



# Cotgrave and District U3A

## Keeping in Touch 23

### Humour in Chaos

We live in chaotic times but, fortunately, we can still enjoy a hint or two of humour. I found this in the weekly magazine 'The Week' and thought it might amuse you.



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### Lake District Sheep

I came across an interesting bit of news in the Times recently concerning the future of sheep in the Lake District. In particular, it referred to a rather special breed known as Herdwick Sheep. As is clear from the attached photograph, they are not only hardy but possibly unique in the colour of their fleeces, which are dark brown. They have, apparently, inhabited the Lake District fells for something like six hundred years but, as with so many ancient traditions, there is a distinct likelihood of their becoming extinct. The reason is simple – modern farmers are under such financial pressure that they are letting their farm buildings to paying visitors or just allowing the land to go wild – the so-called rewilding fashion. The fact is that the past century has seen the number of sheep on these fells reduced by half and this has a particular significance with regard to a vital Lake District feature known as 'Hefting'.



Given a specific quality of turf, it is clear that each sheep requires a certain area of land in order to thrive. It then follows that a herd of n sheep requires n-times that basic area.

However, there is no fundamental reason why the herd should not expand indefinitely to spread itself far and wide and this is, of course, the reason why sheep are usually confined to one field by walls or fences. But, in the Lake District, it appears that these particular sheep have a built-in instinct which confines them to their own area – there is therefore a natural boundary between two herds which prevents each herd from expanding (put another way, the two herds do NOT diffuse into one another) and this saves the farmers a lot of money and trouble. But there *is* trouble when the density of sheep is much reduced – the boundary between different herds becomes indistinct



and the ‘hefting’ instinct is gradually lost. Indeed, the whole basis of Lakeland sheep farming is in the balance! It begins to look as though paying guests are in process of destroying the very environment that they pay to enjoy! And we in Cotgrave are privileged to acquire yet another amazing bit of knowledge that we knew absolutely nothing of – at least that’s true of me.

While on the topic of sheep, one cannot overlook the nature of the word itself. ‘Sheep’ is both singular and plural – sometimes referred to as an ‘invariant’. There are lots of them, such as fish, cod, salmon, plaice, bison, deer, swine, offspring, aircraft, etc. There are also a few words which can be used either way, such as boar or buffalo (why there are so many animals involved is another interesting question!) Finally, there are also words, known as ‘defective’ which have no singular, such as glasses, pants, scissors, jeans, etc. Apparently, there are over five hundred such oddities, which seems to make them really quite commonplace!

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### **A Day in Delft**

I wrote this for the Cross magazine in 2011 but it seems still to be of interest – after all, what happened in 1586 isn’t likely to change in importance by very much over a mere nine years!

Recently we were fortunate enough to spend a few days in Amsterdam in wonderful weather and very much enjoyed renewing acquaintance with its numerous canals, seventeenth century houses, museums and churches – oh and there were also such little matters as Dutch pancakes and *bitte ballen* (a favourite snack of mine from many years ago). I also had pleasant memories of Delft, a mere hour away by train so we also spent a very enjoyable day there, renewing acquaintances with its somewhat fewer, but no less impressive canals, houses, and churches (the pancakes were no less enjoyable, too). One of the joys of such exploration is, of course, to come across aspects of the history of the place which ring bells with one’s memories from quite different areas of interest, and Delft was to provide several.

We began with the Old Church (Oude Kerk), founded in 1246 and characterised by a crazily leaning tower. Delft, like so much of Holland, is built on sand and, apparently, the tower began to lean very soon after construction started. In fact, attempts were made to straighten it as building continued, with the result that it has an obvious kink about half-way up!

Nonetheless, as we were assured, it has been standing thus for some six hundred years and shows no sign of falling down yet. What is more, it served as a convenient platform for a world-famous scientific experiment, when in 1586 a Delft worthy, Jan de Groot, together with his friend Simon Stevin dropped two lead balls, whose weights differed by a factor of ten, from the top of the tower and recorded the crucial fact that they reached the ground simultaneously. This was in direct contrast to the Aristotelian belief that such objects should travel with velocities proportional to their masses and thus set the experimental cat among the philosophical pigeons, as it were. In fact, it is a point of some controversy who actually performed this world-perturbing experiment – many people believe that it was Galileo, who made use of the leaning tower of Pisa, but there is no firm evidence that he ever did so – all that can be said with any confidence is that he ‘theorised’ about it. On the other hand, Stevin, in a book published in 1605, makes a positive claim that he and de Groot really and truly did it! I think I want to believe him. In passing, I should perhaps mention that de Groot’s eldest son Hugo is famous as a lawyer who did much innovative work in the sphere of international law. There is a statue of him in the town square, though he isn’t buried in Delft because he fell out with the Orange family and spent much of his life abroad.

But that is far from the full extent of my interest in the Old Church in Delft. There are memorial stones to Johannes Vermeer (of ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ fame but who also painted a wonderful ‘View of Delft’) and to Maarten Tromp, the Dutch Admiral who is reputed to have sailed up the Thames and devastated the English fleet! Of even greater interest to me was the memorial to Antonie van Leeuwenhoek who was *an* inventor of the microscope and who, in consequence of his ability



to see life at magnifications as great as 300X, came to be known as ‘The Father of Microbiology’. He reported many of his findings through the London Royal Society and after a period when relations were somewhat strained, was made a Fellow in 1680, a considerable compliment to his experimental skills. He corresponded with Robert Hooke (Royal Society Secretary) who was also in the business of microscopy, though struggling with the problem of making adequate lenses. Herein, indeed, lay van Leeuwenhoek’s trump card – he had discovered a method of lens forming which involved drawing a glass rod down to fine thread, then melting the end of the thread and using the surface tension of molten glass to form near-perfect glass spheres. They were tiny, only about 1-2 mm in diameter, so their light-collecting properties were not spectacular but their optical perfection turned out to be far better than anyone could achieve, at the time, with more conventional grinding and polishing methods. Van Leeuwenhoek was canny enough to keep his secret to himself and was able to make a multitude of biological discoveries before anyone else could achieve similar resolution.

In particular, he was the first person to describe single cell organisms. He also demonstrated blood circulation through a vein and when, in 1698, he was invited to meet Peter the Great, he gave the Russian Tsar a microscope so he could amuse himself by watching his own blood circulation. Much of this I already knew but the exciting discovery I made in Delft was the fact that van Leeuwenhoek and I share a birthday – I was born exactly three hundred years, to the day after him.

One final observation: alas, the Old Church had no ancient glass – it was all blown out by a huge explosion in 1654, when some 30 tonnes of gunpowder blew up. Delft was being used as a military arsenal at the time of the war of independence from Spanish rule and the whole magazine went up, killing over a hundred people and wounding over a thousand.



The carnage would have been much worse had not many people been out of the town at the time. For the same reason, the New Church in the town square is also lacking in ancient glass but does have the elaborate tomb of William of Orange, assassinated in Delft by a Catholic fanatic who supported Spanish rule, against the Protestant Orange family who fought for independence. Sorry to end on such a gruesome note – but that's how it was.

**John Orton**

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## A Bit of Irish Humour

Two men were sitting next to each other in Murphy's Pub in London. After a while, one bloke looks at the other and says: "I can't help but think, from listening to you, that you're from Ireland."

The other bloke responds proudly: "Yes, that I am!"

The first one says: "So am I! And where about from Ireland might you be?"

The other bloke answers: "I'm from Dublin, I am!"

The first one responds: "So am I!"

"Mother Mary and begorra. And what street did you live on in Dublin?"

The other bloke says: "A lovely little area it was. I lived on McCleary Street in the old central part of town."

The first one says: "Faith and it's a small world. So did I! And to what school would you have been going?"

The other bloke answers: "Well now, I went to St Mary's, of course."

The first one gets really excited and says: "And so did I. Tell me, what year did you graduate?"

The other bloke answers: "Well now, let's see. I graduated in 1964."

The first one exclaims: "The Good Lord must be smiling down upon us! I can hardly believe our good luck at winding up in the same place tonight. Can you believe it, I graduated from St Mary's in 1964 my own self!"



About this time, Vicky walks up to the bar, sits down and orders a drink.

Brian, the barman walks over to Vicky, shaking his head and mutters: "It's going to be a long night tonight."

Vicky asks: "Why do you say that, Brian?"

"The Murphy twins are drunk again."



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## The Art Group

As I remarked last week, the Art Group have been more than generous in their support for our efforts, so here are four more of their excellent paintings:



## Puzzle Corner

First we have the answers to the quiz set last week by Peter Shreyhane. This is followed by a quiz Paul Childs has kindly (or cruelly, according to taste) sent us. It's another difficult dozen pop-song girls' names. Answers, as usual, next week.

### *Answers*

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Tiger                            | Which is the largest cat ?                                  |
| 2. Daffodil                         | What is the national flower of Wales ?                      |
| 3. Mayfair                          | What is the most expensive property on the Monopoly Board ? |
| 4. Bat                              | Which is the only mammal that can fly ?                     |
| 5. Iron Bru                         | Which soft drink is often associated with Scotland ?        |
| 6. 1986                             | Which year was the Chernobyl disaster ?                     |
| 7. Dopey                            | Which of Snowwhite's dwarfs doesn't have a beard ?          |
| 8. Ed Miliband                      | Who was leader of the Labour Party before Jeremy Corbyn ?   |
| 9. Tony Blair (67), Theresa May(63) | Who is older Tony Blair or Theresa May ?                    |
| 10. Newcastle                       | In which UK city was the Animals Pop Group formed ?         |

### POP QUIZ OF GIRLS NAMES

- 13) John Travolta was in love with her?
  - 14) Guy Mitchell sang about a 'black-eyed' girl?
  - 15) Dolly Parton was pleading with another girl about her man?
  - 16) Gene Vincent rocked about a 'be-bop' girl?
  - 17) Gilbert O'Sullivan sang about a little girl?
  - 18) The Everly bros 'clowned about' this girl?
  - 19) Ray Charles sang 'bluesy' about this girl?
  - 20) Louis Armstrong 'gravelled this voice' about whom?
  - 21) Elton John went Russian for this girl?
  - 22) Chuck Berry sang about this girl?
  - 23) Musical based upon this lady?
  - 24) The Rolling Stones a gem of a hit with this Tuesday girl?
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## Creative Writing Group

This week's contribution comes from Chris Tomblin and arose from her efforts to discover the origins of her family, leading to an accidental discovery of a (distant!) criminal relative! Thanks again, Chris.

### HER SEARCH FOR A PUBLISHER

(Chance encounter)

NEW YORK TIMES

Wednesday August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1907

The wanderings of Elizabeth complicated by a robbery.

The little town of Berlin Minnesota is in a region dealt with in one or two works by General Lew Wallace and is not a thousand miles away from Indiana. Thus, the people in and around Berlin are more or less lit'r'y. The mother of Elizabeth Erlich lives there and under the inspiration of the traditions of the territory she wrote 'Who was he? What is He-Christ?' There are no book publishers very near Berlin Minnesota so Elizabeth who is twenty years old started for New York to find one. She had 708 dollars about all that the Erlich's had saved for hard times. Arriving in New York in the early part of April she registered at the Broadway central hotel one night and the next morning as early as her home folks went to the wheat fields she went out to find a book publisher for 'Who was he'. Somebody had stolen her purse before she had gone two blocks. But the manuscript wasn't in the purse. Elizabeth went to work to a restaurant at 804 West Fourteenth Street as a waitress. She must have been a fine waitress for she says she saved 380 dollars by the middle of July. Then she thought she had enough money again to warrant her talking to a publisher. She was so happy that she forgot she lived at 127 West thirteenth street. Somehow, she remembered the address later. Then she went to a sixth avenue restaurant to have a sort of extra dinner to celebrate the joyful occasion of the approaching publication of 'who was he' Her eyes being still red from her crying over having forgotten her address she was accosted by one Harry Bradshaw. He was so good and gentle that Elizabeth told him all her plans. Then he confessed that he himself was a publisher of no mean renown and he doubted not that 'who was he' would sell into the thousands if put into the hands of the right person. He had found out that Elizabeth had the money with her. Going to Central park they talked over all the plans and then they went to a hotel in which Bradshaw said was the publishing area. It wasn't many minutes before Bradshaw had her money. He then told her that he was no publisher she declares and then she screamed. The police came Bradshaw was arrested. Yesterday he was found guilty of robbery in the second degree before judge Foster in general sessions. He maintained that he was a literary person, but he had never heard of Sir Walter Scott much less of Richard Harding Davies. He will be sentenced on Friday. Elizabeth Erlich still has her manuscript.



Cumberland Evening Times

New York August 24th

For cruelly robbing a young and unsophisticated country girl of \$380 Harry Bradshaw so called publisher and literateur was sentenced yesterday to State prison for 10 years and 6 months. Elizabeth Erlich 18 from Berlin Minnesota came to this city to find a publisher for a book written by her mother. As she was about to take the manuscript to a publisher she got into conversation with Bradshaw and confided her aspirations to him, He told her he was a publisher and then took Miss Erlich to a hotel and robbed her.

Bert Cooper lit yet another cigarette and threw his hat onto his head at a rakish angle as he swaggered over to the desk where his boss the newsroom editor of the New York Times was pounding away at a typewriter his shirt sleeves rolled up over his muscular forearms and a pencil behind his ears. The newsroom was noisy as usual with a fug of smoke covering everything.

'What's doing today boss' he asked, and the editor thrust a piece of paper over to him without looking up.

'Court for you today buddy' he growled. 'Robbery. Should be straight forward'. Bert groaned not his idea of fun. The editor looked up.

'Judge Fosters sitting' and a look passed between the two men. Judge Foster was not a friend of the New York Times.

Elsewhere in the city Judge Warren W. Foster was preparing for the day ahead. He was in his office in the General sessions court in New York looking at his papers. The assistant district attorney was leaning over his shoulder.

'This case' he said pointing to some names on the list 'is an odd one but I'm confident we'll get a conviction.' The judge sighed. This case wasn't news to him he'd had some very strange communication about it from some very influential persons in New York. He had his own theory about where the girl's 380 dollars had come from and it wasn't from working at a restaurant on West fourteenth street. It had come from work of a very different kind and the pillars of New York society who were involved didn't want it coming out in court.

'The girls story's a bit weak' said attorney Bostwick 'but Bradshaw was seen with the money and she said he had taken it so I'm sure we'll get a conviction' 'What's Bradshaw's background' asked the judge 'any previous convictions anything like that.

'No' said the attorney 'he's squeaky clean, claimed he was a publisher but just a chancer, I think. He's English been here since 1903. No

" Hmm an immigrant' said the judge with a sneer in his voice. 'Right. I don't want the girl questioned too closely you understand, especially about the amount of money she had with her. Several influential people are interested in this case.' A look of understanding passed between them. 'I need to be careful though I don't want any more investigations into my conduct. I was nearly crucified by the New York Times.'

Judge Warren W Foster had recently been under investigation by the commissioner of accounts and the Grievance committee of the Bar association. He had been accused of leniency in the sentencing of one Charles A. Belling ex vice president of the Bronx National Bank who by means of forgery had robbed the bank of \$25,000 dollars. He'd given him an indeterminate sentence of not less than 1 year and not more than 20 years which meant in reality he'd be out in 18 months. But hell, he was from a well-known and influential New York family and he was respected enough to be in a position of trust at the Bronx bank. He knew his father for God's sake what was he to do. He managed to convince the committee that he was acting under these new leniency rules that had just been introduced to benefit society. He'd even quoted suspended sentences for crimes that usually attracted 10 years' incarceration for persons of good character and first offenders and even managed to be admired for his forward-thinking ideas.

Bert Cooper stood up in court later that morning while the judge and his retinue arrived, and he took a look at the defendant Harry Bradshaw. Cooper saw that the judge had noticed him and was regarding him with a steely stare. Bradshaw was a slightly built good looking young man with dark hair. He looked scared. As the case unfolded Bert sat up and started scribbling in his notebook furiously. Harry was being questioned by Bosdick the assistant state attorney. Bradshaw denied he had stolen the money. He said he was looking after it for the girl as she had been robbed previously and he was a literary person and so was going to help her to find a publisher and that was the truth so help him God, When he said he'd look after it for her shed gone berserk screaming and shouting she was being robbed.

'So, Bradshaw you say you are literary "asked Bosdick 'which books of Walter Scott are you acquainted with and which of Richard Harding Davis.'

'Well I can't recall the names of the books sir' he replied.

'As I thought Bradshaw that proves that you are not a literary person at all, and you have told us a pack of lies.' And with an air of triumph the prosecutor sat down. Then the girl was called to the stand and Bert eyed her with interest. She proceeded to recount her story to the court in a childlike simpering manner. When she got to the bit where she said she had forgotten where she lived Bert snorted and was glared at by the judge. Then the defence attorney started his questioning.

'When you were robbed of 730 dollars in April did you report it to the police.' Bosdick was straight on his feet 'objection' he shouted, 'that has no bearing with the case in hand' and to Bert's disbelief the judge upheld the objection. 'Then do you really expect the court to believe that you managed to earn 380 dollars by waitressing for three months.' was the question. Again, objection by Bosdick and upheld by the judge. Question after question that might have led to the truth was objected to and upheld by Judge Foster. This poor jerk hasn't got a chance thought Bert. There's something fishy about this and it's something to do with where the money came from. As he expected Bradshaw was found guilty and Bert made his way back to the newsroom to type up his copy. He typed word for word what had been said by the assistant DA in his summing up of the case and laughed to himself. It sounded ridiculous and a real stitch up to him but let's wait for the sentencing and see what this newly tolerant and liberal thinking judge decides on the poor sucker's sentence.

The next day Judge Foster entered the courtroom and Bert sat up straight notebook out.

The Judge started 'This is a most heinous crime carried out on a simple and innocent country girl. She has been robbed not once but twice by the sort of disgraceful character you see standing before me and I totally abhor this type of crime. We need to set an example and stamp this out once and for all. We are heartily sick of the crimes carried out in New York by immigrants. I sentence you Harry Bradshaw to 10 years and 6 months in Osinning state penitentiary.' The courtroom gasped.

Bert shouted 'New York Times Judge Foster, what about your new leniency with first offenders. It's the guys first time why not suspend his sentence. Why did he get more time than the guy who robbed his bank'

'Silence' roared the judge 'and get out of my courtroom?'

Bert rushed back to the office and was furiously typing his copy when the news editor came straight over.' Come on buddy we got to go see the big guy, he's not happy about something.' Bert said' can it wait let me just finish typing this up for you to take a look at' The news editor said ' Quick then but I have a feeling you won't be needing that buddy ' Bert finished typing up his copy and they made their way to the editors office and knocked on the door . A gravelly voice shouted Enter. He was sat at his desk with his usual big fat cigar in the side of his mouth. 'That motherfucker Fosters not happy with you Cooper 'he said 'and he's been onto the proprietor saying you were disruptive and a disgrace in court. We're not allowed to publish anything further about this case. What've you got on it' and Bert passed over his copy and the editor read it and shook his head. 'Looks mighty fishy to me but sorry boys we gotta do what we gotta do. Our hands are tied on this one. But ten years in Sing Sing poor guy. I'll tell you something I bet Bradshaw wishes he'd never set eyes on Elisabeth Erlich''



## Cotgrave History

Nothing at all about Cotgrave this week! Don't worry, there's plenty more to come and (almost certainly!) plenty of Weekly Letters in which to find space for it!

Keep well and see you again next week,

John

PS (yet again!). I just can't refrain from celebrating Jimmy Anderson's achievement of being the first pace bowler to have taken six hundred Test wickets:

James Anderson, bowler of grace,  
Has recently won a great race,  
(In spite of dropped catches  
In several Test Matches),  
To six hundred dismissals by pace.



‘How to be happy in Lockdown’