

With my sister on a train, surfing and in a restaurant

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Gerry's Diary

Hi, this is Gerry and this is my Diary for Friday 3rd November 2017. Nice to be talking to you again. On today's show I'm going to tell you about a visit by my sister and her husband and what we did: a train trip, a visit to a surfing centre and a noisy restaurant. But first, there was a question about Prince Charles.

Last time I asked you about Prince Charles. He's just broken a record, and I asked you about it. Thanks to everybody who sent me a message. The answer was that Prince Charles is now the longest serving Prince of Wales in our history. The Prince of Wales is the title of the "heir [1] apparent" of our king or queen: that means the person who should become the next monarch [2]. Prince Charles has now been Prince of Wales for over 59 years. He's actually nearly 69 years old, but his mother didn't make him Prince of Wales until he was ten. In future the title may be given to a girl. Our next monarch will be the oldest child and not just the oldest son. However, Prince Charles has two sons and Prince William has an oldest son, so we're probably not going to have another queen for a long time. The tradition of giving the title of Prince of Wales to the English King's son started in 1284. In that year King Edward I had a baby son. The baby was born in the new castle in Caernarfon in Wales in 1284. Before that Wales had Welsh princes, but Edward I killed the last Welsh Prince of Wales. Now Edward I was King of Wales and England. Welsh people like to tell a story about this. This is their story: The king said to the Welsh people: "I'm going to give you a new Prince of Wales. He was born in Wales, and he doesn't speak English." "A Welshman?" they thought. No, the new king's baby son! The baby, of course, spoke no language at all.

My sister with her French husband came to visit us from America this autumn. My sister likes to go out and visit places and we had some good trips. One day we went for a ride [3] on the Welsh Highland Railway – this is a narrow-gauge steam [4] railway that goes from Caernarfon to Porthmadog through the Welsh mountains. Narrow-gauge [5] means that the gap [6] between the two rails is not as wide as on the usual railways that we have in Europe. The train goes through some beautiful countryside. Most of the little railways in Wales – and there are quite a lot of them – were built to carry slate [7], the hard grey stone that was used to make roofs.



Another day we went to visit Surf Snowdonia – this is a sports centre for wave surfing [8], but not in the sea. This is an artificial [9] lake with a machine that makes big waves. The



lake is in a valley in the mountains and the water is all rainwater that comes down into the valley through a hydro-electric power station. It's possible to surf for 150 metres on the lake if you stay with the wave, and then you can surf back with a new wave from the other end of the lake a couple of minutes later. The waves are two metres high in the middle of the lake – that's for the experts – but they're lower at the edge [10] for beginners. We were there on a grey October afternoon and the lake was quite busy with surfers of different ages. This surfing lake is one of the new tourist attractions in our area that are bringing in visitors from around the world. This centre had 150,000 visitors last year. I was impressed.

Perhaps it's just because I'm getting old, but I find restaurants are often very noisy these days. My French brother-in-law [11], who lives in America, works in a restaurant there, and he says Americans often talk very loudly in restaurants. He says Britain used to be quieter

but these days the British seem to be just as loud as the Americans, he thinks. The worst situation is usually when there's a big group of people eating together – a group of friends or colleagues, or a big family celebration. With my sister and her husband we went out to dinner one evening to a new restaurant in our town. The food was very good, but the restaurant is small and next to us there was a group of twelve women having dinner. And they were loud, I can tell you. And the more wine they drank, the louder they became. I began thinking in the restaurant: is it better to have a group of women or a group of men next to you? Which is louder? And I now have a theory about the difference between a group of women in a restaurant in Britain and a group of men. They can both be very loud, but in my theory they are loud in different ways. For example, with this group of twelve women there were often six loud conversations happening at the same time. In my theory a lot of women like to talk to the person next to them, but then they join in with other people as well. With a group of men, according to my theory, there's often a competition [12]: who can dominate the table? Men often like to tell jokes [13] or to tell stories about themselves. They talk very loudly so that everybody else at the table can hear them, but then somebody else wants to tell a joke or a story so this person has to speak even louder, and so it goes on. Both the women and the men make the same noise perhaps; but often with women you can't really hear what they're talking about; with men you often hear one voice, which is really loud and you have to listen to his story or his joke or whatever – and for me that's even more annoying than the general noise from the group of women. That's my theory anyway. It's not always true, of course, but I wonder if you agree with me. And are restaurants in Switzerland also getting louder?

Finally today, I learnt to do something new this month. Fishmongers [14] in Britain often sell not just fish but also game [15] birds – these are wild birds that have been shot [16]. Our local fishmonger sold me two birds “on the feather [17],” as he said. The birds were intact, in other words. I had to “dress” them, get them ready to cook. First I had to pluck [18] them, that is to say I had to remove the feathers. And then I had to gut [19] them, to empty the insides, etc. The internet shows you how to do these things, of course. I was rather proud of my work when I finished it. I was able to cook the birds and serve them to my wife. They were delicious, she said. There's a photo of the birds on the website and on Twitter. And my pub quiz question this time is about the photo. Can you tell me the name of these birds? What were they?



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 finally, don't forget the PodClub app, where you can find the vocabulary learning programme. I'll be back with my next Diary podcast on 1st December. Till then, thanks for listening, and take care!

Glossar: Gerry's Diary

[1] **heir**: a person who gets something (money, title, etc.) when somebody else dies (NB We don't pronounce the “h” in this word.)

[2] **monarch**: the king or queen who rules a country (NB We pronounce the “ch” in this word like a “k”.)

[3] **ride**: a journey (usually for pleasure or something special) in a vehicle

[4] **steam**: when water boils it becomes this

[5] **narrow-gauge**: an adjective to say that something is not made as wide as usual, such as here that the distance between the two rails of a railway is not as wide as usual (NB We pronounce the second word to rhyme with “age”).

[6] **gap**: distance, space between two things

[7] **slate**: a hard, usually grey stone used to build roofs of houses or, in the old days to make tablets (small boards) for children to learn to write on (with chalk)

[8] **(wave) surfing**: a sport where people ride on a board on top of waves in the sea

[9] **artificial**: made by people not by nature

[10] **edge**: side

[11] **brother-in-law**: the husband of your sister or your wife/husband

[12] **competition:** a sort of game with winners and losers

[13] **joke:** a funny story (to make people laugh)

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

[15] **game:** here: wild animals that we hunt and eat

[16] **to shoot:** here: to kill with a gun

[17] **feather:** one of the things that cover a bird's skin

[18] **to pluck (a bird):** to pull the feathers off a bird

[19] **to gut:** to remove the stomach and internal organs of an animal, fish or bird