



## Keeping in Touch 29

### A Dead Duck Story

John Haskell sent me this weeks ago and I lost it! Apologies to John but it's just as funny now as when I read it for the first time. Hope you agree.

### Duck

A woman brings a very limp duck into a veterinary surgeon.

As she lays her beloved pet duck on the table, the vet puts his stethoscope to the bird's chest and listens carefully.

A moment later the vet shakes his head and says sadly, *"I'm really sorry madam, but your duck, Cuddles, has passed away."*

The woman becomes quite distressed and begins to cry.

*"Are you sure?"* she says with tears flooding from her eyes.

*"Yes madam, I am sure"* the vet responds. *"Your duck is definitely dead."*

*"But how can you be so sure?"* the woman protests. *"I mean, you haven't done any testing on him or anything have you? Perhaps he's just stunned or in a coma or something."*

The vet rolls his eyes, then turns around and leaves the room.



A few minutes later he returns with a black Labrador retriever.

As the duck's owner looks on in amazement, the Labrador stands on his hind legs, puts his front paws on the examination table and sniffs around the duck from top to bottom. He then looks up at the vet with sad eyes and shakes his head.

The vet pats the dog on the head and takes it out of the room.

A few minutes later the vet returns with a cat. The cat jumps on the table and delicately sniffs at the bird from its head to its feet. After a moment the cat looks up, shakes its head, meows softly and strolls out of the room.

The vet looks at the woman and says, *"Look madam I'm really sorry, but as I said before, this is most definitely a duck that is no longer of this world. Your duck is dead."*

The vet then turns to his computer terminal, hits a few keys and produces a bill, which he hands to the woman.

The duck's owner, still in shock, looks at the bill and sees it is £150.

*"£150 just to tell me my duck is dead!"* she shrieks with incredulity

The vet shrugs his shoulders and says, *"I'm sorry madam. If you'd taken my word for it, the bill would have been £20. However with the Lab Report and the Cat Scan, it's now £150."*

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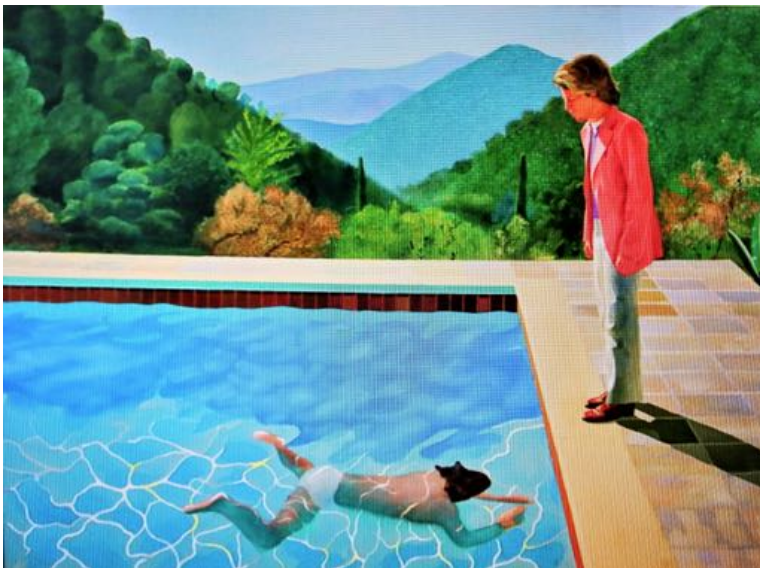
## Art

It will not have escaped your notice that I am something of a fan of David Hockney – after all he was a Bradford lad and I was born only a dozen or so miles away. Hockney's father, Kenneth, was a conscientious objector in the First World War, so obviously a man of principle and of independent mind. It should not altogether surprise us, therefore, that his son followed suit. He too was a conscientious objector in world war two. He acted as a stretcher bearer. He has also shown his refusal to toe the line of convention by his refusal to give up smoking – notice that in this lovely recent photograph he is complete with his customary fag and one would scarcely refer to his manner of dress as altogether conventional!



Whatever one may think of his lifestyle, it is clear that his unconventional approach has been a central feature of his art. He has explored any number of different techniques, including lithographs, etchings, 'liquid paper', photo-collages, computer paint-box, I-phone, I-pad and digital photography. He is well known in artistic circles for his method of painting an open scene from each of a large number of angles, then combining the individual views to form a huge 'retrospective'. In this manner he produced the largest painting ever to be hung in a Royal Academy exhibition. It was forty feet wide by fifteen feet high and represented a coppice in Yorkshire somewhere between York and Bridlington. It contained no less than fifty individual paintings. This was 'constructed' in 2007, whilst Hockney was living in Bridlington and making hay with the Yorkshire scenery which he greatly loved.

To return to origins, Hockney was educated at Bradford Grammar School, Bradford College of

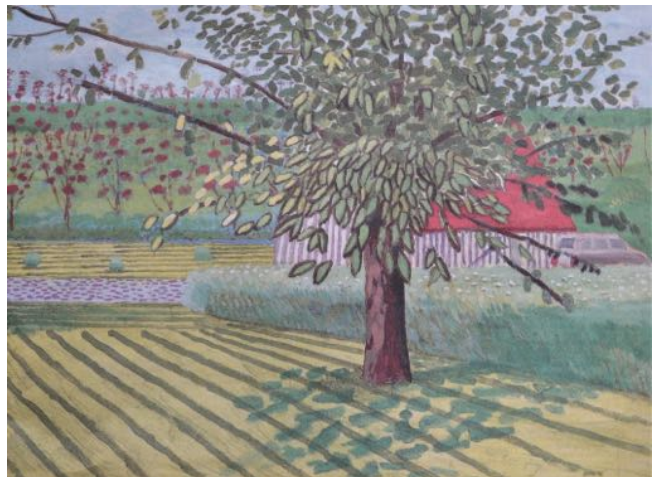


Art and The Royal College of Art (in London). He qualified from the latter establishment only after a contretemps with the directorate over his refusal to write an essay as part of his Final Examination – the college actually agreed to change its rules in order to pass him! I said that he was a man of strong, independent principles! In 1964 he moved to California where he made a significant contribution to the development of 'Pop Art'. It was here that he produced many paintings of swimming pools, such

as the, by now, famous 'Pool With Two Figures' a photograph of which we show here. Incidentally, it sold in 2018 for the princely sum of £70 million – the largest sale price for any living artist!



He also developed an interest in the picturesque hills around San Francisco and I have a reproduction of one such which hangs part-way up our staircase (just opposite the ‘Flight into Egypt’ sculptures I talked about last week). Here it is in all its glorious colour.



In the 1990s Hockney returned to England and, in addition to his ‘Yorkshire’ paintings, he gained acceptance by the ‘Establishment’ with a number of ‘Scenes’ for theatrical works, including opera at Glyndebourne. In 2018 he used an I-pad to design a stained-glass window in Westminster Abbey in recognition of the reign of Queen Elizabeth – it shows a hawthorn pattern from his native Yorkshire.

In 2015 he left England again and moved to Normandy, where he still lives. He loves the solitude there, particularly as emphasised by Covid-19! As he says, he only needs to look out of his windows to enjoy (and, of course, paint) the trees surrounding his country home. Such an eye for detail does he show that he appreciates the changes in the leaves from day to day. We show photographs of his paintings of his house and of one of his trees. It seems that, wherever he may find himself, he just has to paint, draw, reproduce electronically, etc, etc.

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## Salts Mill

Thinking about Hockney reminds me that there are quite a lot of his artworks in Salts Mill at Saltaire, just a few miles from Bradford. This is of interest, in itself, having been built as a textile mill by Titus Salt in 1853. Salt was born in 1803 of Congregationalist parents. His father was a successful farmer, then a mill-owner and Titus followed his father into the wool trade and became expert in buying and selling wool. Then, in 1822, at the age of only nineteen, he bought a sample of Donskoi wool (which comes from Georgia, Russia), found it difficult to sell, so decided to set up his own mill in Bradford and made a success of weaving both that and Alpaca wool. He rapidly became rich and bought other mills in Bradford. However, he was appalled by the working conditions of a great many Victorian employees and decided to do something about it. Not only did he build a beautiful and spacious mill outside Bradford, but he provided living accommodation for his workers as well. In fact, he built an entire village of decent, well-spaced houses in marked contrast to the more normal slum accommodation typical of West Riding towns and cities at that time. The village contained a school, an adult learning establishment and other public buildings but there was one proviso, there was to be nothing resembling a public house – Salt was a devout Christian, built the Congregational Church in Saltaire and forbade ‘beershops’! Nevertheless, he was not, himself, teetotal – just thought it safer for his workforce to be so! He and his wife Caroline had eleven children and there are streets in Saltaire called after each of them. Salt served as Mayor of Bradford, was elected a Liberal MP and, in 1869 was created a baronet.



The mill continued to function until 1986 when it was closed and gradually converted into an art gallery, coffee shop and mixture of arts and crafts shops. It contains a large collection of Hockney's work. Well worth a visit if you happen to be passing through on the way to the Yorkshire dales.

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## Words

There has been a certain amount of discussion recently concerning the changing in meaning of commonly-used words, even to the extent that young people today have never heard of some words which were common when we were in our youth (but more of that later). Did you know, for example, what a wool stapler was? Nor did I until I learned that Titus Salt became a wool stapler under his father's tutorage. Apparently, a wool stapler is a man who buys wool from a producer (ie a sheep farmer) grades it, then sells it to a manufacturer, who turns it into cloth. But where does the word come from? A stapler usually worked in a particular market place and, in mediaeval times, some such markets were given special status by royal decree. Thus, one of the most important markets in the wool trade was at Caen (then owned by the English Kings) and it was known as a 'Staple'. By a process of osmosis, a handful of wool fibre became known as a 'wool staple' and, later still, the merchant who handled it became known as a 'wool stapler'. The term was still in common use during the nineteenth century but seems to have lost a lot of its significance during the twentieth (that's my excuse, anyway – and I grew up in a wool town, so should have known!). Then, one cannot but be puzzled by the meanings we attach to the word 'staple' today. I struggle to see any connection between handling a fistful of wool and driving bits of sharp metal wire through sheets of paper, while there seems to be no more of a relationship with the eating of a staple diet.

Words do, of course, change their meaning over time. A nice example (and I use the word 'nice' in its original meaning) is provided by the word 'literally'. Its original 'dictionary' meaning was 'to do with words', or 'word-for-word'. It implied verbal accuracy such as might be appropriate to a translation from one language to another. Yet there can be no doubt that nowadays we use it in a subtly different way – indeed as a form of emphasis: for instance, I might say "I literally had to pull myself up by my bootstraps in order to achieve my objective". Note that the sense would be exactly the same if the word 'literally' were not there – its inclusion simply serves the purpose of emphasising just how hard it was for me to reach my goal ('goal', too, is a word which has changed its application from general to specific!).

There are, of course, a great many examples of words which have changed their meaning – here I select only a very few. Modern technology often plays a role; when information is 'tweeted' no-one supposes that it involves birdsong. Even us oldies know better than that! However, there is a lesser degree of certainty about the use of 'stripes' to describe a footballer's shirt. The original use of the word was a description of the effect of the frequent floggings which many slaves experienced at the hands of their owners. 'Meat', too, no longer carries the meaning it used to have. Originally, it simply meant 'food' of any kind (even hay for horses!). To be 'naughty' originally meant that you were poor, not wicked but the pressures on the poor to find illegal methods of keeping body and soul together probably led to the more recent implications. Finally, you may well be aware that the word 'hussy' originally meant 'housewife' – there was no implication of improper behaviour.

One gets the impression that these changes in meaning are happening at an ever-increasing rate, as evidenced by the recent comments in the press that modern youngsters are totally unaware of the meaning of words which were common when I was young. The examples quoted include ‘bonk’, ‘cad’ and ‘codger’ so I have (unsurprisingly!) taken the liberty of summing it all in the form of a limerick:

There was an old codger from Kew  
Asked his maid if she fancied a do  
But, instead of a bonk,  
She gave him a clonk.  
“You’re a cad – I’d ne’er do it with you.”

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## **Eco-Group**

Brenda Ainsley has kindly sent us the following update on Eco-Group activities:

We are pleased to report that we continue to meet (using Zoom technology) once a month. If you would like to join us, please let me know! Our September meeting focussed on the waste incinerator proposed for Ratcliffe-on-Soar when the coal-fired power station is shut down. As ever there is a complicated picture: electricity will be generated from burning household waste but unfortunately this new facility will not be a zero-carbon emissions; it will also generate a massive amount of traffic, all with its own high carbon footprint. This at a time when we strive to meet the 2050 net zero carbon emissions target that the UK signed up to back in the 2015 ‘Paris Agreement’.

In our October meeting (today) we intend to discuss the David Attenborough programme ‘Extinction’, recently broadcast on the BBC.

### **Government Energy Saving Scheme**

Green Homes Grants are available to improve your energy consumption. Check here to see if you are eligible <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme>

### **Crisp Packets**

Please keep them coming. Over 39 million packets have now been recycled nationwide; we sent off a consignment of over 10kg a few weeks ago and have now raised over £77 for Ash Lea School.

Please flatten your crisp packets and pack in a box or bag: this reduces the amount of handling we need to do – important for obvious reasons.



## Plastic Free Cotgrave

Several of our u3a members are involved in this community project  
<https://www.plasticfreecotgrave.org.uk/index.htm>

There's lots of information on how to 'live more lightly'. As Sir David Attenborough says, "Waste less". For those who plan to have some festivities at Halloween this year, there are some hints and tips on how to avoid the 2,000 tonnes of plastic waste generated every year.

## Cotgrave Community Garden

You may have seen activity near The Welfare recently, where one of the bowling greens is being converted into a fabulous community garden. Some u3a members are involved with this. They held an Open Day at the end of September which helped raised awareness – and funds! Plastic Free Cotgrave were very pleased to be involved and had an information stand.



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A U3A Member was asking recently how to recycle plastic milk-bottle tops and such like. I can confirm that the Dove Cottage Hospice Shop, next to Cotgrave Garage will accept these things – they have a dustbin ready and waiting to receive them at any time. You can park in the Rose and Crown car park for a few minutes

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## Quiz Corner

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Chris Soar for his all-inclusive compilation of drinking songs and their composers and singers. Here are all the answers, which should keep you happily occupied for a day or two:

Below are the answers, but first.....Aagh! How did it get in there? A pesky, errant apostrophe in question 4! My fault, though unspotted by the teams of proofreaders, editors, sub- editors, compilers, and printers who make up the team responsible for the Weekly Newsletter. The shame of it.....but we move on!

1. Red Red Wine was written by **Neil Diamond**, and I have it on an album by him. It was however a big hit for **UB40**.
2. Boots Brown's **Cerveza** (as we all know, Spanish for Beer), was the first instrumental I bought on 45 vinyl. I still have it. It begins with a bass guitar followed by drums, clapping, cymbals, guitars, saxophone joining in – perhaps an idea taken up by Mike Oldfield in Tubular Bells. (Discuss!)
3. This was **Tequila** (Spanish for Tequila!).
4. **Whisky in the Jar** was first recorded by the Dubliners (not a single Dubliner's something!), but the bigger hit was by **Thin Lizzy**.
5. **Slim Dusty** had a minor hit with **Pub with no Beer**. It is not my kind of record, but my brother bought it for my Birthday, along with Chantilly Lace, and I still have it!
6. The **Pina Colada** song was recorded by **Rupert Holmes**, and, for a short while, that cocktail was very popular. I have that too.
7. This was, of course, **Crackling Rose** (a bit of poetic licence here, because it was actually Crackling RosIE, as included in Paul's quiz).
8. **Peter Sarstedt** sang "I'll buy you one more **Frozen Orange Juice** on this fantastic day". His big hit, of course, was Where Do You Go To My Lovely?
9. **Jimmie Rodgers** sang "**Kisses Sweeter Than Wine**"
10. It's **Tequila** again, and sung by **The Eagles**.
11. **Frankie Lane** searched for **Cool Water**, which was the first pop song I heard before Hound Dog.
12. Sorry. I worded this question wrongly by emboldening the "and". **Jack Lemmon** was the Actor, and **Andy Williams** the Singer.
13. **Nancy Sinatra** and Lee Hazelwood brought out an album with the song **Summer Wine**, which was rerecorded by **The Corrs** much later.
14. **Scott English** (and American!) recorded **Brandy**, but the name was changed to Mandy by Barry Manilow.
15. **Dean Martin** sang "**Little Ole Wine Drinker, Me**", in answer to the question "Who's that fool cryin' in the corner?"
16. That was **Love Potion No 9** originally recorded by **The Clovers**, the 45 vinyl of which I still have, and 5 years later by **The Searchers**.
17. **Wide Ey'd and Legless** – though from love!



**18. Sherry by The Four Seasons.**

19. **Another Cup of Coffee** from the album Beggar on a Beach of Gold.

20. **Bobby Goldsboro** (No “ugh” on the end – that’s reserved for unwanted apostrophes!) sang the song: “She” sipped on a **Julep** (traditionally sugar and crushed mint covered in ice with Bourbon poured over. Never had one! Never drunk bourbon! Perhaps that should be remedied!

Right. Those are the answers to the Quiz. Obviously they could all have been found using Google, though I suspect Paul got most, if not all, without that help!

Mentioning Google reminds me that, if you’d like to bring a smile to your face, Google “Julie Andrews – doh ray mi -Antwerp station” and also “Uptown Funk Dance – Old Movie Clips”.

I’m sure you’ll find them uplifting, and , if you have the time, they’ll lead you to similar clips – just the job to lose those Covid glooms!



Then, for the rest of the week, we have a gentle quiz from Peter Shreyhane based on Cotgrave Street names:

1. An ecclesiastical address.
2. There’s a Christmas feeling here.
3. Where you might catch a fish.
4. The angry incline.
5. Where you might find wool being woven.
6. You might get your sweeties here.
7. A place to pick fruit.
8. Where our ancestors may have walked.
9. Does a university official live here ?
10. Did Beatrix’s Potters little friend live here ?

*Answers will be given next week, I hope!*

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## **Creative Writing**

This week's creative writing is by Sue Hillyard on the subject of a Magazine Article. You are advised to take notice of the names of the letter writers. Thanks once again, Sue, for your many contributions to our Weekly Letters. Also to the Creative Writing Group for their continuing support.

### **ASK AUNT MAUD**

#### ***MY JEALOUS STEPMOTHER***

*Q) My stepmother is always criticising me and finding something to moan about. Since my father died she's very pleasant when others are around, but when we are alone she finds every opportunity of complaining and being vindictive. She's always checking her appearance and I've often heard her talking to herself in her room. I rarely go out although I am of marriageable age. Do you think she is jealous of me?*

#### ***Miss S White***

*A) It sounds to me as if she is, indeed, jealous because you are young and pretty, and she's a mature woman. Perhaps you might try getting on her good side by buying her some face cream as older people can often get wrinkled and warty, or you could suggest giving her the gift of a few Botox treatments. She seems to be a quite deranged person so watch out for her sending you into the woods or giving you a rosy apple.*

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#### ***SHOULD I FOLLOW MY DREAM?***

*Q) An old school friend previously held a very responsible and high profile job although he left his last post under a cloud. I have always been an ambitious, confident and idiosyncratic person and now find myself in a situation where I could emulate his career. Should I pursue my dream or would I risk the trap of being promoted above my capabilities?*

#### ***Mr B Johnson***

*A) You don't say what the position is so it is difficult for me to advise you. From the tone of your letter I imagine you to be a rather talentless, pompous and self-promoting twerp. Only 50 years ago you would not have had such an opportunity, but these days, even the incompetent can rise to high office. So long as you are able to control your narcissistic tendencies and surround yourself with multiple teams of highly qualified and capable staff and advisors you might get away with it. You may have to cope with copious and persistent criticism but you sound like the sort of person who will bluster your way to the top by bypassing inconvenient issues and focussing on speaking loudly and gesticulating wildly. If you do take the job remember to always maintain a smart and tidy appearance as this might help with your image.*

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### ***SHOULD I RISK GOING ON A CRUISE?***

*Q) I like to think of myself as a highly sociable person - indeed, the thought of not seeing anyone for more than a day or two is terrifying to me. A friend has suggested that I book a cruise as there is always a full and active social life onboard ship. Should I take the plunge?*

***Mr R Crusoe***

**A)** Definitely. The chance of you not socialising on a cruise is extremely low. You won't spend a minute by yourself and you may get the opportunity of exploring exotic island locations. Let me know how you got on when you get back home! Bon voyage!

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### ***I'M WORRIED ABOUT MOVING HOUSE***

*Q) I have lived in the same house for well over 50 years but I have noticed a significant lowering of moral standards among my neighbours. Everyone has been married to at least 2, if not 4, people in the immediate neighbourhood, several people have been murdered, and I feel that I am being watched all the time. Should I move away?*

***Mr K Barlow***

**A)** There's a lot to be said for starting again but, at your age, Mr Barlow, I would suggest that familiar surroundings might be a comfort. We all feel under scrutiny from time to time but it is extremely unlikely that anyone anywhere is the least interested in your daily activities. Ignore the goings on around you and perhaps spend a little more time quietly watching TV as nothing can be so dire as the goings on in some of the witless and degenerate soaps which blight our screens.

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### ***MY FRIEND IS ALWAYS STEALING THE LIMELIGHT***

*Q) A few years ago my male long term work partner retired. His position was offered to, and taken by, a very annoying woman of a similar age to me. She's always trying to out do me in terms of our various responsibilities and her long fringe, which flops about and virtually covers her eyes, drives me to distraction. Do you have any advice for me?*

***Ms T Daly***

**A)** You don't say what job you both do. I suggest that you take every opportunity to smile smugly, nod condescendingly and generally look as cool and glamorous as you can manage whenever she's talking. Oh, and buy a pair of scissors!

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**MY NEIGHBOUR'S CATS ARE A PERSISTENT NUISANCE**

*Q) Next door's cats are always jumping over the fence to use my flower borders as their own personal toilet. What do you advise?*

*Anon, Surrey.*

A) Try [www.catapultsRus](http://www.catapultsRus). I've tested them myself with excellent results.

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**I'M NEVER ASKED TO BABYSIT**

*Q) Despite having four children of my own, several grandchildren and now a number of great-grandchildren, I have never ever been asked to babysit - not even once! I spend the vast majority of my time at home and have plenty of space. I also know for a fact that they pay others to care for their children. Should I resent this?*

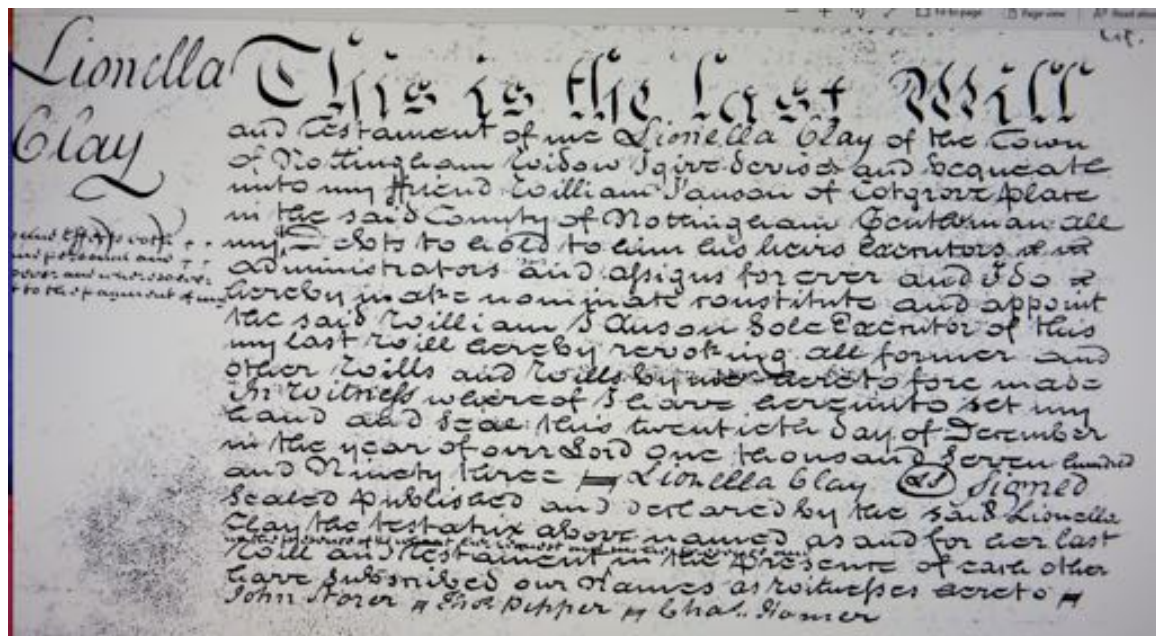
*Mrs E Windsor*

A) It may be that your family are concerned that, however unlikely it might sound, you might pass the responsibility of their care on to someone else. Many grandparents are used as childminders by their children, some are even paid! Perhaps you could let them know that you would appreciate the opportunity of earning a few extra pounds from time to time if your pension isn't stretching quite as far as it used to.

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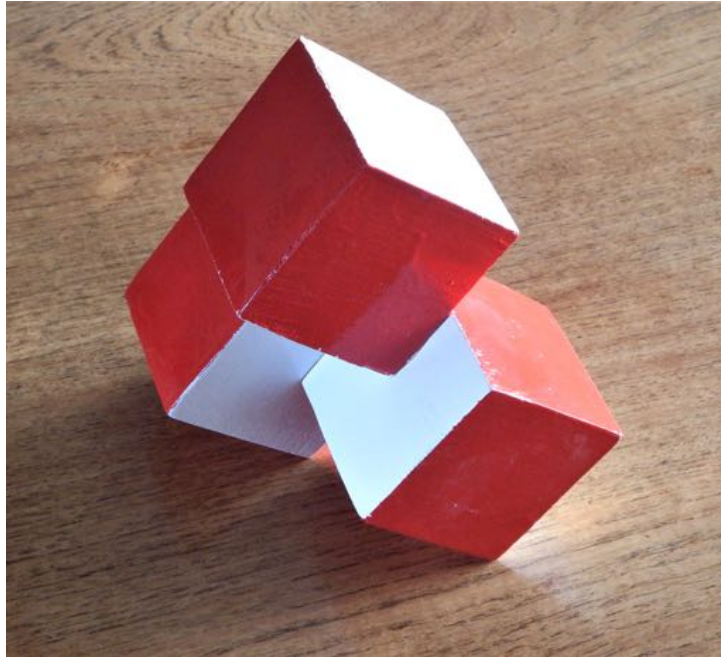
Come to think of it, we hardly write anything these days – it's all typed! And such thoughts stir me to show you an example of how they used to do it in the eighteenth century. This is a section of Lionella Clay's will, with mention of William Ianson – you will all remember well that we talked about them some weeks ago. In spite of the legalese, we can read it easily enough, which is certainly not true of the hand-written census returns of the nineteenth century – believe me, they can be nigh-on impossible!





**That's it, I'm afraid for this week. Look after yourselves,**

**John**



**STOP PRESS**

**STOP PRESS**

We have just heard that Chris Tomblin has won a writing competition organised by the National Trust. She wrote about the bridge in Clumber Park. Congratulations Chris – very well done.