

Tales of Château de Melmoth, Lesser Drivelling and other stories by Melmoth

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,096](#).

30 Apr 2012 8:19am

Obligatory crumsword comment;
Tumtitumtitum (tiddly pom).

Far more importantly Walpurgis Night approaches once again and the château is en fête to celebrate Great Uncle Vlad's official birthday. The banqueting hall is blazoned with bletcherous banners, the battlements bedizened in brave, bright bunting and the ballroom bursting with baroque bouquets of blowsy blooms (bleedin' blinky-blimey, ain't alliteration amusing? No? Ah well). In short, we are being as vulgarly ostentatious as possible because it might distract guests from the all pervasive rising damp, treacherous areas of dry rot and alarmingly unstable lumps of plasterwork which make living here such an exciting, if unpredictable, experience.

Over the course of a long and eventful "life" Vlad has accumulated a great many birthdays (or re-birthdays if you insist on being pedantic) and it seemed sensible to roll them all into one big festivity. Having a party for every single one has led to increasingly frequent hangovers which are disrupting our normal excessive drinking habits, also the apothecary has started to grumble about the large outstanding account for Alka-Seltzers and vitamin C tablets. We've spent days getting the place ready; hanging extra cobwebs, making sure all the doors creak properly, detuning the pipe organ and stuff like that. Thankfully the catering has been the proverbial doddle, unsurprisingly there have been no takers for the vegetarian option and little demand for dainty side-dishes or tasty tracklements but we're rather hoping that **BSB** will bake something deliciously toothsome for the occasion (a Carotid Cake maybe?).

Very often these happy events have been the result of over-enthusiastic amateurs wielding the customary hammer and wooden stake with more gusto than knowledge of basic anatomy. After the loss of a substantial number of fine linen shirts Vlad has become something of an expert in techniques of stain removal and invisible mending, it's quite a treat to watch him experimenting with new soap-powders or patiently wielding the tiniest needle and thinnest thread by the light of a dribbly candle. He's thinking about opening a specialist laundry service so if there's anyone (or thing) in the QCC who's had comparable difficulties he'd be delighted to hear from you.

His friends and relatives have flown in (or materialised) from far and wide and look ever so elegant in their immaculate (if slightly antiquated) evening dress or traditional Carpathian costumes. There'll be dancing and games (musical coffins, hunt the Van Helsing, etc.), The Lesser Drivelling Operatic Society are going to perform a selection from Ruddigore and at midnight Vlad will treat us to his unique rendition of "Fangs For The Memory" and other songs in a similar vein (with atmospheric sound effects and howling from his backing group; The Jugulaires).

Needless to say you're all invited. Come round for a bite, it'll be dead good (don't be late).

For those of you who don't already know how to get here just take the local train from Yatter or Drool to Splotherington Parva and Brettingham Scurl's taxi service will bring you to the château (this time he's solemnly promised to remove the Gloucester Old Spots from the carriage and clean it up a bit so it shouldn't be too whiffy). It's not a fancy dress party so no silly outfits please, just the standard fish and soup with red silk-lined black cloak or faded, stained ballgown and do remember that jokes or bad puns of a "vampiristic" nature are not appreciated.
"Bloody bad taste" as Uncle Vlad would say.

Look forward to seeing you all.

Pip, pip and toodles.

PS.

Any helpful suggestions for edibles or party games would be most welcome.

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,151](#).

03 Jul 2012 9:05am

*A country road. A tree. A wobbly signpost to Lesser Drivelling.
Evening.*

*Seagoon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to solve a particularly difficult anagram.
He scratches his head with both hands and looks increasingly puzzled.
He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.
As before.*

Enter Great Uncle Vlad.

SEAGOON: (*giving up again*). Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR: (*advancing with short, stiff strides, teeth sharply glinting*). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to do The Rev's crossers, saying Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried an Enigmatist. And I resumed the struggle. (*He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Seagoon.*) So there you are again.

SEAGOON: Am I?

VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you'd gone off to be an illiterate goatherd on Tierra del Fuego.

SEAGOON: Me too.

VLADIMIR: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? (*He reflects.*) Get up and I'll give you a cyber hug and an IOU for that fiver I borrowed last week.

SEAGOON: (*irritably*). Not now, not now.

VLADIMIR: (*hurt, coldly*). May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?

SEAGOON: With the Sisters of Little Mercy.

VLADIMIR: (*admiringly*). The Sisters of Little Mercy! Where?

SEAGOON: (*without gesture*). Over there.

VLADIMIR: And they didn't beat you?

SEAGOON: Beat me? Certainly they beat me. They're a teaching order, it's what they do.

VLADIMIR: The same lot as usual?

SEAGOON: The same? I don't know. Had me eyes shut 'cos I was enjoying meself so much.

VLADIMIR: (*sotto voce*). Weirdo.

Enter Huge Evensong, the crossword Godot, dressed in a 1950s police uniform.

HUGE: (*thumbs behind lapels, slight knees bend*) Evenin' all.

VLADIMIR: Blimey, you're a bit early. Thought you weren't supposed to arrive 'til much later.

SEAGOON: If at all

HUGE: (*trying to look stern and editorial*) 'Ullo, 'ullo, 'ullo. Wot's all this then? Blethering on for ages and not one mention of how easy peasy lemon squeezy the crumsword was (contravening the QCC statutes and ordinances, paragraph 2815/884 subsection 603). Alright chummies, you're nicked.

SEAGOON: It's a fair cop GUV, he's got us bang to rights.

VLADIMIR: You have caught us sir like Treens in a disabled spaceship, or "Mushy peas and chips cooked in exotic vessel (9)".

They all shamle off with Huge whistling "Maybe It's Because I'm a Londoner".

The audience gazes at the empty stage for a few minutes with a kind of glum hope that something remotely interesting might happen, then demand their money back.

The author wonders if shelf-stacking in Tesco's might be a positive career move.

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,152](#).

04 Jul 2012 2:39pm

With the advent of summer there's always the prospect of long hot days (corblimeh, there's a larff) and extended trips on the bicycle, yet lovely as it is tootling along country roads in the pouring rain there's inevitably the problem of how to transport enough booze. Short winter rides are easier, a handlebar bag will comfortably hold two or three bottles of something drinkable which doesn't object to a bit of

shoogling (a youngish Fleurie or a Beaujolais for example) but longer outings demand a great deal more. From experiment and experience the absolute minimum is:

At least one mixed case, with ice to chill the whites and an assortment of suitable glasses.

The picnic hamper and selection of tracklements, along with plates, silverware, napery etc.

Several changes of clothing (for the inevitable tumbles into soggy ditches, streams, duck-ponds and other watery hazards).

All the other essential accoutrements of serious cycling such as spare tyres, inner-tubes, chains, cranks, cables and so on with a comprehensive toolkit and necessary bits and bobs, plus a miscellany of gadgets bought from the cycle shop in moments of weakness because they "might come in handy sometime".

Obviously this little lot won't fit into a couple of panniers so much head scratching until a marra suggested one of those dinky-doo bicycle trailers; it was duly ordered and arrived this morning. The New Bike was not impressed:

New Bike: Wot the flamin' 'eck is that?

Myself: (Proudly) It's a jolly little trailer for carrying stuff.

New Bike: I hope you're not expecting me to pull that contraption along?

Myself: Why not? It's rather splendid and matches your paintwork beautifully.

New Bike: Have you gone totally larks? I'm a road bike not a removals lorry, I'm supposed to whizz up and down hills very fast, wheeeeeeeeeee! not trundle along dragging half a ton of your junk.

Myself: Please, please, pretty please, with sprinkles on.

New Bike: Nopes.

Myself: You can have double rations of 3-in-One.

New Bike: Huh. I've heard that one before.

Myself: I'll save up all my pocket money and get a new groupset for you.

New Bike: (Hesitating slightly) Shimano Dura Ace 7900?

Myself: Blimey, you don't want much do you?

New Bike: (Haughtily) It's my best offer, take it or leave it.

The negotiations continued for a short while (with the Nincompoop sniggering in the background; it thoroughly enjoys these confrontations) but the New Bike got its own way in the end, as it usually does.

Anybody want a bicycle trailer in mint condition?
(All reasonable offers considered.)

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,153](#).

05 Jul 2012 1:25pm

In the church of St. Ermintrude the Misodockleidist the Reverend Horatio Babblesworth is preaching one of his incomprehensible sermons; some obscure theological point based on a complete misunderstanding of the Albigenian heresy.

A trio of elderly ladies are seated in a rear pew happily nattering amongst themselves:

"When shall we three meet again?"

"Dunno. What day is it today?"

"Er...Thursday?"

"Anyone got a diary?"

"Hang on a mo."

One of them rootles in the pocket of her grubby raincoat and produces a sticky and battered "i-pad", which has a distinct aroma of pickled herring about it. She prods vaguely at the screen muttering darkly about "modren rubbidge". The others are mightily impressed.

"Ooh, wassat then?"

"It's a thingy wot organises pitchers an' music an' my busy shedyule an' stuff."

"Can you see the inter-tube on it?"

"Is it worked by pixies?"

"Where d'you get it from?"

"Honest 'enry's, dead cheap, fell off the back of a lorry or summat."

"Ain't apple spelled with two Ps.?"

"Can we do the crossword on it?"

They fumblingly navigate through the Guardian website, getting momentarily distracted by Wednesday's fashion gallery,

"Cor! Look at them little hairy legs."

before finally arriving at the Quickie.

Predictably 7a gets their immediate attention and they cackle and snigger over possible answers before finally bunging "diamond" in.

One of these days they'll discover the QCC, then we'll really understand being "off-topic" and the true meaning of "puerile humour".

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Speedy crossword No 876](#).

08 Jul 2012 11:21am

It's Sunday and in St. Ermintrude the Misodotakleidist's three elderly ladies are bickering in a rear pew.

"When shall we three meet again?"

"In thunder, lightning...."

"Blimey, not that one again."

"Eh?"

"You say it every time"

"We meet most days, there's no need to go through all that rigmarole."

"And why've you dressed up like that? It ain't Halloween yet."

The youngest of the trio looks slightly abashed, removes her black pointed hat (an obviously home-made effort) and tries to shuffle a small besom out of sight under a moth-eaten hassock.

"Just trying to get into the spirit of the thing."

"Daft I calls it."

"Sorree."

In his wobbly pulpit the Reverend Horatio Babbleworth drones cheerfully on. He has got hopelessly lost among the Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites but is gradually building momentum for a resounding denunciation of lady cyclists and their tight lycra shorts (his usual peroration which always makes him twitch slightly and causes his spectacles to steam up).

"What's that plumber's van doin' round at your 'ouse?"

"I'm havin' a jacuzzi fitted"

"Ooh, ain't you posh?"

"Don't the bubbles get up your..."

"Not if yer keeps yer legs together"

"That'd be a first."

They giggle naughtily, nudge each other and wink obscenely.

"What colour's it goin' to be?"

"I wasn't sure whether to go for Champagne or Avocado but in the end I settled for Girlie Pink With Glittery Bits."

"Um...er...very nice"

"Tasteful"

"Yeah, that'd be the word."

One of them starts quietly humming West Ham's anthem and another mutters:

"Double, double, toilet trouble. Fire burn, jacuzzi..."

"Don't you start."

"Eh?"

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,161](#).

14 Jul 2012 5:28pm

From the Splotherington Courier and Pig Breeder's Gazette:

Crisis in Lesser Drivelling.

By Brettingham Scurl (Social, Business and Animal Husbandry correspondent).

Preparations for The Lesser Drivelling Tiddlywinks Championship have been thrown into disarray by the shock revelation that fewer bouncers (entrance security operatives) will be on duty than expected, leading to increased fears that there may be a repetition of last year's deplorable rumpus. The boss of Strabismus Security (Mr. "Buck" Nickels) denied any responsibility for the crisis saying:

"It's an ongoing personnel shortfall situation which isn't mission critical and is being addressed proactively in client focussed terms, our core competencies are incentivised to think about moving the sky-blue goalposts out of the box, through

the glass ceiling, to be win-win deliverables and it ain't my fault 'cos there's no "I" in team."

When asked if that meant he would be repaying any of the hundred quid for the contract (or anything at all) he replied that:

"The team (spelled without an "I") are pushing the envelope and considering taking it to the next level."

Strabismus Security are now advertising for any local reprobates (without a recent criminal record) to help out and earn a few free pints; the ability to speak English (or any other language) isn't necessary, inarticulate grunts will do nicely.

In a further development Mr Edwin Fattlespode, the event's major sponsor and owner of "Fast Eddie's Greasy Burger Van" has employed Mr 'Arry "Knuckles" Thugge to protect his investment.

He told this newspaper:

"I ain't 'avin' no other bugger floggin' their chips near The Mangle an' Ferret while that there tourneyment's on, paid good money for this pitch an' it's mine see? 'Arry, just step over 'ere an' sort this bloke out will yer? "

The authorities (PC Scrunchion and The Rev. Horatio Babbleworth) are monitoring the situation closely and are fully prepared to step in and do as little as possible should the need arise.

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,170](#).

25 Jul 2012 8:45am

The New Bike and The Nincompoop have formed an unholy alliance, a conspiracy, they are (to put it bluntly) in cahoots.

There have been furtive whisperings emanating from the shed for a while, interspersed with sniggers and cackles of a distinctly ominous character. The sat nav has been fiddled with and the other day a contour map of the locality had been hastily shoved behind some old potato sacks in an attempt to hide it; hilliest areas seemed to have been the main focus of attention and were heavily marked with narrow tyre tracks and oil stains, as were bits of bogland and some rivers. Being somewhat (ahem) slow on the uptake the significance of this didn't sink in until yesterday when we had to go out and do some stuff (get the chainsaw repaired, replenish the dwindling booze stocks, buy jelly babies for the Heffalump traps and other essentials).

"Is it ok if we go into town?" I asked politely (The Nincompoop much prefers bombing round the country lanes).

"Oh goody" it said with suspicious enthusiasm and notched up a few more revs "brrrruumm."

We tootled happily along the main road then suddenly it veered off down a rutted and potholed lane.

"Where are we going?" I squeaked nervously.

"Short cut." it replied (shortly).

When The Nincompoop is in this sort of mood there's no point in arguing, the only thing to do is hold on tight and hope that nothing's coming the other way.

"Poop, poop" it sang as we belted round a blind corner on two wheels, narrowly

missing a tractor (giving it a copy of "The Wind in The Willows" for Christmas was definitely a mistake).

"Vrrrooom" it joyfully yelled as we bounced, temporarily airborne, over a hump-backed bridge (letting it watch "The Italian Job" was absolute madness) and on we went.

The "short cut" lasted several hours and umpteen miles. It must have included every precipitous climb in the region (some of them more like cliffs with a thin coating of tarmac than what would normally be called "roads") and near vertical descents made even more scary by chicane bends and wandering sheep. We detoured past the muddiest ponds, widest ditches and thorniest hedges then spent a long time exploring a wobbly track which ran perilously close to a deep, fast flowing and horribly cold looking stream.

Eventually the pair of us returned home with myself a nervous wreck and The Nincompoop purring contentedly.

"Brrumm." it murmured with the quiet satisfaction of someone who's done a good job, then winked at The New Bike.

The penny only finally dropped when the bike said with malicious glee:

"Just you wait."

It might be a good idea to stay indoors for a while and concentrate on sedentary pursuits like crosswords and jigsaw puzzles.

Oops, nearly forgot to mention it (bad, bad, bad). Today's was:

Dead old? Maybe a little simple. (1,6)

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,172](#).

27 Jul 2012 12:58pm

There is tremendous excitement in Lesser Drivelling today; the Tiddlywinks Championship starts tonight at The Mangle and Ferret. The organisers have spent several hours drinking pints of Peculiar Old Bishop's Thingummy and arguing loudly about the petty cash so it ought to go well, although the torch relay had to be abandoned when the batteries went flat. There's much titillating gossip about the opening ceremony when the Official Tiddlywinks Flame (barbeque) will be lit; Petunia Fantod (the director) has refused to say anything about it although van loads of pink welly boots and buckets of cold custard have been seen arriving at the pub and all participants must bring crocodile clips or they won't be let in, so speculation is (as they say) rife.

Many of us still remember her production of "Aladdin and The Beanstalk (in Boots)" by the Splotherington Parva Panto Society, a truly remarkable event at the cutting hedge of contemporary theatre (the grumbles who complained about the nude scenes and gratuitous violence clearly missing the acute political satire and psycho-sexual symbolism of it). She has promised a "mystery celebrity guest" and there are (unconfirmed) rumours that the Dagenham Girls Pipe Band might make an appearance.

It's all just too, too thrilling and...

Oh dear, excuse me, I appear to have wet myself...

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,211](#).

11 Sep 2012 10:43am

Sir Jasper McAbre has been staying with us here at the château, although on second thoughts "overstaying" may be more the mot juste. Using the pretext of distant kinship (some tenuous claim to being a several times removed matrilineal cousin through the O'Bliviuns of Bally Knickyknocky) he availed himself of family connections to impose quite shockingly on our hospitality.

But to begin (appropriately) at the beginning.

When he first arrived we were duly impressed with his suave manner, natty tailoring and pencil-thin moustache, Great Uncle Vlad spent many happy hours with him engaged in long discussions about gentleman's sartorial elegance and we thoroughly admired his debonair attitude to overdue tradesmen's accounts:

"Damned impertinence" he'd exclaim as yet another red-printed bill was thrown on the fire. The large, expensive motor car (poop, poop) he had for sale seemed like an unmissable bargain ("a special discounted price for relatives, gets me out of a spot of bother don'tcherknow") and we cheerfully stretched the overdraft beyond its already strained limits to acquire it. Defrauding his young nephews out of their rightful inheritance was regarded as merely upholding a fine (dis) honourable family tradition and imprisoning his elderly mother in the attics of McAbre Towers (to go progressively insane in white linen) was a perfectly acceptable expression of filial devotion. We didn't object to his cheating at cards (the Dowager Duchess does it all the time), the attempts at naughty corruption of the village maidens or his raiding the wine-cellars for debauched parties with fellow "gentlemen of the turf"; such frolics are just everyday events in the rich tapestry that is château life. However, Lady Hermione was a little upset at being tied to the railway tracks as part of a convoluted and nefarious blackmail scheme, mainly because the Melmothe Steam Locomotive Company went bankrupt years ago and no trains run anymore (she was trapped for most of the afternoon so missed her illicit rendezvous with a hunky stable-boy) and we were somewhat disappointed to discover that he was trying to sell the stately pile on eBay without telling us (at a ridiculously low valuation which added insult to injury). Such minor indiscretions might have been forgivable (as was pinching the silverware to pay off gambling debts) but what really blotted his copy-book was his habit of grabbing the daily newspapers as soon as they arrived and doing all the crosswords at lightning speed (in ink) then smugly pronouncing them to be easy-peasy lemon-squeezy. This was a barbarism of the most heinous variety which revealed him to be an utter cad, total bounder and absolute rotter of the worst stripe. He has now been shown the door (and how to use it) and told never to darken our towels again. Quite Contumacious Caddery indeed.

Some people are simply unfit for perlite serciety.

PS. The large, expensive motor car (poop, poop no longer) burst into flames on its second outing and has been sold for scrap. Bah!

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,212](#).

12 Sep 2012 8:23am

Despite recently leaving under something of a cloud the memory of Sir Jasper McAbre's visit still lingers at the château, like the smell of yesterday's kippers or Banquo's ghost being a nuisance at the feast. Little things keep reminding us of his erstwhile presence; a portrait of Balthazar "The Scoundrel" Melmothe (reputedly by Hyacinthe Rigaud) missing from the long gallery, several items of jewellery which looked vaguely familiar appearing in the local pawn-broker's window, a succession of horsey individuals in emphatically checked suits calling at odd hours and demanding immediate settlement ("yer don't want any trouble now, do yer squire?") and so on. More bothersome was a respectfully worded but very firm letter which arrived from some legal bods insisting on either the return of their client's money or the title deeds to a Phlogiston mine in Tierra del Fuego and we were (to put it crudely) "grilled" by a detective from the fraud squad who seemed to be most interested in Sir Jasper's activities and whereabouts.

It's all been rather disconcerting, although fiddling the crossword answers is serpently caddish and ungentlemanly an occasional bout of kleptomania can occur in the very best families (forgetting to pay one's bookie is almost de rigueur) but having a relative, however distant, being suspected of involvement in illegal jiggery-pokery is an entirely different fettle of kish. Of course we assume it's just a simple case of mistaken identity, after all, Sir Jasper went to a very good public school, was a member of The Bullingdon Club and regularly donates wads of cash to the right political party so it's quite inconceivable that he could be any sort of crook. We're fully confident that the whole muddle will be cleared up in jig time so there'll be no need for social embarrassment or distressing explanations (some of the county set can be a teensy bit old-fashioned about this kind of stuff).

Meanwhile Lady Hermione has discovered how to wangle Jasper's crossword caper. She stayed up until just after midnight, downloaded it, pressed the solution button and printed the thing out on a very small piece of paper. We caught her sneakily copying from her crib-sheet and when she pranced about singing "easy-peasy" we yelled abuse and pelted her with stale bread-buns. Eventually she got the message, threw a hissy fit and stomped off in an almighty huff to shoot rats in the cellar. The rest of the morning has been fairly peaceful, apart from sporadic bursts of gunfire from her Heckler & Koch MP5 and girlish cries of "gotcha, yer little bugger" which have periodically drifted up through the floorboards.

PS. The weather is somewhat inclement for the time of year so the pink irrelephant hunt has been postponed (yet again). Harrumph.

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,214](#).

14 Sep 2012 7:58am

Yesterday evening **tjeannie18** said of the QCC:

"Can we keep it punchy and real?"

So here's a little bit of "reality" (not sure if it's punchy though, perhaps that's too much to ask at this hour of the morning).

Autumn approaches and if things go according to the usual timetable Winter will soon be plodging and dripping in its wake. It won't be long before the lanes are coated with slippery, treacherous wet leaves and cycling becomes an exercise akin to roller-skating on ice; time to change the tyres on the New Bike for something a tad more grippy. A quick trawl in the intertube for bikey-thingy suppliers and a spiffy new set purchased by ratcheting up the credit card to a level it was never intended to achieve. They arrived this morning and predictably enough the New Bike didn't approve.

New Bike: What on earth are those?

Myself: Winter tyres...er, for cycling in Winter.

NB: You don't say?

M: And the Autumn as well, when it's a bit skiddy and stuff.

NB: They're horrible.

M: I chose them specially to go with the colour of your frame.

NB: Exactly. It's like wearing a matching handkerchief and socks. I'll look common as muck.

M: Aren't you?

NB: Well...yes...sort of, but we don't have to tell everyone. I do have some pride y'know?

M: (*coaxingly*) Look, they've got lovely treads and little knobbly bits.

NB: Ha! You only want to use 'em so you don't fall off as easily.

M: (*trying to sound innocently surprised*) Gosh, I'd never thought of that.

NB: You don't fool me; trying to spoil my fun, making me go slower, turning me into a softie's bike. It'll be a basket on the handlebars next, an' mudguards, an' panniers, an' a comfy saddle. Well I ain't wearing 'em, so there.

M: But...

NB: Nopes.

M: Please?

NB: Uh-huh.

M: Please, please, pretty please with sprinkles?

NB: Double, triple nopes with brass knobs on.

M: (*attempting to be assertive*) Right, that's it. I'll show you who's boss...

Several exasperating hours later, various fingers amateurishly bandaged, the shed floor is littered with broken tyre-levers, ruined inner-tubes and bent spanners:

M: You infernal ghastly machine.

NB: Tralala.

M: I'll trade you in for a bloody tricycle, see if I don't.

NB: Tumtitumtitum.

M: (*sits dejectedly in a puddle of oil and bursts into tears*) It's not fair.

Nincompoop: Now look what you've done Bikes.

NB: Blimey, he makes such a fuss sometimes. Oh go on, fit your stupid tyres and stop

blubbing.

M: (*brightening up*) Can I really? I've got a super-swanky new bell for you an' all. Listen.

Swanky New Bell: Tinkly-tinkle...ting.

NB: (*horrified*) In your dreams matey.

M: Please.

NB: Nopes

M: Please, please pretty please....

Etc.

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Speedy crossword No 886](#).

16 Sep 2012 2:35pm

There was considerable brouhaha in the chateau this morning when this week's edition of the Splotherington Parva Courier and Pig Breeder's Gazette dropped through the letterbox. Against all standards of decency and decorum they have published some grainy black and white photographs of (what they claim to be) the Dowager Duchess sunbathing on the croquet lawn without her vest on. Their justification for this outrageous intrusion on a lady's privacy is that it's "in the pubic interest" (which is presumably one of the Gazette's not infrequent typos) and that as a local "celebrity" she has to expect this sort of thing.

Imagine the relief when downing a medicinal pint (or twelve) in The Mangle and Ferret (to calm the shattered nerves) I encountered Brettingham Scurl. It turns out that the photographs were of Bessy (his prize-winning Gloucester Old Spot) which he'd submitted for the regular page 3 feature "Pig of the Week" and somehow his wobbly and incompetent pictures had been "mistakenly" wrongly captioned. One suspects this was all just a deliberate ploy to boost the flagging circulation of the deplorable rag. A stiffly stiff letter of the stiffest variety will be sent to the editor without delay, forthwith and post haste (as soon as these next couple of pints have gone down the hatch).

PS. If you want to see some proper naughty piccies of the DD go to

<http://www.chateaudemelmothe.com>

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,216](#).

17 Sep 2012 9:01am

We were struggling with the crossword this morning (a polite way of saying that the entire family were involved in a furious argument over the correct spelling of 20a) when the post arrived. Amongst the usual collection of final demands and threats of legal action was a strangely crude envelope, slightly singed in one corner and with dainty hoof prints across it. The almost illegible postmark appeared to be "Ushuaia".

Inside was a letter from Sir Jasper McAbre and a company prospectus (which looked terrifically grand, all covered with curlicues, arabesques and twiddly bits with loads of embossed stamps and wax seals dangling on ribbons). He apologised profusely for finagling the crosswords when he stayed with us:

"A moment of madness, an aberration for which I'm heartily ashamed etc."

and has been attending meetings of Cruciverbalist's Anonymous to cure himself of the problem (which just goes to show that he's a jolly decent chap really). He also explained that there was nothing suspicious about his sudden disappearance; it was simply the result of an irresistible desire to go and live in Tierra del Fuego and breed racing goats (he's already been elected Life President of the Illiterate Goatherds Association) but asks that we say nothing to the authorities because of being;

"...in a bit of a mess with those blighters from the income tax..."

(a situation with which we're all too familiar, so mum's the word).

More excitingly he has discovered a vast natural deposit of Phlogiston and has started a mining company to extract it. None of us know anything about mineralogy or chemistry so we haven't the foggiest idea what Phlogiston is, but it sounds ever so important and valuable which makes it all the more tempting to invest in the initial share issue (or "take the plunge" as we believe the financier's jargon has it). Sir Jasper is most kind to offer the opportunity of getting;

"...in on the ground floor, it's going to be a licence to print money..."

and the prospectus is very imposing, all complicated official phraseology (which we don't understand) with lots of unreadable signatures (local dignitaries we assume) and quite astonishing profit forecasts.

The difficulty is going to be raising the necessary ackers to take advantage of this golden opportunity as the chateau coffers are even more than usually empty. We did have high hopes of the Nigerian Prince who sent an e-mail offering a substantial share of his lost inheritance if we helped him regain it (which has cost us a few bob). A third of King Solomon's Mines would have solved all our problems for years to come but there seems to have been some delay and we haven't heard from him for a while (such a sad story of his being the victim of a naughty relative's fraudulent machinations, quite appalling to think that any member of one's own family could be so mendacious). As things stand we need to raise oodles of boodle at short notice so we're thinking about starting a new crackpot religion or inventing an absurd alternative therapy (based on some fictitious "ancient wisdom") but if anyone in the QCC has any better ideas or knows any wizard wheezes we'd be delighted to hear from you (discretion assured).

PS. Does anyone know how to spell 20a?

Melmoth1816 [commented](#) on [Quick crossword No 13,326](#).

24 Jan 2013 9:02am

Winter has struck Lesser Drivelling with more than its usual ferocity, the season's inevitable gales have rollicked boisterously across the saltmarsh bringing with them horizontally driven sleet, a dense blanket of snow and (against all probability) a shower of ice-cubes shaped like little hearts. Most of the village's inhabitants are

huddled indoors. Wrapped in multiple layers of wooly jumpers and overcoats they steam gently beside meagre fires drinking toddies or warm shrub and are descending merrily into an alcoholic hibernation. It's all thoroughly Dickensian and only needs a tragic heroine dying of acute melodrama with a mob of unpleasant relatives lurking in the background to complete the scene.

A few hardy souls, braving the hostile elements (the hostile elephants migrate south for the duration) have made their way to the church of St. Ermintrude the Misodockleidist where the Reverend Horatio Babbleworth is muttering and mumbling his way through an opaque, impenetrable peroration. For some reason, known only to himself, he has decided that Wilgefortis ought to be the patron saint of cruciverbalists and is attempting to justify the bizarre notion with tortuous "logic" (using the term in its vaguest possible sense) and misquotations from the apocrypha. His tiny congregation gave up listening several hours ago and the obviously inebriated gent wearing gaudy lycra, bicycle clips and tatty tweeds is now snoring gently while the trio of elderly ladies in a rear pew are bickering quietly amongst themselves.

When shall we three...
Flippin' 'eck, not again.
Wossamatter?
You an' that daft incantation.
It's traditional innit?
Yeah right, bleedin' irritatin' an' all.
An' why's you wearin' a false beard anyway?
'Cos I dun't want ter get married again.
Fat chance o' that.
Thought yer liked a bit of...
Yer dun't need a wedding for that.

They nudge each other and giggle naughtily.

Wot about the crossword then?
Do we 'ave to?
Yup, got to do the crossword an' then say summink intelligent and erudite about it afterwards.
We're not allowed in otherwise.
Like wot?
Oh I dunno, "dunnit" or "easy peasy" or suchlike.
Or some of the answers is dead wrong or furrin.
Rules is rules y'know.
Blimey.

A crumpled, greasy newspaper is produced (which exudes a powerful aroma of stale fish), they peer at it uncertainly through two pairs of smeared and wobbly spectacles and an ancient lorgnette. The eldest clutches a chewed stub of pencil and holds it waveringly over the puzzle.

Right, ten down...