

Thursday

January 15th

Thursdays were always the same and always different.

That is to say every Thursday was the same as every other Thursday but every Thursday was different to every other day of the week.

He got up late on Thursdays and had his breakfast before he got washed and dressed.

Around eleven o'clock he went for a walk, just as he had every Thursday. Well perhaps not just as he had seventeen years ago. Those years had taken their toll. He was stooped with the stiffness and pain of arthritis and much slower than he had been all those years ago.

He stopped for coffee at the little stall near the entrance to the park and, in spite of the seasonable cold, went into the park and sat on a bench to drink it.

He dropped his cup in the waste bin just inside the gate, noticing that as ever it was so full that it needed to be emptied and that someone had simply dropped their litter on the ground.

He walked back into town and had a sandwich for lunch at the same café he always used, where he was known and welcomed every Thursday lunchtime.

After lunch he walked back around the corner to his flat and busied himself with the little housekeeping tasks that took up the next hour or so.

Keeping an eye on the time, he didn't want to be late, he finished up with the ironing left over from Tuesday's washing session, found his hat, coat, scarf and glove and set out again.

As he walked through the park for the second time he felt suddenly tired and when he came to the next bench, in a change to his unvarying routine he found he had to sit for a moment to recover.

He must have dozed for a short while he thought, for the early twilight had already given way to the dark as he hurried off as best he could, hoping that his lapse had not made him late.

No, he was in time, the yellow bus was just pulling up on the opposite side of the road as he went through the far gate of the park.

Children poured off the bus in a sudden chattering storm and his granddaughter spotted him and skipped over the road into his waiting hug.

He took her schoolbag in one hand and her hand in the other and they set off for their ritual Thursday tea time treat, a burger and chips washed down with a slushy ice drink.

They had the best part of an hour to kill before the little girl's mother would be home from work so they used the time to assemble the plastic toys that came with the meal and to colour in the picture provided by the café.

January 16th

The local Gazette came out on Friday and the front page had been hurriedly amended to include a late report, even as the paper was being sent to the printer.

The reporter who interviewed the jogger simply sent a text message to his editor. He sent 'In a bizarre coincidence, John Morris, 37, a local business man, found the body of 82 year old Jacob Wilson while jogging through the Municipal Park on Thursday evening. Mr Wilson had obviously been dead for some time as he was almost frozen to the park bench where he was found. It is a sad coincidence that it is exactly seventeen years to the day

since the school bus disaster that killed Mr Wilson's granddaughter and five other children as they were being taken home from school in icy conditions. Mr Morris said that the thing that astonished him most was the look on the old man's face. He had a serene smile and looked as happy as a man could be.'

Jim Bayliss