



Joseph Connolly

A monthly diary of sundry observations, brief encounters and anecdotes, local and less so, foodie and otherwise

Thanksgiving will be swell

Today is Thanksgiving Day – which, for the seventeen million Americans who now appear to be living in Hampstead, can only be very good news indeed. We in Britain know what happens on this day, just as we have a working knowledge of past presidents and the names and capitals of states. This does not apply in reverse, however: Americans have not heard of Shropshire, and wouldn't know Harold Macmillan if you hit them round the head with him. My personal knowledge of all things American is gleaned exclusively from the thousands of movies I have absorbed during a lifetime – and here is the lot:

- As children, Americans dress in t-shirts, sweats, sneakers and baseball caps and jackets. They live on milk and cookies and often, with dad, 'go get ice cream'. They are also much given to Jell-O, Twinkies, Popsicles and comic books (pronounced 'camic berks'). When these children grow into adults, none of the above changes.
- They drive to school in blue and white convertibles with red upholstery. The jocks are cool and stupid, the nerds



■ Millions of turkeys are about to meet their fate

are ugly and clever – while the girls look like thirty-six year-old beauty queens, and particularly the cheerleaders. They get to third base. They make out. They belong to Greek fraternities devoted to chugging beer and fornication. These are bolstered by the annual orgy called Spring Break – funded by billionaire parents – or, failing that, pumping gas, jerking sodas, or aggravated burglary.

- The only book they have ever read is Harry Potter. Pronounced Hairy Padder.
- The police describe a suspect as being Hispanic or Caucasian and weighing 190 pounds and imagine we know what in God's name they are talking about.
- Men sleep in their underwear. And in the

morning, swing their legs over to the side of the bed and pull on trousers. Except that they call them pants. While waistcoats are vests. And braces, God help us, are suspenders.

- And a fanny is a bottom.
- Newspapers are hurled an enormous distance by a boy on a bike in the general direction of a porch, and they never unravel.
- Men will favour Scotch over Bourbon, because it is 'imported'. They also like a Fig Newton (Noot'n), while being addicted to a Danish and coffee. This is pronounced either caffy or cawfee, and the sole reason it is ever brewed by cowboys is to throw on the fire.
- If a gangster smiles, it's not good. If he touches your face, you're in deep doo-doo's. Should he

actually kiss you, you're dead.

■ Every single senior member of the CIA and the FBI is irredeemably corrupt, and so are most congressmen. And while they call the man in the Oval Office Mr President, they don't call other people Mr Accountant or Mr Milkman.

■ Also corrupt are all sheriffs in the southern states. Some are merely racist, but mostly they demonstrably detest absolutely everybody.

■ A hundred is a hunnerd. November and December would be 'a couple munce'. They say 'just wait two seckints'.

■ Professors on campus are always working on their second novel (pronounced navvle) while deflecting overtures from a sexy sophomore who wants a better grade.

■ All Englishmen are butlers, homosexuals or sadistic villains. Sometimes all three.

■ They never say just Time, but always Time Magazine. As opposed to Time Cooking Oil, or Time Pimple Cream.

■ When it comes to herbs, they go cockney: 'erbs.

■ And it's all very contagious. In Britain now, people unashamedly say 'I'm good', 'Can I get the tab?', 'I need you to look at this' ... and everyone, including women, children and grandparents are 'you guys'.

Well gee. Happy Thanksgiving Day: should be just swell.

Inside track on The Fab Four

Joe McGrath is very ebullient and humorous fellow who has lived in Eton Avenue, Swiss Cottage, for decades. I knew that back in the 1960s he was the first director (there were five in the end) of that ill-fated James Bond spoof Casino Royale – as well as directing the magnificent Peter Cook and Dudley Moore TV series Not Only ... But Also. What I did not know is that he directed six of The Beatles' short videos – which, along with many others, have this month been released on DVD for the very first time. "It was John who became a very good friend," Joe told me at lunch. "He was quite wicked. Pete and Dud wanted him to appear in a sketch, so I phoned Brian Epstein. Brian said yes, but he must be paid. I said is a fiver all right, and he said okay." Joe went on to devise the wordless sequence in A Hard Day's Night where Ringo breaks away to go parading around the streets. He then directed Ringo with Peter Sellers in The Magic Christian. "It was actually Lennon I wanted for that part, but he didn't seem interested. I did like John, but I also loved McCartney's talent – but even then Lennon was very cruel about him. Once he said to me: "The trouble with Paul is that he really wants to be Cliff Richard..."

Drowning in Dickens

Women sometimes become curious about what men talk about when they are all higger-mugger, and drink is being taken: heaven knows what they imagine. Well at a recent party in Covent Garden I was chatting to Howard Jacobson about his brand new and audacious reworking of A Merchant in Venice, while the historian Andrew Roberts was saying that he was already masterminding his own memorial service – this to take place before he actually dies, because he loves a good party, does Andrew, so why should he miss out on one that's bound to be wonderful because he's the person who's planning it ...? Another chap there is working on a book about Dickens: he says that in every one of the novels, there is a drowning, or talk of one: fascinating. So there you have it, ladies: we don't all drone on about beer, business, cars and floozies. Nor, God forbid, football. Ever.

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