

29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

## Landing

**James T. Kirk:** Prepare to initiate emergency landing plan B.

**Pavel Chekov:** What's emergency landing plan B?

**Montgomery Scott:** I don't have a clue.

*William Shatner, Harve Bennett and David Loughery, Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*

Today I leave Islay and Jura after three months here. So I'm contemplating endings – praying that I have a safe landing on the mainland.

When I was in the Boys Brigade, a central part of the activities was PT – physical training – including boxing, Indian Clubs, Parallel Bars and frenetic games. And we *always* had the dreaded Vaulting Horse. This was a solid wooden box, built in sections, with a padded top. The idea was to launch yourself over the b\*\*\*\*y thing, with your arms and legs in some sort of artistic configuration, and land safely on the other side. In my early years, we weren't blessed with a springboard on the take-off side. It was tough! First, legs to the right; then legs to the left; then legs through your arms; then a forward roll over the top; finally, a perilous handstand.

I was rubbish on the Vaulting Horse. And the whack across my bum from the Staff Sergeant's cane when I was stuck wasn't a lot of help. But surprisingly, I always seemed to manage a safe landing. The landing side wasn't a modern, deeply-padded crashmat. Ours was a thin, rubbery sheet which did little to cushion your fall. And me? I may have been rubbish getting up there and *awful* getting over the top. But with the assistance of a big lad on the far side, my landings were pretty good (if not emulating Olympic gymnasts): a bounce; a star-jump; sometimes a delicate roll. But *always* with style and flair! And, from time to time, a round of applause!

When we've put a lot of energy into preparation, worked hard at getting over things and looked for success in our achievements, shouldn't we be equally concerned about the landings, the endings, the finishing? Can we try to land safely? Might our landings have some flair?

Buster Keaton, a Silent Movie great, was once asked about the safety of his dangerous stunts. He replied: "The secret is in the landing ... It's a knack. I started so young that landing right is second nature." *I* started young too, so now I'll have to remember my knack of landing with style.

### A prayer for today

*Land me safely, loving God, and help me be ready for the next forward roll. Amen*