



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 12

A Bit of Local History

I've been reading about Oliver Cromwell and realised that there's quite a lot of Civil War history associated with Nottingham and its environs. In particular, Colonel John Hutchinson, who lived at Owthorpe Hall was very much involved – he spent most of the war in charge of Nottingham Castle and, indeed, the whole of Nottingham itself. He was also one of the signatories of Charles I's death warrant, which made him persona non grata when Charles II returned to the throne in 1660.



John Hutchinson was born in 1615 in Nottingham, rather than Owthorpe, because his father had been obliged, by a severe drought, to move his stables into Nottingham! He was the son of Sir Thomas Hutchinson and Lady Margaret, daughter of Sir John Biron (Byron) of Newstead. In fact, Sir Thomas was the first member of his family to move to Owthorpe, his own father having lived somewhere in Cropwell. John was educated at Nottingham Grammar School and at Peterhouse College, Cambridge. He attended Lincoln's Inn with the intention of studying the Law but apparently devoted himself to music and religion. It was the latter which determined much of his future life, in particular deciding him to favour the so-called 'Independents', who were in favour of religious tolerance (though not to the extent of approving of Roman Catholicism!). Their rivals

within the Parliamentary party were 'Presbyterians', who were against Episcopacy (Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and Deacons) and wanted a Church subordinate to Parliament.

In 1638 John married Lucy Apsley, whose father was Lieutenant of the Tower of London and she made a name for herself as a writer and poet. Perhaps, most importantly, she wrote a very detailed biography of her husband's life which is a useful source of historical information. It is still available in book form but is not an easy read! Nor is it a balanced account of Hutchinson, who was thought to be short-tempered and not particularly effective as a politician (he was a member of the Long Parliament). However, he certainly made a significant contribution to the 'Roundhead' cause during the war.



Nottingham was not very well defended and suffered various incursions from Royalist forces (nearby Newark was an important Royalist garrison) but Hutchinson managed to keep reasonable control – the castle remained unbreached throughout -and he can also be credited with one or two victories against local Royalist strongholds.

The first of these concerned Shelford Hall which was a Royalist thorn in Parliamentary flesh. It was taken by the joint forces of Hutchinson and General Poyntz, 160 Royalist troops being killed and 140 others taken prisoner. The hall itself was then burned to the ground. A similar fate was met by the nearby Wiverton Hall (just two miles from Langar, near Tythby) on the following day. Incidentally, there is an interesting snippet of information concerning Wiverton – Queen Henrietta Maria stayed there in 1643 on her way to meet up with the King, bringing military equipment that she had collected from various European sources. The village of Wiverton no longer existed, having been completely obliterated by Lord Chaworth when, in 1510, he decided to enlarge his parkland. Such was the power of the aristocracy in those days!

Following the execution of the King, John Hutchinson retired to Owthorpe Hall, where he did much to improve the garden and fishponds. (More detail of this aspect is available on the History Group website which we referred to in Weekly Letter number 6). Partly on account of his deeply felt apologies and partly on account of Lucy's efforts to defend him, he escaped the fate of many of the Regicides but in 1663 he was arrested and charged with being involved in a plot against Charles II. He might have been able to avoid imprisonment but refused to do anything to save himself – it appears that he still felt so guilty of his part in Charles I's execution that he was only comfortable when he, himself was punished. He spent a year in the Tower of London, was then transferred to Sandown Castle in Kent where he died four months later. Lucy had visited him every day!

Moles, Stoats, Weasels and Others

It was only a week ago that we were talking (at some length!) about moles, so it may be appropriate to celebrate one particular mole who succeeded in turning a common phrase on its head:



*There once was a mole lived in Spain
Who burrowed again and again.
As he lived on a hill,
This particular skill
Made a mole hill out of a mountain.*

You have to be careful with that last line – to obtain the right rhythm, it has to be read:

“Made a MOLE hill out OF a mounTAIN”,

not quite the most natural pronunciation. But we limericists learn to cope with such details – it's all part of the art!

But things in Chris Soar's garden are getting even more exciting. How about this account of his Stoat Sighting:

A Vulpine Visit and Mustelid Moments

I have a Study, which I spend a lot of time in (whoops, sorry, in which I spend a lot of time) - that is, when not out in the garden.

As members of the Croquet Group know, it fronts onto the croquet lawn and, because of the way my garden slopes the windowsill is at lawn level, so, when I am seated at my desk, I get a good view of most of the lawn. The windows have reeded type blinds, usually down, which means I can see out but nothing can see in. This way I get to see what wildlife comes onto the lawn and nothing can see me.

On Monday, I was at the desk from 6:30 am, and around about 8 am, a fox trotted up the steps and did a circuit of the lawn. Although I know a fox visits my garden every night, it is not often I see one, so that was a special start to the day.

This reminded me of my Mustelid Moments a few months ago. A mustelid is an animal of that family, the mustelidae, which includes (inter-alia) stoats, weasels, badgers and martens. In this case I'm talking about a stoat. Now some people say that they don't know the difference between a stoat and a weasel. I could say that this is simple – a weasel is weasily identified, whereas a stoat is stoatally different! –but in fact it is very easy. The weasel is tiny, a dull brown in colour, and usually seen scuttling across the road. Stoats are handsome devils – bigger, chestnutty brown with a creamy white front, and a black tip to their tails.



Anyway, I was in my study and on the phone and I suddenly saw this stoat tearing up and down the lawn, stopping suddenly, standing on its hind legs, zooming around in circles, disappearing into the honeysuckle hedge and dashing out again, and generally being completely crazy. It was hysterical! I thought it was a young stoat full of energy, rather like the baby rabbits which appear on the lawn and dash about hither and thither. I was laughing so much that I almost dropped the phone. I noticed a magpie swooping down, and wasn't sure whether it was after the stoat, which leapt up at it. I wanted to take a photograph so I moved the blind to do so, and unfortunately it saw the movement and disappeared. I have not seen it since.

I then remembered reading as a boy an article about stoats jumping and twisting and turning in front of rabbits. The rabbits are mesmerised and confused by the behaviour, and the stoat gradually gets closer so that it can pounce.

This was evidently what my stoat was doing. It was after the magpie, which are, of course, inquisitive birds, and the fact that the magpie had flown low to investigate a couple of times, and the stoat had leapt up at it seems to bear that out.

What a sight! What an experience! Interesting, and curious, don't you think!

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RAG Unlocked

The partial unlocking of lockdown has made a dramatic difference to the meetings of the Real Ale Group, as can be seen in the accompanying photograph. Instead of merely Zooming together, we actually met in the flesh (only figuratively and, of course, distantly) and enjoyed a random collection of bottled beers while fending off the weather with an equally random collection of umbrellas. In fact, the sun shone on us most of the time, as befits our deserving natures. But, to be serious for just a moment, it really was a pleasure to see one another again. By the way, though seven people were involved, there were never more than six at any one moment – we may be boozers but, for all that, responsible boozers.



And, talking about boozing, gives me an irresistible opportunity to quote from ‘Verse and Worse’ again, in the form of ‘The Irish Pig’:

‘Twas an evening in November,
As I very well remember,
I was strolling down the street in drunken pride,
But my knees were all a’flutter
So I landed in the gutter,
And a pig came up and lay down by my side.

Yes, I lay there in the gutter
Thinking thoughts I may not utter,
When a colleen passing by did softly say;
“Ye can tell a man that boozes
By the company he chooses”.
At that the pig got up and walked away!

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Molly and Her Marbles

Once more we gain further insight into the thought-processes of our six-year-old (soon to be seven). Thanks to Sue Hillyard.

Molly's Essays - 5

Last Saturday daddy made a tent on the washing line. he put sum sheets up and a blankit on the grass and Peter and me had a picnic under it it was fun. then Peter went in and got sum lego and we made sum lego things in our tent. My mummy and my daddy wer sitting in the sunshine and torking about greatgrandads birthday. he sed to my mummy we will have to go and see my grandad becorse hes going to be ninty then he sed he probably wont remember we came to see him i think hes loosing his marbells.

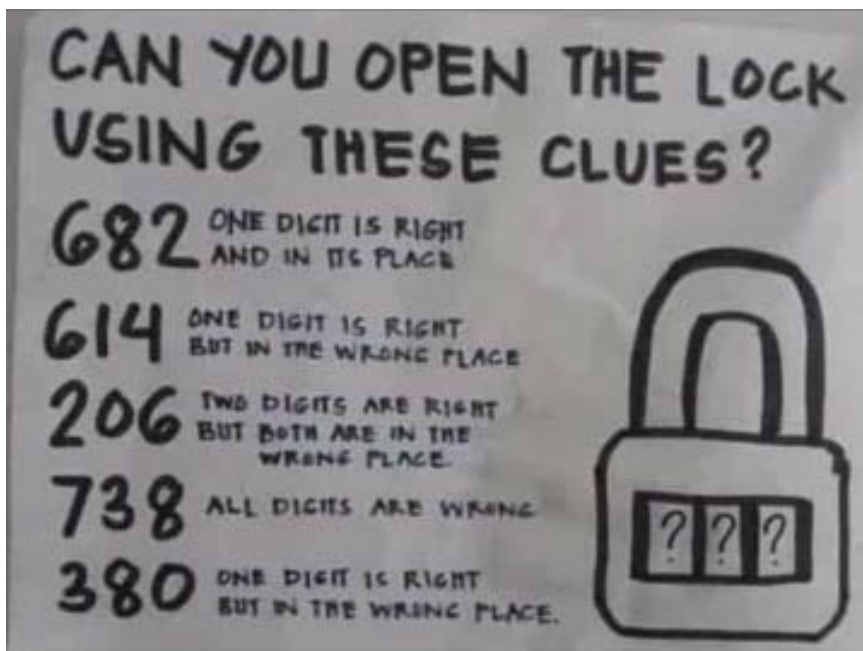
I dint even no greatgrandad had any marbells. he must of had them a long time. then i felt sad becorse he is loosing them and he must get worrid were they are goin to.

Then on Monday mummy sed all rite you two get your shoes on we are going to see greatggrandad so we got in the car and went for a drive to greatgrandads house. when we got there we all sat in the back garden becorse we cant go in the house yet because daddy sed we have to keep away from greatgrandad but we can pretend to hug the air insted. becorse greatgrandad is old and the virus is danjerus for old people. thats why we carnt go in.

great grandad gave us sum tamatoes out of his greenhouse and Mummy put greatgrandads card and a present on the table and he opened it and it was sum cheese and sum pickels and he sed thank you. then i reached into my unicorn bag and put my present on the table and mummy sed whats that molly and i sed its a present for greatgrandad. and he opened it and sed o sum marbells like he was suprized and i sed I thort you mite like them cos daddy sed you are loosing yours. then we went home after that.

Puzzle Corner

Can you unlock the padlock, given the clues provided?



CAN YOU OPEN THE LOCK USING THESE CLUES?

682 ONE DIGIT IS RIGHT AND IN ITS PLACE

614 ONE DIGIT IS RIGHT BUT IN THE WRONG PLACE

206 TWO DIGITS ARE RIGHT BUT BOTH ARE IN THE WRONG PLACE

738 ALL DIGITS ARE WRONG

380 ONE DIGIT IS RIGHT BUT IN THE WRONG PLACE.

The illustration shows a padlock with three dials, each containing a question mark.

[Answer next week.](#)

The Art Group

Having gone artistically astray last week, we return to normality this week with floating umbrellas by Desna and two lovely paintings by Dot Albans. To say the least, we are truly fortunate to have such wonderful input from the Art Group – thank you again to all concerned.



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Creative Writing

We welcome another creative write from Elsie Warby – much shorter this time but an excellent summary of what most of us are feeling about what Barbara referred to as our current ‘House Arrest’.

The house

The past

The house was busy
We were all in a tizzy.
Grandchildren playing
Overnight staying.
Toys everywhere
Cupboards bare.
The house was happy
full of life and love.

The present

The house is tidy and clean
The silence makes us scream.
Toys in boxes, books on shelves
No one digs and delves.
Grandchildren absent for weeks
FaceTime for us to speak.
Cupboards stay replete
Nobody comes to eat.
The house sighs
Lockdown rules lives.

The future

Grandchildren descend
Playing pretend.
Toys and books scattered
Peace is shattered.
Biscuit tin emptied
Food supplies decimated.
Hugs and kisses aplenty
Lives no longer empty.
Lockdown has gone
New times have begun.
The house is alive again.

Put another way:

The trouble with lockdown is this:
It's our friends and our fam'lies we miss.
Cooped up at home
And forbidden to roam
That's no-one's idea of bliss.

Keep well and cheerful. See you next week,

John