

Mouse eats rabbit, driving at 100, English speakers

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Gerry's Diary

Hi, this is Gerry and this is my Diary for Friday 13th April, 2018. On today's show I'm going to talk about my Easter weekend with my grandchildren. Then there's some news about my mother. And finally there was a listener's question about English speakers.

The headline for my first story today could be: Mouse [1] eats rabbit [2]! I'm recording this show just after Easter, and I hope you all enjoyed the holiday. We had Lulu and PJ here – our grandchildren – and they enjoyed their chocolate eggs and bunnies [3], etc. Usually their parents don't give them much sweet stuff [4] like chocolate, so Easter is a real treat [5]. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't good this Easter. It was cold. There was a lot of snow on the mountains – unusual for April. And we had some rain.

Before Easter Day we put the chocolate eggs and so on in the loft [6] (under the roof) to keep them as a surprise for the children, but then when we went to get them on Easter Saturday we got a surprise – not a good surprise like for the children, but a nasty [7] surprise. We found out that we have mice in the loft. We had one of those chocolate bunnies [8] from the Lindt chocolate company – one of the gold ones with the little bell round the neck. This gold bunny had a hole in its tummy [9] where a little mouse had enjoyed some chocolate. There were some other little holes in our shopping bags, but not too many, and we had plenty of chocolate in the end. Too much probably!



The other thing I did with my granddaughter this Easter was to dye [10] some eggs – in other words, to make them different colours. We used onion skins, red cabbage (to make blue eggs!), beetroot and turmeric powder. There's a photo of our eggs on the website.

We now have about three weeks before the next big party. My mother is nearly 100 years old. She has her very special birthday at the beginning of May, and all the family is coming to celebrate with her. I'll tell you more about her long life in my next Diary, but today let's talk about how she is now. She had a bad fall last November and she was in hospital because she broke her hip [11]. My hospital stories at the end of last year were about visiting her after her operation.

She was at home when she fell, and she was very angry about the accident. "How stupid!" she said. "How could I fall in my own home? But," she said, "it's good that I only broke my left leg, because now I can still drive." She has an automatic car, you see, so she only needs one foot to drive. I heard on the radio last week that there are over 260 drivers in Britain who are older than 100. There was an interview with a lady called Mrs Eileen Ash who is 105 and still drives. "Where do you drive?" the journalist asked. "I go shopping," she said, and she gave a few other examples, but the best was "And I drive to my yoga class." At 105! Fantastic [12]! My mother drove her car on the day that she fell, but she hasn't driven since then.

Every five years after the age of 70, British people have to get a new driving licence [13]. There's no test but you have to say if you're ill or if you think you can't drive. Anyway my mother is waiting for her new licence, but I'm not sure if she really wants to use it. She doesn't feel so confident [14] after her fall. She passed her driving test [15] when she was just 17 years old – that was in 1935!

My pub quiz question last time was this: What's the name of a person who sells fish? Well, a lot of you wrote to give me the answer. It's a fishmonger [16]. "Monger" is a very old word for somebody who sells something. These days we use it for fish, but also for a person who sells hardware. That's an ironmonger [17] – a person who sells things for the house such as tools, nails, saucepans and so on. We have a wonderful ironmonger's shop in our little town: it sells everything. In America they call these shops hardware stores. Unfortunately we don't have a fishmonger in our little town. There's a mobile fish shop – a fishmonger with a van [18] who used to come to our house, but we haven't seen him for a couple of months, so now we have to go to the supermarket to find fish. Anyway congratulations to Ella, Pia, Sister Raphaela and Véronique who gave me the answer via the website and Maya on Twitter. There are a couple of other words with "monger" in them that you might like. A "warmonger" is a leader who seems to want to start wars. Or a "scaremonger" is a person who likes to motivate people through fear. There are quite a lot of those around at the moment.

Before I go, I'd like to try to answer a listener's question. Guy posted this question on the website: How many people in the world speak English? It's a very interesting question and difficult to answer. First, there are English speakers in countries like Britain, America, Australia, Canada and so on. It's our first language and the official language of the country. There are about 350 million of us. Then there are people in countries like India, the Philippines, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and so on where English is an official second language. That's a lot more people. And then there are all of you who are learning English in other countries. All over the world people use English for business, for studying, for travelling, etc. So English is a smaller language than Chinese or Spanish if you only count first language users, but it's the number one global language, with perhaps 1.5 billion speakers in total, but nobody knows for sure.

Just time for my new pub quiz question. How many national and regional languages are there in the EU? How many languages are recognised as national, regional or minority languages in the EU? That's a tricky [19] question. You can send me your ideas 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, with the vocabulary learning programme. I'll be back with my Diary in four weeks on Monday May 14th, after the Ascension Day weekend. Till then, take care!

Glossar: Gerry's Diary

[1] **mouse (plural: mice):** very small animal with a long tail (Walt Disney called his one Mickey.)

[2] **rabbit:** small animal with long ears and a small round tail which lives in holes in the ground

[3] **bunny:** child's word for a rabbit

[4] **stuff:** things

[5] **treat:** a special, very nice thing

[6] **loft:** the room in a house that is just under the roof

[7] **nasty:** unpleasant, bad

[8] **chocolate bunny:** the animal that brings eggs at Easter (NB This animal is really a hare, an animal which lives in open fields. It looks like a rabbit but it is bigger, but most people think it's a rabbit.)

[9] **tummy:** popular name for the stomach

[10] **to dye:** to colour something like cloth by putting it into a special liquid

[11] **hip:** where the leg joins the rest of the body

[12] **fantastic:** here: very good

[13] **driving licence:** a permit to drive a car

[14] **confident:** feeling sure that you can do something, e.g. "I feel ~ that I will win the game."

[15] **to pass a test:** to succeed in an examination (NB A false friend in French!)

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

[17] **ironmonger:** (British English) a person who sells things for the house (and usually also for the garden)

[18] **van:** a small vehicle for carrying things (smaller than a lorry/truck)

[19] **tricky:** difficult