



The curious case of a London gentleman who is in the unfortunate position of not knowing who he is, is causing the Caersws Board of Guardians (Montgomeryshire) some trouble.

Many years ago a woman on tramp with a seven-months-old offspring was admitted to the house.

The offspring became a foundling, went out into the world, and, under the assumed name of David Davies, has prospered in the Metropolis.

Recently he gained a good post in Paris, and went over to take it up. But he could not produce a birth certificate, or give his parentage, and had to relinquish it.

He has now reported the Board of Guardians to the Local Government Board for neglect in not having a record of who he is.

But they cannot help him, and the only person, it was reported to the Board, who can solve the mystery of whether he is a duke's son or a cook's son is an octogenarian lady at Caersws.

She, however, lends a Tom Jones romance to the story by resolutely keeping her lips sealed.

The unfortunate unknown has personally searched the records of ancient Bumbledom in Caersws without avail.

(Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News, July 16, 1910)

50 YEARS AGO NO SMOKING

Who has been smoking in Shrewsbury's Shirehall Council Chamber and Crown Court?

No prizes for answers, just a warning - don't do it again. Smoking was banned for all meetings in the Crown Court and Council Chamber back in 1949.

But, says a report of the county council general purposes committee, there has been a tendency to disregard the rule recently, perhaps because many members of the council are not aware of its existence.

It will be brought to the notice of the council to-day.

(“Looking Around” with “Walling Street” column, Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News, July 16, 1960)

25 YEARS AGO PUPILS SAY FAREWELL TO VILLAGE SCHOOL

It's not just the end of term for one of the smallest schools in the county.

At Chapel Lawn in the remote South Shropshire hills headmistress Mrs Jocelyn Williams closed the door for the last time as the 15 children went home to begin their summer break.

The school is the latest to be axed by the county council because of falling numbers and so in the autumn the children will face journeys to four other schools in the area.

“It's a very sad day but we have done all we can to fight the closure,” said Mrs Williams, who has been at the school for 20 years and is now taking early retirement.

Public subscription started Chapel Lawn almost 130 years ago in 1856. In its heyday the two roomed school took around 80 pupils, but with families moving away and a fall in the number of children born locally the numbers are down to 15 full and one part time.

Last weekend over 400 past pupils came back to the school for a special get together which included a church service.

Presentations were made to various members of staff and displays included items of needlework made at the school as long ago as 1904.

“Tongues certainly wagged as they all got together and caught up on many years' gossip,” said Mrs Williams.

(Shropshire Star, July 19, 1985)

FEATURES

Obsessed with the latest high-tech technology? Ah, then there's a county group you should meet.



BY BEN BENTLEY
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What does a geek look like? That's the question I find myself asking.

I'm in a pub to meet some geeks. Problem is, I've not the foggiest what they look like. We've only met on Twitter.

It's Friday night in the Admiral Benbow in Shrewsbury, the place where a group of Shropshire geeks, who call themselves Shropgeek, hook-up and talk in person rather than through 140-character tweets.

I look at my watch. 7pm comes and goes, as does 7.15pm. At 7.20pm I begin to suspect I've been set up and, by 7.25pm, properly stood up.

I resolve to ask a gent who, frankly, fits the stereotypical worldview of what a geek should look like — thick glasses, slightly gormless mug, trousers which if they could talk would say “I'm not with him, honest!”

“Excuse me, but are you a geek?” I ask. Turns out the Shropgeek are in the back room and, as it happens, not one of them looks like a geek, or what you might think a geek should look like.

The language is a bit alien though. In the corner there's a debate about “bottom jitter”.

“Don't type that into Google,” says new Shropshire geek Victoria Cleaton much to the amusement of her fellow geeks. “It's to do with DVDs, actually,” she adds, clarifying any misunderstanding.

Technology

Shropgeek is a group formed around 18 months ago with the idea of bringing together like-minded ‘geeks’ to talk technology in a pub over a beer. Most work in IT. All of them love gadgets and geekery with a passion.

But what is a geek? What is the definition? Can anyone join the club?

The group's organiser Kirsty Burgoine: “Anybody can be a geek — everybody has a geek in them — everybody knows a lot of stuff about something. I'm a geek. I'm a web designer. I spend a lot of time programming and writing code and I'm pretty much chained to my computer.”

“Everybody is very proud of Shropshire and Shropshire does a lot of really good real ale, and a lot of people who come along like real ale.

“That could be seen as geeky — everybody has a geeky dimension, or an obsession.”

Mind you, the topics of conversation and the subject of the talks therein might be a defining criteria. Not everyone gets excited by barcodes, one of the subjects of conversation recently.

Members chew the fat over server environments, the iPhone app ‘Sleep Cycle’ and its benefits, and compare the relative merits of the iPhone, android phones and Blackberries.

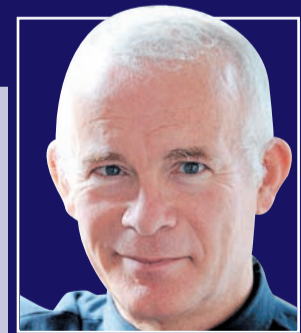
The recent launch of the iPad caused almost uncontrollable levels of commotion.

But rather than the group being confined to a tiny number of people with limited mutual interests as you might expect any group of geeks to amount to, Shropgeek is expanding almost as rapidly as the technology they work with every day.

Kirsty says this, perhaps, is an illustration of how important technology, the web and its ability to communicate globally, is to people in rural communities such as Shropshire.

Clearly there is a social aspect to Shropgeek that is not fulfilled in the workplace. This is hi-tech social networking brought to old-fashioned life.

New member Steward Noble, 44, says: “I had heard of it but I didn't think I was geeky enough. But it's nice to meet and talk about IT because people at work only talk about work.”



Peter Rhodes

● A READER writes to complain that his local GP practice is full of doctors from Athens who are all writing novels. Apparently they are Greek author docs.

● IF you want a fine example of that old expression “spitting in the wind”, look no further than Lord Judge, the Lord Chief Justice, who says jurors should be warned not to consult the internet over cases they are hearing. Oh, please. What sort of person could resist the temptation to Google the defendant's name and find out exactly what sort of record he has? These days, all

Adulation of criminals is not new — but it indicates a society in deep trouble

the world's knowledge is the click of a mouse away. No stern words from someone in a red robe and wig can weaken the awesome power of the search engine.

● DAVID Cameron says there should be no sympathy for gunman Raoul Moat and we all know he's right. The problem is that “we” are not the only people living on this little island. There is also “them”, a sizeable and resentful underclass cut off from the prosperity of our nation who hate the system, dislike education, despise the cops and regard drug dealers as great blokes who bring them moments of glorious oblivion. For this underclass, whose leisure pursuits include shoplifting, getting legless and chucking bricks at fire engines, anyone who takes a pop at the cops and who is denounced by politicians and the media can't be all bad. Something similar happened in America in the 1930s (remember Bonnie and

● THIS must be an old missive doing the rounds but it made me smile: “In order to restore some confidence to the England football squad, Fabio Capello has arranged an early friendly against a team from Iceland. If this goes well he will arrange further games against Tesco, Morrisons and Aldi.”

● THE unveiling of Taranis,

Clyde?) when banks collapsed, millions were left jobless and all trust in the police and government evaporated. The hit song Big Rock Candy Mountain (“where the cops have wooden legs”) is a celebration of criminal life and drunkenness. A dirt-poor hobo from Tennessee 1935 would instantly recognise the adulation, 75 years later, of Raoul Moat on the sink estates of northern England. Adulation of criminals is nothing new and is usually an indicator of a society in deep trouble. America in the 1930s was saved by the New Deal. We're waiting for ours.

● PHILIP Coates of Barnsley has become the first person to be prosecuted for riding a Segway, one of those curious American people-movers, on a pavement. Good to see the police taking pedestrian safety so seriously. However, what about the cyclists who tear up and down our pavements with impunity? Rule 64 of the Highway Code states very clearly: “You MUST NOT cycle on a pavement” but the rule is broken thousands of times a day. When did you last see a copper intervene?

the Ministry of Defence's prototype unmanned combat air vehicle, must send shudders of alarm through the highly trained ranks of the RAF. How long before the spellbinding precision of a Red Arrows display is created by some spotty geek on a computer and inputted into the flight controls of half a dozen scarlet Taranis fighters, to thrill the crowds without a pilot in sight?

● THIS reminds me of the joyous experience, a few days ago, of seeing a particularly aggressive cyclist (vein-hugging lycra, self-important snarl, spitting etc) having a puncture. Such language.

chatroom is a driver whose car was failed because its number plate did not have the postcode of the supplying dealer on it. Death trap, innit?

● DECISION time. Who deserves more sympathy this week, the drunken Australian Michael (“Crocodile Dundee”) Newman, who tried to ride a huge crocodile and was duly bitten, or the nine twerps injured in Spain's annual display of animal cruelty, the Running of the Bulls at Pamplona. Tricky, eh?

● SHOCK, horror. More than a third of cars are failing their annual MoT test. The AA warns darkly of “a motoring underclass who are driving cars with crumbling tyres and brakes”. Then again, it might be that recent changes in the rules force garages to fail cars for the stupidest of reasons. Saddest case from a bulging internet

● LORD Mandelson reveals that Tony Blair thought Gordon Brown was “mad, bad, dangerous and beyond hope of redemption.” Can this be the same Peter Mandelson who, only a few short weeks ago, was urging us all to vote for Mr Brown?

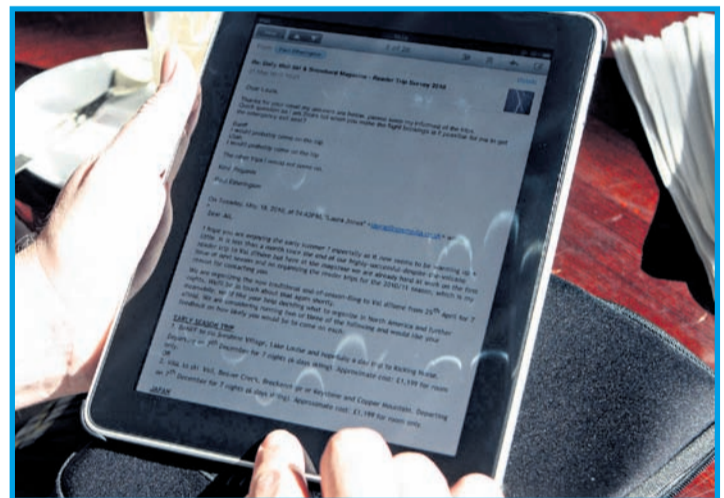
● MAYBE because I'm off to Wales tomorrow, this letter from a reader caught my eye. It concerns two English trippers who were driving through Anglesey and stopped at the celebrated village of Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwyl llantysiliogogoch for lunch. “Before we order,” one of them told the waitress, “I wonder if you could pronounce the name of this place for us, very slowly.” She replied: “Burr-Gurrr-case from a bulging internet



Freelance web designer Kirsty Burgoine, left, Tweets fellow IT ‘geeks’ outside the Admiral Benbow in Shrewsbury



Victoria Cleaton and Angus Black met playing an online game



The Apple iPad is the Holy Grail of geekery

Talk turns to the new iPad, a gadget Victoria bought because she thought it would be easy for her autistic son to use. There are grumbles about running dual apps and some Shropgeeks have found they have to shut down Twitter to open emails.

“As a tester myself, that's a bit silly!” says Victoria.

The group keeps members informed through the very things it talks about — the computer and the internet. Blogs and podcasts are also tools to get information out there, and Twitter is the quickest method of posting information about forthcoming events and meetings.

As part of its expanding membership, Shropgeek will stage its first major public event — tentatively entitled Theory of (R)Evolution as an affectionate doff to the oldest ‘geek’ in town, Charles Darwin — at the Boathouse in Shrewsbury on September 24.

The event is an evening of talks by some of the most innovative people working within the web today and will put Shropshire geekery on the map.

Kirsty adds: “Shropgeek is not set up to network, but if people get talking and something comes of it then great.”

● To find out more visit about the group and the Theory of (R)Evolution visit www.shropgeek-revolution.co.uk