

Time Travel Tuesday: Perfect Puzzles Tuesday 26 May 2020

Welcome to Time Travel Tuesday: Perfect Puzzles – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

As it is 'half term' this week, when families are trying to think about how to entertain children during lockdown, we are thinking about how different generations have often been so resourceful in the past to get their own entertainment kicks just by using bits of paper, sets of dice and imagination. In today's post we are going to let you travel back in time to your own childhood when, for most of us, there was less TV and certainly no computers like there are today to help. We are going to look at what some of us might remember as quaintly being called 'parlour games' - particularly those that combine puzzles, quizzes, board games, cards and party games.



Playing cards at the Pensioners' Club at West Green Library, 1950s.

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

During the middle of the 20th century there was a bit more help on the home-entertainment front. Ingenious games were being created by emerging game companies like Universal Publications Limited (or UPL). And Wood Green suddenly became the centre for a great production-line of re-inventions or new creations of old 'parlour games'. In 1940, Universal Publications Ltd set up home at 581 Lordship Lane in Wood Green and for many it changed how the family was entertained at home.

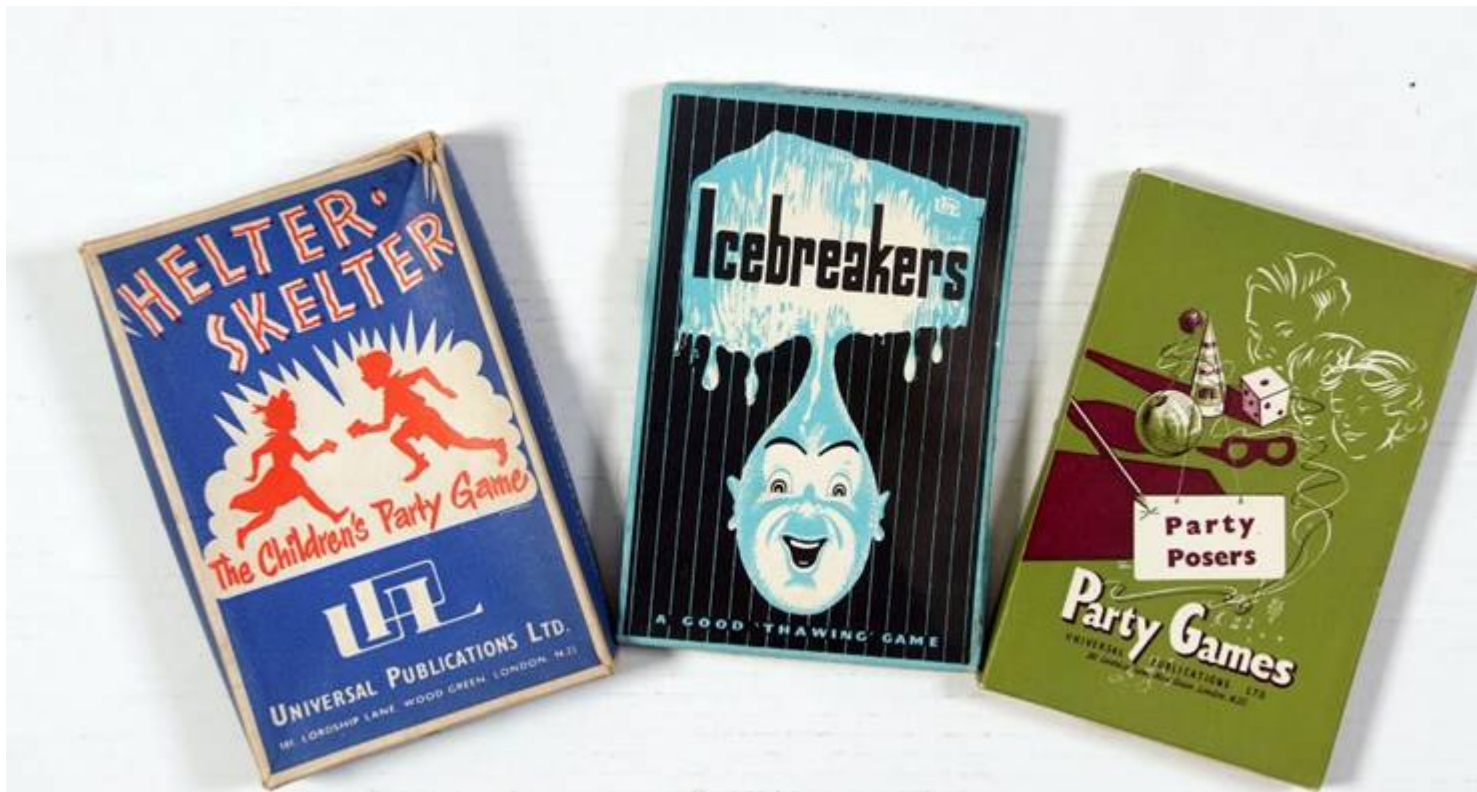


Detail of 1950 OS Map of Wood Green: From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

The company UPL started out in central London in 1932, and at first focussed on puzzle books, card games and publications for general amusement. In 1935, they produced *40 Patience Games*. The company was founded by a 'D. E. Swaffield' who "derived so much happiness from the pleasure and entertainment he gave to millions through his games".

After the Second World War, to meet a growing market for recreational activities, they turned to creating more challenging games and resources. UPL began to see how we might change our own ways of thinking by suggesting parlour games were not just for dark winter days spent at home. As their promotional blurb said - their games "are just as popular during August as they are during December." They wanted party games to be for people to come together in groups and socialise at home – or whatever place they might choose to play games – at clubs, schools, gardens.

Below is a photograph of a few of the games made by UPL dating from the 1950s that we have in our collection at Bruce Castle:



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

As you can see from just this small selection, there is an emphasis on 'party games and also notably 'icebreakers'! There seemed to be an opportunity for UPL to make games to introduce people to one another.

DEFINITELY ORIGINAL!

THE U. P. L. PARTY GAMES

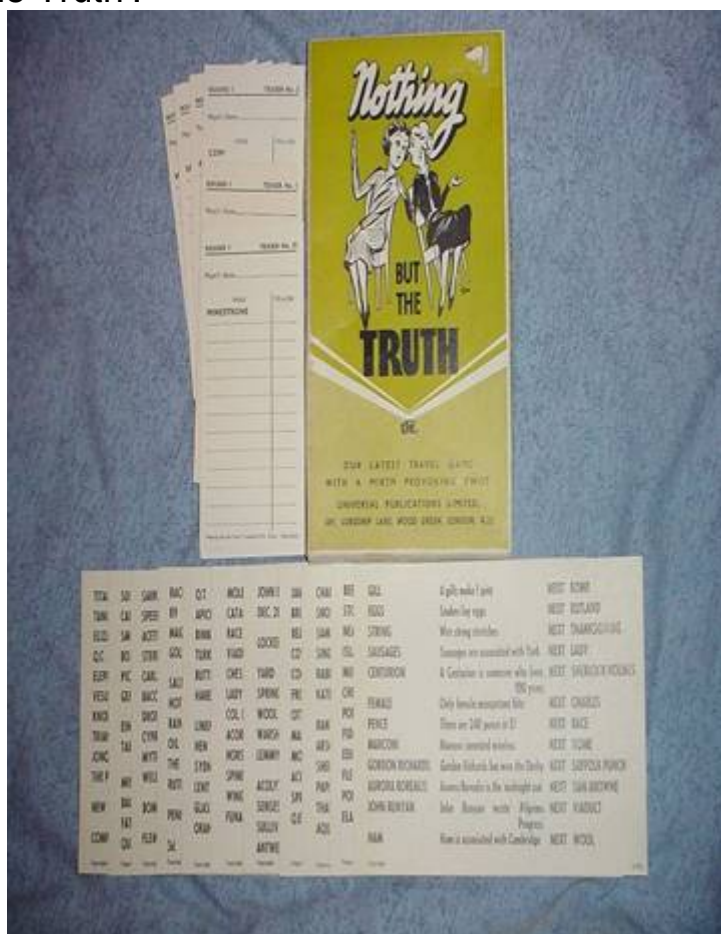
The advent of these books will dispel anxiety when making arrangements for parties, social evenings, afternoon teas and cocktail parties.

It will be seen that each book contains two distinct games, and that in each one the identical games are repeated on fourteen separate stiff cards. Every card has been neatly perforated so that they may be easily detached and one handed to each guest, while a key card is provided for the convenience of the host or hostess. Thus amusing entertainment is already prepared for any number of people up to fourteen.

In addition to the games already to be played, each book contains the details of a Thawing Game—i.e., a Paul Jones in the form of a Party Game.

From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

Each game had a catalogue list of other games they offered. The list of names often sounded odd or intriguing - 'Appointment with Fear', 'Bedlam', 'Railway Riot' and 'Nothing But the Truth'.



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

They also offered games that reflected new hobbies or interests at the time, such as the 1940s 'Spot the Car Parts' – with more people interested in cars from the 1950s onwards.

Some game titles perhaps seem relevant today and seem to respond to our current situation in lockdown - with certain restrictions for some activities now lifted (house hunting), whilst the rules for 'A UPL Shopping Expedition' game are seemingly quite complicated to follow ...

A U.P.L. GAME

HOUSE HUNTING



A FASCINATING AND EXHILARATING GAME

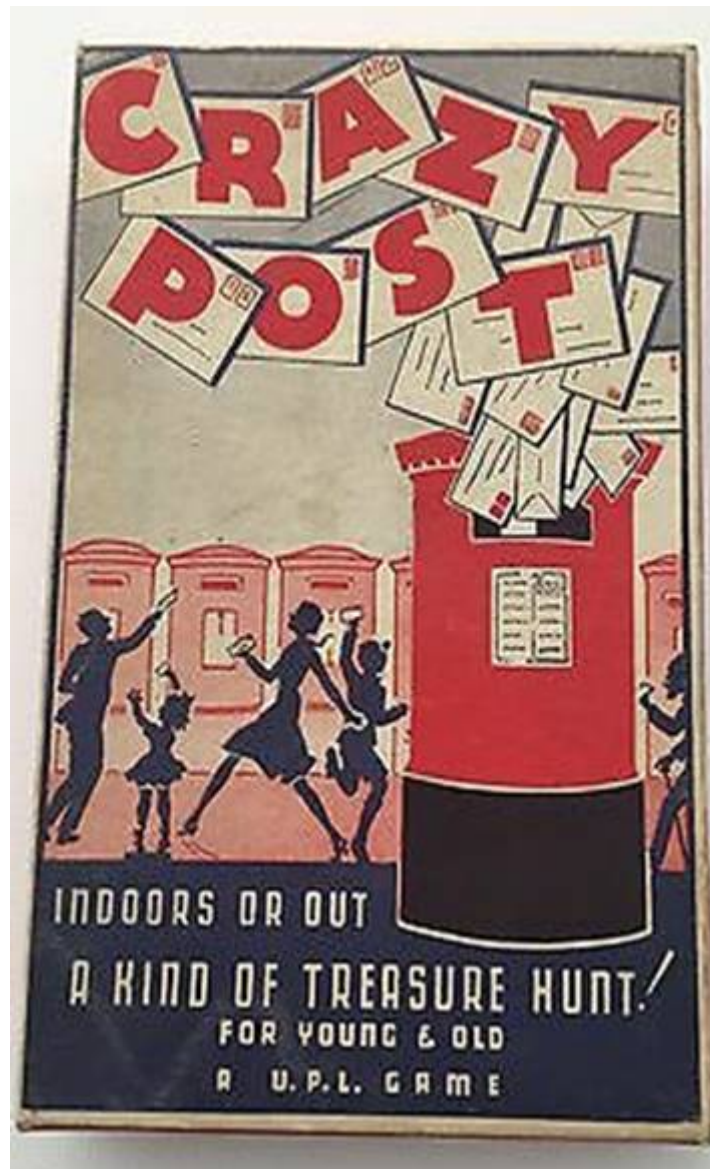
UNIVERSAL PUBLICATIONS LTD.

36, LORDSHIP LANE, WOOD GREEN, LONDON, N. 22



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

Perhaps there is one game that might be relevant to our own Postal History collections at Bruce Castle which UPL called the 'Crazy Post' game. This game was so popular that they redesigned it during the 1960s for further production.



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

Here's what the 'Crazy Post' game consisted of:

There were eight cardboard post boxes, each with four place names or towns written on the front. The post boxes were positioned around a room or garden. Players were given a personal number and received a 'letter' from the games host, with the name of the town written on the front and their personal number on the back of the letter. The player then had to post this letter to the correct box/ name of town as fast as they could. They raced back to get another letter to post, then another, until all 380 letters had been posted – quite some undertaking! Players got points for correctly-posted letters and lost points for incorrectly-posted ones. As you can imagine town names of similar spelling such as 'Maldon' and 'Malden' or 'Hertford' and 'Hereford' were there to cause chaos and confuse. We can only imagine the mayhem as the 1950s party guests rushed about jostling to post their letters in the right letter box at high speed ...

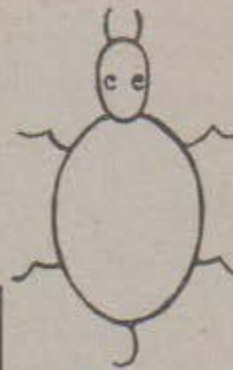
One of our favourites from UPL is the more traditional game of Beetle Drive – known to many we are sure – but formatted in ready-made cards and drawing pads by UPL. This has been a favourite to play at Bruce Castle during our Family Activities and also our Reminiscence Café afternoons in better times.

THE BEETLE GAME

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Name

Body ..	6	Legs ..	3 each
Head ..	5	Feelers ..	2 each
Tail ..	4	Eyes ..	1 each



1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

REGISTERED
SCORE

U.P.L. COMMUNITY GAMES ARE JUST AS ENJOYABLE DURING AUGUST AS DURING DECEMBER

1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____
 6 _____
 7 _____
 8 _____
 9 _____
 10 _____
 11 _____
 12 _____
TOTAL



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Why not have a go at your own Beetle Drive? All ages can play it! (You can even play it by Zoom for different households.)

In the attached PDF is a blank **Beetle Drive sheet**.

Here are the **Beetle Drive rules**: Number your tables and sit two to four players at each table. The youngest player rolls the dice first. Play continues in a clockwise direction, with players throwing the dice in turn and drawing body parts of the beetle depending on the number they have thrown. There are a total of 14 body parts to draw. You must draw the body before anything else, so you can't start until you throw a six. You must throw a five to draw a head before you can draw the eyes and antennae. The first player from all the tables to draw a complete beetle shouts 'BEETLE!' and scores the maximum 14 points for that round. Everyone else counts up how many body parts they have drawn, and scores one point per body part.

Lastly, here are some of the rather cryptic questions that can crop up in a UPL Game – this time from *All About Yourself* (no. 71 in the UPL series) and focuses on body parts. Some are quite clear and straightforward:

Question: 'A cave has this?' Answer: 'Mouth'.

Question: 'A snake sheds this?' Answer: Skin

Can you identify these below? (The answers are given at the end of this post, far below).

1. A very thin paper.
2. Beheaded you could stand on it.
3. Rows of Knit 1, Purl 1, form this.
4. You could grow another one but not have a third.
5. The first half is a child or young animal.
6. These show when you smile – if you have them.

We have a number of the UPL series of games in our collection, but not all. Some we have discovered by chance on stalls at our very own Vintage Fairs at the Castle (and stallholders have kindly given them to us). Other museums around the country have some examples in their collections including the [Science Museum Group](#), some of the museums in the National Trust and we have recently learnt about a [Museum of Gaming](#) in Lancashire which has UPL games in it too. We have yet to find anyone though who actually worked at UPL locally –

do you know of anyone? Or do you recall seeing the factory in Lordship Lane? Or did you have these games at home? Please do get in touch we would love to hear from you.

We assume the decline in production of these UPL games in one part of Wood Green coincided with the rise of the popularity of television and recreational rivalry of course in another part of Wood Green - at Alexandra Palace - from the 1950s onwards!

And so ends another post for today.
Hope this keeps you entertained.

Take care, keep well and stay healthy
Best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

(And here are the answers to the quiz questions below

1. Tissue
2. Gland (beheaded = land...)
3. Rib
4. Foot
5. Kidney
6. Dimples

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Curator

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