



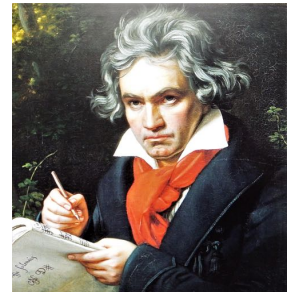
# Cotgrave and District U3A

## Keeping in Touch 17

### Corrections

Before proceeding to this week’s intellectual challenge, I have to confess to a serious historical error in last week’s Letter. Louis XIV had been dead some 78 years when the French Revolution erupted in 1793 – it was Louis XVI who lost his head to Madame Guillotine. I seem to have got a bit confused over my Roman numerals! Lesley Sinclair kindly (and politely) pointed it out and I therefore offer my apologies to all concerned.

But, what is more, there appears to be some controversy concerning the answers to Peter Shreyhane’s quiz, too. Paul Childs, who is an authority on all manner of musical matters, points out that the Buddy Holly’s posthumous hit should have been ‘it doesn’t matter any more’ rather than ‘that’ll be the day’. I, personally, am totally incapable of commenting on this, but I believe that the two contestants have agreed that Paul is right. I can tell you the year in which Beethoven was born (1770) but not a jot about Holly – sorry, I have to admit my lack of broadmindedness.



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### Census Matters

A few years ago Steve Cockbill and I spent a good deal of effort translating the hand-written Census returns for Cotgrave into digital text, so I gave a deal of thought to what these returns might be telling us. One of the details concerns names so I wrote the following article for the Cross Magazine also a few years ago and it seems perfectly relevant to today. Back in the mid-nineteenth century names were a little different from those in common use today and biblical references were much more common.

## 1851 And All That

As I may have mentioned before, the Cotgrave branch of the U3A, Local History Group is engaged in a programme to unravel the history of the village during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An essential part of this is concerned with analysing data from Census Returns which were collected every ten years from 1841 onwards and I am currently wrestling with the task of transposing the hand-written 1851 Census into a more readily understandable Excel spreadsheet version. Anyone with experience of family history exploration will understand something of the nature of such a project – not to mention the poor quality of the handwritten version available from Ancestry, nineteenth century handwriting is characterised by a wealth of swirls and flourishes which tease the modern reader into near-maddening frustration. Trying to interpret unknown surnames can be, well, extremely trying! Christian names are somewhat less so, particularly as the residents of Cotgrave, alive in 1851, tended to concentrate their attentions on a very limited range of choices. What is more, they seemed drawn very strongly to Biblical names. Johns, James's, Josephs, Thomas's, Samuels and Daniels occur with remarkable frequency in the 'Male' column, Anns, Elizabeths, Mary's, Hannahs, Sarahs and Rebeccas in the 'Female' column. There is also a well-defined trend towards naming at least one son after his father and one daughter after her mother, which implies yet another limit to the range of Christian names in regular use.

However, perhaps unsurprisingly, one does come across a few surprises. The occasional use of Theophilus set me wondering but I soon located it on the internet. St Luke's Gospel and Acts of the Apostles (probably both written by the same author) were addressed to a certain 'Theophilus', though his identification appears anything but 'certain'. The name itself means 'Friend of God' or 'Beloved of God' but it was apparently used both as a first name or as an official title. The Coptic Church insists that he was a Jew of Alexandria but various alternatives have been suggested. He may have been a Roman official (possibly a man converted to Christianity), St Paul's lawyer during his trial by Rome or (a modern preference) Theophilus ben Ananus, the High Priest of the Temple between 37 and 41 AD. But who are we to choose? There can, however, be no doubting the Biblical origin of the name. My only concern is with the poor recipient of such an appendage – how would he be teased, I wonder, by the lads in the Manvers Arms (or whatever it might have been called in 1851 – yet another puzzle to be addressed at a later date\*)? Another surprise (of an inverse nature) is the lack of usage of the names Peter or David. The frequent use of other apostles' names seems to imply there may have been an embargo on the use of Peter. Could it have been that St Peter was regarded as too close to God to be dragged through the mire of common usage? Clearly, the name of Jesus was treated thus – perhaps Peter was too. But there can be no corresponding sensitivity over the use of David, which is commonly used today. King David did, of course, have his weaknesses but were they taken so seriously in 1851, one wonders, as to preclude the application of his name to even the least worthy of Cotgrave's youthful prodigy? It is easy enough to understand parents' reluctance to Christen their offspring Judas (!) but why not David? or, for that matter, Matthew or Mark or Philip, none of which figure in my recent struggles? In all probability, I am simply overlooking the importance of custom – it was likely, perhaps, that parents wanted their children to sound like their neighbours' children and that was enough! We can hardly ask those concerned now!

I realise, in all this, that I could be accused of misogyny (one can't be too careful these days!) so, to put the record straight, I should also give consideration to the female sex. Zillah was one girl's name which took me by surprise. Where in the name of heaven did that come from? Well, it came, in fact, from Genesis. Zillah was the second wife of Lamech, a member of the house of Cain. The word itself means 'shade', though there is no evidence that she was in any way a shady character – she had children and helped propagate the Cainite clan. No more is known of her. By contrast, yet another girl's name that appears in the 1851 Census, that of Lucy, means light. The Roman Church has a Saint Lucy who suffered martyrdom in the early years of the Christian Church but there is also a connection with Lucius of Cyrene who was a kinsman of St Paul. Either way, the name seems to qualify as 'Biblical'.

So much for names. Another interesting feature of the Census concerns people's occupations. It would take far too long to go into detail but one specific example is worth recording. A couple of chaps described themselves as 'cordwainers'. It is a word that I had heard before but never understood – I thought, perhaps, that it might be connected with sailing ships but in that I couldn't have been further from the truth. Consultation with the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary yielded the fact that a cordwainer was a shoe-maker. It turns out that in Mediaeval times the best quality leather (goats' skin) came from Cordoba in southern Spain so the leather was known as cordwain and a shoe-maker who used this leather came to be known as a cordwainer. There then grew up a distinction between such craftsmen and their inferior counterparts, 'cobblers', the former making high quality shoes from new leather, while a cobbler was allowed either to repair shoes or to make them only from old (ie 'used') leather. The concept of the cobbler's inferior status is reflected in our modern-day description of a poor bit of work as a 'load of old cobblers'. And that seems to be a suitable point at which to finish this particular example.

**John Orton**

**\*It was known as the 'Black Lion' in 1851**

Mention of the changed name of the Manvers Arms raises the question of just how Cotgrave's public houses came into being and we can offer a certain amount of background based on both Census returns and on the various Trade Directories which were published from about 1820 onwards. Thus, we know that in 1822 there were two pubs in Cotgrave, one called the Royal Oak (now the Manvers Arms), the other the Duke of Wellington (now the Rose and Crown). We also know that both pubs changed their names in the mid-1800s, the Royal Oak becoming the Black Lion, the Duke of Wellington the Victoria but by 1861 they both had acquired their present names. We know nothing of the early life of the Rose and Crown but The Manvers Arms (obviously an ancient building) had originally been, firstly, a farmhouse then a joiner's shop. According to William Lewin, the Manvers came into being as a public house following the destruction of an ancient 'beerhouse' but he is not specific about its precise location. As we noted in an earlier Weekly Letter, the Manvers had pretensions to being rather more of a hotel than a mere pub but the Rose and Crown was always a drinking man's sojourn!



An interesting fact which emerges from perusal of the Census Returns, some of the landlords were only part-time victuallers, having some other occupation to make ends meet. It is quite clear, for instance, that in the 1861 Census the Rose and Crown licensee, Thomas Scottorn, advertised himself as a sadler – we have an old photograph (dated 1871) with the sign 'SCOTHERN SADLER' clearly visible on the wall facing the road (note the variation of spelling!). At the same time (1861) the manager of the Manvers Arms was also designated as being a wheelwright. In the 1871 Census the landlord of the Rose and Crown was a Henry Kircher, probably related to

Hannah Kircher, Mistress of what is now the Church School on Plumtree Road. Writing in 1952, William Lewin, being a recipient of her benediction, is not altogether complimentary about her performance in this role! The oldest photograph we have of the Manvers Arms is dated 1915, showing the same façade as we are familiar with today. A somewhat later photograph reveals the fact that the Manvers advertised 'HOME BREWED ALES – did anyone know that?



As to the names, the Royal Oak refers, of course, to the oak tree in which Charles II hid from the Roundheads after the battle of Worcester in 1651, the Duke of Wellington made his name in 1815 when he defeated Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo, the Victoria celebrates the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1830, the Rose and Crown refers to the Wars of the Roses, the crown being that of Edward III and the red or white rose of the Lancastrian or Yorkist contenders and the Manvers Arms recognises the fact that Earl Manvers owned the relevant bit of property. The Black Lion has me beaten! So far, I have not been able to pin down any specific origin of this particular name. Can anyone help? Does it have any local significance?

All this complexity obviously needs a summary so, you've already guessed, we shall revert to the limerick. But it's obviously too important to condense it all into just a single verse – hence the following:

In eighteen hundred 'n twenty-two  
Cotgrave's pubs were rather few.  
The Royal Oak  
Attracted folk,  
While Wellington offered a different brew.

In eighteen hundred 'n fifty-one,  
When all was said and all was done,  
To quench one's thirst  
Black Lion was first,  
Victoria being the other one.

But in eighteen hundred 'n sixty-one  
The names had changed again – for fun!  
So now if men,  
A'thirst agen,  
Sought shelter from the burning sun,  
They had to leave their working farms  
For either the Cross's Manvers Arms  
Or at Mill Hill's base  
The smiling face  
Of the Rose and Crown's alternate charms.

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## Art



We have no art this week, except as represented by that of the photographer. They are both 'stolen' from The Times. Our first photograph shows an unusually well-organised pose of dogs – and, interestingly enough, they really are posing. They belong to a canine training school which has the specific purpose of preparing dogs for TV and film, when they are needed to fulfil some very special acting part.

I very much doubt that the stags were posing deliberately but they make a lovely early-morning picture from somewhere in the Derbyshire Dales.



## **Puzzle Corner**

As with the Art, we have no quizzes for you this week – just a couple of serious questions. Joyce and I went for another walk in the local Country Park the other day and very much enjoyed the sunshine. But I couldn't help noticing just how many widely different wild flowers were displaying *yellow* flowers. I wondered if it had anything to do with the eyesight of bees but then realised that there were no bees in sight! We have plenty of bees on our lavender in the garden but that is blue – and, in any case, I suspect the bees find the appropriate flower by smell, rather than sight. Does anyone know the answer? Not that I'm going to risk making yet another error of fact by marking your answers out of ten but it just fascinates me. More seriously, though, there is little doubt that we have far fewer bees on our lavender that we used to have – we, as a nation, should be very worried that they are in serious decline.

The other question which similarly fascinates me concerns the experimental fact that an amazingly large proportion of flowers – garden and wild – have five petals. I've walked round countless gardens and counted petals – there really is no doubt about the observation! "Typical scientist" you may say, counting petals rather than simply enjoying the beauty of the colours and the shapely arrangement of stems and blossom! But that's the way I am – and you still haven't answered my question!

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## **Creative Writing**

Once again we are very much indebted to the Creative Writing group for their contribution to the Weekly Letter. This time it comes from Sue Hillyard and certainly makes us think – that, of course, is what it's meant to do. Thanks Sue.



## The Beginners' Guide To **FLIGHT**

(and other interesting facts)



Very few people realise that flight is **not all** about aerodynamics.

Whilst such theories certainly have a bearing on the **science** of flight, in reality (see *The Beginners' Guide to Reality for more information*) it is much more about the greatly under estimated **EFFECTIVENESS OF WILL POWER**. (See *The Beginners' Guide to Willpower for more information*.)

The simple fact is; **NO-ONE WANTS TO FALL!** Once one is airborne the choice is to fly or to crash into the ground and either

- a) have a really, really bad headache, or
- b) be eaten by a hoard of rabid predators, or
- c) something much, much, much worse!



So, surely will power **must** have something to do with it – don't you agree?

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Here is a person who is about to take a flight on an aeroplane. You might ask why she is worried. She will be packed with 300 strangers in a long metal tube with highly combustible fuel inches away, and she will be tightly strapped into a seat – often with a two year old toddler screaming in the seat directly behind her.



She has no need to fear the flight as **EVERY SINGLE PERSON** on that flight will be praying to their deity of choice or using their utmost and collective willpower to stay **UP** until they approach a suitable landing site.

For reassurance, she will be given full instructions on the use of the



**LIFE JACKET**

and the

**OXYGEN MASK.**



She will be shown how to brace for .....**COLLISION (!)**,

and, if all else fails, will be provided with a **SICK BAG.**



So, you must agree, there is nothing at all to **WORRY** about!

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Interestingly, 'flight' is one of the words in the English language in which the 'gh'<sup>\*</sup> is used to elongate the 'i' – so, the word 'flit' with a short 'i' in the middle (like 'pip') becomes 'flight' with an elongated 'i' (like 'pighp' ...er ...'pipe'). (Note: 'GH' can also be pronounced 'FF', as in 'enough', but in the word 'flight' it is silent.)

It could just as easily be spelt 'flyte' or even 'flite'.....but that would be far too easy! Or 'phlighte'...but that's just ridiculous!

There is no rationale behind this peculiar quirk of grammar – it is designed simply to confuse innocent foreigners wanting to learn our very eclectic mother tongue.



There are many more other examples of our grammatical guile which are waiting to catch out the unsuspecting student of our beautiful English language.



One theory is that we have adopted this brilliant strategy as revenge on those from across the water who insist on **blighting OUR lives** by randomly allocating inexplicable gender to inanimate objects such as chairs, windows and the like.





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## AND FINALLY

*If you've been on a flight, you've flown  
If it was some time ago, you flew  
Whether fleeing or flying there is no denying  
Flying's better than falling – that's TRUE!*



**STAY SAFE!**

.....  
So, once again, we come to the end of our meanderings. Look after yourselves and either wear a mask or stay at home (as Joyce and I do). Those £100 fines can soon mount up!

John

**PS** What do you call a deer without eyes?

No-eyed deer.

**PPS** I hope you all receiver the email from Pat Baxter, The Groups Coordinator, earlier this week to update you on advice from the National U3A.

If you wish to keep updated on the latest advice from the National U3A this will be available from next week on <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>