



More on the ... 'K' file .. and a quick look at ... U.

... by Fred Hawtree

Even before the June 'Green-keeping' hit your doormat its powerful analysis of human greetings had worked through to the top brass. When the Queen went to Berlin, not one Guards' officer received more than the routine handshake, whereas President Gorbachev was pictured greeting President Honecker with lips pursed ready to deliver a powerful smacker.

He was aiming for the left cheek. That settles the problem we touched on last month. Both parties must know which side to go for initially in order to avoid crunching noses, glasses, or teeth.

If kissing cheeks is a hang-over from aristocratic times, one may find it odd that Russia retained the practice while ditching most other behaviour of the Imperial Court. But society springs from older roots.

One word in the English language which suffers cruel neglect is 'ululate'. Being of a sympathetic nature I never pass up a chance to dust it off and give it an airing, but the opportunity does not knock very often.. As those of you who refer to 'Bent' as 'Agrostis' will know, the curious shape of the word represents the plummy vibration in a concert of female throats, of the glottis or, perhaps, Adam's (if that is the right word) Apple. They heard it in Rome expressing approval of returning legions marching past the emperor after annexing another parcel of Mediterranean real-estate. Instead of clapping, whistling, or blowing motor-horns, Roman ladies 'ululated'.

The sound is not as dead as the word seems to be. Some fifteen years ago, Moroccan troops went to Zaire to calm a volatile situation. Having calmed it, they flew home to a heroes' welcome and marched through the main square of Casablanca just below my bedroom window. As each detachment passed the crowded pavements, the air vibrated shrilly as the ululations rolled in and out with them. The Roman sound must have been identical. Only the uniforms had changed.

I did not see the final ceremonies but the pictures next day in 'Le Matin du Sahara' showed more than a few cheek-to-cheek greetings as a bonus. But kissing greetings are common between Arab males, whether shaven or unshaven. Osculation springs from depths as unplumbed as ululation. Revolutions do not change either of them though not everyone is equally affected emotionally.

Ululate.....
the plummy
vibration in
a concert of
female throats

When there were no more ululations to be heard, I went out to see what other echoes of ancient times I might pick up. The hope was quickly dashed by a young man who asked if I had business in Casablanca. I explained that strictly speaking my work was in the north, close to Tangier, but my clients had offices in 'Casa'. He seemed amazed by the coincidence. He was, he said, just about to open a bank in Tangier. He would be delighted to handle my financial transactions. I explained that these were unlikely to go beyond cashing a traveller's cheque but he saw that only as an overture to export and import licences, letters of credit and all the paraphernalia of international commerce. With these high hopes, which I endorsed cordially, he shook my hand and was about to disappear round the corner into the Avenue Hassan II, when a thought suddenly struck him. Turning back he added thoughtfully, "By the way I suppose, just until I get established up there, you couldn't possibly lend me the price of a cup of coffee?"

Let us pick up the thread nearer the present. Just before Christmas, I renewed acquaintance with a Monsieur George de Bernard. A good golfer, he had been on several committees establishing new golf courses in France during the mini-boom of the sixties which after 25 years of comparative calm has become a

mad rush. Figures are quoted glibly but the last I heard said the French Golf Federation had knowledge of 500 new projects. There are 2.9 golfers per one hundred inhabitants in Britain, but in France last year it was only 0.2%.

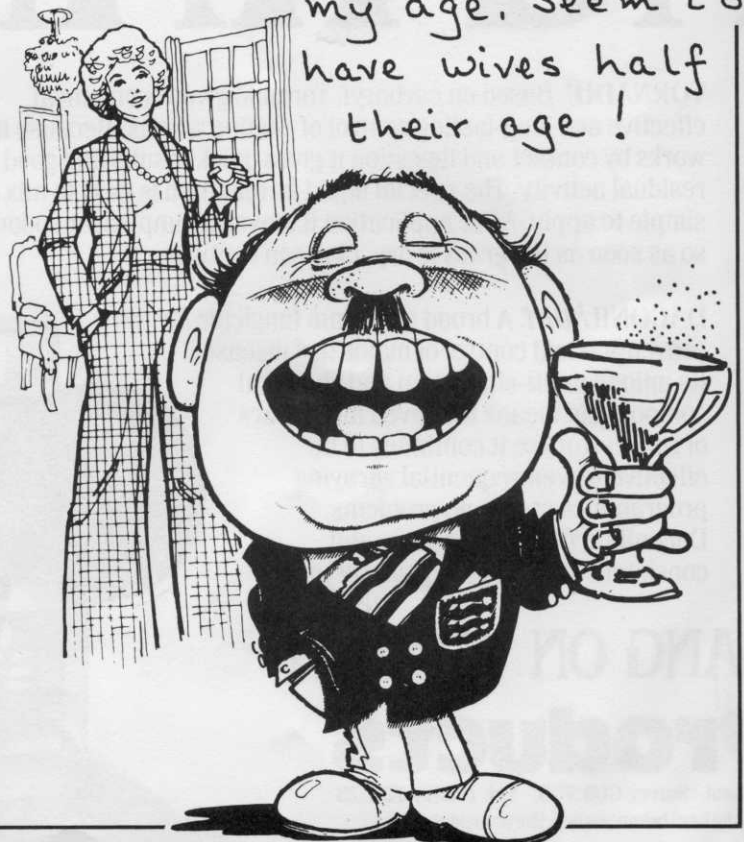
They have a long way to go but it will not take long if the current estimate of 30% growth per annum is maintained.

George de Bernard later retired to his family home near Angers and turned it into a four star hotel attached to the Relais des Châteaux chain. He receives a regular clientele from the House of Lords due to a recommendation from one of his earliest visitors who happened to be royal and incognito. George de Bernard recognised him but kept mum for a whole week and his discretion was appreciated.

His neighbour down the road has farm land surplus to requirements and subject to the vagaries of Common Market agricultural policy. He is wisely considering turning some of it into a golf course - in fact two. This is the Monsieur de la Poype who left France in 1940, joined the Free French and thence the Royal Air force, and finished up sweeping German aircraft out of the skies over the Russian front with notable success.

The Russians were so pleased they presented him with the fighter plane in which he flew so many sorties. This gesture was both a reward for his exploits and a facility for his journey home at an awkward time. They also awarded him the Red Star and with it he received the ultimate accolade. He was kissed by Joseph Stalin, as de Bernard said impressively, *sur la bouche!*

French golfers half my age, seem to have wives half their age!



So none of your left and right pecks for Uncle Joe - slap bang on the lips. Although prickly, this too must have echoed some ancient ceremonial reserved for the ultra brave. One on the cheek for long service; but the full works for a DFC and bar.

The Romans presumably brought something like it to these shores in 55 BC, but could neither persuade the British ladies to ululate nor us rough old tribesmen to take up kissing. The Normans did no better in 1066 and even disappeared themselves.

The British kept clear of possible infection outside the family for 2,000 years but are now trying to make up for lost time. Observe your Club Captain, when next presenting prizes to the Ladies Section.

Such a gathering last night at La Forêt-Fouesnant here in Brittany, obliges me moreover to correct an impression I reported last month. Based on the evidence then available, four kisses were standard greeting even between casual acquaintances. That may still be true of young ones and was confirmed this morning between young ladies of the pillion riding type in the Cafe du Centre in Pont-Aven. Three of them performed identically. But persons more mature and with different recreations

have come under my in-depth scrutiny and things are less out of hand than I suspected.

Thirty years ago next month, I laid out a 9-hole course for the Golf de Cornouaille. It lies just across the estuary from this hotel and there are plans finally to extend it to eighteen. Hence my return. I am especially fond of its members because the only change they have made since the beginning is a new pool on the left of the drive at the eighth and there are not many clubs that have not added a pool somewhere if they could find a hole for it.

The sponsor supplies not only superb trophies but Champagne into the bargain

The membership (200) is lively and there is a competition every weekend from March 1st to 29th November, plus two more in December, ten more on various Thursdays and others on Public Holidays like Pentecost yesterday. They are all strongly supported and followed in the evening by a prize giving for which the sponsor supplies not only superb trophies but also champagne or other

appropriate beverage for 70 or 80 people into the bargain.

In the cause of pure research on your behalf, I found myself at both the Sunday and the Monday gatherings. Champagne Sunday; Rosé, Monday. It would have been churlish to decline the invitations and you yourselves would have felt obliged to do the same.

Heavily disguised as one of the participants with a glass in my hand I could observe the others with scientific detachment as they milled round the long lines of ready filled glasses while greeting friends not previously encountered on the golf course during the day.

...did not the brushing of the cheeks become more lingering as the night wore on?

I can now reveal that in Brittany at least, the standard ration is still two kisses, one on each cheek, as between men and women golf club members, as of 7th/8th June 1987. However the atmosphere of an occasion like this tends to become super-

charged as the temperature rises and the calories accumulate. Was there I wonder, as we social observers tend to do, some other dimension in all this? Should I be looking below the surface as well as at it?

I returned to the Hotel de L'Esperance and reflected carefully before putting a new theory to you - especially as I messed up the first one. My latest thinking can be summed up in eight words. 'The more there are - the less they mean'. (But I suggest you still file it under K).

Most French golfers half my age seem to have wives half their age, mostly blonde and all beautiful. Was I mistaken or did the basic brushing of the cheeks become more lingering as the evening wore on? It became less a question of number than of intensity. To kiss four times at this level would give the whole game away; a lingering twice leaves scope for putting in some real meaning without holding up the party. I leave it to you.

You have been very patient as I prattled on about these superficial matters while you were itching to hear what the Parisian greenkeeper is wearing this Spring.

In September we will get back to work - and so must I!

FEATURE 1

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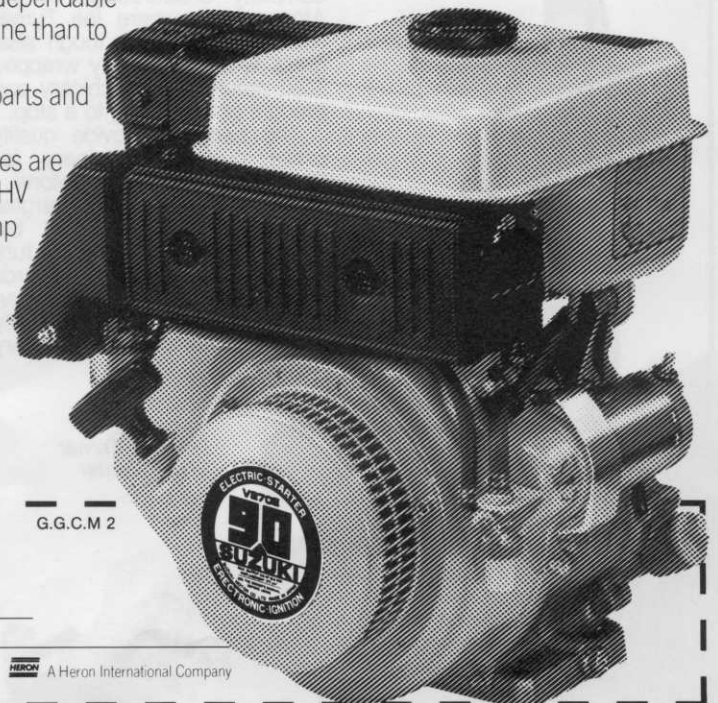
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