



INSPECTOR GENERALS' MISSIVE WEEK 31



Life continues to be quiet and entirely satisfying in week 31 but I do still feel for those still in work or stuck inside their four walls for long periods. If you have friends or neighbours suffering, do talk and help them if you can.

I am really glad I didn't include any questions on the Covid-19 restrictions and precautions in the early quizzes all those weeks ago. This week has proved that no-one really understands the current rules and since they seem to change every few days anyway, we can be forgiven if the exact requirements sometimes escape us. What really matters is probably the generic "let's all be sensible and careful"; I know many elements of the population seem to disregard this dictum but I am trying to follow it and I trust you are doing the same. The regular masonic meetings in which we used to participate seem as far away as ever. However, our brand of Freemasonry in the Rose Croix still stirs me with gratitude to our forebears for constructing the ceremony with such meaning for our daily lives. Our practice of the ceremonial may be absent, but I hope the faith which sustains us remains as satisfying as it always has been.

Nick Wilson and Stephen Knight, trusty responders both, produced a good set of answers to last week's questions although I am still pleased to see that no-one gets full marks – I must be setting the questions at about the right level. Here are last week's answers:

1. Bahia Felix in Chile has the highest average number of days with rain in a permanently inhabited location (325 days) although other places have higher average rainfall depth.
2. The lowest directly recorded environmental temperature is -89.2°C (-128.6°F) measured on 21st July 1983 at the Vostok Station on the East Antarctic Plateau. On 10th August 2010 satellite measurement of the ground temperature in the same area registered -136°F (-93.2°C). Studies indicate that -98°C is likely to be the lowest possible natural temperature. The lowest temperature ever recorded in a laboratory is -273.14°C (and -273.15°C is absolute zero).
3. Virtually all gases and fluids burnt to create energy produce both carbon dioxide and water but burning hydrogen results only in water which is therefore the only common "exhaust" molecule.
4. The oldest surviving lodge room is The "Chapel" of St John at 23, St John Street Edinburgh. It was built originally for Lodge Canongate Kilwinning in 1735 and is still in use.
5. From 1930 to 1935 after the abolition of all speed limits for cars and motorcycles, annual road fatalities reduced by 11% to 6,502. The figure for mainland UK in 2019 was 1,752.
6. The Davy lamp has a screen around the flame through which a flame cannot pass and any methane or other flammable gas that does get in through the screen simply makes the lamp burn brighter – thus being a warning to miners etc that a flammable gas is present.
7. BCG vaccination more than 20 years ago is unlikely any longer to be effective. Even were it more recent, there is no actual evidence that susceptibility to coronavirus is affected in any way.
8. It was the passing of the 21st amendment to the US Constitution which abolished prohibition.

9. The Skinners and Tailors (now titled Merchant Taylors) livery companies were both granted Royal Charters in 1327 and argued for decades over which was senior in the list. Lord Mayor Robert Billesdon directed in 1484 that they should alternate precedence each year, Skinners is 6th in even numbered years and 7th in odd-numbered years and Merchant Taylors the reverse. This is believed to be the origin of the phrase “sixes and sevens” meaning confused or mixed up.
10. Computers (at the moment) only work by having an element of memory either powered or not powered and this is called binary because there are only 2 states available. Using Hexadecimal means longer numbers can be dealt with more easily by humans than just using binary because, for instance 1044 in binary is 10000010100, but in hex it would be 414 – a much shorter number for the computer programmer to deal with (and usually written as 41416 or as 0x414). The computer doesn't actually know this of course (so the correct answer is “they don't!”).

Here are this week's research items:

1. Why was one of Charles Maturin's works useful to a great-nephew?
2. Germany was divided in 1945 into West and East but when did it first become a nation state?
3. Who was the last British Sovereign born outside the UK?
4. What is a tog?
5. What is the boiling point of water at the top of Mt Everest and why is it different from normal?
6. If I have 24 grams of pencil leads in a case, roughly how many atoms are there?
7. Why is modern petrol not as good for lawnmowers as the old “leaded” petrol was?
8. What did the T and MG stand for in the 1960s/1970s R&B group “Booker T and the MGs”?
9. What is the predominant gender difference in many male and female hoverfly species?
10. Why do some aircraft have upturned wing tips?

Stay well Brethren and, as St Paul wrote to the Hebrews, faith will get us through.

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