



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 36

Blanket Coverage

We pride ourselves on covering most things but blankets are becoming something of a speciality. Sue Hillyard, as you know, is busy crocheting blankets for charitable purposes and has asked that we include this update.

CHANGE OF PLAN!

First, a big thank you to June Boot, Chris Tomblin, Maggie Spencer and Barbara Bullin for responding so promptly to my request for donations of double knitting wool. Your generosity really is very much appreciated.

Since last week, I have heard that the hospitals have been inundated with blankets - so much so that they have nowhere left to store them and have asked people to stop sending them in! So, I have contacted Church Farm Care Home here in Cotgrave, and they have said that they will be delighted to receive them. I now have enough for at least two blankets (the first one is finished and the second is underway) but would be happy if anyone else would like to donate wool so that I can make a third.

Thank you.

Sue x



The Crescent Moon

We haven't seen many clear nights (or days, for that matter) recently so my imagination was caught by the sight of a beautiful crescent moon the other night. It was too good an opportunity to miss so I attempted to photograph it and we show the result here. 'Could be worse' is the appropriate verdict, I think – then, what do I see in the next morning's Times than a photograph of the same crescent moon over Salisbury Cathedral. The blighters would go and outdo me, wouldn't they!

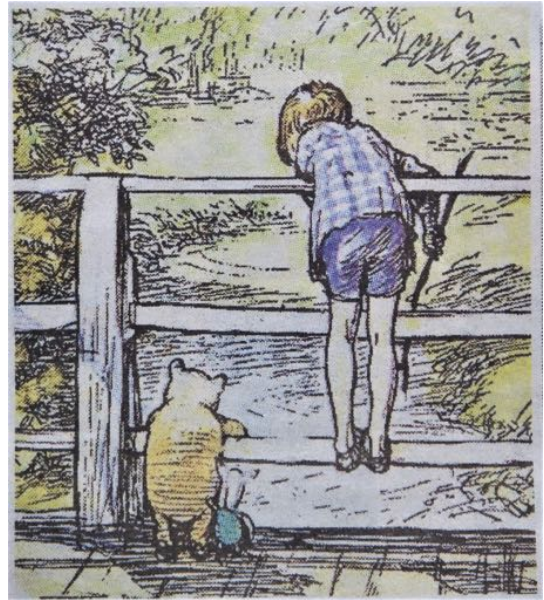
The fact that the 'horns' are pointing to the left means that it is a 'waxing' moon (rather than 'waning') which means that the Times photo was taken a day or two before mine. And, as an interesting bit of astronomic physics, there is a hint in both photographs of the complete circle of the moon's outline which results from 'earth light'. The bright crescent results from direct sunlight illuminating the moon's surface, while the faint 'gibbous' shape is due to sunlight reflected from earth. Here endeth this week's lesson in astronomy.



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Poohsticks

Another article in The Times recently took me back to the time when we were living in Sussex, not very far from ‘Hundred Acre Wood’ where Christopher Robin and his bear, Winnie-the-Pooh used to play Poohsticks on the bridge in Ashdown Forrest. Our two girls will certainly remember visiting the site on several occasions. It isn’t clear whether A. A. Milne, the writer of such classics as ‘The House at Pooh Corner’ or his son Christopher Robin invented the game (probably in 1928) but they agree that it was invented on that particular bridge. A great many fans have made pilgrimage to the spot over the years – so much so that the bridge had to be rebuilt in 1999. East Sussex County Council raised something like £300,000 (largely from the Disney Corporation!) to build a somewhat stronger version of the original. The Times article was concerned with the sad demise of a large tree which had been blown down by a high wind. It lay right across the stream but, fortunately had not damaged the bridge in its descent. It will, no doubt, be swiftly removed.



So popular has the game become that both Oxford and Cambridge Universities have set up Poohsticks Societies and a National (now International) Poohsticks Competition has been held most years since 1984 at larger venues along the River Thames. The idea is that competitors drop their sticks into the stream at the ‘upper’ side of the bridge, while rushing to the ‘lower’ side to see whose stick appears first. The original sticks were, of course, broken from nearby trees or bushes but so many were the visitors that East Sussex Council were obliged to ask that people should bring their sticks with them! The local vegetation was suffering undue damage.

The drawing of Christopher Robin and Pooh playing Poohsticks was made by E H Shepard, who illustrated all A. A. Milne’s children’s books. Apparently, his version of Winnie-the-Pooh was based on his own Teddy Bear, rather than on the one owned by Christopher Robin, as is apparent from the photograph of the real Pooh-Bear taken when C. R. was about five years old. Neither of them looks the least bit like they do in the books!



The books about the adventures of Christopher Robin, Pooh, Piglet, Tigger, Eeyore, Roo and friends became so popular that they not only made a lot of money for Milne and Shepard but even more for later generations of the Milne family. What was, perhaps, less desirable was the effect on Christopher Robin himself. Being famous during his schooldays may have had certain advantages but it also led to bullying and, in the longer term, to problems of identity. It proved extremely difficult for him to convince people of his true personality – everyone wanted to think of him as the little boy in the Shepard cartoons.

I'm glad I wasn't famous as a little boy – nor, for that matter, as a grown-up man. It's much easier to be 'ordinary'.

There was a young fellow named Chris
topher Robin and, added to this,
Were Winnie-the-Pooh
And Piglet and Roo,
A collective that no-one should miss.

Clumber Bridge

Talking about bridges, reminds me that we featured an article in our fifth Weekly Letter concerned with the ornamental bridge in Clumber Park. Readers may know that the bridge was seriously vandalised in 2018 but has, finally been beautifully restored. As part of the restoration celebration package, the National Trust set up a creative writing competition which challenged competitors to fantasise over the bridges recent fortunes and, as we announced a week or two ago, Chris Tomblin won the 'Over 26' section of the competition with her article which we published in Letter number five. In announcing their decision, the Judges remarked that her article was "Written as the Bridge itself -- - a light-hearted journey through our Ornamental Bridge's 25 year history, growing old gracefully and looking ahead to brighter days, post Covid." Once again – well done, Chris.



We reproduce here two photographs of the restored bridge, one demonstrating a comparison between new and old pillars, the other showing the new bridge glowing in autumn sunlight.

More of Cotgrave Place

Cotgrave Place represents Cotgrave's principal contact with English wealth and aristocracy. You had to be well-off in order to afford the rent!

So far, we have examined the lives of Robert Burgess (the local man) and of Charles Hill, who was related to the Earls of Scarbrough. Charles died in 1867 and was followed at Cotgrave Place by another aristocratic family in the shape of Robert Henley Shawe Eden and his wife Jessie Ellen nee Hildyard. Robert was born in Wandsworth and Jessie in Swannington, Norfolk so they had no obvious connection with Nottinghamshire. They were married at Swannington in 1862 by *his* father, who was then Bishop of Bath and Wells and, of even greater significance, 3rd Baron Auckland – more of that in a moment. Jessie's father was only Rector of Swannington so obviously had to give way to his ecclesiastical senior!

Robert had been living in Cotgrave Place before his marriage and brought his newly-wedded wife there following their wedding. They had four children, while living there, two boys and two girls. That they were comfortably-off is indicated by the fact that they enjoyed the services of four servants, a cook, a parlourmaid, a nurse and a lady's maid. Their residence at Cotgrave Place fitted neatly between the Census Returns of 1861 and 1871 so we have no evidence as to Robert's official occupation. Perhaps he didn't need to do anything!

Why they should leave Cotgrave is unclear but the 1871 Census finds the family living in the village of Bramcote, at No 36 Town Street, which sounds something of a come-down from Cotgrave Place. However, they still had four servants. Robert declared his occupation as that of a 'Peer's Son'. In 1881 they had moved again, this time to a village called Minty, near Malmsbury in Wiltshire, where Robert describes himself as a 'Land Agent'. The two boys appear to have left home but the four servants are still with them. Then again, in 1911 Robert and his wife are living with three servants in Llandrillo, Merionethshire, where Robert refers to himself as an 'Estate Agent'. Jessie Ellen died in 1927 but there seems to be no record of Robert's death.

As with the Hill family, the interesting aspect concerns their background. Robert Henley Shawe Eden was born to Robert John Eden (3rd Baron Auckland) and Mary Ann Hurt, his father being, at the time, Vicar of the local Parish of Wandsworth. Robert, senior began his ecclesiastical career as third son of William Eden, first Baron Auckland – he probably had little hope of ever acceding to the title. However, his elder brother George, who became second Baron, failed to marry so, when he died in 1849, Robert found himself both Bishop of Sodor and Man and 3rd Baron Auckland. His son, therefore lived on the Isle of Man for much of his childhood, moving to Somerset when his father was made Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1854. His mother was brought up at Alderwasley Hall in Derbyshire – she must have met her husband when he was briefly Rector of Eyam, only a few miles away. Just by the way, her brother Francis married Elizabeth Arkwright, a descendent of the famous Richard Arkwright.

All this, of course, leaves unexplained just who these Barons of Auckland really were and which 'Auckland' they belonged to. The answer to the latter question is: West Auckland in the County of Durham (a village near Bishop Auckland) which is famous for winning the first-ever football World Cup. This was back in 1909 and 1911 (they won it twice and were thereby allowed to keep it!).



What is more, I have seen it! It was years ago, sometime in the nineteen seventies, I think. We were exploring the North-East with a couple of friends, found ourselves in West Auckland just before Sunday lunch and dropped into the local pub for a drink. It was full of MEN but not a woman in sight – they were all at home cooking the Sunday Lunch for their menfolk! Our two wives were something of a phenomenon! Anyway, there it was, the World Cup in a glass cabinet behind the bar and a barman all too happy to explain to us just how it came to be there. I shall never forget the sight.

But, back to the Barons Auckland. The Baronacy was created in 1793 (I always remember it as the year George Green died at Sneinton) for William Eden, a prominent politician and it has continued to exist ever since. The Eden family has made many a name for itself, including that of Sir Anthony Eden, Prime Minister of England, who was responsible for the Suez Canal debacle in 1956. He was the great, great, great grandson of Robert Eden, 1st Baronet of Maryland. Yes, Maryland! Didn't you know that there were baronetcies of Maryland? Neither did I until I was obliged to explore the subject. It was created in 1776, before the American War of Independence – remember that America was part of England then and it was run, of course, by titled Englishmen. Thus we have yet another important connection to Cotgrave Place, though I admit it is rather a distant one.



William Eden, 1st Baron Auckland



1st Baronet of Maryland

Finally, you may be interested to know that the city of Auckland and a small island off South Island in New Zealand were named after the Aucklands. Apparently, this island was discovered in 1806 by an English Captain, Abraham Bristow and he named it 'Auckland' after a friend of his father's, William Eden, 1st Baron Auckland. The city in question was founded in 1840 by the then Governor of New Zealand, William Hobson, who named it after George Eden, 2nd Baron Auckland.

Well, there you have it – one just never knows where one is likely to end up, once launched on such investigations. By the end of this pandemic, we shall surely be the best informed U3A Branch in the Country!

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The Art Group

The theme of this week's Artworks is 'Wildlife'. It means repeating some earlier paintings but no matter – they are still as good as they were then. Hope you enjoy them - I think they are wonderful.



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Puzzle Corner

We first have the answers to last week's puzzle from Judy Bullock.

Thanks, again, Judy.

NAIL	B	R	U	S	H	ASIDE
SUDDEN	D	E	A	T	H	TRAP
MASS	M	E	D	I	A	STUDIES
HEAVENS	A	B	O	V	E	BOARD
HOMEWARD	B	O	U	N	D	OVER
FLAT	B	R	O	K	E	OUT
MIND	G	A	M	E	S	CONSOLE

City: HAMBURG

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Then, Peter Shreyhane has a few general knowledge questions for us.

1. What is the nationality of Pope Francis?
2. Which UK comedy series has had the most episodes broadcast (not counting repeats)?
3. Which is the UK's oldest University?
4. Who sang 'Happy Birthday' to President Kennedy on May 19th 1962?
5. If you travel due west from Paris, which is the first country you would come to?
6. From which language/country does the word EMOJI come?
7. In 1956 Dr Christian Barnard carried out the first transplant of which organ?
8. What does N.A.T.O. stand for?
9. Which country house was the home of the Earl and Countess of Grantham?
10. Which type of food is pumpernickel?
11. Who did Margaret Thatcher succeed as Prime Minister?
12. In which year was the Queen born?
13. In March 1974 two airlines amalgamated to form British Airways – name one.
14. What is a baby otter called?
15. Which country has the most lakes?

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Some Book Titles

For those of you who prefer reading to doing puzzles, Peter also has a few suggestions of books you might like to consider:

Birds by Jack Daw

The Study of Hurricanes by Gail Force

Igloo Construction by S. Keemo.

Parachute Jumping by Hugo First

Grow Your Own Vegetables by Rossa Carrots.

Study of Precipitation by Wayne Drops

Robotics by Ann Droid

Bee Keeping by A. P. Arry.

Leo Tolstoy by Warren Peace

Grave Mistakes by Paul Bearer

Irish Flooring by Lyn O'Leum

And if these aren't creative enough, we can always rely on the Creative Writing Group to enthrall us.

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Creative Writing Group

This week we have a fascinating contribution from Heather Whatnall, which was written back in May. As Chris Tomblin points out, it is remarkably predictive concerning the timing of the first vaccines and the end of our familiar pandemic – at least, we hope so!

The Lady with the Dog

I first saw her in late March 2021 ... the Lady with the dog.

It was a few weeks after the end of Covid 19. I'd had my vaccination in January, which was early in the programme, and was so looking forward to getting back to my favourite café "Mimi's". Unfortunately, Mimi didn't reopen the café until the beginning of March. She waited until the vaccination roll out was complete and social distancing rules had been totally lifted. It meant the café was once again full of tables covered in stiff white cloths with vases of beautiful yellow daffodils on each one.

I had started to get back into my pre-Covid routine, going to the café each day around 11am for a break from work. I always sat in one of the two window tables and had a pot a tea with a lightly toasted teacake - smothered in butter! It was always delicious and after Lockdown it tasted even more scrumptious. I also enjoyed chatting with Mimi if the café wasn't too busy.

The day the Lady with the dog first came to the café was a Tuesday. It was a dull morning, so the arrival of a "Tsunami" of colour took me by complete surprise - my senses were almost overwhelmed. She was an absolute rainbow of colour. Her long, beautifully curled hair was a fantastic shade of pink, her coat was vibrant red, and she had orange tights and blue shoes with big silk bows. My eyes were struggling to register it all (my mouth was probably open too!) so I didn't immediately notice the small black dog the lady was carrying. It looked like a Cockapoo although it was very small. I thought at the time it must be a miniature one. I knew so little about animals before I met the Lady with the Dog. When she sat down at a table in the window next to mine, she placed the dog beside her on the floor. I noticed the dog had piercing green eyes and its owner had perfect almond shaped nails which were actually painted with rainbows. I was totally fascinated.

The Lady removed her coat to reveal a stunning black silk dress - it looked vintage. It transported me to my days in London when I would pop into the American Bar at the Savoy for cocktails on the way home from work. The Lady in the café would have looked amazing seated on a bar stool in the American Bar with a saucer of champagne lifted to her luscious scarlet red lips.

I was brought back to the present by Mimi's voice "Good morning Marilyn, how lovely to see you and Poppy. Shall I bring you your tea and pink French fancy cake"? To this, Marilyn (what name could have been more fitting?) replied "Yes please Mimi and some water for Poppy" .. her voice was so gentle, almost breathless, silky - and very seductive to me. I'm sure you can tell I was totally bewitched.

The tea and cake arrived followed by a bowl of water for Poppy the dog. The bowl was placed on the floor next to where Poppy was sitting - totally still and silent.

I was trying to calm myself when my phone rang. It was a work-related call and I had to take it. I had to make a few notes while answering the call and it was a good fifteen minutes before I could look up properly and soak up Marilyn again. By this time, she had finished her tea and cake and was getting her purse out of her silver handbag. She placed £5 on the table before replacing her purse and getting up from the table. Before I had time to calm my mind and think of something to say she had put her coat on, picked up Poppy the dog (who had, of course, not touched the water) and left the café - smiling at Mimi and blowing her a kiss on her way out.

I watched her walk away from the café, holding Poppy in her arms as if she was holding a baby.

I think my mouth must still have been wide open when Mimi came over to the Lady's table collect the teacup, teapot and empty plate. She looked to me and could see I was in some kind of shock.

"Are you alright George?" she asked. Before I could reply she said, "Marilyn is something to behold, isn't she? She was very badly affected by the Covid Lockdown. She had to isolate on her own for almost a year due to her having a weak immune system. She shut herself off from everyone and Poppy the dog became her only companion. The dog had been bought her by father when she was little and she has treasured it - she told me her father bought it from the amazing toy shop that used to be in the Flying Walk Arcade - it's been closed for years. In those dark months of Lockdown, when none of us knew if we would survive, Marilyn felt safe with Poppy who became real to her - her own "living" companion. She's not really recovered since we have been vaccinated and she still believes Poppy is real. It is so sad and yet, at the same time, so absolutely fabulous".

As Mimi went off to wash the plates I realised that my fascination with the Lady and the Dog had only just begun.....

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Cats and Dogs

By way of a farewell – I received this from my ‘Favourite’ Son-in-Law (he’s the only one I have, so he has to be the favourite!):

A German Shepherd, a Doberman and a cat had died.

All three are faced with God, who wants to know what they believe in.

The German Shepherd says “I believe in discipline, training and loyalty to my master.”

“Good.” says God. “Then, sit down on my right side.”

“Doberman, what do you believe in?”

The Doberman answers “I believe in the love, care and protection of my master.”

“Ah” says God. “You may sit to my left.”

Then he looks at the cat and asks “And what do you believe?”

The cat answers, “I believe you’re sitting in my seat!”



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Once again, that’s all for this week. Keep well and keep smiling.

John

