

PETERBOROUGH

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The Scottish summer we lads all went loco

RAILWAYS have been my lifelong fascination, and as soon as I was old enough at 16, I joined the London branch of the best railway club (it must have been the best – it was called a society, not a club). Six years later, in 1963, the ‘Beeching cuts’ to the British Rail network were being felt nationwide. This led to my friend Stan suggesting to me and another friend, Ron, at a club branch meeting that we three should hire a car and spend a week of our annual holidays in Scotland, noting as many of the remaining Scottish steam locos as we could before they met the cutter’s torch. We quickly hatched a plan. In early June we set off and arrived at Carstairs, a key railway junction in South Lanarkshire where the loco shed was easily accessible, as it was next to the station platform. After visiting the shed, as we were walking back onto the platform a very long and full Glasgow-bound express, with 15 coaches, arrived from London. As it stopped, much to our surprise we heard our names being called and saw a



familiar face at a carriage door close by. It was Jazz, another member of the London branch, who had spotted us in the melee. If he had been in another coach or we had been standing a few yards away, our paths would certainly not have crossed. He said he was going to Glasgow to visit the area’s main loco shed, Polmadie. Coincidentally, this was our next destination, so we suggested he travel with us, saving him having to tackle Glasgow’s public transport system on foot – an offer he could not refuse. En route to Polmadie, Jazz related the story of another, younger, London branch member, Des, a diminutive

youngster who had never been to Scotland but decided he had a ‘now or never’ chance to see the remaining Scottish steam locos. To do this, Des had bought himself a second-hand NSU Quickly moped, which was not powerful enough to use on the few motorways that had been built by then. He had also bought a one-man tent and, with a recently acquired provisional driving licence, felt equipped to head north on a journey that would eventually exceed one thousand miles! Deep in the bowels of Polmadie shed a couple of hours later, we were all still chuckling at this story and thinking how saddle-sore Des would be if and when he ever reached Scotland. Then suddenly, out of the gloom, we heard a high-pitched voice – ‘Hello Stanley, hello lads – how are you?’ Standing in front of us was a bizarre sight: the rather rotund, 5ft 6in tall, crash-helmeted and leather-clad Des, with his tent tied in a roll on his back, trying to write down loco numbers in heavy motorcycle gauntlets. Recalling this tale in later years, Stanley always said it was his Dr Livingstone moment in reverse!

Rick Ferrari, Billericay, Essex

LETTERS

Stock clearance

THE lawless state of British retail was brought home to me recently. Hoping to replace a punctured inner tube so my six-year-old son could ride his bicycle, I found every 18-inch tube on the shelf was gone. When I asked why the gap hadn’t been filled, the store manager explained that they were plagued by daily thefts. Private security cannot physically intervene and the police don’t attend. Corporate management has accordingly surrendered and the automated stock system has been rendered farcical by rampant shoplifting. The computer believes an item is on the shelf; the thief who took it is long gone. The manager observed that to expect otherwise was ‘blinkered’, which to me suggests a culture that has not merely accepted defeat but begun to resent those who haven’t. We are seeing the hollowing out of the High Street through a collective decision, made quietly and without democratic consent, that shoplifting is just a cost of doing business. My son didn’t get his bicycle tyre repaired. A small thing. But small things have a way of adding up.

RICHARD ROMM, Horsham, W. Sussex

Le sport

I WAS in France recently and, loving sport, turned on the TV in my hotel room to watch some. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing – they had men’s sports presented by men, with other men summarising and interviewing. How weird is that? It could never happen here.

BOB PHILLIPS, Southampton

Brethren ban

FURTHER to Jane Fryer’s report about the Plymouth Brethren (Daily Mail), I am not Brethren but began working as a supplier to a local Brethren company in 1998. I was soon doing work for eight of them as a graphic designer on brochures, leaflets and, latterly, their websites – at least half my business. Five years ago, I was with them at a marketing meeting. The senior man there asked me to do something, and I explained that it wasn’t a quick fix. ‘It’s not like Harry Potter,’ I said, ‘where you just say “Lumos” and a light goes on. It’s a lot of changes.’

The atmosphere went cold and he said: ‘That’s black magic. You are engaged in black magic.’ The finance director present, a man of at least 55, then stood, turned his back on me, put his hands on his ears and started loudly saying ‘blah blah blah’, while walking back and forth stamping his feet, to drown me out (although I had stopped speaking). I was asked to leave and four days later received an email saying they had found another designer.

Name and address supplied

Doing the splits

YOUR royal editor Rebecca English reported on Prince William discussing scones in a cream tea. As Duke of Cornwall, he should know better. Scones are a Scottish invention. Real Devonian and Cornish cream teas are eaten with splits, never mind in what order you add jam and cream. Scones gradually took over, I’ve been told, because they didn’t go stale so quickly. A few years ago, I went in search of a real Cornish cream tea. Eventually I found a teashop near St Ives that served splits and congratulated the lady in charge. She was Welsh.

EDWARD GRIFFIN, Sway, Hants

Taxed to the max

WES STREETING says a member of his family who is a cleaner pays a higher rate of tax on her salary than her landlord will pay on the eventual capital gain he makes when he sells

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CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF A LOVED ONE

HAVE you lost a relative or friend in recent months whose life you’d like to celebrate? Our column on Friday’s letters page tells the stories of ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives. Email a 450-word tribute and a favourite photo to: lives@dailymail.co.uk or write to: Extraordinary Lives, Daily Mail, 9 Derry Street, London W8 5HY, including your phone number.

the house. This is another example of a senior politician not understanding how a market sector works. A landlord receives a rent and pays income tax on that at the appropriate rate. So a landlord on the 40 per cent rate who sells up pays a combined, inclusive tax rate of 64 per cent. In addition to the tax burden, he is responsible for repairs, maintenance and periodic redecoration.

He is also open to tenants who may go into arrears or vandalise the property. They can take many months to evict, all adding to a landlord’s costs. Small landlords are selling up in droves. Mr Streeting’s proposal to raise capital gains tax will not only drive more landlords out but kill off new entrants. If Mr Streeting despises the private landlord so much, why doesn’t he just advocate abolition of the private rented sector?

LEN NEWBY, Forest Row, E. Sussex

P. SHORTEN, Marlborough, Wilts

was unaware that EU pet passports were no longer valid for non-EU residents. And Eurotunnel, usually a fantastic source of information, had nothing on their website to let people like me know the rules had changed.

MAGGIE NICHOLSON, Royston, S. Yorks

hatreds: older people, the middle class and motorists. If you fall into all three categories, God help you.

ADRIAN BUTTERWORTH, Brockenhurst, Hants

Towel wars
I PITY the partner of Alesia Fiddler (Escape Comment),

being dispatched at some ungodly hour every morning on holiday to nab two sunbeds before Herr Eggert’s compatriots can. If she ever has the misfortune to stay at my hotel, her towels will be sure to receive a morning dunking.

M. HINE, St Dogmaels, Pembro

Terrible trio
I CAN’T believe I’m saying this, but maybe it’s better to keep Never-Here Keir than replace him with No-Principles Andy or Snake-in-the-Grass Wes. What a choice.

CHRIS HULLEY, New Milton, Hants

Letter of the week
WIN our Letter Of The Week Magic Mug, courtesy of Printer Pix. These reveal our Daily Mail Letter Of The Week design when hot. To create personalised photo gifts (see example, right), visit printerpix.co.uk. The Letters Editor will announce the Letter Of The Week each Friday. Write to: Daily Mail, Letters, 9 Derry Street, London W8 5HY or email letters@dailymail.co.uk, including your full postal address and telephone number.

Perfect sunnies
HAVING studied Shane Watson’s fashion advice on sunglasses (Inspire) and realised the eyewear sweet spot is minuscule for us offensive older women, I have a better idea. We should all wear a crash helmet with a tinted visor. Then Shane could treat herself to a couple of weeks off.

KAREN INGRAM, St Leonards-on-Sea, E. Sussex

Throwing stones
IS IT just envy that drives people trying to find fault with future Strictly presenter Emma Willis that they seek to dig into her past? Who among us has reached the age of 50 without acquiring experiences we would rather forget? I suggest Emma’s detractors should heed the words of Jesus when He said: ‘Let he among you who has not sinned cast the first stone’.

None were left then. Would any be left now?

BRUCE BUDD, Pudsey, W. Yorks

Pet passports
IN MID-APRIL, I spotted an article saying that from the following week, UK residents could no longer use an EU pet passport. When I tried to obtain the only accepted alternative, an Animal Health Certificate (AHC), I found only one of the vets at our local practice was issuing them, and then only one a day. They have to be issued within ten days of travel. This week, my vet told me even he

When going to uni makes little sense

MANY will agree that young people would be better off working than going to university (Daily Mail). Whenever the issue is raised, there are calls for more school leavers to consider apprenticeships, but a good placement can be hard to find. I once worked in HR for a major energy provider, dealing with apprentice provision. We invested heavily in training, but outside the big corporates there has long been a shortage of meaningful placements. One reason for this is poor funding for employers, another is interference from successive governments, which piles on the costs and bureaucracy. Some employers are also happy to use young people as low-paid dogsbodies. Schools are blamed for steering pupils towards academia but with such limited apprenticeship options, they see selling the higher-education dream as a surer path.

Master tailor: Jeff Best and fashion graduates at the V&A in London

A SUBJECT called Careers was once on the timetable of every secondary school, with a member of staff responsible for it (I was one of them). All Year 11 pupils were interviewed by a Youth Employment Officer, and most schools worked with employers to provide work experience, but this has all been scrapped. The result? Pupils leave school or choose courses with no idea about the world of work. IAN KERR, *Consett, Co. Durham*

I AGREE with Charlotte Ambrose (Daily Mail) about the disillusionment of attending university. At Essex University, I did South



Master tailor: Jeff Best and fashion graduates at the V&A in London

American Studies from 1968 to 1972, and although you didn’t need a large student loan in those days, my spirits were soon dampened by the Left-wing culture – if you didn’t write an essay or express a view with a Marxist slant, you received mediocre marks. Mrs DEBORAH YOUNG, *Winterbourne Bassett, Wilts*

I AM a bespoke tailor who completed a five-year apprenticeship. I’ve been a pattern-cutter for more than 40 years. Every year, fashion students beg me for help with their final-year collections. I cut the patterns for their designs, which they then take to a dressmaker or tailor to be made up. They present garments and patterns to their tutors and, hey presto, a few weeks later they have their degree. And then what? Most disappear from the industry. Some borrow a few quid to ‘start their own label’ and soon go broke. A small minority are taken on by mainstream companies that use computers to ‘pattern cut’ (no wonder nothing fits any more) or possibly manage to join a retail company’s quality assurance department as a ‘technologist’. One or two go back to college to teach. I am 80 years old and would love to pass on some of my experience before I pack it in, but the major fashion colleges won’t even interview me. Why? Because I don’t have a degree.

JEFF BEST, London N14

Straight to the POINT

EVERYONE in Labour talks about ‘the story’. Please stop and tell us the truth.

M. AYLWARD, Bexhill-on-Sea, E. Sussex

MAYBE Cole Palmer isn’t in the England squad because he has the world’s worst haircut.

TONY COCKRAM, Exeter, Devon

IF HE raised the age of criminal responsibility to 70, Mr Lamy could almost eliminate crime.

IAN HARRINGTON, Axminster, Devon

SO LOOKSMAXXING influencer Oscar Patel remodelled his own face (Daily Mail). I think he should have another go.

STEVE MILTON, Dartford, Kent

NICOLA STURGEON is not the first to say she didn’t know what her husband was up to, and won’t be the last.

ARTHUR YOUNG, Paignton, Devon

THERE are lies, damned lies and ‘I will smash the boat gangs’.

DAVE BRANTHWAITE, North Shields, Tyne and Wear

I UNDERSTAND ITV have offered Trump a considerable sum to host Deal Or No Deal.

ROD GRICE, Stourbridge, W. Mids

IT TOOK 82 years to break the hottest May day record. Global warming?

WARWICK BANKS, Ketton, Rutland

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Sign Language
DITCH ALERT: I spotted this sign in Falkirk and thought the writer might have had a ‘dry’ sense of humour.

Ken Riby, Barnsley, S. Yorks

Out Of The Mouths Of Babes
GEORGE, six, came to visit just after half-term. ‘Are you back at school now?’ said I. ‘No, Grandad. I’m at your house,’ he replied.

Terry Fitzgerald, Cheltenham, Gloucs

Limerick
‘My hand,’ Donald boasted, ‘is great! Two pairs, kings and aces. That’s fate.’ And while he did holler, The sly Ayatollah Said: ‘Too bad, ‘cause I hold a Strait.’

Paul Freeman, Nouakchott, Mauritania

Today’s poem
MAGICAL MAY
The aqua sky, the dazzling sun, The silken waft of morning air, With Nature’s rebirth now begun, We have more time to stand and stare. The dragonflies with jewelled wings That hover over mirrored ponds, The beetles, frogs and sticklebacks That gambol in the lily fronds, The perfumed, secret woodland glades, Where barn owls swoop and badgers play, With each new dawn a brand new sight... This is the magic month of May.

Margaret Pearl, Bolton, Lancs

Joke
MEDICAL specialists have no sense of humour. I can’t be the first person to sleep in for my insomnia appointment.

Geoff O’Keefe, Newcastle upon Tyne

Picture That!

CLUED-UP CHAP: This is Max. He loves doing the Mail crosswords!

Peter Clarke, Wakefield, W. Yorks

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DEBATE Two deeply disturbing sex-crime cases

AS A retired judge, I am outraged by the leniency extended to the 15-year-olds who raped two girls in Fordingbridge, Hampshire. The judge responsible for letting the boys off without custodial sentences failed to consider the victims of their appalling behaviour and the release of online footage of the offences. There is no excuse. The judge should recognise this and resign.

JOHN TWITCHEN, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

I SERVED in the Met for 36 years and cannot recall any proven case where the sentence has been so inappropriate as in the Fordingbridge rapes. This was the offence at its worst and the age of the perpetrators is irrelevant. How can His Honour Judge Nicholas Rowland believe his own explanations for not imposing a custodial sentence?

ROGER TALLENTIRE, Upminster, Essex

FULL marks to Norfolk police for their investigation and arrest of the alleged Afghan grooming gang, but questions remain. Why are the seven men now in custody still seeking asylum when they arrived in the UK between four and six years ago, I wonder? It also baffles me why we assume that men from a country where, under the Taliban, rape is barely treated as a crime and women may be abused or married off at puberty, will abide by our laws, when our young women are at liberty to dress and live lives unknown in their upbringings.

SUSAN ORTON, Halesworth, Suffolk

IF THE seven Afghans are found guilty, they should pray they don’t come up before Judge Nicholas Rowland, as he will punish them with a very severe telling-off.

RAY LLOYD, Crowlas, Cornwall

THE type of crime, the part of the world the accused are from, their immigration status and the victim profiles seem all too familiar now.

G. MATTHEWS, Lancaster