



## Cotgrave and District U3A

### Keeping in Touch 31

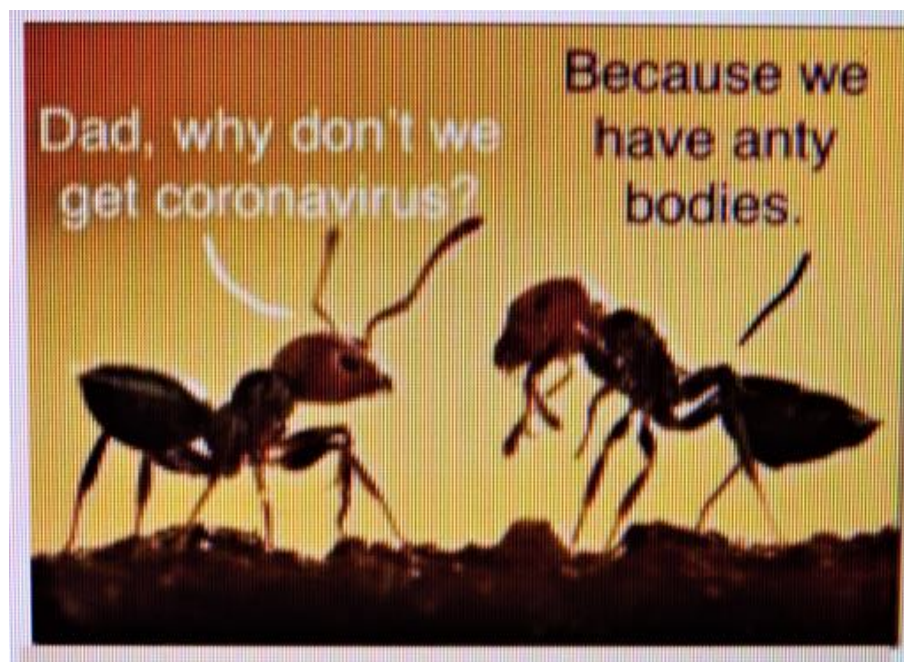
#### Preamble

As many of you know, I am also a member of Beeston U3A so I receive a copy of their monthly newsletter. I've quoted from this on one or two previous occasions but on rather serious matters like Covid-19. This week, it's on Covid-19 again but simply for fun. I thought the following might amuse you.

#### HOME COVID TEST

1. Pour yourself a large glass of red wine.
2. Smell the wine and if you can smell it, go to 3.
3. If you can smell it, drink it and see whether you can taste it.
4. If you can smell it and taste it, this means you are free of Covid.

Last night I tried the test nineteen times and every one, thank God, was negative. Tonight, I'm going to do the test again because I woke up with a headache this morning and I feel that I may be going down with something.



This needs no explanation.

I think I have also made clear that I love L S Lowry paintings, so it will come as no surprise that I was much amused by the following Times cartoon. I can only hope that you will enjoy it too.



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Now for the serious stuff – after all, U3A does (or used to!) stand for ‘University’, even one of the ‘Third Age’.

### Orbs and Crosses

A couple of weeks ago, I told you about Autun Cathedral and its many wonderful stone carvings and included a photograph of one of these, showing Mary and Joseph on their famous ‘Flight into Egypt’. It’s here again, as a reminder.



A detail which I overlooked last time, has been worrying me more recently. You will see that Mary is holding a ball in her right hand (just a little larger than a cricket ball!) and baby Jesus is resting his right hand on top of it. In spite of the many cricket fanatics who argue for ever-earlier origins for the game, there can be no doubt that cricket did not exist in the year AD 1, and certainly not in the country of Israel! What exactly, is this round object and what is its significance? The Autun sculptor was making a definite point – it must mean something! So, I asked a Catholic friend for her opinion and she came up with the likely explanation that it represents the World and that Jesus is indicating his love for the whole of humanity. This set me thinking – I had surely seen such an orb somewhere else and, of course it was in the crown jewels. I remembered seeing, for instance, a painting of Queen Elizabeth I in her full regalia, clutching just such a sphere and here, indeed, it is for all to see. The orb has grown a little larger (though still not so large as a football) but, more importantly, it’s now surmounted by a cross.

Now, it seems unlikely that Elizabeth was expressing her love for all of humanity, though she may well have wished to be in control of a bit more of it, and this sent me off on a minor research project to ascertain where these orbs and crosses came from. The internet is all-knowing these days (but be careful what you believe!) and I very soon came to realise that this love of round objects, representing the World and man's power over it has a long history. Certainly, the Roman Emperors clung onto them, in recognition of their power over quite a large portion of it and it constituted a significant part of their religion, too.



For example, we show here a photograph of a Roman statue of the God Jupiter, making clear his power over the World by holding a model of it in his hand (and remember that Jupiter was the God of all space, usually seen as the Roman equivalent of the Greek God Zeus).

This brings us to the question of the cross and it needs very little imagination to realise that this must represent a Christian influence. Interestingly, we can see this well illustrated by comparing two Roman coins. The first one is one of the Emperor Carinus, who ruled from AD 282 to 285 and it is clear that, like Jupiter, his orb is not surmounted by a cross. On the other hand, the second coin, one of Emperor Constantine (306 – 337), the first Christian Emperor, clearly shows a cross.



This seems to represent the beginning of a new Orbital Era (as it were) in which Rulers wanted to indicate their power over their particular portion of the Globe, while being careful to admit that they were only doing so through the good offices of their God. It also suggests a hint of a



dilemma because it is clear that the Church, itself also wishes to declare its influence over the World, as illustrated by this nineteenth century painting of Mary and Jesus also holding their orb (it is actually a Russian-Orthodox icon). Christ, too, is often painted holding a Globus-Cruciger, as it came to be known and we show an example, painted by Andrea Previtali round about 1500. On the other hand, the Orb is still very much a part of the Crown Jewels and figures importantly when we have a Coronation Ceremony, so we have to accept that both Church and Monarch make use of this particular bit of symbolism, each in their different ways.



Returning, now, to the Autun carving, I was prompted to ask “Why is the orb shown there not surmounted by a cross? After all, it is a religious icon.” But a moment’s thought is sufficient to answer that question: even though the carving was made during the twelfth century, it would, surely, be anomalous to use the crucifix symbol at the time when, in the carving, Jesus was still a baby – the crucifixion was still thirty years away! The Autun carver was simply being strictly logical.

I feel much better, now, having sorted out my earlier concerns. I can only hope that you, the reader, think it all worthwhile!

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## A Spherical Earth

A rather different question, raised by the above discussion is: ‘When was it first realised that the earth is spherical?’ and the answer is: ‘a long time ago – much, much earlier than the arrival of the Christian era’. Pythagoras (he of right-angled triangle fame) is known to have speculated upon it in 500 BC., based on the observation that a ship sailing out to sea appears to disappear from bottom upwards. Then, in 400 BC Socrates noted that, at the time of a lunar eclipse, the earth threw a curved shadow on the moon. But the height of Greek scientific brilliance came round about 200 BC when Eratosthenes actually measured the circumference of the earth with a simple experiment. He stuck a stick in the ground (vertically) and examined the shadow it threw on the ground. He compared this with the observation that at a well, some (measured) distance away the sun was directly overhead. And from these two observations he was able to calculate the earth’s circumference. Brilliant! One of the best experiments ever! The very simplest of equipment resulting in a highly significant outcome – and his result was within roughly ten percent of today’s accepted value!

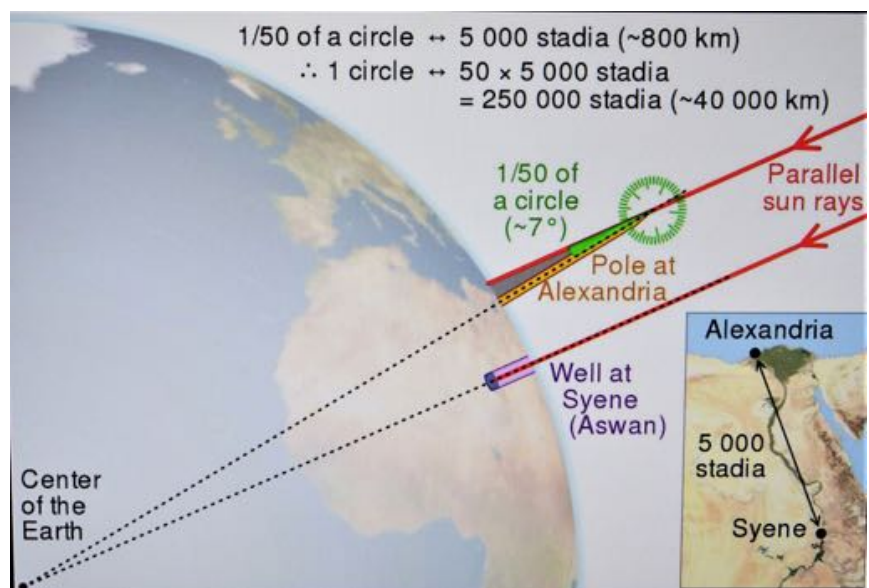


It isn’t difficult to understand how it worked (see attached diagram). Eratosthenes was head of the library in Alexandria and first noticed that, at the summer solstice, a well in Alexandria showed a partial shadow, while at a similar well in Syene (present day Aswan) the sun’s rays were exactly parallel to the axis of the well – in other words exactly normal to the earth’s surface. He then went back to Alexandria and set up his pole and found that the angle between the sun’s rays and the vertical pole was 7.2 degrees. All that was left to do was measure the distance between

Alexandria and Syene! It isn’t altogether clear just how he did this – possibly by getting someone to pace it out!

Anyway, it is clear from our diagram how he could calculate the earth’s circumference (at least, I hope it is!). Yet another question concerns his ability to set up the pole accurately vertically. The spirit level wasn’t invented until the seventeenth century but there is clear evidence that the plumb line was in use by the ancient

Egyptians and hints of it in Homer’s *Odyssey* so we may assume that Eratosthenes made use of one, too.



## Quiz Corner

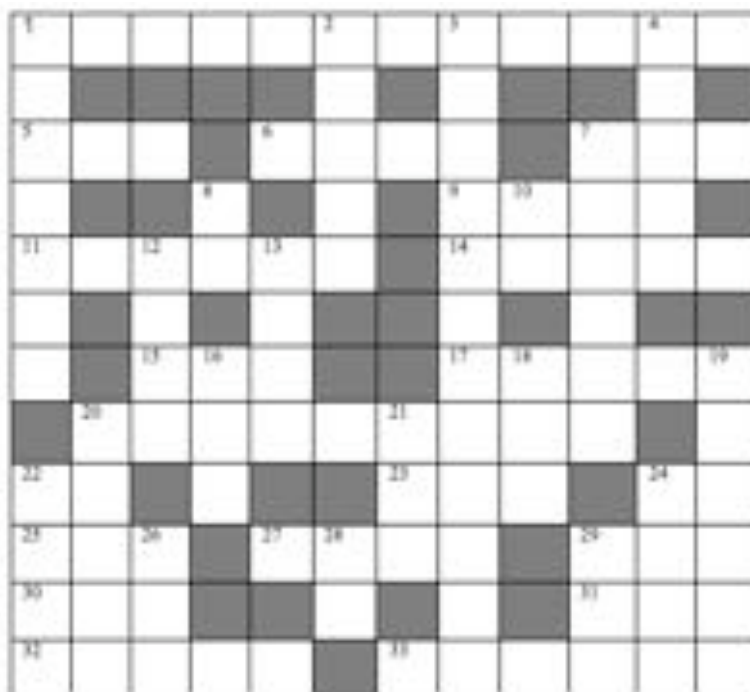
Firstly, we have the answers to Paul's 'Olde English' quiz:

### Answers to old English translations sheet

- 1 Twinkle, twinkle little star.
- 2 Birds of a feather flock together.
- 3 Look before you leap.
- 4 Beauty is only skin deep.
- 5 Don't cry over spilt milk.
- 6 Cleanliness is next to Godliness.
- 7 The Pen is mightier than the Sword.
- 8 You can't teach an old Dog new tricks.
- 9 Spare the Rod and spoil the child.
- 10 Watch a Pan never boils.
- 11 All that glitters is not gold.
- 12 No smoke without fire.
- 13 Beggars can't be choosers.
- 14 Charity begins at home.
- 15 Dead men tell no tales.
- 16 People in Glass houses shouldn't throw Stones.
- 17 Beginners luck.
- 18 All's well that ends well.
- 19 A rolling Stone gathers no Moss.
- 20 He who laughs last laughs longer.
- 21 Nothing ventured nothing gained.
- 22 Sticks and stones make break my bones but nicknames never hurt me.

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While this week we can enjoy a Crossword submitted by Sue Hillyard – thanks Sue for your continuing support.



## CLUES

### ACROSS

1. The birds at the back fly from side to side (12)
5. You will find part of a fish in here (3)
6. As well as can be expected (4)
7. Caps seen in the Himalayas maybe? (3)
9. You might have little but you can definitely start small in America (4)
11. You can get this without difficulty (6)
14. Get near and shut it! (5)
15. Unhappily a winter disorder (3)
17. Yorkshire sweets (5)
20. Metallic and colourful sounding, quite pleasant to listen to (10)
22. Those in third and second place came as a bit of a shock! (2)
23. A cracked one sounds dull and crazy (3)
24. Nottingham is apparently in this backward little region (2)
25. Perhaps the confused sailor was unwelcome onboard? (3)
27. It's definitely not us who are short of a topic! (4)
29. and 29 down. I heard you on the radio (3)
30. Just look at her age and you'll find her particular time period (3)
31. Even without King George it's still very good that we all do this (3)
32. The tart lost her companion, but the guitarist can still play (5)
33. Sounds like the chap got his money through altruistic provisions? (6)

## DOWN

1. Without nitrogen the tobacco sniffers don't do so well (6)
2. Lovely money laying around (5)
3. 7 across combined with 2 down results in one of these (12)
4. I can can do high ones (5)
7. Symbolic of the brand? (6)
8. A tasty sounding symbol (2)
10. This short man was one of the writers (2)
12. Was this the original broad band? (4)
13. The noisy confusion could be fair game (4)
16. That sailor got mixed up to use this creative medium (3)
18. The inverted triangle top is one you can descend into (3)
19. They can take 3 days; others not so long - or even longer (6)
20. Without a royal warrant you can still plot a safe voyage (5)
21. Not a copy cat but a species with the same characteristics (3)
22. The confused flower produces minerals (4)
24. See me at the butcher's (4)
26. The aforementioned sailor is sticky (3)
28. Half of the fence is in the ditch (2)
29. See 29 across (3)

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## Art Group

This week we have contributions from Desna Haskell and Dorothy Albans. As I must have said several times already, we are so lucky to be able to enjoy their talents.



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## Chess Group

It is good to see that the Chess Group manages to keep functioning, in spite of everything the PM can throw at us. Here is photographic evidence, including the obvious need for warm attire.



## Creative Writing Group

This week we have another contribution about money from Heather Lea. Thanks Heather. My father was a bank manager and I remember watching him in awe as he counted cash with an unprecedented rapidity (or so it seemed to me). The odd thing is that I have never been the least bit interested in money, myself! I, somehow, managed always to have just enough.

### Money can buy me love

Heather Lea/Whatnall

“Do you want £10s or £20s Mrs Oldroyd?”.

It had been a long, dull day Gill thought as she complied with the customer's request and counted out the cash.

“Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, one hundred. Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, two hundred. Two twenty, two forty. Is there anything else I can help you with Mrs Oldroyd?”.

After receiving a negative response Gill hurriedly wished her customer “Good afternoon” and displayed her “Till Closed” sign. The Banking Hall doors would soon be closed and Gill’s favourite part of the day would start – balancing her till.

Although Gill thought it had been a dull day it had actually been busy and there were a lot of transactions to process. It would be a while before she could count the cash in her till and see if she balanced it first time. She had a 100% success rate so far this month and was determined to keep this record. Today was the last day of the month.

The Chief Cashier Lynne would soon be pestering Gill and the other cashiers for their balances. Lynne, having avoided serving customers for the last half hour, had already balanced her till and was having a cigarette. This was not unusual. Everyone knew that Lynne always bent down to the bottom drawer of her till every time a customer came in after 3pm – so ensuring customers didn't see her and went to another till. This meant she could complete her till balance by 3.30pm even before the Banking Doors closed.

Gill had lots of notes to make up. There were a number of soiled notes today which she had to keep separately so they could be amalgamated with those in other tills. There was a large amount of coin which was heavy work. A lot of the Market stalls had paid in today and they always had lots of coin. As Gill counted the notes, she licked her fingers to assist the process, her till sponge was dry and she was in too much of a rush to go and water it.

(Years later Gill would both cringe and laugh at the thought of licking her fingers while she counted notes which could have contained all sorts of germs. The notes from the Meat stalls at the Market often had bits of mince on them and, similarly, there was often bits of salmon on the notes from the Fish Counters. Gill would always say it hadn't done her any harm as she prided herself in having taken no sick days in her 40 years with the Bank).

Once all the notes were counted. Gill started the balance. She always followed a set routine: writing down the total of notes beginning with the £50 notes and working through to the £1 notes. Then it was the coin – full bags and then the part bags. She had already calculated the total she should have by listing the cash in/out on the vouchers she had processed that day. Gill got a total of the cash in her till and was confident that this would agree with the vouchers total. She was horrified when it didn't - It was £10 short!!

Lynne had started shouting to all the Cashiers - She wanted the bulk cash to bag and seal so it could be paid over to the Treasury and then Lynne would be able to go home – she was taking her children to get new school shoes. Gill's announcement that she hadn't balanced was not well received "Hurry up and check your till, why did you choose today to not balance?".

Note substitutions were often the issue. The £20s were short by £20 and the £10s were over by £10. Gill started checking them all. She put each bundle through the note counter – she had made up a lot of bundles today. About halfway through the recount she found it – a £20 note in a bundle of £10s. The note counter rejected it. As Gill picked it up, she noticed there was writing on it. She was used to seeing rude drawings and insults on notes - why did people not realise it was illegal to deface Bank Notes. What was written on this note was, however, a bit different:

"Beautiful Gill, Till 3, please come for dinner with me. KM"

Gill's head started whizzing - who was KM? She didn't have long to think as Lynne was on her case asking if the till was now balanced. Thankfully it did and everything could be finished off and packed away in to the Vault. Gill had put the defaced £20 at the back of the loose notes in her till so she could look at it again in the morning.

Who was KM? The mystery kept Gill busy that evening. She went through all the regular customers she served but nothing came to mind. She was just falling asleep when it came to her "Kirkway Meats". The owner of this Market Stall was about her age, very attractive and, now she thought about it, he was very chatty when he came in and did seem to always come to her till. Gill fell asleep with a big smile and excitement for what the next day might bring.

### Epilogue

Mr Kirkway Meats (also known as Martin Fisher) did come in the next day. He came to Gill's till. She blushed heavily and Martin knew she had seen the note. He asked her out for dinner and she accepted the invitation. It was the start of a wonderful, loving relationship.

**Contrary to what the Beatles thought "Money can buy me love"!**

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## English Wines

You will remember that we discussed the rise and rise of the English wine industry a week or two ago. I was therefore interested to read a newspaper article the other day to the effect that the famous French Champagne makers, Taittinger have bought a large area of Kent, where they plan to grow grapes. Global warming has made this part of England ideal for the growth of those grapes which go into Champagne production. Should we celebrate or complain about undesirable immigrants? Well, you won't be surprised to learn that we shall celebrate with a limerick:

The wine-growing regions of Kent  
Make 'Fizz' up to fifteen percent<sup>#</sup>.  
So Champagners from France,  
Showing Gallic romance,  
Have bought Hectares<sup>\*</sup>, with vinous intent.

#There may be just a hint of 'Poetic Licence' here.

\*They were sold 'Acres'!

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## Hip Hip Hooray

When Andy Murray was recently drawn against a tennis player named Alexander Sverev, The Times came up with this headline:

'CHALLENGE FROM SVEREV WILL TEST ANDY'S METAL!'

It may well have done so, but Murray won an exciting match 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

I feel that's probably enough for this week. Look after yourselves,

John.

