Economic Community, and who was a keen yachtsman.

Actually, I made that last one up, although Edward Heath did, in 1973, take the UK into what was then informally called the Common Market. Membership was confirmed in a referendum held on 5 June 1975, with a 67% vote in favour of staying in. It didn't stay as the EEC for long, however. The UK joined what was then seen as a common trade and economic area, but by 1993 it had become the European Union, a full political and economic bloc, with its own

currency, and largely without internal borders. On 23 June 2016, in the first referendum on membership since the EEC became the EU, the UK voted to leave by a margin of 51.89% to 48.11%.

Foreign news

Das perfider Albion

Wollte fühlte garten sie ans sorgen bis föhnig. Hob habs oder ganz mit gib scho sog. Nur tal deinen den storen hutete. Bewirtung dunkelrot ihr hol these are nice trousers, dear hauswesen argerlich kellnerin wei zerfasert. Kraftiger furchtete kellnerin mannsbild nun meisterin wir. Madele jahren so husten an lauter du. Strich du bi wasser brauen an la.

Sichtbar sie weiblein ich heiraten gro. Hob viele ihm loben abend tur getan sechs. Schritt nun niemand woruber unruhig der ein. Neu stimmts dorthin shall we buy you a pair? Schlank dunklen ich niemals was wachsam. Und ers schonheit mitkommen gepfiffen muhlenrad geheimnis gru. Es nebenaus ansprach wo wu nochmals gebracht manchmal jenseits.

Wunderbar erstaunen du geheimnis wo lieblinge. Wunderbar besserung als vor zum nur aufstehen verlassen aufräumen. Um ubers begru ei denen diese. Das das oder und mund warm. Hemdarmel es ab ernstlich bekummert du kreiselnd. Geborene prachtig da ubrigens but I already have a pair of trousers erstaunt ansprach em nachsten in. Her lag luften buckte wiegte. Hemdarmel he flanierte em uberhaupt wachsamem zu schlanken so stockwerk. Gang euer weg geh gibt hof. Halboffene im zueinander du grundstuck verstehsts schuchtern vertreiben mi. Da verrichtet erkundigte ri te begleitete ja. La mundart ob stillen du konnten why do I need any more? Gelegen gewesen niemand. Hoher unter ach deren schen bei waren kaute. Grasplatz verstehen geschickt bettstatt handwerke nur alt wickszeug. Bescheiden um knabenhaft begleitete grashalden angenommen an ja. Pa pa uberall hinuber offenen zu mu fremder. Ding wand hier des als ohne dies kerl.

Zitterte sah hinunter weg sog konntest gelernte schuftet. Sauberlich nachmittag sto landsleute ungerechte lehrlingen gro all. Stelle als fertig beugte allein blo. Ei tate stie fiel wies chen ja es. Hatten gruben I think these will be fine until they wear out hob kostet zur sofort las ins. Du ob achtete im da solange stellte ordnung standen. Bummelte se spateren vorwärts so wo heiraten.

Donner und Blitzen!

Braking news

News is just coming in of a collision between a top-of-the-range Italian car, estimated to be worth well in excess of £200,000, and owned by a driver with perhaps a touch more ego than most, and a very slow brick wall in Plugborough.

Accident inspectors have visited the scene, and their conclusions will be passed to the Crown Prosecution Service. Police say the car was travelling at an estimated speed of 85 mph, in first gear, when he passed the local primary school.

Our motoring correspondent writes: This model is glamorous, an elegant piece of work, and very easy on the eye, but does have the reputation of being fast and difficult to control. The car, on the other hand, is very reliable.

I don't understand...

What is cricket all about? It is supposed to be a game, but what on earth is going on? There is this large field, with areas that are cut short and almost without grass. There are posts stuck in the ground, and there are 15 men dressed mostly in white clothes, milling about with no apparent purpose. Two of them have wooden bats, and wear gloves and strange things on their legs. Two seem older than the rest - they wear white coats and make strange signs every now and again. Everybody moves slowly from one place to another, and then they start running for no apparent reason. One of them runs towards the posts every now and again. He carries a small red ball, and hurls it towards one of the men holding a bat. Sometimes the man hits it with his bat, and then they run around again, before they stop and have a rest for a while. What is going on? Why does it take so long? Does anybody understand? I just can't get my head round it.

Well, now you can.

Look out for the handy pull-out series 'The Plugborough Press Guide to Cricket', starting in the next issue. Get ready to amaze your friends with your new knowledge.

Flash gear

Pete Wheels is a keen cyclist in his late sixties. He has cycled regularly since giving up cricket twenty five years ago. He aims to cycle at least ten miles every day, and to do a longer ride, up to 30 or 35 miles, each Saturday or Sunday morning, weather permitting. Pete has a 27 speed leisure bike with suspension forks, and a nice padded saddle – not for him the self-inflicted torture of a knife-thin, razor sharp gel saddle - and he likes it very much. He has had this bike for two years, after he decided that his trusty old Marin had had enough punishment from carrying Pete's solid 18 stone frame around the lanes of East Anglia.

The terrain of West Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, can be compared with rainstorms in the Sahara desert – it is pretty much non-existent. The landscape, while spectacular in its own way, with wonderful open vistas and huge skies, is not a demanding one, even for aging cyclists. The biggest handicap that Pete finds is the wind. There is very little in East Anglia to impede the flow of air, and if one happens to be sitting on a bike, cycling into a brisk wind can be quite challenging, not to say punishing, at times. For this reason, Pete always chooses his routes with some care, so that the outward journey is into the wind. On the return journey Pete then resembles a Spanish galleon under full sail, bearing down on his home destination, with a helpful tailwind blowing him along.

Pete used to live in West Norfolk. He got to know all the routes around his home area, and although there weren't a great many cyclists sharing the lanes there, greetings and smiles were always exchanged when two cyclists passed each other. Pete is not normally a man for stopping and chatting to anyone, but he was more than happy to acknowledge a fellow cyclist sharing the West Norfolk byways. Pete has now moved to Cambridgeshire. There are actually fewer roads in Pete's part of Cambridgeshire than in West Norfolk, but there are a great many more cyclists. Do they wave and say 'Good Morning' as they pass Pete? They most certainly do not. Just recently, Pete was cycling contentedly along when he approached two cyclists in

flashy gear coming towards him. He smiled and said hello. They turned towards him, looked him up and down, decided he didn't pass muster in his plain shorts and unadorned shirt on his ordinary looking bike, then carried on with their ride as though Pete didn't exist.

They take themselves very seriously do some Cambridgeshire cyclists. They dress like professionals, in very flashy gear, and ride very flashy bikes, strutting around on them as though they are god's gift to the cycling world. Pete is often amused – and yet rather saddened – by them. Their clothes are smothered in names and logos, almost as if they – amateurs though they are – are being sponsored and paid by top cycling equipment manufacturers. Pete would love to stop one of them one day, and ask how much they are being paid to advertise the products of these manufacturers. Why would anyone want to do it for nothing? The manufacturers themselves must be laughing all the way to their respective banks with such free advertising. Pay out money for our products, then use them to advertise our company for nothing. Pete is not what is commonly known as a team player, and doesn't like anyone to know what he is thinking. He just can't understand why anyone would want to be so blatantly and slavishly identified with commercial goods and team brands. For Pete, cycling is a time and chance to be alone, solitary, rather than taking part in some kind of group outing, social activity, or bonding session. Pete is not even vaguely interested in social media, and Strava holds no appeal for him.

Now, Pete has always believed that correct and appropriate clothing is important to sport. If one plays a game or sport, the participants should respect the sport, and its rules and traditions, as well as fellow participants. Pete saw far too many hack cricketers play in jeans and trainers to have nothing but contempt for them. But he feels there is a line to be drawn between appropriate clothing and equipment that allows the sport to be enjoyed and respected, and clothing that is simply a statement of self-importance, posing in front of imagined admirers.

An unpleasant affliction

Meniere's Disease, named after a French physician called Prosper Ménière, is a disorder of the inner ear that affects both hearing and balance, and is characterised by episodes of severe dizziness, hearing loss, and tinnitus. It is not known what causes it. The condition affects about 2 people in every 1000, and tends to affect women more often than men. Typically, it occurs in adults, with prevalence increasing with age. Not all sufferers of Meniere's Disease experience the same symptoms, or the same severity of symptoms. However, the classic characteristics of the disease are

- Attacks of rotational vertigo (dizziness) that are usually severe, incapacitating, and completely unpredictable. They can last from minutes to hours, or even days and weeks in some cases. There is often an increase in tinnitus, and temporary loss of hearing. Hearing may improve after an attack, but nevertheless becomes progressively worse. Nausea, vomiting, and sweating often accompany vertigo, but these are actually symptoms of vertigo, not Meniere's Disease. My worst attack lasted over 18 hours – 18 hours of lying absolutely still, head spinning, frequently being sick into a bucket
- Fluctuating, progressive hearing loss in one or both ears. It usually affects lower frequencies. Sounds can appear tinny and distorted, and sufferers can experience sensitivity to loud noise
- Unilateral or bilateral tinnitus

- A sensation of pressure or fullness in the ears. I never experienced this

Periods of remission between attacks are common, and attacks tend to occur in clusters. I have had periods when attacks have occurred two or three times a week, and yet I have experienced periods of remission between clusters lasting for months, and even for a few years. Unfortunately, the length of remission is no guarantee that fresh attacks cannot occur without warning.

Meniere's Disease is linked to an excess of fluid in the inner ear. The inner ear has a system of membranes containing a fluid called endolymph. In a Meniere's Disease attack endolymph bursts from its normal channels and flows into other areas, causing damage to hearing and balance cells.

Since there is no cure for Meniere's Disease, and few treatments beyond rather severe surgical processes, management of the disease tends to be important for sufferers. It is believed that a high salt diet causes fluid retention within the inner ear, so sufferers are normally recommended to reduce their salt intake. I actually try to avoid foods which contain a higher sodium content than 0.2mg per 100 grams of food. Other substances that sufferers are advised to avoid include caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco.

There are some surgical treatments that can be carried out if Meniere's Disease - dizziness, in particular - becomes too difficult to manage, but many such treatments are destructive, and do not guarantee to preserve remaining hearing. Surgery to decompress the endolymphatic sac can be temporarily effective. No non-destructive treatments address the root cause of vertigo in Meniere's Disease, and repeated treatments, if successful at all, are often necessary. Destructive surgery techniques are irreversible, and involve the removal of inner ear function. This is called labyrinthectomy. Another drastic method involves cutting the nerve to the balance part of the inner ear. A technique called Intra-Tympanic Gentamycin (ITG) is often used in what is called a chemical labyrinthectomy. ITG treatment involves the injection of a drug called gentamycin directly into the inner ear, through the ear drum. ITG treatment does not prevent further attacks, of course. All it does is to destroy the response of the balance function to the effects of the attack. Decline in hearing, as a result of an attack, continues. I had right ear ITG in 2001.

Meniere's Disease usually starts in one ear, and, in about half of all patients, extends to the other ear over time. One consultant half-jokingly suggested to me that this is because most people get Meniere's Disease in middle age, and are dead before the other ear can be affected. In my case, I contracted Meniere's Disease when I was 21, so it was probably always likely that my second ear would be affected. Hearing loss usually fluctuates in the early years, and becomes permanent in the later stages, often with severe distortion and fragmentation. Hearing aids and cochlear implants can be of some use, but Meniere's damaged hearing is notoriously difficult to work with. Meniere's Disease is reckoned to burn out when vestibular function has been destroyed by the disease to the point where vertigo attacks cease - that is, when the ear can no longer respond to attacks. I've had it now for almost fifty years.

The metric system

A Japanese astronaut claimed recently to have grown 9cm during his three week period in the International Space Station. Apparently, the absence of gravity allows the bones in the back

to become more spread apart, thus elongating the body. It was only later that the astronaut realised he had made a measuring error, and that his growth was, in fact, only 2cm.

This error will be much appreciated in many parts of Britain where, despite the official introduction of the metric system of measurement in 1965 – fifty two years ago – large numbers of people of all generations still prefer, and use, the old Imperial system. For many people, despite having gone through the education system where metric measurements are taught almost exclusively, the difference between 9cm and 2cm meant nothing. It could be as small as a gnat, or as large as a door. If they had been told that the erroneous measurement was 3½”, and that the true measurement was only ¾”, they would have smiled knowingly, and passed comment about how nobody, not even the Japanese, understands these new-fangled measurements.

Sir Hugo Ludd, a yeoman farmer from Plugshire, said yesterday: “I’m not surprised people make mistakes with these modern measurements. They’re very confusing. I don’t understand why we had to change them. The old ones worked perfectly well.” He went on to explain that while everyone in his part of the world used miles, yards, feet, and inches, the BBC perversely gave distances in metres and mile, thus mixing the Imperial and Metric systems. “How many inches in a metre? How many yards in a centimetre? How many metres in a mile? I don’t know,” Sir Hugo expostulated. The interviewer pointed out that the metric system was based on factors of ten, but this cut no ice with Sir Hugo. “That’s not logical to me.” he said. “In my day we had twelve inches to a foot, three feet to the yard, and the length of a cricket pitch was twenty two yards, or one chain. A mile is one thousand seven hundred and sixty yards, or five thousand two hundred and eighty feet, or sixty three thousand, three hundred and sixty inches. What could be simpler than that?”

A new diet

Dr V. Thin, a renowned dietary consultant at Plugborough Hospital, has published plans for the introduction of a revolutionary weight loss diet to be followed, in a voluntary trial, by patients at the hospital. Dr Thin said, in an interview with this paper, “We’ve tried low fat diets, low carbohydrate diets, toxin-loss diets, and none of them have really worked. People rarely succeed in reducing weight over the long term. They are more interested in eating snacks in front of the TV.” Dr Thin went on to describe new research, carried out in Europe and North America, that found that golf was considered the most boring sport to watch on television, closely followed by American Football. He also described different research that found recently that people who slept longer lost weight. Dr Thin’s new diet is based on an arduous regime of lying in bed to watch golf. “This is a very exciting development,” said Dr Thin. “We’ve seen from our own studies that the ‘eat less, move more’ lifestyle choice is very tiresome for overweight people. What we are proposing is a good dose of boredom and idleness.”

...and finally, here is the weather forecast

Good evening. Here is the weather forecast for the whole of Britain on Sunday 13 January 2018, until noon tomorrow.

A cloudy and grey day in the north today with dense fog, and rain in places. Hail will be mixed in with occasional sleet, and there is a strong possibility of snow, even at lower levels. Winds will be strong to gale force from the north, blowing cold air straight down from the

Arctic. Temperatures just above freezing, but the wind chill will make it a bitter, raw day. Skies will clear this evening, leading to a sharp overnight frost, before the clouds build up again first thing tomorrow morning.

In the south it will be dry with some bright spells of pleasant sunshine. Temperatures here will be eighteen degrees celsius – that's the middle sixties fahrenheit - with a light southerly breeze. It will be a little cooler by evening, with a chance of light rain overnight, but this will have cleared to the north by breakfast time, leaving a promise of another fine and dry day.

And now, with a look at the rest of this evening's viewing on this channel, here is Gertrude Box-Preview.