

CHAS'S

ROCK'N' ROLL

ALLOTMENT

DYING' to have a really good bonfire now round the allotment but everything is still pretty wet. Decided that on my half plot (I've got a plot and a half), I am going to have a right ol' burn up when it dries out a bit and start a new compost heap. We had a communal one last year but that has been broken down and disbanded so I will have to sacrifice part of my half plot. That's OK though. Might take a year to rot down but it can all be dug back in. In fact I will start two, leaving the first one to rot down as I begin the second one and so on.

The grass is slowing down. A sure sign that the soil is beginning to cool. Grass is always a good indication as to the soil temperature so keep your eye on it. Sow your seeds when it is too cold and they can damp off and rot away but, as the new

‘Grass is a good indication of soil temperature’

season progresses and you see that grass start to romp away, then you know the soil is warming up and it's time to hurry up and get cracking with the seed sowing.

I believe you are born with certain genes which reveal themselves as particular interests as you grow. I also think that in a lot of cases you can trace through your predecessors where these genes come from.

I believe my love of gardening comes from the Tylers, which was my mum's maiden name. Her dad was a good gardener and I've just found out through a great cousin that Grandad's brother, my great uncle Jack Tyler, had the soil in his blood. My great cousin gave me a photocopy of his wedding day in 1948. All my family were there as well as all his. Except his grandad Jack. Jack's excuse was that he had work to do in the greenhouse.

My music comes from my



Picture: LUKE SANTILLI

piano-playing mum who was a Tyler but she got her music from her mum who was a Shaw whose father was William Shaw, my great-grandfather, who I knew very well as we all lived together in a small terraced house in north London.

He was music through and through and played clarinet in his younger days but I knew him only as an exponent of the penny whistle. Probably sold his clarinet. He was born in 1860 and died in 1956 when I was 13. Right up until I became a teenager, he would relate to me many music stories.

The Sousaphone for instance which was invented in the 1890s when he was a young man, he was enthralled with. It played lovely bass notes and was made for a marching band. "It went right round your head and rested on your shoulders," he said and

would demonstrate how you would "put it on" and how you would be able to comfortably march for miles and play for ever. He lost his young brother Chris in the First World War.

My favourite 78 record I dug out from the family collection when I was a kid and constantly played it on the old wind up gramophone; it was Chris's favourite, said my nan, The Sailor's Hornpipe.

Christopher John Shaw's bronze "death penny" hangs over my fireplace now. All the soldiers that died in the Great War received one of these with a letter from the King. My great-great Uncle Chris's body was never identified so he could be the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey.

Great Grandfather would demonstrate to me on his penny whistle how important it was to

blow each note perfectly before you attempted a tune. His words always come back to me when I am playing piano or guitar or whatever instrument. Play each note perfectly.

I feel so privileged to be able to say today that I have received valuable musical knowledge from somebody I knew and was related to and marvel at the fact that he was born 154 years ago.

● *New Christmas songs by Chas now available: The Magic of Christmas and Boogie Woogie Christmas. Available on iTunes and Amazon. All profits to Water Aid. An Audience with Chas Hodges DVD available at chashodges.co.uk. Chas & Dave: All about Us autobiography written by Chas Hodges is now available. John Blake Publishing Ltd. For full list of tour dates visit chasndave.net*

Did you know?

by Mitchell Symons

HUMORIST JAMES THURBER WAS BORN 120 YEARS AGO TOMORROW. HERE ARE SOME OF HIS WONDERFUL SAYINGS...
One (martini) is all right, two is too many, three is not enough.
It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers.
You can fool too many of the people too much of the time.
Early to rise and early to bed makes a male healthy and wealthy and dead.
Humour is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility.
The dog has got more fun out of Man than Man has got out of the dog, for the clearly demonstrable reason that Man is the more laughable of the two animals.

THIS WEEK'S PONDERABLES...
● A third of potential housebuyers would pull out of a contract to buy a house if it was said to be haunted and some two-fifths would not go ahead if the property had been the scene of a murder.
● **The adult human mouth produces more than a litre of saliva a day.**
● A 6th-century Chinese emperor got around his Buddhist principles not to harm any living creature in a cunning way. If he had to kill someone, he fitted them with bamboo wings and made them try to fly. Obviously they could not and died.
● **Women who fear being forced to marry abroad are advised to hide a spoon in their underwear.**
● 10,000 horses were killed at the Battle of Waterloo.
● **One hundred cups of coffee over a period of four hours would kill the average person.**
● Labour MP Chuka Umunna (right) was part of the choir that sang the theme tune to Mr Bean.

THIS WEEK'S IMPONDERABLE...
Are oxygen masks that drop down on planes any use or is it just that the pure oxygen makes passengers a little happier in the last seconds before they hit the ground?
A reader's question which intrigued me. I checked with the airlines who gave me the official line: "In the course of various aeronautical emergencies, the oxygen flow in the cabin might be interrupted. In such instances, the oxygen masks will provide sufficient oxygen for passengers' needs."
What about in a decompression?
"The same thing applies but obviously the oxygen demand is greater. The oxygen mask/bag provides oxygen; in fact more than people need, which means that during pauses in breathing and exhalation, the oxygen flows back into the bag and is stored there until required. This reduces the need for high oxygen flow rates, which in turn reduces the amount of oxygen carried and the amount wasted."
I turned to Mike, a friend who used to be a commercial pilot.
"They're telling you the truth, except that if you were falling as quickly as you would be during a crash, the oxygen masks would be pretty useless. But then, by the same token, any euphoria you might get from them would be more than outweighed by the adrenalin shock. Put it this way, mate, if I chucked you off the Eiffel Tower and gave you some oxygen on the way down, do you think you'd be feeling euphoric? No, I don't think so either."

WISE WORDS...
There is only one basic human right, the right to do as you damn well please. And with it comes the only basic human duty, the duty to take the consequences. (PJ O'Rourke)

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A great wind hits them, off they streak, It blows so hard, they cannot speak.

Rupert

And Jenny Frost

EPISODE 47

The little pals have not long to wait before things begin to happen. Out of the corner of his eye Rupert sees another storm beating up almost immediately after Jack Frost's whistle.

A great wind hits them just as before, whisking them off the platform at the top of the tower and away into the sky, away from the bluish light of the ice palace into darkness and then into ordinary daylight again.

They cling to each other and to the racing sledge, too breathless to speak.



Through dark and light, with mighty force, It speeds them on their homeward course.

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