



Cotgrave and District U3A

Keeping in Touch 55

Royal Sadness

The Royals seem to be very much in the news at the moment – but how the reaction to the recent death of Prince Philip contrasts with that of the not quite so recent outpourings of Prince Harry and his wife. It is sad, indeed, that we need a death to restore some semblance of balance to our portrayal of the Royal Family and their public image.



Copy-Cats

In lighter vein, have you noticed that when one person yawns, it tends to set off others?



Now to a very much earlier discussion of the difficult interaction between Ruler and Ruled.

The Farnley Wood Plot

Hands up those who don't know what the Farnley Wood Plot was all about! I have to admit that, prior to preparing this article, mine would have been one of the first to be raised. The Farnley Wood Plot was a rather small and pitifully unsuccessful attempt by a group of Yorkshiremen, in 1663, to overthrow King Charles II. "All very well" you may say but why should we even pretend to have an interest in it? It concerns us here in Cotgrave in a small way because it was used as an excuse to arrest Colonel John Hutchinson of Owthorpe and to imprison him firstly in the Tower of London and later in Sandown Castle in Kent, where he shortly afterwards died. There you have the bare bones of it but there is obviously a good deal of background which may help to stir our interest – let's look a little more deeply.



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Those of you with better memory than I can lay claim to will remember that in Volume 12 of our Weekly Letters we devoted considerable space to the history of Colonel Hutchinson and his devoted wife Lucy (nee Apsley). However, to save you the trouble of hunting for this long-lost document, we shall begin with a short summary. John Hutchinson's parents were Sir Thomas Hutchinson and Margaret, daughter of Sir John Byron of Newstead. They lived in Owthorpe Hall, a mere stone's throw from Cotgrave. For more detail about the Hall and its gardens we need look no further than the History of Cotgrave website:

<https://historyofcotgrave.weebly.com>

(look in the 'Military' section.). John was born and educated in Nottingham, read Law in Cambridge but showed far more interested in religion and the arts. While studying Law in Lincoln's Inn, in London he met Lucy, whose father was Lord Lieutenant of the Tower of London. They married in 1638 and came to live in Owthorpe on the death of his father in 1643. Unlike his father, who was a good friend of Charles I, John Hutchinson chose the Roundhead side (he was an ardent protestant) and, in 1643, was appointed Governor of Nottingham Castle and, later of the city of Nottingham, which he defended gallantly throughout the war. In 1646 he became MP for Nottinghamshire (a seat which his father had previously held) and in 1649 he was one of the signatories of the King's Death Warrant. He was, nevertheless, doubtful of the validity of Cromwell's 'Commonwealth' and retired to live quietly in Owthorpe. On the Restoration in 1660, he was arrested as a 'Regicide' but, thanks to the offices of his kinsmen Lord Byron and Sir Allen Apsley, he was spared the fate of many of the other Regicides. However, he was obviously regarded as persona non grata and was forbidden from holding any public office.

He also remained under suspicion and, when the opportunity provided by the Farnley Wood Plot presented itself, he was re-arrested and remained in prison until his death in 1664. For anyone seeking greater detail, I can only recommend the lengthy account written by Lucy: ‘Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson’. She wrote it purely for the family but a descendent had it published in 1806. I have a copy dated 1905 but I believe there is a recent paper-back version available – but it isn’t easy reading!



So much for background but what of the Farnley Wood Plot? We need to understand a little of the country’s religious feeling after the demise of the Commonwealth, bearing in mind that various shades of Protestantism had been dominant during the ten years or so of Cromwell’s ‘reign’.



Though professing support for the Anglican Church, Charles II was seen as being of doubtful allegiance to the Protestant cause. In fact, he was probably a secret Catholic, a suspicion possibly confirmed by the ‘fact (?)’ of his conversion to Catholicism on his death bed. We might also regard his marriage to the Portuguese Princess, Catherine of Braganza -who was a devoted Catholic – as further evidence. His son James, who followed him as James II, was undoubtedly a Catholic, which led to his ‘replacement’ by the William and Mary duo in the

‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688. On the other hand, Charles was obliged to make public affirmation to the Anglican faith in order to obtain funds for his wars with France, so a slightly uneasy balance was established in the Capital of London, which was far from satisfying more distant parts of the Country, such as the West Riding of Yorkshire!

Farnley Wood lies midway between Leeds and Morley and offered a place well suited to clandestine gatherings, being the meeting place of a group of plotters who had hopes of attacking Royal establishments in Leeds. Two of the leaders were Joshua Greathead, a local Squire who had fought for Cromwell, and Captain Thomas Oates of Morley. Their aim was “to re-establish a gospel ministry and magistracy; to restore the Long Parliament; to relieve themselves from the excise and all subsidies and to reform all orders of men, especially the lawyers and clergy” – ambitious objectives, given the obviously ‘local’ nature of their organisation! The plotters were summoned to gather on the morning of 12 October 1663 but, in the event, only twenty-six people turned up and the enterprise was therefore declared a failure. What was worse, there had been a disagreement between the two leaders and Greathead had turned traitor and informed the authorities, resulting in the arrest and subsequent execution of all concerned. In fact, this minor rebellion is also thought to have led to the 1664 Conventicle Act, which penalised anyone who attended a ‘dissenter’ meeting so it turned out to have been an even greater ‘failure’ than it seemed at first sight!

It was also used as an excuse to arrest a number of ‘doubtful’ characters, such as John Hutchinson and, while most were released for lack of evidence, it proved the last act for poor John. So that is the end of my story of the Farnley Wood Plot – not of much consequence but enough to fill a couple of A4 pages!

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Art

Am I allowed to include photography in the Art section? I thought this first photograph quite remarkable in catching a most unusual natural vista, while the second one is an equally remarkable study of a sleeping octopus. Apparently, they change colour during sleep and scientists believe that this is in sympathy with their dreams. It has been observed that they change colour in response to their local environment and the presence of predators, so the idea is that they dream about such things and change colour appropriately. I must admit that I had never even thought of the possibility that octopuses might dream!



Art - continued

We also have the opportunity of enjoying real art from Maggie Spencer and Desna Haskell.
Thank you both for sending them in.



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Alison Mees

As part of the Executive Committee's plan gradually to re-start U3A activities, a group of us (twenty some in number) enjoyed a Zoom meeting last Tuesday morning, addressed by Alison Mees. Alison had spent some sixteen years living in various African countries and had obviously come to love Africa, its people and, particularly its wildlife. She kept us fascinated for the best part of an hour with details of animal life, beautifully illustrated with her amazing photographs.



We heard brief accounts of lions, elephants, rats, lizards, buffalo, hyenas, wildebeest, leopards, and cheetahs. The birds were also wonderfully colourful – flamingos are just gorgeous. Did you know, by the way, that the wildebeest make an annual trek of something like a thousand miles seeking fresh pasture – they must spend most of their lives on the move. While I had previously seen photographs of leopards in trees, I now know that lions can also climb trees, as well as cheetahs. It

gives them a much longer view of their surroundings, helping considerably in their search for prey!

Alison clearly came to love these animals and wanted to learn how to recognise them as individuals and it transpires that lions each have a unique whisker pattern on their faces (a bit like our fingerprints) and the bodily marking of leopards and cheetahs are similarly specific to each animal – but it must take a lot of practice to recognise any particular pattern!

Alison showed us photographs of Maasai people, emphasising their desire for education, even though they have typically sixty pupils in each class. Apparently, the women build their houses, using an interwoven pattern of tree branches, plastered with a mixture of mud and dung, which is waterproof, would you believe! Ironically, the house we saw had a solar panel on the roof to power a radio or charge a mobile phone. Water is an obvious problem for them. If there is no well nearby, the women have to carry forty-litre containers over long distances – though they may be fortunate enough in some instances to have donkeys to take the weight!

She didn't mention what the men were doing all this time! (And no-one thought to ask!)

However, it was obviously cheetahs that were Alison's true delight. She works for an organisation known as the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF). These animals, which can run at 70km/hr, or 45miles/hr (cf 35km/hr for a 100m sprinter) are now in need of preservation, with only 7100 left. The usual reduction in habitat is one reason



for the problem but another is the growing popularity of illegal smuggling of cheetah kittens as pets. These poor animals live no more than two years, in contrast with the eight-to-twelve years when in the wild. There is a natural reason for the decline in numbers, too, the result of young cheetahs being brought up by single mothers. Unlike lions, which grow up in families and have a survival rate of about 25%, the survival rate of cheetah kittens is no more than 5%. Mothers find it difficult to keep an eye on four or more offspring and they often get lost in densely grassed surroundings. CCF workers regularly find such solitary young cheetahs and bring them up but have a serious problem – before releasing them into the wild again, they have to be taught how to hunt! How, exactly, do you do this? Apparently with the aid of mechanical devices! But exactly what these are was left to our imagination!

Altogether, we enjoyed a highly educational hour and could only wonder at how some of the photographs were taken. Perhaps our Committee will extend the idea into May and June before we can hope for a return to 'normal' meetings.

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Quiz Corner

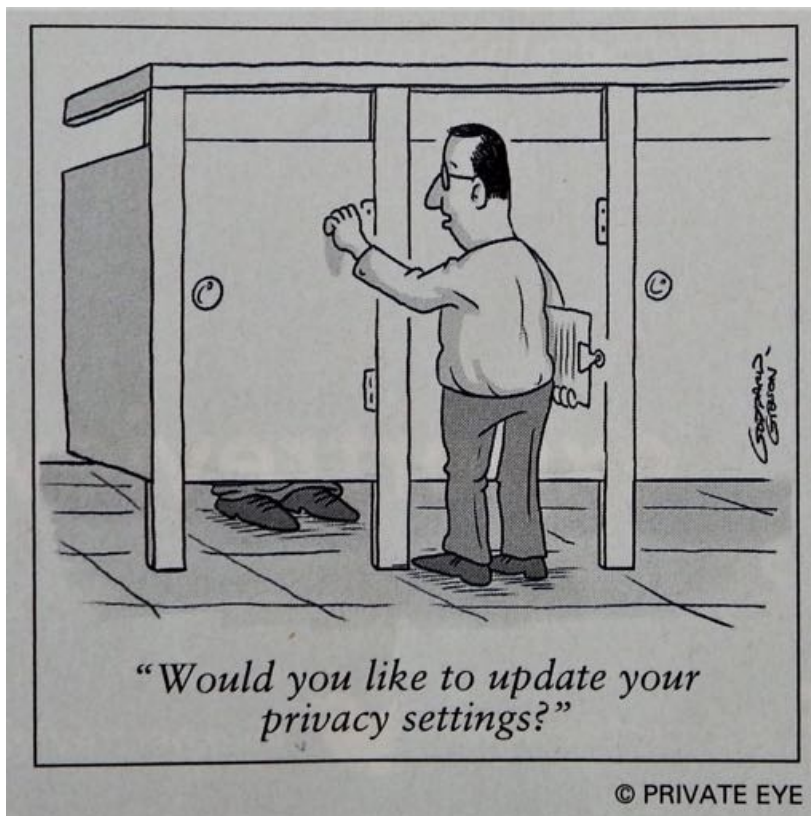
We have no quiz, as such this week but another puzzle from Sue Hillyard.

Eight people are arranged in a group, one of them having an important piece of information which he/she wishes to transmit to all of them. It takes one minute for the data to be transferred from one person to another and each person having the data is able to transmit it to one other recipient. How long will it take for the data to reach all eight members of the group?

Then we have the answer to her last week puzzle about the race horses. The answer is, of course, 'one minute'. No need for any complicated algebra – just *think* about it.

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Comedy Corner



Creative Writing Group

This week's contribution (and highly creative it is!) is by Chris Tomblin. Thanks again Chris.

Safety rules for time travel.

By

Christine Tomblin

When Paul had asked as many as fifteen questions in as many minutes his mother had had enough. 'Now that is it Paul go and sit over there and be quiet until I've finished this, or I'll have to knock you into next week.'

Paul went and sat in his favourite chair near the fire. It was a cold day as it had snowed overnight, and he had been outside for most of the morning building a snowman. He stretched out his legs a bit so his stockinged feet could catch a bit of warmth. His mother was full of funny sayings like that, but that one was her favourite and she used it a lot, particularly when she got exasperated with his continuous questions. He knew she didn't really mean it.

Paul stared into the fire. 'It's a funny thing to say though, I'll knock you into next week, I wonder if it has ever been done and somebody *has* been knocked into next week by their mother. Would everything carry on as if nothing had happened? Would your friends and family be there, or would they still be in this week and you'd be in next week on your own. He chuckled and had another thought, what was old Smithy going on about last week. Mr Smith was the physics teacher. Paul didn't really like Physics, Smithy was a bit boring, but he remembered he had been rabbiting on about quantum physics last week and he said we are all on a time continuum. What did that even mean? Paul shrugged he didn't really understand it but would ask his mother about it now. 'Mum' he said 'Can you just tell me.....' With that he felt an enormous whack that seemed to lift his whole body into the air, and he started spinning round and round for what felt like a long time until he landed with a thud in the middle of the floor.

'Wow! what happened' he thought and looked round in a daze. He was still in the sitting room, but it looked different with some strange furniture although his favourite chair was still there by the fire but sitting in it was a very surprised looking boy.

'Hello' said the boy 'where did you come from so suddenly and why aren't you following the safety rules'

'I haven't come from anywhere' said Paul sitting up. 'I was just sat in that chair where you're sitting now when I think my mum must have knocked me into next week, but next week looks totally different to last week' he said looking round. 'Anyway, what safety rules'

The boy nodded 'Oh I see' he said, 'what date was it out of interest'.

'It was the 30th January 2019' answered Paul from the floor.

‘You mean 2069’ he laughed ‘it’s the 6th February 2069 today so your mum *has* knocked you into next week, but you shouldn’t be here on your own you know, that’s the first safety rule of time travel. The second rule is that you must always be wearing stout shoes and you have only got your socks on. The third rule is that you must always have your time travel machine with you in case you need to make a quick getaway and I can’t see your machine anywhere. The fourth rule is’

‘Stop’ cried Paul. ‘I did mean 2019, what on earth are you talking about?’

The boy looked puzzled but carried on regardless. ‘The fourth rule is that when time travelling you are not allowed to travel back to before 2050 when time travelling was invented. You can’t have come here from 2019 as it’s simply not possible.’

‘Well I did’ shouted Paul as he pulled himself up and pushed the boy off the chair. ‘I was sat in this chair and then suddenly I was spinning in the air and now everything looks different except the chair.’ And he sat down on it.

‘That chair belonged to my Grandad’ said the boy from the floor where he was now sat ‘he used to make up stories about it to entertain me. He said that he had travelled to the future in it to see me when he was a boy, but I knew it was only a story. It was a bit silly anyway as you can’t travel to the future in an old chair like that.’

‘And what was your Grandad’s name’ asked Paul?

‘He was called Paul’ said the boy.

Paul replied ‘But that’s *my* name and this is *my* chair’

The two boys stared at each other. Just then they heard the front door slam and a man shouted, ‘I’m back’.

‘That’s him now’ said the boy.

What was the fifth safety rule? ‘asked Paul urgently but the other boy’s face started to look a bit blurry and Paul felt a sudden whack and the spinning started again until he landed with a jolt. This time he was still in his chair. He became aware of his mother standing over him ‘what is it Paul what did you want to ask me. I’ve finished what I was doing so ask away ‘

‘Mum I think you really did just knock me into next week, but it was next week in fifty years’ time’ he gabbled. ‘I met a boy there who I think was my own grandson and he was telling me about the safety rules for time travel but I never heard what the fifth rule was as I came back too soon and I’ll never know what it is now’ His mother laughed ‘You’ve been dreaming Paul, you fell asleep in front of the fire, there’s no such thing as time travel. Knocking you into next week is just a saying. Anyway, you couldn’t possibly have met your own grandson.’

‘Why not?’ asked Paul.

Because silly that’s the fifth safety rule, do not travel anywhere you might meet a member of your own family. Anything could happen! And you may even meet yourself and that would never do’ Paul looked sharply at his mother and she burst out laughing ‘Joke!’ she said. ‘Just a joke now come and have some tea’

Once again, that's all for this week. Hope to see you all next week.

John

P.S. *To all you budding authors, now is your chance to get into print and let people appreciate your talent. We need more articles for the Weekly Letters, so put pen to paper, or fingers to keys and you could be in the next editions.*

