PodClub

Hospital talk, escape from the real world, Remembrance

01.12.2017, Episode 189

Gerry's Diary

Hi, this is Gerry and this is my Diary for Friday 1st December 2017. On today's show there's more about my bird adventure. Also, stories from hospital, from a concert and from our Remembrance [1] Day.

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My pub quiz question last time was a picture question. I posted [2] a photo of a bird and asked you about it. "What kind of bird is this?" I asked. It was a bird to eat. My photo was not so clear, but my PodClub colleagues posted another photo on Instagram and in the end I got the correct answer to my question on the website, on Instagram and on Twitter. The bird has a red beak [3] and red feet. It also has red or pink round the eye. If you like to drink Swiss wine, perhaps you know the pink wine, Oeuil de Perdrix. In English that's the 'eye of the partridge'. And that's my mystery bird. It was a partridge. Thanks to everybody who wrote after the last show.

The story of the birds continues. The next week my fishmonger [4] had some wild duck. "Good!" I thought. I bought two small ducks and that evening, I got ready to 'dress [5]' them. Unfortunately, I was perhaps a little too confident, and I cut my finger and thumb very badly with my very sharp knife. My wife had to take me to the hospital because we couldn't stop the bleeding [6]! It was very stupid of me. But the fingers are OK again now. I've put a photo on the website of my finger and thumb after my visit to the hospital! The moral of this story: 1. Always be careful with sharp knives. 2. Don't think you're an expert if you've done something just once!
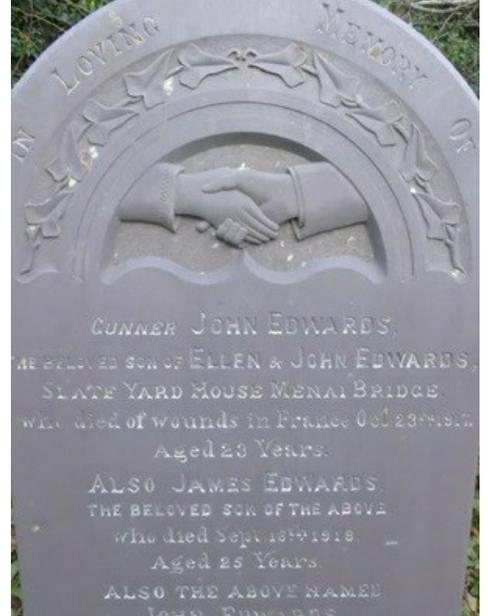

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I was in the hospital again later this month; this time to visit an old lady who fell and broke her leg. One day I was driving to the hospital and listening to the radio. Somebody was talking about old people in hospital. Do nurses and doctors show enough respect for them? This was the question. The woman on the radio said: "I don't like the way that nurses call old people "dear [7]". They say things like: 'Would you like a cup of tea, dear?' I think this is patronising. They treat old people like little children." That's what this woman on the radio said. Was she right, I wondered? How do the nurses in our hospital speak to my old lady? Well, I have to say that they use a lot of words like "dear". My old lady was in a lot of pain and when the nurses had to move her they said things like: "Just try to turn to me, sweetheart [8]." Or "Yes, I know it's hurting, darling. We're nearly finished, 'cariad'." 'Cariad' is the Welsh word for 'darling' or 'sweetheart'. So is it wrong to speak like that? I don't think so. In this part of the world, if you see somebody who is not well or who has pain and you want to show that you care you use words and names like this. More importantly, are the nurses and doctors really talking to the patient? Or is it just routine? I saw a young woman doctor talking to my old lady. The doctor sat down next to the bed so that she could put her face close to the old lady and really talk to her. A hospital can be a cold and frightening place. Good nurses and doctors, like this one, can change that by the way they talk with their patients.

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In September this year I was in the city of Lviv in Ukraine. Do you remember? And when I was there I went to the opera house. I went to see a ballet: Le Corsaire. I'm not a big ballet fan [9], but I enjoyed this show. It's a silly story about pirates and slaves in the Middle East, but the music is nice and the dancing was excellent. It was good entertainment. This wasn't serious art – it didn't make me feel strong emotions, it didn't make me think about the problems of the world. It was a couple of hours of fun [10] – a nice escape [11] from the real world. This month I went to another show about pirates. This time it was an operetta [12] by Gilbert and Sullivan. They wrote operettas at the end of the 19th century, and in Britain they're still quite famous. This time I went to see The Pirates of Penzance.

Penzance is a town in Cornwall, but the story of this operetta is so silly [13] I can't begin to explain it. There are pirates, who are all orphans [14] – those are children with no parents. There's an army general with a whole chorus of daughters. There are local policemen. And so on. The singers were a group of local people here, and they have a Gilbert and Sullivan society [15]. The special thing about this show was that the society invited other singers to come and join in [16]. The music is fun and quite easy to sing. We had one practice in the afternoon, and then the extra singers sat together in the audience, and we joined in with the choruses, so we sang the parts of the pirates, or the policemen, and so on. It was fun [17] and another nice escape from the real world.

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On November 12th this year, it was Remembrance Sunday – the day when we remember all the men and women who died in wars. This started after the First World War, and we have a ceremony for our little town every year at the War Memorial on Church Island. As you know I'm a member of the Friends of Church Island. This year, a local historian [18] wrote about 23 First World War graves [19] on our Church Island. Some of these graves are official war graves with the standard headstone [20] – these are for men who were in the army or navy and who died in Britain and so are buried [21] here. In other cases the men died in France or in the Middle East or at sea. Their bodies are not buried on the island but their names are on their family gravestone [22]. Our local historian gave us information about all these men – where they came from and their families, where they died and how. The youngest was not even 17 years old – he died in an accident while he was training in England. The oldest was over 50. Nearly all of them were from our little town but we also have the graves of an Australian and a New Zealander. On the day before Remembrance Sunday, some of the local scouts [23] came down to the island to help, and we spent a couple of hours finding the 23 graves, clearing and tidying them so people could see them better. We marked each grave with a poppy [24], the symbol of Remembrance, and I photocopied a flier with a little bit of information about each grave. The next day we had our usual ceremony, and then we invited people to go and visit the 23 graves.

And here's my pub quiz question for this show. Why are there so many very old graves in British cemeteries [25]? In this way how are British cemeteries different from Swiss ones?

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Send me your answers and any comments on the show to the website podclub.ch, or you can use Twitter. My Twitter address is @gerrypod. You can also find us on Instagram with the hashtags #gerrysdiary and #podclubgerry. And don't forget the PodClub app, where you can find the vocabulary learning programme. I'll be back with my next Diary podcast on 19th January 2018. This is the last show in 2017, so let me say "Nadolig llawen", Merry Christmas, and "Blwyddyn newydd dda", Happy New Year! Enjoy yourselves and take care!

Glossar: Gerry's Diary

[1] **Remembrance:** an action to show that you remember

[2] **to post:** to upload (onto a website), to send (a message on social media)

[3] **beak:** the hard part of a bird's mouth

[4] **fishmonger:** a person who sells fish

[5] **to dress (a bird):** to get (a bird) ready to cook

[6] **to bleed:** when blood comes out of your body

[7] **(my) dear:** a word for somebody you like or love

[8] **sweetheart:** a stronger word for somebody you like or love, similar to darling

[9] **fan:** somebody who really likes something, such as a football club, and supports it strongly

[10] fun: pleasure

[11] escape: a way to stop you thinking about something unpleasant, such as a problem

[12] operetta: a comic, less serious opera (such as Die Fledermaus)

[13] silly: not serious or reasonable, trivial

[14] orphan: a child who has no parents (because they have died or disappeared)

[15] society: here: club, association

[16] to join in: to take part, to participate

[17] to be fun: to be pleasurable, enjoyable

[18] historian: a person who studies and writes about history

[19] grave: a place where a dead person is buried

[20] headstone: a big stone standing at the end of a grave with the name, etc. of the dead person

[21] to bury: to make a hole in the ground and put something (for example a dead body) in it and then cover it with the earth

[22] gravestone: a big stone (with the name, etc. of the dead person) standing next to or lying on top of a grave

[23] scout: a member of the organisation that encourages young people to learn practical skills and help other people

[24] poppy: a simple red flower

[25] cemetery: a place where dead people are buried (also called a graveyard)