



# Cotgrave and District U3A

## Keeping in Touch 35

### A Plea for Help

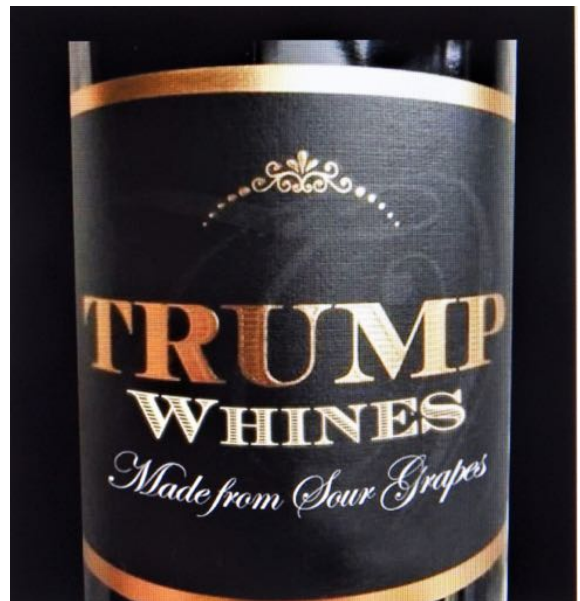
Before getting to the funny bit, I must fulfil a promise to Sue Hillyard, which I totally forgot last week! She is in process of crocheting a blanket for palliative care at QMC and is short of double knitting wool. Do any members have any spare double knitting wool that they might donate to such a good cause? (NB it must be 'double').

If anyone can oblige would they please let us know so that we can tell Sue. She will then make contact to arrange collection.

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### Wine Appreciation

I am indebted to an old friend Brian Fernley, who used to live in Cotgrave, for our first cartoon. I think it just wonderful – really catches the present mood in respect of the soon-not-to-be President Trump. Thanks very much, Brian – I'm still laughing after several days!



Then there's this which I've pinched from the Beeston U3A Monthly Letter:



## A Local History Mystery

Now it's time to get serious – remember what I said a week or two ago about U3A educational ambitions! I wrote the following for the now-defunct Church Magazine way back in 2005 but it still seems appropriate to our Weekly Letter series – it is, at least, about local history!

The elucidation of Cotgrave's personal history owes much to a group of WEA students who made a special study of village life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and their well presented findings, published in 1987 under the title "Cotgrave – aspects of life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" is recommended reading for anyone with a serious interest in the village (a copy being available from the library on the precinct).

The choice of this particular period neatly encapsulates the time during which the Scrimshire family figured large in Cotgrave life and it is to them that I wish to draw attention in the following. They left us an obvious reminder of their presence in the form of "Scrimshire Lane", the relatively short stretch of road linking Plumtree Road with Risegate, at which point it transmogrifies into Owthorpe Road. It represents one of the oldest named streets in the village, being referred to under this title in the 1790 Cotgrave Enclosure Act (a copy of which is also available in the local library) and one can only assume that it was so-called because of its proximity to the Scrimshire manor house, the remains of which disappeared relatively recently beneath the modern development of Green Platt. A fragment of ancient stonework still exists near the bottom of Scrimshire Lane which probably formed part of the boundary wall delineating the family estate but little else remains in the way of structural evidence for the Scrimshire presence. There is, however, a considerable amount of other material, including gravestones, entries in parish registers, records of land transfers, wills, etc which allow us to learn quite a lot about the family.



Their arrival in Cotgrave is noted by the seventeenth century Nottingham historian Robert Thoroton who refers to the purchase of land and property by Harold Scrimshire sometime in the sixteenth century (probably round about 1560-70 but I can't find a more specific date). It seems that the availability of this land came about as a direct result of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, most of the land around Cotgrave having previously been divided between Lenton Priory and Swineshead Abbey (near Boston in Lincolnshire). Henry kept some of his newly acquired gains for himself but sold off the Swineshead Abbey portion to Harold Rossel and to George Pierrepont, whence some fraction of it, including the manor house, became Scrimshire property.

Harold firmly established himself in the local community and probably played a role similar to that of country squire. He was obviously a believer in the virtues of education and, on his death in 1610, he left the sum of £20 for the betterment of the local school. He married a Margaret Henson and their son William inherited the estate. William's first son John who died in 1669 is named on one of the Scrimshire gravestones which, until the refurbishment of the Church following the fire in 1996, lay within the chancel but are now gathering moss in the Churchyard. John had five children, including William who inherited and another John who became Rector of Cotgrave in 1667, though only for two years. Sadly, he died in the same year as his father (two John Scrimshires dying in the same year might well confuse even the most careful historian and I doubt that I can include myself in that category – yes, I was, for a while very confused!). William continued the line with yet another John and a Margaret whose name appears on a second gravestone (died 1748). John returned the compliment by fathering a third William and (would you believe?) William begat a third John! They certainly had an eye for symmetry, these Scrimshires. John III was the last of the Scrimshires to reside in Cotgrave – in 1759, when he sold the estate to Thomas Lamb of Southwell, he had already moved to a London address – and, by the 1790s, as Throsby tells us, “There was a good old house belonging to the family of Scrimshire, but it is now pulled down”. A sad end to an eventful era in the life of the village.

Two other gravestones remain, one recording the death of Elizabeth, wife of William II in 1682 and the other reflecting the inherent sadness of so many family lives in those days before the advent of modern medicine. It records the death of two of John II's children, Margaret and Brian who died within two days of each other in July 1705. She was four years old and he only one. John II and his wife Mary had four other children which may have compensated somewhat but such loss as this must have been hard, indeed, to bear. Their fifth child was a daughter called Mildred, born in 1710 and she lived to the (for those days) good age of 73, as we know from a memorial tablet on the wall of the Church chancel, inscribed as follows:

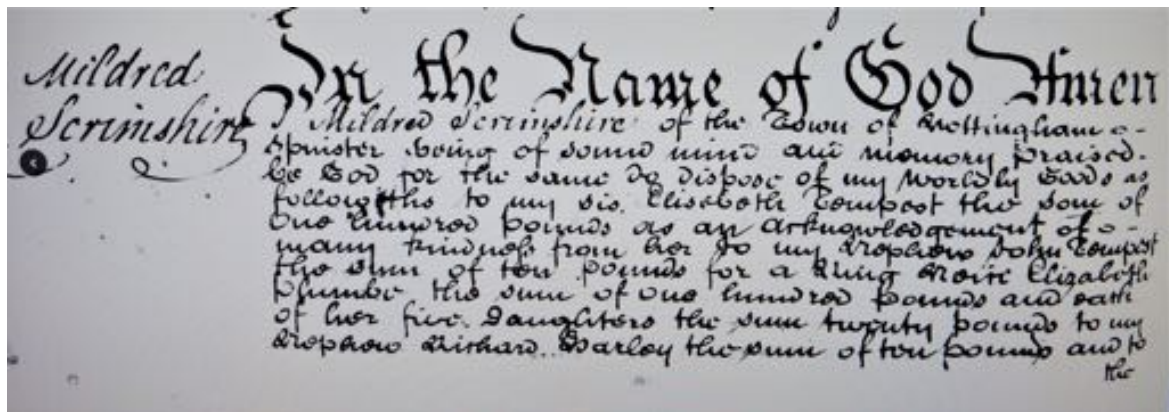


“In Memory of Mrs Mildred Scrimshire Daughter of William Scrimshire Esq. of this Place who died October 12<sup>th</sup> 1783 Aged 73 Years. From a due Sense of Gratitude & Affection this Monument was erected by her two Neices (sic)”

But herein lies the mystery. There is an entry in the Parish Register for the year 1710: “Mildred d. of Mr John Scrimshire and Mary his wife bapt. 3<sup>rd</sup> February”. How, then, could these “two Neices” believe her to have been born to William Scrimshire? One can forgive them their idiosyncratic spelling – education still being a trifle hit and miss in the eighteenth century – but surely they knew their own family lineage better than this! And I refuse to believe that two Mildred Scrimshires were born in 1710 and died in 1783!! One confusion of that kind is enough for any family – don’t you agree?

## John Orton

Looking at it again recently caused me to puzzle over it a little further and I discovered yet more discrepancies. There is convincing evidence from ‘Ancestry’ that Mildred Scrimshire was born in 1709 to JOHN Scrimshire – not William! There is also evidence that she died on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1783, not the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, as stated on the monument. What is more, she was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1709, so she was seventy-four when she died, not seventy-three! Finally, it is absolutely clear from her will (a section of which we reproduce here) that she was a spinster, whereas the monument describes her as ‘Mrs’. How could her nieces be so utterly confused about their aunt’s details? As a long-shot, we know that Mildred’s father (John) had a brother, William, born just a year before John, himself, but, apart from his birth date, nothing is known about him. In particular, there is no evidence that he ever married, so it seems very unlikely that he could have fathered Mildred.



Thinking that a couple of hours with Ancestry would solve the mystery, I plunged into what turned out to be an almighty mess! After a couple of DAYS I am still very little clearer how the discrepancies could have arisen. The trouble is that the Scrimshire family was (a) prolific and (b) made use of a certain range of first names which proliferated throughout time and relationships. I did come across one family line which suggested that a William Scrimshire had married a lady called Elizabeth Frank from Knottingley in Yorkshire and that they had produced two daughters Elizabeth and Mildred whose dates of birth and death agreed perfectly with those well established for them. Could this explain the confusion over Mildred’s paternity? Well, no it couldn’t. Though the birth date of the mother Elizabeth Frank was ‘unknown’, the dates of her parents *were* known and a moment’s thought suggested that, if Elizabeth was to have borne these two daughters, she must have given birth at the ripe old age of seventy! Nevertheless, such misinformation might just have been responsible for the paternal error on the monument.

In fact, there is very little doubt that Mildred and her sister Elizabeth were borne to JOHN Scrimshire (1659-1713) and his wife Mary Melton (1674-1746). The two girls were only about one year apart in age and must have been close throughout their lives. Elizabeth married John Tempest and moved to live in Nottingham – Mildred remained a spinster but also moved into Nottingham and obviously retained the close relationship with her sister, as is clear from her will, which left the majority of her estate to Elizabeth’s daughters Ann and Henrietta Tempest. It is almost certainly these two nieces who arranged for the monument to be erected. How they contrived to make such a mess of the inscription is still as much a mystery as it was in 2005! Meanwhile, I have learned a salutary lesson – avoid the study of complex family relationships where twelve or so children are quite the norm! OK, several of them died young but that still left another seven or eight to add their contribution to the general confusion!

But that’s enough of being serious –

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### **Anti-Ageism**

Doug Pimblett is responsible for our next humorous look at the joys of growing old. As he says, the younger generation should be wary of ‘messing with the old’

A little old lady goes into her bank, presents her card and asks to withdraw £10. The bank clerk says that, for the withdrawal of amounts under £100, she must use the ATM outside, because that is the rule.

The lady says “OK, can I withdraw all the money in my account?” The clerk checks and says “That’s just over £300,000. We don’t have that sort of money in the Branch.”

“What’s the most I can have, then?”

“£3,000” says the clerk and hands over the cash, “Is there anything else I can do for you? There’s a queue building up.”

I’d like to deposit £2990 into my account.”

The moral of this story is: “Don’t be difficult with the old guys – they’ve spent a lifetime learning the skills!”

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## The Art Group

Desna thought that perhaps we had had enough of dogs, last week and might prefer to enjoy a few cats – here they are and two more lovely pictures from Dorothy Albans.



### Puzzle Corner

Judy Bullock sent in this week's puzzle

The requirement is that seven five-letter words be entered into the grid so that the three words written across at each level are connected – for example: 'wishing-well-done' Reading downwards, the seven letters in the shaded squares spell out the name of a city. Good luck!

NAIL						ASIDE
SUDDEN						TRAP
MASS						STUDIES
HEAVENS						BOARD
HOMEWARE						OVER
FLAT						OUT
MIND						CONSOLE

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## Youthful Recollections

Michael O'Connor has graciously agreed to be this week's 'victim'. Here is his contribution

I was born in Newport, south wales, in 1946. My father had returned from the war after serving in the Special Forces in Burma for 3 years. My mother was working in Lovells sweet

factories...converted into arms manufacture. I was raised in Canal Parade...an Irish docker community next to the railway lines. I used to climb the fence, cross the tracks and play near the River Usk on a tributary called the cocky elbow. We used to steal bananas at Xmas from the trucks. I had never seen them..so ate them with the skin on...I didn't like them! It was a hard life but I had a very happy childhood.



I remember how cold it was...loads of blankets on the bed, no central heating, just a coal fire downstairs. The windows used to freeze inside in winter! The famous Newport Transporter Bridge was across the road and I used to ride on it. The film 'Tiger Bay' was set around it with John and Haley Mills.



My dad used to buy me 'Classics Illustrated' every Saturday. It was a coloured comic with all the great books in picture form...titles long forgotten today..The Master of Ballantrae, Green Mansions, Coral Island, Rob Roy...Green Mansions now sells for £850 on internet..my collection is long gone. I used to race to my nanna in the

week...she had a radio..I was an avid listener to 'lost in space' and 'Dick Barton'. I still have annuals of Radio Fun. My favourite comic was The Wizard..with tales of 'tupper the tough of the track' and 'v for vengeance' although we also had The Hotspur and The Eagle with Dan Dare. My other favourite was Roy of the Rovers following the fortunes of Roy Race of Melchester Rovers. I used to walk at 6 years to the library to get the latest edition of Just William or Jennings and Derbyshire. At Xmas we had a stocking, a book and some fruit. I hated Meccano!

I went to a Catholic primary school called St Marys which taught me the value of discipline, being run by nuns. As a good boy I went to church at least twice a week and played football every Saturday at Tredeagar Park. I managed to pass the 11 plus and gained a place at West Mon Grammar School, a very prestigious grammar school in Pontypool. Although the nuns wanted me to go to St Illtyds in Cardiff.



All of my relatives lived within a mile in Newport and it really was a time when you could leave your door unlocked. I have managed now to trace my family tree on all sides back to 1700 and they all lead to Cork in Ireland. My friends here will know how I discovered a grave in Cork from an ancestor in 1720...I fell over it in the dark...but that's another story. My old street has now been demolished. The university of Wales is on the site. Sadly, the community spirit has disappeared in Newport. My family moved to the new estates in Cwmbran. All I can say is never forget your roots..they are what makes you what you are today. I get the same feeling with the U3A in Cotgrave.

I have returned a number of times...I have a son living close to Newport with a grandchild and a sister in Cwmbran. We are talking a bit with the Monday Club and the Real Ale group about our reminiscences. So many common memories of times long gone...but never forgotten.

Michael

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## Creative Writing Group

Once again Chris Tomblin's Group enhance our closing passages. It may look a little short this week but that is because Jim Odell set himself the challenge of completing his contribution in no more than one hundred words. It is exactly that! Anyway, here it is:

### *The Ghost of Keith Dadd*

Henry Jones was twenty years old, so he had a party in the village hall – just tea and sandwiches. The twelve people invited arrived, except Keith Dadd. The party was very dull.

Keith arrived later and immediately started to talk to all the folks, even the ones he did not know. Soon, everyone was laughing and talking. Then Keith received a 'phone call and had to leave early.

After Keith left, the general talking and humour continued. Whether he had left the house, the country or the planet, in that room his spirit lived on.

Jim Odell

Later, Jim added a limerick along the following lines:

There once was a ghost, name of Kevin,  
Who haunted a house down in Devon.  
He had led such a life,  
Causing trouble and strife,  
They just wouldn't have him in Heaven.

We needed a limerick! I had almost forgotten about it, so thanks Jim for reminding me.

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## **Last Words**

Thanks again to Doug Pimblett, we have a brief, but hilarious postscript:

The scene is an Army Training Camp somewhere in --- well, I'm not allowed to tell you that.

Sergeant: "Private Jones"

Jones, coming to attention: "Yes, Sergeant."

Sergeant: "I didn't see you at my Camouflage Class this morning."

Jones: "Thank you, Sergeant."

**That's all, again, for this week. Keep safe,**

**John**

