

A Fresh Tablecloth Every Day

**The various memories of growing up and
modern day thoughts on all things trivial.**



**John William George Neale
1938-2004**

Forward

When I gave my dad a computer, I never realised how it would release his creative talents. Armed with the ability to email, he could jot down his memories and fire them off to anybody . However, his distribution list was quite small, mainly consisting of the people he thought would be the only ones interested. Myself and Simon, and Sisters Shirley and Pam. I know he had been using email to communicate with his Sister Brenda for a while before most of these emails were written. Those emails were of the more personal nature, mainly regarding how things were and general chit chat. After Brenda passed away I think he must have sat down and thought “ I better write some of my memories down, because when I’m gone all those memories will be lost forever”

I and all his family are so glad that he did. He had a very rare ability of being able to write about things that somehow seem harsh or benign today and yet his humour shone through and illuminated the stories so vividly that they are such a pleasure to read and they make you laugh time and time again.

He recounted stories of his childhood and teenage years and gave them the apt title of “A Fresh Tablecloth Everyday” Recounting his memories in a series of chapters and partworks that arrived in our ‘inBoxes’ at random intervals.

When he felt he had exhausted his repertoire in this area he then went on to tell stories of his daily life enriched with humour and taking ordinary situations and re-telling them as witty anecdotes.

These are the thoughts and ramblings of a comical genius. My Mom said “He should have been a Scriptwriter”.....I am sure he would have been a brilliant one. But then again, in our eyes he was brilliant at everything he ever tried or did. (Especially growing Sweat Peas!)

I have tried to keep the format of these as original as possible. I have left the dates when the mails were sent and attempted to tidy up the formatting. However, I have left all spelling and punctuation untouched so that they are as original to his hand (or keyboard!) as possible.

Thanks Dad, for the gift of Humour and for making us so proud . You were simply brilliant.

Andrew Neale
March 2004

A Fresh Tablecloth Every Day

Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2001 6:30 AM

Subject A Fresh Tablecloth Every Day

If I was going to write a book on the Neale family it would be called as above because Mom put a clean one on every day it was called "The Birmingham Evening Mail" It didn't matter if we spilt our tea out of the jam jars we were drinking out ha! she could always put page two on!

When on the rare occasions we had bacon mom used to take the frying pan with the fat still in it from last time which could be weeks down of the top shelf in the pantry and she would wipe the little foot prints from a mouse off the surface of the fat and pop in the bacon ! you never wasted anything!

Does any of you remember the shower of cigarettes ? When Dad went to the toilet one night after he had done his " business" he pulled the string to flush (chain ? do you think we were posh!) something fell down on him he lit a match to see what had come down, (No light in toilet? we just guessed didn't we?) Behold!

there was packets of all descriptions at his feet he had found Johns hiding place of his ill gotten gains as the law would say! Dad never said a word to me he just helped himself now and again free fags! old brands now, Passing cloud, craven A, Turf,Bar One, Park Drive etc

To be continued..... Part two" Bed bugs and Fleas and my Jam butties to school"

Abyssinia Baldy

Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2001 12:18 AM

Subject A clean Tablecloth every day part 2

Just after the war Bham council supplied you with Balls of distemper to decorate your house, you had a choice of Blue, Buff , or green. You took the ball and put it in a bucket broke it up and added water stirring it up with a stick, and then you painted it on the walls,Mom and me did it , Dad would put more on the floor if we let him do it. Once when we were doing a bedroom in Buff Mrs Mills who joined on to our house came running round shouting "are you distemping Vi? Just you come round and see what you have caused " ! When we went round we went up her stairs into there adjoining bedroom all the wall was crawling with Bedbugs coming out of all the cracks we were driving them all out of our house into theirs. I remember then the council came to fumigate all the houses all in one go. All the Dads had to seal all the cracks round the doors windows with rolled up newspapers etc and we all had to stand outside while the council men lit fumigating candles they had planted on the floors of all the rooms,all the kids, Moms and Dads had to stand in the yards ,I cant remember for how long but we were all running around looking at

some of the smoke escaping out of cracks round doors where they hadn't been sealed properly.

When we moved to Barford Rd we had them again! We had to move because we kids were all sleeping in one bed and Shirley started growing thingies !! I Bagged the small boxroom much to Shirley's disgust! " Why does he always get his own way Mom?"

Moan! moan ! Shirley slept by the window in her own bed! and Brenda shared a Double bed with was it Alan? . Anyway I think I lasted a couple of nights sleeping for the first time in my 12yrs life (it would be 1949-50) When I heard something by the window I looked through the darkness and saw these green eyes looking at me through the glass I shot out of the bed and dived in between Brenda and Alan, Needless to say Shirley got the room! When I was in bed looking at the ceiling with a bed bug crawling across I used to say to myself as soon as you reach that crack in the ceiling I'm going to splat you! but I never did I fell asleep,

Then there were the Bloody fleas ! eating you half the night jumping out of bed to try and get them! red bite marks on you when you went to school Before I went to school in the morning I used to sit at the end of the grate with a cup of tea on the end and dip my bread and marge in it and eat it YUK! Miserable as sin I was, I'm sure Shirley sat at the other end doing the same? then mom used to wrap my jam sandwiches up in newspaper and off to school with the jam soaking through the paper down Springhill with ripped trousers and a green right sleeve where I wiped my nose! It seemed like miles to walk it was only 200yds! and if it was cold get to the radiator in the school hall to put your bum against it. Do you remember the outdoor across the road where you could take the beer bottles back and get the deposit back? 2pennies I think, and when you went in and put what you had collected on the counter they would say "we ain' having that one it ain't one of ours! "that's M'B" and they collected for the Coronation street party 2/6 a week we took over and it was crap! That's a 15yr old talking ha! Do you remember one Sunday morning there was a loud banging on our front door and Mom went (Dad was down the Pub by this time) and standing there was this old bag with a black eye saying look what your old man did to me! What could Mom say? she just shut the door on her , just Dad fighting again! she must have got in the way! ha! Do you remember Mrs rhodes we called them the " Rhoders" rough lot! by other the side of the railway well someone came to tell me that she was standing naked in the telephone box down by the post office we all went to have a look she was screaming lots of rubbish which meant nothing to us and the Police came and took her away they were all nutters them! When Shirley bought a packet of sweetpeas from Woolworth's I took up a row of black bricks by the side of the outside loo so she could grow them up the wall and they did well, so I made a window box and put it on the wall next to Mrs Caddy's one day I came from work I think and there was Dad pulling all the worms out throwing them on the floor! I said what you doing they're good for the soil! he hadn't got a clue! I think that's when Shirley and me got hooked on gardening . That's enough for now you know how long it takes me to type as I think back

Abyssinia

ps Part 3 to follow

Sent: Sunday, March 04, 2001 12:11 AM
Subject A fresh Tablecloth every day part 3

Cripple fingers here! again! The house at Spring Hill was a horror story as you have already guessed, we had a small path that lead up to the front door on the right was Dads pigeon pen the full length of the wall which was the back of the billiard hall, Pattie Frieks or something like that lived there with her little brother can't think of his name but I used to play with him just to get free cordial in a milk bottle of his mom, anyway I digress! One night we were all on our way back from Uncle Les's wedding reception Dad (drunk!) Mom, me, Shirley, Brenda might have been in Mom's arms? What's the date of Les's wedding? that would say if Brenda was there well Mom was holding Dad upright as much as possible I was moaning as usual it was about 1.30am! it was cold and we had run our socks off at the reception real tired, Dad got the key out to open the door and dropped it on the floor somewhere, we couldn't see a thing pitch black it was, Dad lit a match I think it was and I went all giddy the ground seemed to be moving to the right very fast, it was then we realised we were standing in a yard completely and I mean completely covered in cockroaches the light made them all run towards Dads pen it was just as though tarmac moved all in one go to the right, Millions Yuk! When I came from school at night I remember having to wait for Mom to come from work about 5pm if it was cold I sat in the pigeon pen till she came and would I have a good moan! If she asked Shirley to go on an errand she would say it's his turn I went last time! If I had to go I wouldn't unless I got 6 pence! or the boiler stick across me!

Do you remember Dad and Uncle Les deciding to breed rabbits? I think one side of the pen was made to keep them they intended to kill them and sell I was upset when they did in the yard whether that was the only killing they made I don't know, but that scheme went! By the way later on when I was a bit older back to the cockroaches I used to light bits of newspaper and burn them out of the holes in the walls all around our garden ... Garden? it was just black dirt! I was chopping wood for the fire one day and a piece flew up and hit me in the eye I had to go to the eye hospital for treatment I remember having a bandage on I must have looked like Long John Silver! ha!, that was just one of the regular trips to hospital that Mom had to take me! If you look at me closely you can see I have one eye bigger than the other! ha! Probably the bleeding wood is still in there!

One day it was nice and sunny me and Harold Mills climbed up the "Brewhouses" up on the grass bank which was at the back of Mr Bakers? (That his name Shirl?) we climbed on his roof and stood behind his chimney picking bits of mortar out the brickwork and throwing it at anyone who walked past they would look up and we would hide behind the chimney (we were 30ft up!) anyway someone spotted us I don't know who told on us probably that sister of mine getting in Mom's good books! ha! I went off somewhere else to play completely forgot about it, when I came through the door much later I didn't know what hit me! well I did it was the Boiler stick Round the table she

chased me wack! wack! It must have frightened mom to death thinking where I had been

How many of us were in the maiding tub in the Bickleys yard on wash days? we all stood up in the tub ,(it always seemed to be sunny then days) standing in blue water (Blue Bag) Moms killed two birds with one stone, washed the clothes and the scruffy kids all at once! Then there was Mrs Browns tree I was always climbing "Get out my tree Johny Neale get up your own end!" a very small lady Mrs Brown the boot menders .I used to upset Aunt Edna (many times!) I locked her out of her own house one day and wouldn't let her in when I did come out I set about her with her own mop! Mom must have despaired ! ha

One day (there's lots of one days isn't there ?) I jumped off the Air raid shelter and landed on the palings a nail was sticking up and I was stuck on the nail through my eyebrow some one had to lift me off and Mom made another journey with me to Dudley rd I remember to this day Aunt Gladys giving me a brass threepence for being so brave! ha! All this is before your time Pam ,we were not well off but I do know we never went hungry Mom always fed us something lets think now? bread and lard with salt on. or with condensed milk (George Mills a lot older than me lived next door ,pretended to sneeze on my piece of bread I never eat it again! ha!) bread and dripping, bread and marge with sugar, then there was Granny Stanbies stews! Another story coming up! Make that in part three I know Shirley remembers "The dreaded stew!"

Abyssinia Baldyxxx

Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2001 10:50 PM

Subject A fresh Tablecloth Every Day part 5

Hello fellow scribblers, what about the imminent arrival of number five to the already over crowded Neale household? .

When Moms bump started to get bigger and bigger I was embarrassed when my mates came round (self again!) I upset Mom one day I said "why have you got pregnant for?" I would be about 14yrs then, mom said "you can get pregnant when you fall down stairs " and I believed her !!! I was going on a school camping trip which she had paid weekly to the school so I could go (how you appreciate mothers when your young!) I was to go to New St Stn to meet up with all the classmates, I said to mom " your not coming like that!" and she didn't.

We were camped on a farm for 2 weeks in big bell tents sleeping about 12 kids, we were all talking about sex in the pitch black, When I made my contribution to the topic of how a woman can get pregnant there were howls of derision! what a berk! Mom had certainly got her own back on me! ha! God I hadn't got a clue 14 yrs old ! today they are pregnant now! by this age! up to 15yrs I thought they cut open the belly to get them out ha! 14days of being laughed at! served me right!

I can't remember Pam being born I can't remember Pam being in a pram or anything(sorry Pam) but then I was out and about at 15yrs old, I've got

recollections of Shirley moaning to mom about one of the girls spoiling something or other book or comic or her drawings I remember Shirley could draw fashion sketches if I remember right, All I could do was on a Friday night with my sixpence pocket money off dad (later increased to a shilling! 100% up!) I used to go up Monument Rd to a paper shop run by two funny men who looked like Laurel and Hardy(do you remember Shirl?) I bought an exercise book and a pencil and a rubber and still had change ! I would go home sit at the table and write "This Book Belongs To J W G Neale" then spend 10mins just looking at it having nothing to write !! ha! Pam there was a toy shop at the bottom of our entry at Spring Hill I think it was called Avons the other side was Browns, I used to look in the window lots of times but we couldn't afford anything as I remember I always thought how good it would be to make a hole at the back of the shop (it was only wood) but I never got round to it! ha! The bottom of the entry the other side was a bombed building our playground in the cellar 4xBricks a seat 8xBricks a Table we had Candles, Milk bottles full of cordial, a penny a fill from the billiador . We used to shout BBCC! that meant "bunk boys cops coming!" ha! Good Dens they were One night!(change from day ain't it?) Dad said help me tonight I said what for? " I'm going to build a Pigeon pen you can help me get the old floorboards up when its dark and we did ! There was enough noise to wake the dead Dad pulling them up in the dark me carrying them up the entry must have been 12 o'clock at night and he built it! all solid and free! Dad at one time worked at a Toy factory at Western Rd I remember him bringing me a cowboy gun (I knew it was Hot) by listening to them talk I was at the bottom of the entry shooting everyone and this Policeman came up to me , he said that's "a nice gun sonny" I was sweating! but I kept cool ! Just like Roy Rogers Would! "Yes I said My Dad bought it me" ! and off he went Phew! Do any of you remember Alan going in to Moseley Hall Hospital? what was it for ? what had he got? I had to take him something one day I think it might have been food. Must have a rest now I'm so slow ! typing missing the space bar etc etc. I will have another think down memory lane

Abyssinia Baldy

Sent: Wednesday, March 07, 2001 2:05 PM
Subject A fresh Tablecloth Everyday part 6

Right you lot! Who can remember Moms Co-op divi number? This will prove who did the most shopping out of us all ! the first one to answer and mail it to me gets 5xstars and a Blue Peter badge ha ! I know it ! What was the name of the chap who had a little black car who lived down the yard just up from the Hurst's he was a Insurance agent and I went with him on his collection rounds, just so I could watch him drive ?

Does anyone remember me getting into trouble with John Tiernan ? he came to me one Saturday afternoon and asked me to go to town with him , I said " I ain't got any money " he gave me a £5 note I asked no questions and off we went into town , I bought this and that and every time I ran out of money he would give me some more! , we spent all afternoon round Bham I thought this is great you would think I had won the pools fivers, tenners , it was dark by the time I got home laden with all my goodies Books, Pencils,,sets, Encyclopaedia Comics, full of chocolate tired out but happy! that was until I walked through the door of our house! I must have looked a sight Like Father Xmas ,all hell broke loose! " where have you been?" Mom and Dad were white faced! I was a bit flushed myself well I was but skint now though ! ha! " Mrs Tiernan has been up here crying ! " (probably saying a few hail Mary's as well I expect !) Mr Tiernan had been having his afternoon nap on the settee with his coal bag collection on the floor by the side ready to cash up when he had woken up, when he did wake up and look inside there wasn't much in there! It was with the two Johnnies in town! ha ! I think he had a good hiding and had to go to confession every morning at 6 am for a week. me ? me ? I had a paper round and I had to pay every penny back out of my tips and I think Mom added a bit to it ,but the experience let me know what winning the pools would be like ! ha ! and the next minute having nothing ! ha ! Do any of you remember that ?

When Dad had his compensation money for his accident at work to his eye he got £800 a lot of money in those days he gave me the deposit for my motorbike £30 a James 197cc from " Fords" bottom of City Rd the reg No was ROJ 619 I still remember it

When I worked with Dad down Aston we had to be in for 8am if you were late by more than 2mins you lost your good timekeeping bonus Dad was never ever late, Mom and Dad would be shouting up the stairs to me "Hurry up you will be late" ! I always got up at the last minute ! Dad would give up and go off to catch his same bus he did every morning something like 7.30am to get in for 8am I would be just getting out of bed then as he was getting on the bus ! ha ! I would be out of the house by 7-45am and scoot passed him walking down the road just before the works and be in before him ! ha ! he got real peeved sometimes, "You will have an accident one of these days !" he said and I did ! one morning on the way to work he beat me that day !.

Dad went through that compensation money like water out of a tap (about 12 months I think) Mom could not do anything to slow him down.I think you all had something like bikes or what nots, and me my motorbike

Do you remember my card schools in the front room Sats or Sundays smoke filled room? Teddy Wilkes Ronnie Hurst etc

Do you remember me fiddling with the TV aerial. out the window and getting a fuzzy ATV picture with the first TV advert I'd ever seen Typhoo tea it was ,you all thought I was a genius ! True I suppose ! Dad watching the boxing and his head going from side to side dodging the blows as if he was in the ring !ha Mom used to say just look at him ! he will knock himself out in a minute.

Alan with his doughnuts eating them in front of the screen .
see ya !

Abyssinia Baldyxxx

Sent: Friday, March 09, 2001 9:13 PM

Subject Osler st school.

My 1st year at Osler st skool was waist , I lasted 6 munths, Monday morning was metal work we were all given a piece tin 12" square and we were to make a sugar scoop, The instructions were written on the blackboard all numbered.

the first instruction was to take a straight edge and file the ends level, well every kid got busy except one ! me !

I started looking for this tool called a straight edge do you think I could find one ! all the other kids were beavering away I was pretending to be busy, well you might say "Why didn't;t you ask? " I was to frightened to that tells you something about the School doesn't it

Well this went on for about 12 weeks all the other kids were bending their scoops into shape and soldering etc I still had a square piece of tin which I put in my locker in the metal shop till the next Monday week after week

When I left Osler st to go to Barford rd School I couldn't escape quick enough ! by the way chaps I know what a straight edge is now and I think about it every time I pick a steel rule up!

There was a history teacher named ? he was a sadist I hated history I came last but one out of 40 kids in tests I had a couple of whacks off him I cant remember what for, but a strange thing was he got his deserts when he was at Summerfield rd School? where mom cleaned .

One night mom while cleaning a classroom heard a voice behind her say " What are we going to do with him Mrs Neale " This by the way was told to me by Mom when she was still working there Mom said "Who ?What you on about ?" There stood the teacher who scared the sh** t out of me when at Osler st , telling mom her darling son Alan who was known as the Professor was making his life a misery he was the leader of the gang who were disrupting his class (I could hardly believe her) but she had to go up the school to try and calm it all down , Mom said she was embarrassed co's she worked there and had to see him most nights working late serves him right Alan got him for me ! ha !

When I was at Barford rd I didn; like music lessons which were straight after playtime we all had to line up ready to go to our allocated classes and march in .

Not Johnny Neale oh no ! he was sneaking along the wall of Brandon Passage keeping close so the teachers in the staffroom wouldn; spot him this would be 3:30pm School finished at 4:0pm I wasn't having a torturous 1/2hr listening to old Hepburn play his violin! not me !

I timed the dash across the road when all the staff would be going down the stairs to classes I never ever went to music classes and he never missed me co's he'd never met me !ha this went on for a heck of a long time Mom would say you will get caught one day! as she poured me a cup of tea ,I was 14 yrs by the way .

Do you remember what we had for dinner on Moms wash days when we came from school on a Wednesday ? then back to school on the afternoon ? That's enough for a bit you have to laugh at yourself don't you ?

Abyssinia Baldy

Sent: Monday, March 12, 2001 3:13 PM

Subject A Clean Tablecloth Everyday part 7

Springhill 1940's, Mom had great difficulty keeping cloths on our backs, I think goggy had a few hand downs from big Shirley but there was nobody to hand down to me ,sob! It meant frequent trips to my local gents outfitters, i.e. a trestle table outside the second-hand shop c/of Springhill passage and Ingleby St.Mom would be getting me to try on various garments o/s on the pavement and me moaning as usual, looking round worried my mates or someone who knew me would see us.

The Bham Evening Mail ran a scheme for poor families that if you got a note from your school you could get a new pair of boots and a pair of socks, I think I had about three pairs over the whole time at Steward sty School, but everyone knew who had them at School walking in with big shiny boots! ha ! One day sic Mom said " try this on !" It was a gabardine Mac navy blue I can still see myself in it! talk about the 3rd man film? I looked like a spy gone wrong ! It came over the ends of my fingers and nearly down to my ankles ! It had a big buckle belt that nearly went twice round me! I think Mom thought to herself he'll grow into it,anyway I remember wearing it one wet Sunday afternoon and knocking on Ray Arnolds Fagot and Pea Shop to see if he would come out to play, he answered the door and while I was talking to him I could see Mrs Arnold and Rays sister Beryl laughing together through the doorway, me being self conscious and looking like the KGB on a mission I took it they were laughing at my attire! God where did Mom get it from ? Orson Welles ? well anyway I told "my Mommy" ! they were laughing at me ! What a plonker ! they were probably laughing at something quite innocent , It caused Mom to go down and tell them off ! I think now of course for no reason but that's how self conscious I was ha !

When I ripped a good pair of short trousers a L shaped tear that hung down by my bum about 4" inches Mom made me go to school like it so I had to walk along holding the tear up with one hand so the girls wouldn't see ! fancy walking all the way with one hand on my bum till I could get to sit down at my desk ! there was a repeat performance at playtime ! Served me right ! ha ! Another memory that sticks in my mind when at Steward St School was our reading tests every week in front of the Head Teacher Mr Scott up in his Study , Shirley had the same , I read out and I quote, "The boys sang in the choir" but I read it out like it sounded "The boys sang in the chire" (what that could be I don't know ! ha !) anyway he made me read it out a couple of times and then corrected me I came away thinking how can that be pronounced like that ? (don't forget I didn't go to Church much ! ha !)

In 1992 I got the chance to visit the school which by now was not being used as a school but a Church Association and they let me look around some of the empty rooms , I went into the Hall everything seemed so small now , I went up the little stairway to the old Headmasters Study where I had stood all those years ago ! I stood in the exact spot where my wood working bench used to be and where I used to nearly cut my hands off chiselling I last stood there in 1950 that's 42yrs ago then one of my B.T. chaps came in and said " what you standing there for" ? (the benches had gone by the way) I told him the same tale then I got the insults off him! ha !

I had the ruler across my Knuckles for allowing my mates at school to drag Shirley into the boys toilets but it was her fault ! well what was she doing hanging around the boys toilets anyway ? Mr Scott said I should Protect my sister SO TAKE THAT! WHACK !

When I was late for School it was because I liked a good crash in the roads around ,there was the runaway milk float down Springhill overturned with milk and battery acid mixed, Wish I could have got my hands on that ! what a concoction ! ha ! late for School !

The Fire engine that crashed into the side of a No 8 Inner circle Bus scattering Firemen all over the road Blood every where ! late again ! actually Mom came Up behind me while I was rubbernecking and said "what you doing here you should have been in School 1/2hr ago?" the bus was on it's side and passengers were climbing out of the windows onto the side of the bus and being helped down a ladder I saw emerge one of my mates with his mother and climb down, funnily enough his name was John Neal no E on the end I Asked him later on what was he doing on the bus anyway? he said he was off School poorly and his Mom was taking him down to the flats to his Grans to mind him while his Mom went of to work He nearly never made it !.

Then there was the runaway horse wrapped its neck round a lamppost with all the ragman's wares in the road ! something must have frightened him to bolt like that ! (no not me) late again for School ! Then there was always the Chimney fires ! (yes I still pronounce Chimney "Chimdey" there seemed to be a fire every day all the kids watching the firemen stick a hose down the Chimney while standing on the roof exciting days then Time for a rest , its ok for you typists but I'm bloody slow !

Abyssinia Baldyxxx

PS I'm still waiting for the answers to my Dudley Rd quiz, I've had Shirley's I will send markings later tonight She's got no chance !

Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2001 4:44 PM

Subject The Dreaded Lurgi.

These are only are only snatches of my Tribulations, I have a vivid memory of Mom taking me to a Clinic down the very end of Ellen St, I was stripped naked and stood on a table where a woman who looked like a member of the Gestapo a big buxom type with her hair in a bun, she took out a mans shaving

brush and painted me all over with this soapy suds like concoction , from head to toe I was about 7yrs old, it really stung ! Mom was holding me still and I was moaning it was hurting ! I must have had something on me but I don't know what it was , anyway I think I'm cured !

When I was about 5 or 6 Yrs old I went into the Children's Hospital to have my Tonsils out, they dragged me in screaming put me on this green table (everything was green in the room,) and I remember them sticking a hard rubber mouth wedge in , still screaming ! then I woke up in a cot with all other kids around all in various states of discomfort, I can still see the door in the corner of the ward waiting for my Mommy ! ha !

I came out the next day and we got on the No 96 Bus and I had a box of Lead soldiers For being so brave ! (cough! cough!) we called in at aunt Polly's house in Ladywood Rd and she gave me Bread Milk to eat co's of my sore throat SOB ! I did have a Ice-cream in the hospital though on the morning Mom collected me

Here we go ! One day Mom was moaning at Dad that he never took me anywhere (all together now ah! what a shame !) so one sunday he took me with him for a grand day out where did we go ? you might ask ! he took me to Clissold St just up from Springhill (not as far as where I had to go to fetch the coal from the wharf on my own !) He took me along the tow path for about 200Yds then back again he didn't know what to do with me ! he was rushing to get me home so he could get to his 2nd home The College Arms for his drinking session ! That was the only time we had any father son bonding ! ha ! I know I was 39yrs old then but its sad ain't it ? ha ! ha ! only joking ! I think I would be about 6 or 7yrs old then .

"You've got to fetch some Coal !" the dreaded words ! I hated it ! especially if we hadn't got an old pram to fetch it because it meant I had to go up to the wharf top of Camden St borrow one of their barrows have the coal weighed into it a couple of hundred weight would be all I could manage then push it all the way home then take the barrow back to get the deposit back then walk home again doing a triple moan to Mom ha ! ha ! especially if I had to struggle through snow and I mean snow in them days ! my poor little fingers! frostbite I had I'm sure ! ha ! I would be about 2yrs old then ! ha ! No I exaggerate ! about 10yrs !

Aunty Pat was My favourite Aunt ,she was smaller than me when I was about 14 yrs old she would come to Moms sometimes Saturday afternoon or of a Sunday she had never got any money and she would ask me for a cigarette or one off Mom, I did tease her a lot and I know she liked me , she was always had a cup of tea with her fag and a cant with Mom I think she felt safe at our house, she might have had one of the little ones with her as well, sometimes she came with a black eye given her by Uncle Tom he was very violent and cruel to the kids.

Aunt Pat was staying with us once when we were at Springhill and she was washing me , I was standing on a chair by the Black Firegrate Pat was rubbing my face with the flannel me moaning "your rubbing to hard !" moan! moan! she took the towel which hung on a nail on the side of the grate just beneath the mantelpiece (why do we call it mantelpiece ?) shelf to dry me and the towel was full of cockroaches they were keeping warm ! they ran all over the place and so did we !! what a bloody house not fit for pigs !

I was giving Mom some lip and she chased me along Springhill of course I was too fast for her and I kept turning round to pull faces at her and mouth her ! well I turned to run again and ran straight into a face full of Khaki ! a Soldier saw what was happening and let me run into him he held me and said " here you are mother !" The shame of it ! it would not have been so bad if he had been a German Paratrooper but one of our own ! the traitor !

That's it for a bit got to pick Charlie up from nursery

Abyssinia Baldy xxx

Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2001 8:23 PM

Subject: Rationing 1947

Gran Neale lived at the top of Roseberry St where the Tram Depot was, (I used to stand and stare at the shrapnel holes in the walls and there was quite a few too !) the house was where I was born we left when I was 6 months old to Springhill .

Dad regularly sent me up to her house to borrow money off her for his beer, I had to listen to her ranting of why should she ? but she always did ! She let me have her sweet ration coupons so I could have extra sweets from Russell's sweet shop up Springhill.

Mom told me that during air raids all the families in Roseberry St went down to the tram depot and climbed down the inspection trenches under a tram to shelter I would be in her arms, but I never heard a thing ,Mom said that Dads mate who lived at the top of Roseberry St the one with only one arm was standing at the top of the road by the side of the canal talking to Gran Neale and others (people sometimes got fed up of false alarms or just fed up of taking shelter even,)a bomb dropped close by he lost his arm and Gran Neale lost her purse ! the pocket of her cross over apron with the purse in wasn't there it had been ripped off ! people were all ok except for him I can't remember his name he was a regular visitor to us a nice chap he had a mechanical arm which fascinated me then. Ernie Hunt ! it's just come to me ! Aunt Violet and Horace ? Dad recons they won the pools but kept it to themselves they always had money to spend perhaps it's as well with Dad sniffing round ! ha ! and she wouldn't let me play her piano when Mom and I visited ! They lived in Clarke St off Icknield Port Rd top by the Reservoir Aunt Violet never got over having her daughter run down by a lorry in Clarke St when she was about 10 Yrs old I don't think I was born then mom said she wasn't the same after that which you can understand now but we or I didn't then I just thought her eccentric she actually bought me birthday presents too !

This is just another snippet of me! me ! me ! ha !

Abyssinia Baldy

Sent: Monday, March 19, 2001 11:09 PM

Subject A clean Tablecloth Every day This part 9?

Springhill, Just outside our front door there was a drain which took the water from our brown sink and one brass cold water tap in the pantry (you can't call it a kitchen it was about 5x5ft square !) Well Harold Mills who lived next door to us he was about a year or two younger than me used to have a competition to see who could piddle the highest up the wall ! I always beat him ! I was bigger than him ! (I do mean taller by the way !!!) Well when Mom came home and could see the big fountain marks up the wall she would shout at me saying "you dirty bugger ! 'what if the rent man sees that " ?

If in the night I wanted to go to the toilets urgently I had to climb out of bed (I was between Shirley and Brenda with our extra Overcoat on to keep us warm ! Blanket ? your joking ! down stairs I would go find the biggest piece of newspaper I could screw it up as long as I could, make it like a big taper about 2ft long this while I'm shitting myself remember ! light it and shoot out down the yard to the shared block of 6 toilets ,sit there doing my business trying to keep my torch alight as long as I needed it frightened of the ghosts that are lurking about , you needed plenty of paper alight if you had got a tummy upset ! ha ! there was always plenty of ash on the floor from previous runners ! ha ! I wasn't the only one probably my sisters as well !

Once there was a horrible smell coming from the vicinity (I could have said one day then !) of the toilets on investigation the manhole that was just up the two steps to the loos appeared to be rising of its own accord, It ended up with Dad, Uncle Charlie And Mr Mills shovelling it out on to the side of the bombed site with all us kids going PHEW ! and the dads telling us to go away ! we didn't have toilet paper just news paper cut into squares on a nail and using to much caused the problem !(I;lv'e never seen so much " Poo " in all my life ! Not a lot of people know this but when we were little summertime was 2 hrs on the clocks I think It was to do with the war years , so at 11 o'clock at night it could still be light.and when Dad and others came back from the pubs they would be canting in the yard and we kids would still be up and running about in the yard hoping the longer they cant better for us !

One night when this happened someone said they could hear somebody moaning and it was coming from the brewhouse all us kids were scared but one of the men went to have a look there was this tramp who had settled down for the night but he had fell backwards into an half filled maiding tub and he was stuck with his knees in front of his face ! with his backside in water, they got him out and all the while he was shouting "MERCY ! MERCY (I think he was French ! ha !) but what happened next was a shame he had a little case probably all his worldly goods in it, someone threw it all the way down the entry and sent him after it, shouting something like "get out you dirty bugger ! " I can still see him now walking down the entry dripping wet from his backside !

No wonder us kids were scared of ghosts George Mills one night while the canting was going on in the yard when the pubs turned out was in the bombed building (he would be about 17yrs) we heard this moaning noise and saw this ghost going to and fro on the exposed rafters it was George with a sheet

on his head 11 o'clock at night ! and that was right by the toilets ! More paper after that ! Ps I was probably eating my piece of lard watching them shovel that mess !

see ya
Baldy xxx

Sent: Sunday, April 01, 2001 9:13 PM
Subject A Clean Tablecloth Every Day part 10

Mom's Tales To Me

Once when Auntie Pat was visiting it was late and the air raid siren went off, Mom, Pat and me still with my nappy on were under the stairs while the raid was on (no Shirley then)

there was an air raid shelter in Mr Mills's garden next to our house but it was always a pig to get into always water in it entrance covered by an hearden? bag so sometimes it was under the stairs, supposed to be the safest place if your house got hit.

Well Mom said I was crying and hungry I don't remember if she said how long we were under there, she asked Pat to make me a feed up, so Pat went to do it and as she was putting the dummy on the end of the bottle there was an almighty bang ! no windows ! Mom screaming !Pat ! Pat ! what's happened? no answer ! Mom opened the door of the coal hole under the stairs to see Pat opened mouthed in shock with just the top of my bottle with a dummy on the rest of the bottle had been blown off ! the house a complete mess, but Pat was ok !

Two shops at the bottom of the entry said received direct hits and when the all clear went people found their gardens covered in dented tin s of various fruit and veg's pram wheels etc (one was a bike and pram shop the other a greengrocers) no more they weren't ! they were to be my playground of the future, Mom always used the shelter after that episode and I don't think Pat stopped late again !

I remember Dad being on leave, and Mr Mills also, and being in the shelter with Aunt Violet, Dad and Mr Mills outside the shelter smoking their woodbines and some one drew back the bag covering the entrance and saying (Aunt Violet I think) come inside or something like that and it was then I saw the flares floating down from the sky that was looking over the brewhouses it would be over Monument Rd way that picture has been with me all my life and I don't know how old I would have been.

Yet I can't say I heard any bangs or bombs of the war, I was carried to the shelter one night by someone and I was looking at a clear star lit sky being bounced in a rush to get down the path to the shelter

Mom said that once we were caught at grannies Stansbies when the siren went off and we went down the cellar ? I don't remember a cellar do you ? anyway Mom said Granddad said he wasn't getting out of bed bugger it ! and guess what yes there was an almighty bang !

Dust and everything and Granddad standing at the top of the cellar steps to come down and all his unmentionables on show ! (he was in his night shirt) Gran said "PUT YOUR TROUSERS ON ! " he said "I cant find them!" they are on the back of the door" ! gran said, " I can't find the door"! Granddad said It's gone ! a bomb had hit Bulpits the factory at the back of Grans House another fine mess to clear up

All this and the mums had to go to work every day,Mom passed a row of bombed houses on the way to work one morning up by the fire station can't remember the road top of Camden St way she said they were just clearing the bodies away and she told me they had put a little lads head in a bucket I used to pass that spot often and I would think of it and wish Mom had not told me ! and now you wish I hadn't told you now ! It was not all laffs for Mom or others then ! This was recounted in a book written by some woman who lived in the next terrace to that one top of camden St. It was in the Birmingham Mail a few years ago and I remembered Moms story. I could take you to that exact spot today I think it was Albert St now I come to think about it ! what tales for Sunday night YUK!

Baldyxxx

From: [Dave and Pam Faulkner](#)

Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2003 6:56 PM

Subject: The family tree

Dear Shirley and John

Some questions you might be able to answer:

- 1. Where was our dad born? Springhill, Rosebery Street?*
- 2. Where was mom born?*
- 3. Where is Gran and Granddad Neale buried?*
- 4. Where is Gran and Granddad Stansbie buried?*
- 4a Where is Great Gran and Grandad Cartwright buried?(maybe this is too far back for you to know)*
- 5. How many brothers and sisters did dad have (including any that died when young)*
- 6. How many brothers and sisters did mom have? (including any that died when young)*

From Pam

Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2003 9:17 PM

Subject: Re: The family tree

1 believe Roseberry st

2 Kitchener st by Black Patch Park, Winson Green/Smethwick Border

3 Not sure, think Warstone Lane Ickniel St next to key Hill,Aunt Violet Dads sister is definitely.

4 Key Hill Cemetery, But not together separate Graves, I believe this was Gran's doing, I think Mom told me that?

4a Have'nt a clue.

5 Harry, Polly (Mary?) Cissie?, Frank, Violet, Albert. (Three Sisters and Three Brothers) Harry kept a corner shop in Bolton Rd for a few years.

6 I believe Granny Stansbie lost two children in between others at an early age most of it caused by beatings she got while pregnant (source from mom I think?) She took on two stepsons on marriage to Joseph Stansbie, Sam and William? Mom, Edna, Dorothy (known as Aunt Dos and Uncle Sam) at Weoley Castle 106 Kemberton Road. Dos as passed on

Pat, Passed on, Gladys (married a bus Driver and lives up north Durham way? Still there I believe?) Joan (married Richard Richards???) Joan is Buried in Quinton Cemetery, Victor Passed on, Leslie, Shirley.

Foot Note I went onto Census 1901 UK and put in Annie Cartwright at about 20yrs old in 1901 + or - 5yrs and it came up as three names try it yourselves and guess the ages remembering that mom was born in 1914 and I think Gran was in the 20 to 30 year age with mom being the first child, remember also gran was shelling them like peas for want of a better description Ha! Work it out 1914 to when big Shirley was born?

I did the same with Grandad Neale and got him up as Occupation "Stoker Boilerman static" what ever that means I copied all this out and would you believe it I cant find it at the moment I must have put it somewhere safe Tut!. I went onto the new genes site of Friend Reunited to do the Family Tree but you must get permission of anyone living so I gave up, I thought I would be able to add to Simons Tree he was compiling but I never found His so it seems to me if we all did it we would have all these trees separate whats the use of that? and you all have to pay £5 again to search too long winded!!! we could make our own up and add to it as we went along.

see you Baldy xxx

.....On the Subject of Christmas

Sent: 01 December 2002 21:17

Subject What Christmas

You poor sisters only having a sock for your Xmas prezzes, I remember I had a Pillow case! or was that later when we went up in the world and had prezzes the size of which would not fit in a sock?

I can see us in the box room at Springhill Xmas morning with the Overcoat spread accross us and trying not to get our items of expense mixed up with each others My chocolate never saw down stairs again I know that, I only remember one other Xmas was when I got my first new dropped handbars bike a shiney unused all my own.

I don't think I can remember any at Barford Road, but remember I was Grown up 11yrs at least ! I do remember taking Alan down Winson Green to a toy shop on the right hand side just before the Prison and I bought him a electric train set, I think it was Xmas but not sure.

Yes! shiney Pennies, Orange, Nuts,Chocolates I think we were pissin poor don't you ? Ha!

I suppose it would be me! your wise brother enlightening you on the Father Xmas' " who?" " never heard of him ! " I wish he was real, It would have saved me a lot of bleedin trouble over the years !

HUMBUG!

Sent: Monday, December 09, 2002 9:00 PM

Subject I must be mellowing!

It's here again! That time when all rush around with that worried frown, freezing,squashed, confused haven't got a clue look about you, you women are fantastic! and I still get what I wanted for the big day!

Notice I don't say the festive word? that's co's It frightens me! just thinking of all the pressure Barbara's under with all the gifts she will buy me!!!

Believe it or not we shopped in Debenhams Merry Hill last Friday and decided to leave it all to the following Sunday co's they had 15% off for card holders so of course silly twit me said "OK we'll come Sunday" Plonker !

Barbara's eyes lit up! (they don't often light up!) saying "we'll have to come early" "How' early"? I replied , "well they open at 11am on Sundays so we better get there early" How early"? I tried again, "If we go early we can have our Breakfast in Debenhams" she replied, (note the sweetener)

So we went early!! we arrived on the car park in front of the place and you know what ? it was 9.30am! because they open for Breakfast one hour before the store,so we sat in the car reading the papers like what another thirty or so regulars were doing but most were waiting by the doors ready for the off!

The doors opened and in we shot you would think we had all just been let out of Belsen! starving! and all the fatties who are the regulars shot through

between the racks weaving their well worked out routes to be first in the queue.

We didn't do to bad, we were about twentieth in the queue beaten by two old ladies a man on crutches who had parked by the door in the Handicapped!!! bay But I beat the single Mother with her twins in the buggy! only because she caught the wheel in the rack of some garments or other ,so I was reasonably pleased with myself .

It was 6 items for £2.95 so I had 3xrashers 1xsausage 1x beans and a nice fried egg plus free toast a pot of tea great a leisurely "brekka" and then in to the fray getting our worked out shopping with 15% off! Ha!

Now the reason I am relating this boring tale to you is this I do not normally like shopping as Barbara will confirm! I only go under protest well I pretend to moan but really I feel sorry for her going on her own (What an Angel,Martyr etc) I don't ever queue ! I never run after a bus or anything I don't like paying money to see anyone!, not even the queen stirs me! They can come and see me if they want and I don't run and I like to walk in anywhere.

Well that all went awrey on Sunday didn't it? You see it's all to do with becoming what's called a "Senior Citizen' I am now officially in training for my 65th get there early! ,push! shove! use me elbows! "HOW MUCH"? "I'm only a Pensioner you know!" (get the dialogue right) £2.95?bloody robbery! that's nearly £3 in old money!

So there we have it folks! just get out my way I want to be out there Shopping!! sad ain't it!!

Ha!

Sent: 14 December 2002 22:52

Subject Carol Singing?

Not me! I don't remember ever going out in the cold to sing to people's doors, and If I had accompanied you sisters ,as you said, you would'nt have earned as much as me if I had been in charge of the collection money!

I did'nt know any carols either all I knew was the important end bit, If you have'nt got a penny a "hapney"will do etc etc

you skinny old Jew!,I wasnt very religous unless it suited me never mind father xmas just give me the prezzies !

Sent: 17 December 2002 12:47

Subject xmas list

To all interested parties

Herewith is my desired xmas present list but do not feel obliged in anyway what so ever ,(mingy berks)

1 Wig or Transplant voucher from where ever.

2 Thermal wear. I've always fancied some all in one red long johns like what Lee Marvin wore in the film "Paint Your Wagon"

3 One pair of new ears, "Quadraphonic Type" the best to pick up a fart at twenty paces, I can always smell 'em but don't know where they're coming from!

4 A educational cassette tape teaching me not to be Blasphemous every morning I get out of bed, to stop me saying "OH GOD" or "JESUS WEPT"!

5 A 10ft long hand rail for getting from bed to Bathroom, (probably from B&Q) Don't forget the screws!

6 A Zimmer frame, Chrome De Lux, rubber hand grips, with or without wheels.

7 An electro-mechanical reclining armchair as advertised by Thora Hird on channel 4 (in between Countdown) she says "None of us are getting any younger" then shows you the chair,I prefer the colour plush Red please!
Are well! I suppose it will be socks again but we can hope can't we
There isn't no Bloody Father Christmas Like what I keep telling you!
Gimmee ! gimmee !

Love Scrooge no 2

Sent: 05 January 2003 16:34

Subject This is it then?

Good it's all over! now we can settle down and plan ahead, the nights will get shorter (I like light I do!) the spring can't be far behind, all the scrounging gardening Sisters will be rehearsing there begging lines for any of brothers tips or garden news. Well you will have to up your coniving skills cos I aim to be a meany in 2003!

All xmas and New Year parrafanailia as been shoved in the loft till next year I have been up the ladder and sticking it all in black bags and such,now I can get on with looking after the love of my life ! no! you silly billies my Greenhouse!

Do not sow anthing yet just keep things ticking over and keep plants on the dry side and that means in the house to.

The daffs are just starting to show through that cheers me up, I recon I suffer from that lack of light syndrome what ever they call it I just want to hibernate till March and wake up to the sun.

I don't like to talk about ailments but eveyone seems to be under a bug infection sore throats etc well I joined the sickies just after Barbara, Simon, Toni,and half of Merry Hell !! Oh! did I relate my further venture into the Jaws of the Dammed Place? Just after the New Year ? don't ask me what day it was, I was Just getting over my sickness (did I mention that?) Stuck in traffic tailbacks crawling along ,Barbara moaning about me dragging her out to sit in traffic when she would rather be at home watching the Football ! carping on about "It's the wrong time to come just to change your Jumper and all the People will be snatching bargains! but it was to late we were stuck on the dual carriageway and I could not turn around.

Went to McDonalds to Charlies 5th Birtday party all his School class were mostly there a total of 14 five year olds they can make some noise! the staff were very good! (I wonder if they will do my 65th?)

I shall probably do my xmas list next year at about November I dont think I gave you enough time to shop around for the Items I suggested although I did rather well all the same so I won't complain But Buck your Idea's up next year! I got a DVD off the family which I have found better than Video ,I can put sub titles on and the picture is a lot better than anyone else's who as only out of date family home entertainment! but never mind you can catch up with me one day! I shall order some nice films like "Paint Your Wagon" (you will see those Red long Johns worn by Lee Marvin What nobody bought me!)

Now Where's My Sun Glasses

Baldy

...and the rest

Sent: 07 January 2003 20:04

Subject: Attack

Some years ago I was sitting in my arm chair by the door watching TV and you know when you think something as caught your eye and you think you must have imagined it and the next night the same thing happens again, well it turned out to be a little Shrew had decided to lodge with us 'cos it was too cold outside.

We searched the kitchen because he only came out when it was quiet it would be while we were sitting quiet and he would pop out as brazen as you like whizzing passed the door to the lounge.

We finally found his little nest in the bottom draw of one of the kitchen units where Barbara kept her dusters and the rogue had chewed enough up to form a ball of cotton fluff to make himself comfy.

I searched round the back of the washing machine and he ran out and fled under the door to the garden I was amazed because I had never seen one as close up as this and also I would have sworn you would not be able to squeeze a 10 pence piece under the bottom but they flatten themselves right down and gone in a flash, they speed like a dart.

Over the years we have I think had two occasions of them squatting and once I got a stick to bang the back of the units and he never came out but later I found him slightly dead I must have scared him to death they are a bit touchy! A couple of days ago before the cold snap I was looking out the kitchen window and I saw another skulking and scooting along the fence, as long as he doesn't come in here I thought.

Monday morning I was looking out of the kitchen window dreaming of summer as usual and I looked by the side of the pot plant on the window sill with my champion grown Cyclamen in (kept them quiet) and I saw three mouse droppings Oh! Oh! I thought, here we go again where is he? Sod it! I will make a trap Not to kill him just to catch him alive then I can sling him in the horseroad ! Ha! No wouldn't.

Well I put my best Engineering mind to work ,i.e. 1x plastic dish, 1x lollie pop stick, 1x length of cotton, 1x piece of bait (broken mince pie) , 1x Brass weight off the scales to give weight to dish when activated so he can't lift it up! All set up for the night at 11.30 pm and off to bed.

Next morning? dah! ,dah! ,de! dah!!! NO ! I aint caught him! but looking up at me is three little poo's right by the side of my trap plastic type 1, Right you little bugger! no messing with me!, dead or alive your for it! Making trap type 2 planning stage, have a cup of tea first and think about it, this as got to be the one! the piece de la resistance as we inventers always say. While stirring my tea it was then that I saw it? YOU LITTLE BLEEDER! In my superior pot of Gorgeous Cyclamens(which I have kept quiet about!) sitting there just as calm as you like Looking up at me was?..... wait for it ! the biggest over wintering big eating Green Caterpillar who poo'd as big as Mouse!, he was like that one in "Alice through the looking Glass" who said to her quote "And Who Are You? I'm sure he said it to me! so I showed him! and he went down the plug hole with boiling water after him ! Eating my leaves of my award winning Cyclamen (that I have kept quiet about)

Then I had another cup of tea and thought "Well done John ! Didn't take me long to solve that! Just two days !

Intrepid, Brave, Sagacious , Baldy The Exterminator.

Sent: 13 June 2003 20:09

Subject: Barbara's Bright Idea!

Today Friday the 13th! Barbara says shall we go somewhere on the train using our free travel passes for over 60s ? Afters some deliberation on various places within the boundaries of "Centro" travel areas we settled on Wolverhampton, Beatties and all that! walking round and round! but I love her so I relented with just a slight mutter under my breath !" which I got away with. So off we set to park at Sandwell and Dudley Railway Station (At Oldbury!!) Free parking of course ! we are Pensioners you know!

Well so far so good we parked up entered the station and the train was due in for Wolverhampton at 12 20pm a 20 min wait and it was bang on time , on we get and we were in W,ton in 15mins ,smashin! off we set up railway walk and in the centre in 5 mins.

Up and down in and out, we spent a good enjoyable 3 hrs(she will be reading this!!!) looking at things in stores saying "that's nice"! or "I like that"! and "Ooh! have you seen this or that"? Yea! they've got the same things at Merry Hill and all the same shops!!!

We had a bite to eat in Beatties Store and then refreshed we entered the fray again out into the sun it was lovely!! (see who will read this comment) rarned and rarned and then tired (me!) back to the station for a nice relaxing trip to our Station to pick up our car and head home for a nice cup of tea! What had we bought you are dying to ask??? Nuffin!

We checked the timetable and great we only had to wait 10 mins and sure enough bang on time our train service pulled in on we get and lovely seats, clean and comfy the train set off , faster! and faster! Cosely flashed by Tipton in a flash ! Jesus wept! our station flashed by ! a quick glimpse of my car waiting in the car park, woosh! New Street Station 15 mins from W'ton but we want to go back to our station at Oldbury!! Poor Pensioners lost and confused. It can only be a matter of time before were put in a home for our own safety! wandering the country on our free passes is a bit risky!!!

The train info' at New St was better and we got on one straight away and all in all it only took us 35 mins from the time we left W'ton to New St and back to Oldbury!! I suppose we will pick it up eventually and be roaming pensioners with our sarnies in our plastic bags watch out Virgin were on the move even if we do get lost!!

Have plastic mac will travel I'll put my Umbrella up yah if you don't move!!
Show em' ya bus pass Barb'!

Confused but contented old uns!

Sent: 04 July 2003 20:42
Subject: More from the Sage

Some time when your feeling Important,
Some time when your ego's in bloom,
Some time when you take it for granted,
You're the best qualified man in the room
Some time when you think that your going
would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple Instructions
And see how they humble your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hands in it up to the wrists, Pull them out - and the hole that remains,
Is the measure of how you'll be missed;
You may splash all you please when you enter;
You may stir up the water galore,
But stop -and you'll find in a minute,
That it looks the same as before.

The moral of this is quite simple,
Do just the best you can; Be proud of yourself - but remember,
There is no indispensable man..

Sent: 17 September 2003 20:14
Subject: Another train trip

A Sunny day and another jaunt on our Bus passes.
This time the Jewellery Quarter , a gentle stroll down Memory lane, (Warstone Lane! Mom used to work round there) Looking at the Diamond rings in the windows of the shops, "heres a nice one Barb, 1kt single stone £2995 I'll buy you that for your 65th birthday I've got 18 months to win the lottery! easy peasy erm' erm' cough! cough!
We looked and looked and all the shops were all the same ,then we found the museum of jewelery that was crap just another shop with museum staff (blue uniforms, lounging about disinterested) what jewelery work demonstration daint see one walked out and said that was crap too!
Now you might think miserable pensioners and you are probably close to that fact but when you look arround at the potential of the area for tourists they ain't got a clue, not like say France or such like, they would have a Plaza with tables outside the Cafe's on the street etc all that was there was a couple of Sandwich bars ,and we saw two "tea rooms"? set in dark corners of the buildings, what a poor bloody effort! Talking of effort the traffic wardens were putting in some I've never seen so many tickets in one road .

FRRRT!!! ain't going again. Well only to buy The Diamond ring in 18 months time!

Baldy
PS Went by Train so it daint cost nuffin ! Ha!

Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2003 5:46 PM
Subject: Final Curtain

I have to make some decisions and sacrifices, It looks like the time as come, you can,t leave things to the last minute and me being very fastidious,the heart rending ,sobbing, self pitying side of me must be ignored even as difficult that is.

I shall leave all my Gardening books to Shirley, My Greenhouse to Pam ,(collector dismantle on site) It needs three broken panes replaced (Golf Ball damage) And any plants that are taken a liking to.

There's not much time so if you want to visit me, Sainsbury's are doing Grapes for 90p a bag (Green pipless) And Thortons are doing a special bag of toffee's, and if there are any Gardening mags going they will be greatly appreciated (in correct date order)

Yes You've guessed it! John as got a cold again! the worsted cold in the world!! I tell you I'm on my last legs!! why are men's colds worse than any woman's? I don't complain much I'll just fade away no one will notice my demise, Oh ! my blinkin nose! it feels and looks like a beacon shining through the night ! My throat ! It's so rough I'm talking and sounding like an Ass.

You might ask ? why doesn't he take something for it he knows how much we will miss him if he doesn't make it to Monday at least! well I have been taking shots of neat whiskey before bed time, at least if I didn't make morning I'll go out pi**ey ar*ed drippy nosed oblivious! I have got a Trumpet as well! I blow it now and again it does me good!!

No flowers please just goodies,
Baldy with the big hooter XXXX

Sent: 05 December 2003 18:04

Subject: Crocks

Old Crocks Monthly Meeting,
Woodbury Road,
Halesowen,
4th December 2003

Members in Attendance.
Chair----- N Kiteley.
Refreshments----- S Kiiteley.
Minutes:- J Neale.
Apologies B Neale (Shopping)

Neil Chair opened the meeting by asking how John was health wise, I tried to keep it to a 400 word address but could not contain myself and heard someone snoring, so Neil chair suggested we move onto the drug problems we are experiencing in Halesowen, Refreshments agreed, but would Minutes taker like a break with a cup of Coffee? chair agreed to a 2 minute break till Shirley Refreshments returned to meeting which she duly did and meeting re commenced.

The drug problem we are having to endure is who is taking the most pills and tablets out of all the Crocks in attendance? Neil Chair said he thought that as he had been reduced consumption by 2 mill grams then he was in remission and would soon be doing cold Turkey by Xmas!!

Bullshit said John (minutes) We are all NHS druggies any way and mine are a nice shade of pink which go with my complexion, Neil chair said I was out of order (which I already knew! else I wouldn't be in the old crocks would I!) and diverted the agenda to more technical items to be discussed.

Shirley had caught Chairs eye and moved we discussed the benefits of Digitally enhanced TV Chair then proceeded to give His expert evaluation of his aerial being superior to all others and as his was pointed to Brierley Hill his picture was great, Shirley Refreshments seconded that and John agreed that it was the best reception he had seen on any ones screen, Trouble is no one in Brierley Hill can get a picture when Neil Chair switches on!

Before bringing the meeting to a close Neil Chair asked "Any other business"? Regretfully the next hour was taken up by Shirley Refreshments stating that we had not mentioned Decorating which she was keen on, Neil chair said well Nobody else was interested and as no one had seconded it, she Refreshments can forget it before Xmas.

John Minutes said "he sympathised with her but Neil Chair was right "we don't want any of that kind of talk"!

But what about the Hall? Shouted Refreshments, " Out of order"! said the rest of the meeting and Neil chair closed the meeting.

Next old Crocks Meeting to be held after members have visited their own Doctors for updates.

Sent: Monday, December 22, 2003 9:57 PM
Subject: Old Crocks

Old Crocks Members Complaints Procedure.

Memo to certain members who may be disillusioned at monthly meeting procedures, also motions proposed at the time, which they feel may not have been fully dealt with to their satisfaction, Well hard shit!.

To enlighten ignorant Crocks members, to call a Extra ordinary general meeting you need a Quorum of three members (as there is only four members)

There is always in any democratically elected body an agitator causing disquiet and stirring up trouble for perfectly happy easy going no trouble male members making them turn into sweating nervous wrecks at the end of any other business ,with every meeting ending so far with Refreshments(un seconded) trying to move on to unpronounceable agendas (lets call it DIY..DO IT YOU!)

The above mentioned agitator will no doubt be counting on all members being in attendance at the next planned Crocks AGM,and thus receiving backing and seconding from (Barbara(Retail Therapy Failed)) as this is the time of good will to all men ! Neil(Chair) can relax seconded by John (Minutes)
I move that Neil (Chair) strongly censures Shirley (Refreshments) for being out of order , and to check to see if it is her tablets she is taking that are causing Neil (Chair) discomfort? If so With Neil's (chair) permission I could put a call in to the Samaritans Emergency phone number for a visit and advice for her to receive counselling and therapy by ripping a roll of wallpaper up into bits every day for a week to cleanse her unnatural thoughts about Halls and walls, I will bring it up at the next meeting.

I have continued to take medication as prescribed but am still unable to receive digital pictures on my TV, I will have to get Neil (chair) to explain it to me again, do you think if I drop the pink Tablet I might just get Black and White?

Barbara (Retail Fix) Is suggesting That Shirley (refreshments) is playing "it" the wrong way as to gaining any satisfaction out of Neil (chair) I can't think of "what" she means but no doubt she (Retail fix) will be giving her (Refreshments) some tips like accidentally catching a wheel barrow on the wallpaper in the hall or something along those lines!

All thoughts of men and work being associated must be dispelled and out of order till next January meeting ! But don't count on it either way!!!!

Hoping this Memorandum clarifies the position clearly

John (Minutes)

Sent: Monday, January 19, 2004 9:38 PM
Subject: SPs?

Hello Pretenders to "My Throne"

Don't think I will grow SPs this year ,I'm Bored with them, I have about 30 in the frame about 12" high and bushing out after pinching ,I will probably throw them on the compost heap later. (1)

Been in the Garden today and done a lot of tidying up, found four large Parsnips they will do for our stew on Friday, went and got some replacement glass for the Greenhouse and fitted same it is now airtight again I might bring some plants out of the frame into the greenhouse to bring them on a bit earlier, I noticed my Bird of Paradise flower from seed I bought is holding it's own I would like to see a flower on it, another 2 years probably ? Also with all it's leaves still on and looking good is the Agapanthus that never flowered we shall see this year.

The exercise as done me good I hope! Everything in the body is creaking at the moment through lack of gardening but it won't be long now to "lift off" for spring, the daffs are pushing up everywhere you look.

(1) I'm only joking! You aint got no chance ! of deposing the King!
Wise words from a Sage,Me! All things bad for you begin with the letter "S" ie Salt , Sugar, Sisters, Sunshine, Smoking, Sex? .Must try and give that last one up !! Really bad for me! See enough on TV as it is! I Don't mind the warning given out at the beginning of every film saying "This programme contains scenes of violence and scenes of a sexual nature" I turn the TV straight off ! I don't mind the violence It's the Sex scenes that frighten me !

All things good for you begin with the letter M" ie Money, More Money, Much Money, My Money,
Millionaire maybe me?

Your all Garden Bluffers!
Baldy xxxxxx

Sent: Monday, January 26, 2004 8:33 PM
Subject: Memory Lane

Today Barbara and I had cause to go to Aston and on the way back we thought we would drive back home via our old stamping grounds, what an eye opener it was !, we went down Lodge Road towards the bottom where the Nurses homes to the All Saints Hospital were situated only now they ain't! It is now a large Housing estate all roads laid out where the grounds (Blinkin park more like) used to be and when we drove round the estate you could look over towards the hospital with still substantial Cultivated grounds and you now realise how much the "patients" had of greenness,Lawns, Trees, Walks

etc and it makes you realise that them "Patients" were smarter than us they were the right side of wall !! And we never knew or thought that.

There was us "plonkers" fighting our way to work in all weathers, remember the fogs? on the choking Buses people coughing all around you, going home in the bitter cold, going with Ration books in your hand to the shops to queue and fetching coal or coke in an old pram to get some warmth in the house etc etc them on the other side of the Big black long high wall ? food found, warm central heating , proper blankets on their Beds , and to think I was at times an inch, one tiny breath from being Assessed, Processed and Passed to the other side of that wall !! I could have been an entirely different person?

Then I took Barbara to Rosebery Street to show her where I was born and would you believe it a new row of houses stand there and they are Bleedin awful I was born 2/13 Rosebery Street and If I remember it was a lot better looking in the 40s and 50s even though a miserable bugger was born there in 1938 .

On the SP Scene stop sweating I aint sowed any yet ! in fact I aint got any yet!

See ya!

Baldy xxx

Sent: Saturday, January 31, 2004 8:25 PM

Subject: The Happy Event

The address where that happy event, the birth of the baby that occurred on 30th of September 1938 was 2/13 Rosebery Street Brookfields (Rosebery spelt that way on the Birth Certificate I checked) as far as I know there was no bright star in the sky shining down but three men three sheets to the wind did call for the elated father who all then departed for the local tavern "The College Arm's to drink to the "Love Childs Health.

Mother and baby were fine as they were accompanied by the Grandmother of this Lovely child, the Mother in-law who's house they were living at and with. But little did child and Mother know that time was against them and within 6 months a new home was located for rent nearby, a slightly better manger than that other kid's whose mentioned round about December, so as to escape Mother in-laws tongue which was now getting at father and mothers patience A flat bed barrow was rented and what small possessions were owned were piled on late at night after the father had finished his daily toil, the said baby in the arms of the mother walking alongside of the father pushing their worldly goods to their new abode cursing the squeaky wheels of the barrow, breath hanging in the air as he huffed and puffed past his watering hole corner of College street and the lovely child not knowing the "struggle" that was going on!, remember this was March still cold in those days, not nice for a lovely child to be exposed to, the rest you know he grew up to be quite a normal boy but not quite as well known as that other kid who got all the limelight

Baldy xxxxxx

Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2004 7:37 PM
Subject: Pams Pictures

Andrew has purchased a new Scanner and is now in the process of turning out uncreased versions of all us family Looney's.

No doubt you will want a few more copies of me to revere, adulation, worship and all that!.kind of thing that embarrasses me!.

I think that a certain sister thinks that she and her knackered knee husband should be members of the Halesowen old crocks club by keep on repeating their aches and pains to us.

The board members may hold a short version of a medical discussion of your ailments to see if there is any reason not to allow you to join us or easier still to make you affiliated members which will allow you to precipitate in our movement which to get as much NHS treatment as possible, Clause 8/41 paragraph 1 (Passed by Neil chair seconded by John Minutes and agreed by Shirley Refreshments and Dept of Decorating fixation's) so we can compare and evaluate your maladies.

There may be a few small Bribes to pay as in all "organisations" of late, to gain access to the inner circle of clapped out druggies a suggestion could be like one dozen SPs in pots pinched out and 1ft high just as a sweetener to start with each of course, see how you go.

A meeting will be held in the immediate future no doubt If we can stop Neil chair decorating again (Shirley gets high on the smell of Magicote!) Neil chair doesn't know his arse from his elbow ! one minute its wallpaper, then plant a tree time, then a prance in the woods in all weathers!, silly prancers! talking to her SPs ("grow you buggers"!) We could expel her before you pair join in case you side with her!

We have had a meeting since I last spoke to you but it was a shambles a full attendance was registered which meant that Barbara Shopping Guru 1st class was in like a flash and between Shirley refreshments and her it meant Neil chair and John minutes never got a look in! not a sniff! all the male members aches and pains were sorted (5mins) female members discussions of Pills ,tablets Iraq war, Hutton report all mentioned and sorted by the afor said female members (2hrs) Neil chair and John Minutes gave up ! We thought it was ITV " News at Ten"!!! not our usual old crocks meeting! I blame Neil chair for not putting his foot down just cos' it was her Birthday that day!, be warned there's discontent at the table even before you join! to put your fourpence worth in !

SP Note Bought my SPs but can't find Galaxy

Baldy xxx

Sent: 22 February 2004 18:48

Subject: Never Volunteer

Today Sunday I returned home from a 12 o'clock kick off at Villa Park to my lunch.

I walked into the kitchen to a table already laid with a new tablecloth, with a bottle of wine and an already cooked Apple Strudel and a Jug of Custard, Barbara was still Slaving over the stove preparing the Ingredients i.e. Chicken Kiev, Small Potatoes, Broccoli, and cauliflower florets all gently cooked so as to keep the right consistency to my liking.

Hello' Hello' this looks dodgy John thinks to himself, Alarm Bells Ringing??? more like blinking Sirens and Distress Rockets going up!!!! She has time to hand me a cup of tea and asks me about the Match, shaking I managed to answer all enquiries and averted her eyes what can I do? my Hormones don't bubble much these days and it's only chicken Kiev I ask you!!!

Sitting opposite me we both tucked in and I must admit It was super, went down a treat it did, so another sip of Red wine and then I tackled the Apple Strudel, Boootiful!!! What can I do nw I thought ? Wey Hey !!!! a brainwave! I know! "I'll wash up Barb, leave it to me!"

"Oh! great!" she said getting up from the table and depositing herself on the settee with a Sunday paper to read , Phew! I thought that was close!

Now this is my Woe, Oh! Woe is Me! I clear the Table no problem then look to the Sink, I Don't Believe It!! Where as all this come from? where are all the people? guests or visitors, Coach party or whoever it was who were at our table Dining with us?

Still undeterred and thankful John got stuck in, I went at it like a mad man , in no time it was all sparkling just like Barbara's eyes what I averted!

Now the eye opener for you all, I took an inventory of all said washing up (remember meal for two?)

1x meat roasting tin
1x small black crock dripping bowl.
2x saucepans with lids.
1x jug plastic.
2x sweet dishes.
1x side plate.
3x dinner plates (mystery guest?)
1x serving spoon large.
3x dessert spoons.
1x soup spoon?,
3x table forks.
4x table knives.
2x kitchen knives.
1x mug .
1x cup.
2x saucers.
1x teaspoon.
1x drinking glass.
2x wine glasses.
1 wooden spatula.

Final .All washed dried and I gave her a cup of tea too! then up here to tell you my woes!
I put it all away too! It's called love, but don't say anything!! My hands are lovely and soft just like my head Baldy

.....(Shirley had written a book about her own memories.....the response below mentions this before more 'Old Crocks meeting reports' This was his last e-mail)

Sent: 02 March 2004 22:54
Subject: The Book

Have read the book and have not found any mistakes as such 'cept there wasn't much on the hero of the piece if you sell the film rights insist on a good looking actor to portray me, we don't want any "has been" also same for you , "anybody" will do for the rest of 'em!

With reference to our old crocks meetings and discussions, teabag's remarks on all this new technology that we can't cope with will be the agenda next. I will be moving that it is not new technology that we worry about ! its old technology! like paint brushes, ladders, planks colour charts etc etc Chair will second my motion I.e. all walls just to be looked at and walked passed without any silly woman's comments like "lets go to B&Q also postal vote from knacky knee affiliated. All postal votes to me please I'm "minutes" you know!
All new techno stuff will be managed quite well by certain members I.e. leave the remote to us! I shall 'move' that too! there will be a rush to second that too!
If there is any none consequential business to be discussed by lesser members it will probably be 'moved' somewhere else like the Bin!

Gardening note my Sps are away first leaves on.

DIY note:- Decorating bedroom at the moment! yes! yes! I know ! I was tricked I swear it! I said to her "Get up them stairs and strip off! I put two spoonfuls of Stud aftershave in all important places, as I bounded up the stairs I heard her repeating over and over "at last after nine years! I thought is it that long? the sight that met my eyes on entering the bedroom, there was wallpaper all over the floor and she held out her hand to me and gave me a scraper!! my little bit of "enthusiasm wilted" and I stifled a sob or two.
What am I dreaming of? Fantasising about? imagining what? Yes I can see the colours !!! lovely Barb!!

Baldy than ever!