



# Cotgrave and District U3A

## Keeping in Touch 10

### First Things First



I am reliably informed that tomorrow, Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May is a very special day in the lives of two of our long-dedicated members. Pat and Malcolm Baxter will be celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Given that the present lockdown (even in its slightly lightened version) inevitably restricts the scope of such celebrations, it behoves us all to offer our ‘on-line’ congratulations and to wish them not only a very happy day but many more to follow. Pat and Malcolm, please accept our very best wishes – enjoy your Day.

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### Pastoral Matters

Peter Shreyhane has asked that we include the following note concerning the stresses and strains associated with the lockdown:



*There can be no doubt that we are living through a unique set of circumstances. The Lockdown has seriously curtailed our social interaction. Social isolation has presented many challenges, particularly for those who live alone. For the U3A the virus has meant cessation of our Open Meetings and the opportunities that come with membership. From our ongoing contact with members, Barbara and I have noted how well people have been coping with the situation and how positive they remain. It is also good to hear how our “U3A Family” in Cotgrave has enabled members to stay in touch, both individually and via some inventive group activities eg Tony’s Quiz, the Real Ale Group’s “Virtual” Get Together and the Games Club’s Bingo! The weekly Newsletter has been an excellent way of keeping us “together” and enabling members to contribute. I am afraid it will be many weeks, if not months, before we are able to resume many of our activities, so keep the contributions rolling into John for the Newsletter. Please let me know if you aware of any member who is ill, would like some help or simply appreciate a chat. Take care and stay safe.*

*Peter Shreyhane  
[07722562760](tel:07722562760)*

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And, while talking of anniversaries, we can also congratulate ourselves on reaching our own tenth week, admittedly not quite so significant in the scheme of things but worth a minor comment, don't you agree.



## Our Tenth Septeversary!

'Word' doesn't recognise the above title wording, as well it might not! I only just now made it up! But we have reached our tenth Weekly Letter in response to the COVID – 19 lockdown (a word that, surprisingly, 'Word' *does* recognise). Ten weeks implies ten sequences of seven days and it is this which led me to invent my title – after all, each day is important in the struggle to produce a readable weekly document. First of all, there is the challenge to sort out any errors and omissions from the last Letter, then the even greater struggle



to remember who sent me exactly what that I had failed to include in last week's effort and the urgent need to find where I had put it, so that it could be included in this week's! (And, by the way, thanks to all contributors for their efforts – it is vital to the purpose of these Letters that they are by no means just my own writings.

And thanks too to all those who have commented favourably on the results – those, too, are an important part of the enterprise. It would be sad, indeed, to feel that our efforts were not appreciated.) Then there is a need to plan the layout and communicate with our regular contributors so that everything can come together in time for its incorporation in the beautifully laid-out version put together by the other John. A week can slip past in next-to-no-time, believe me! And, in case this sounds like a cry of despair, let me confess that it really is fun! It must be years since I composed so many limericks! But, above everything else, we sincerely hope that it meets a need – we all of us feel frustrated at not being able to continue with our regular meetings and personal contacts so, if the Weekly Letter helps to allay something of that frustration, we shall be happy. Finally, of course, please keep the contributions flowing - it is so important that the Letters represent the spirit of Cotgrave and District U3A, not just the meanderings of John Orton.



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At this point, it seems appropriate to present this lovely poem submitted by Judy Bullock:

### **Here and Now**

At present we are all in waiting,  
No dates in diaries to be done,  
So time to get a walk in the sun  
    Or go for a nice long run.  
Tomorrow is much the same,  
    Playing the waiting game,  
Or putting your time to some good use  
    By doing a good deed  
    For a friend in need,  
Go help in her garden and pull up a weed  
    Or two – something we can all do.  
So, after all that waiting, how are you?  
    What is life going to be like  
When there are too many cars to get on your bike,  
    Too much litter again – plastic bottles too,  
    Or other unmentionables on your shoe?  
    Can we change our ways  
    To make our days  
And the World around us a more relaxing  
    And healthier place to be?  
    We shall have to see.

Thanks for that, Judy. I can only add that some of us are no longer capable of going for ‘a nice long run’ but we can still appreciate the sentiment.

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However, what we *are* still capable of enjoying is a nice long ‘reflection’. I wrote the following article for the Cross magazine in 2018 - but let me be honest – while the words are certainly mine, the story is not. I read it somewhere or other, then forgot all about it until the need for a brief article presented itself. It would surely qualify as ‘creative writing’ except that the creative bit belongs to someone else!

### **A Creative Write**

#### **An Interesting Recollection**

It’s funny how recollections can crowd in when one has time to fill.

For him, it was once again the mid-summer of 1940 with the Battle of Britain at its height and, as with many others, he was fighting his own personal battle, coming to terms with the loss of so many friends in so short a space of time. Each new day saw yet further sorties to face the tide of Nazi attackers and each sortie saw the loss of yet more friends. Time crowded in to help allay the hurt - they were simply too busy to have time for mourning – nevertheless, each one of them had to find his own method of coping. And in the middle of all these recollections one particular memory kept returning – one defining experience which would stay with him for the rest of his life.

This particular scramble had almost ended – the German planes were heading back - and only the odd bits of ‘cleaning up’ were left for his squadron to accomplish. Then he spotted away to his right a solitary Heinkel He 111 – a twin-engined fighter-bomber, recently introduced into the attack – well armed, though, thankfully, not so manoeuvrable as his beloved Spitfire. But this particular specimen was obviously in trouble, smoke was pouring from one of its engines, while the other one was struggling to drag the damaged aircraft back towards the safety of German-occupied Normandy. He had just enough fuel left to catch up with it and just enough ammunition to despatch it – here was a heaven-sent opportunity to add another stripe to his squadron’s list of successes. It took only a matter of minutes for him to position his plane above and behind his target, to begin the descent which would enable him to pour a stream of cannon shells into the stricken aircraft and finish it well and truly off.

Then, suddenly, bizarrely but inexorably he came to realise that he simply could not press the firing button. It was all very well in the heat of the battle to shoot down as many enemy aircraft as possible but this was somehow different. It would be nothing more nor less than the cold-blooded murder of a defenceless fellow human being – and he really could not bring himself to do that. So, having made the fateful decision, it seemed right that, however briefly, he should make visual contact with his opposing pilot. He flew alongside for a moment so they could exchange glances and noticed that the hand on the joy-stick was covered in blood – the index finger having been shot completely away. There could be little doubt that its struggling owner was fortunate, indeed, to be still alive.

He peeled away and made haste back to base, while there was still fuel in the Spitfire’s tank but made no mention of his experience to anyone – after all, he thought, it may well have been a court-marshalling offence! What was more, he had never even mentioned it to family or friends during the thirty odd years which had elapsed since that dramatic moment. Life had progressed happily enough for him. He had married his childhood sweetheart, fathered a beautiful daughter and held down a well-paid job. The elation and excitement of his wartime experiences had faded inevitably into the background but they could never be totally forgotten, as evidenced by his present musings, while waiting for his wife and daughter to join him from their respective rooms.

Today was special, indeed very special. They were waiting to welcome the parents of his daughter’s future husband who were about to join them for the wedding in two days time. Unlike himself, his daughter had been to university, taken a degree in Economics and was now busy with one of those important banking jobs in the city of Frankfurt. It was there, of course, that she had met her German fiancé. None-the-less she still wanted the wedding to take place back in her parents’ village church. It was not that any of them were religious but they all recognised that tradition could still be a powerful determining factor. They had met the boy, of course and liked him but this would be their first meeting with his parents so there was the inevitable degree of tension associated with such occasions. Then the taxi arrived and broke his brief period of reminiscing – it was now time for introductions and every effort to make the visitors feel welcome. He at once moved forward with hand outstretched to greet the boy’s father – only to realise that the hand advancing to grasp his own was missing its index finger.

It’s funny how recollections can crowd in when one has no time at all to deal with them.

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## Something Lighter

Now, in contrast to the rather serious nature of this introduction, we are grateful for the following contribution from Doug Pimblett:

There was a young man from Darjeeling  
Who rode on the tube train to Ealing.  
It said on the door  
“Please don’t spit on the floor”  
So he carefully spat on the ceiling.

Then, again:

There was a cow from Huddersfield  
And this ‘ere cow would never yield.  
The reason why it wouldn’t yield?  
It didn’t like its udders feeled.

Those of us sensitive to the appropriate rhythm, will have noticed that this latter rhyme is not a limerick but one cannot help feeling a certain sympathy with it, whether, like myself, one happens to come from Huddersfield, or not.



By the way, did you know that Huddersfield can claim possession of one of the most handsome railway stations in the country? Built in 1846-50, it is an excellent example of the Classical style, as can be seen in this photograph taken from St George’s Square onto which it fronts. It is a Grade I listed building and has been singled out for architectural praise by John Betjeman: “the most splendid in England”, Sir Nicholas Pevsner: “one of the best early railway stations in England” and by Simon Jenkins “one of the best 100 stations in Britain”. The prominent statue in front of it is none other than Harold Wilson who, as I explained in our second Letter, was born and bred in Huddersfield’s outskirts. The station also boasts a resident cat called Felix who joined the staff in 2011 and who, in 2016, was elevated to the rank of ‘Senior Pest Controller’. He even has his own cat-flap which bypasses the ticket barriers.



Following such brief reference to the country's wildlife, I am stimulated to amaze you with this remarkable contribution from Chris Soar:

### A Bit of Covid Chaos

Last week's Newsletter was so overflowing with erudition, that it set me furiously to think – what could I write about?

I thought of "How do Rugby Referees decide which team was to blame when a scrum collapses?"

Members would, I thought, find such an article, in the words of the late, unlamented Sunday Sport newspaper advert, "a right riveting read". (Some members may recall some famous spoof headlines from that paper, "Lancaster Bomber found on Moon" and "London Bus found at North Pole" complete with photographs. Now, who was it who said "Photographs don't lie!"? Ha!).

Anyway, I digress... I realised that that article would contain only one line – "I have absolutely no idea!"

Then, in the midst of such musings, carried on whilst ambling through the wilderness surrounding my garden, a Green Woodpecker flew up from the long grass a few feet away. Not uncommon, but a gratifying sight of a spectacular bird. This set me off on another track – unusual wildlife sightings.

A couple of weeks ago I was in the lower part of my garden, which I call Chaos Corner, when I suddenly saw this curious creature.

The area has a large proportion between raised beds carpeted by a thick layer of bark and shreddings, in which the animal was intent on snuffling around. At first, I had no idea what it was, and it seemed oblivious of me. Luckily, I had my phone with me so took a few photographs, and as I moved around it, I realised, as you will from the photos, that it was an albino mole. After digging in and grappling with a worm, it just "tottered" round in a circle, and then promptly rolled over and died! So weird!

I was able to take a video of this last event but it is 65mb, and I have been unable to email it to anyone for comment – I thought the "Mammal Man" at Notts Wildlife Trust, or even the Natural History Museum, might be interested. If any member has any knowledge or comment on this, I should love to hear from them.

I have had 2 more unusual wildlife "happenings" in my garden, but I think this article is long enough!



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Then, by way of contrast, we hear again from Molly, our prolific young essayist. Thanks again to Sue Hillyard for cataloguing her youthful writings.

#### Molly 4

i thinkmy mummy is confused dot com.

Yesterday i fell down owtside and hert my nee and mummy sed dont cry baby mummy will rub it betta. then this morning at brekfast i ast her if i cud make my own boyld eg and she sed no you are only a little girl. then when i was having my cheez on toste for lunch she sed for goodnes saik molly your a big girlnow you shud use yor nif nife and fork then just now she sed all rite yung ladey its time for sum skool werk that's wie im doing this riting.

so mummy must be confused dot com becos she doesnt no if i am a baby or a little girl or a big girl or a yung lady. I am six so i think i am a midl size girl. But i am going to be seven soon so i sed to mummy mummy wen can we go shoping and she sed not yet only daddy or i can do the shoping until everibody has stopt coffing becos of the virus. then my mummy sed anyway tell me wot you want from the shop and i will put it on the shoping list and i sed lipstick. and she sed wot are you torking abowt molly you are only six you dont need lipstick so i sed o so you do no that i am six and she sed yes of cors i do. so i sed well you corld me a yung lady so i thought id betta get sum lipstik in c ase i need it soon.

i went into the frunt room and ast my daddy if i cud have sum lipstick but he sed you can borow mummys and peter was playing lego and he laffed at me and sed i was stupid becaus im not a grown up yet. then daddy sed thats not nise yung man say sori to your sister and he did. then i went back into the kichin and sed mummy ive desided i dont wont a lipstick cos daddy sed i cud borow yours so i think i betta get a bra insted and then mummy toled me off for making her spit her coffe owt and spill it down her top.

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#### The Art Group

And we must never overlook the skills of the Art Group – here are two more of their paintings which illustrate the high standard of their work.



## Creative Writing Group

How did you get on spotting the Shakespeare quotations contained in last week's Brian Franks contribution, 'Sainted George'? I thought I was doing well when I got as far as ten but Brian tells me there were no less than forty-one! It seems to me that the only way to make all these clear to readers is to reproduce Brian's article all over again, with quotations marked out in red, so thanks once again to Brian. The only downside is that it means we have to withhold Anna Franks' article until next week – possibly not the first time he has kept her waiting!

### Sainted George and the.....

Once upon a time there were dragons abroad in this land. And because those dragons caused so much destruction there were dragon killers also abroad.

One such was the hero of our story; a bold young man who rather fancied himself as a Knight of Old. Excepting .... he *was* a few hundred years too late. By now, dragons were only a folk memory --- but this didn't stop him from turning his father's old scythe into a sword, well - something like a sword, and he already had a suit of armour, well, a suit of leather (good wearing stuff, just right for work in his father's fields), and an old milking pail that he had hammered into shape as a helmet, well something like a helmet.

And the final touch, he borrowed, well something like borrowed, his father's horse.

Off he trotted, going where ever the horse took him – for it seemed to know the way – until at mid-day he found himself all of ten miles from home. There was a river, and sitting on the grassy bank was a wight with what looked like one of these new "books".

"What Ho, friend. What have you there?"

The stranger looked up, holding out the book in one hand and a writing quill in the other.

"I am writing some notes for a play. Even in mid-winter this cool, quiet spot lends me inspiration. And you, sirrah, what errand are you upon?"

"Ah, I will **a round unvarnish'd tale deliver**. I go abroad to seek dragons and thereby make my name. Such a tale would be **an ill-favoured thing, sir, but it will be mine own.**"

"What, a goodly knight without a name!? are you from The Round Table then?"

"No,no,no, my given name is George, my family name I keep to myself, sir."

"Well, likewise, my given name is Will, only Will"

"Well met by sunlight, proud writer Will. **Full many a glorious morning have I seen**, but here on this **bank where the wild thyme blows** it seems almost as if there is a world elsewhere that has crept upon us.

Methinks it is almost a pity to spoil it by enquiring whether you have seen a dragon here?"

"No, no dragons allowed here. A the very most, a worm for the fishing "

"Ha! I wish you joy of that worm! It is The Wurm that I seek. I will carve him as a dish fit for the gods."

"*Methinks* you dance with the Devil!"

"The Devil! **The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman**; he does not lead man astray... he only shows them the way so they do it themselves. **I will defy the foul fiend**. But I *must* find a dragon, **and boldness be my friend.**"

"Friend, this is madness... there are no dragons. They are long gone from our land."

“Ah, this land, this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England. I will be its saviour from the beast. And if this be madness, Will, yet there is method in it.”

“Oh, I see, I think. You wish to impress some young woman, by bringing her some token of your fight.”

“No, friend Will, woman delights me not, nor man neither --- though by your smiling, you seem to say so.”

Smiling indeed, Will turned his face aside thereby setting sight on the hamper beside him.

“Madness needs feeding George, will you share my loaf and cheese?”

“A goodly idea; and we can talk of your play. Have you done such writing before now?”

“No. My work has been poetry; songs of love to my unrequiting lover.”

“Yes, t’was ever thus... one loves, the other looks elsewhere. Beware, roses have thorns, and even silver fountains have mud! But a play! How do you bring your love into such a thing?”

“That I do not; t’is a fiction, a made up thing of times past.”

“But the purpose of playing, was and is, both from the first and now, to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature.”

“George, friend, does not a poem do just that?”

“A poet, with his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, does glance from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth. And, as imagination bodies forth the form of things unknown, the poet’s pen turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. So, friend Will, will you give life to such lies in the name of playing?”

“Lies?! Looking at the past, of which we know only the outline of facts, and putting flesh on’t... is that lying?”

“Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying! But hark, by the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes.”

And a dull booming sound was heard, punctuated by the thud of heavy footsteps.

“Friend George, your wishes have summoned up the Beast. What say you now of your mirror to nature, when such Nature is long gone?”

“The wish was father, Will, to that thought. There are more things in heaven and earth, Will, than are dreamt of in your philosophy. The Beast is still with us, even if he hides from sight. Now to imitate the action of the tiger and stiffen up the sinews, summon up the blood, disguise fair nature with hard favoured rage and attack the foe.”

“But look at it – t’is bigger than a Spanish galleon. Art thou not afraid for your very life?”

“I bear a charmed life, Will, and if I must die I will encounter darkness as a bride and hug it in my arms. But it is he who will fall. And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again. I will carve him as a dish fit for the gods.”

And indeed, the green-hued beast was huge.

George’s horse was rearing and snorting, ending by uprooting the halter rope which had been loosely wound around a handy sapling, and plunging away, making almost as much noise as the beast in front of them. Whose mouth opened, but instead of the expected flame came a big yawn.

George shouted, “Rumble thy bellyful. Spit fire, spout, rain”, and grabbed up his sword and rushed towards that big head on a long neck, shouting in a voice that was louder than the beast’s in front of him, “To sleep, perchance to dream!” and raising the sword high, slashed down into the still wide mouth.

“Ah ha, a hit, a palpable hit!

A rush of green ichor flushed out , covering George from chest downwards.

Followed by the dragon itself, which planted its front legs either side of George and proceeded to wrap its neck around him.

“Quick, good friend poet, read it some verse, mayhap **that will soothe the savage beast**... or perhaps sing to it.”

Will stood strangely still... then thrusting out his left hand (his right still holding a large hunk of bread) declaimed in a strident voice... for what seemed an eternity. The neck gradually relaxed, and slid to the ground beside George. He raised his sword.... and lowered it to the ground.

“What, George, no stomach to kill the thing?”

“**Never, never, never**, -. After all, **they that have the power to do hurt and will do none**, are more to be praised than scorned. Pray you, undo this button Ah, **for this relief, much thanks.**”

“But the blood – you must clean it off, it will be poisonous.”

“Aye, even if the water itself was a good healthy water but for the party that owned it, he might have more diseases than he knew of. I will take me to the water’s edge.”

Suiting the action to the word, he plunged into the river.

“Wow! And thrice Wow! Tis cold; what call you this stream?”

“This is the Avon; and I fear it has not cleansed you.”

“**Here’s the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.**  
Oh, and oh, oh, oh!”

“George, here, use this moss--- old wives say that it takes away blood from birthing, mayhap it will cleanse you.”

George took the moss, and rubbed vigorously... to good effect. Then, turning to the still slumbering giant, he saluted it, raising his sword then sweeping it back to the ground.

“There, **our revels now are ended**. Goodday to you, Master Wurm. **To sleep, perchance to dream.**”

“What! Leave the beast to roam our blessed countryside and terrorise young maidens.”

“Nay”, and dropping his sword, George lifted up the big head and, carefully, raised one eyelid.

“**Thought is free**, and I, alone I did it, I thought you up from the realms of fantasy. Now, **you that do corrupt my air, I do banish you.**”

And on the word, the great beast dissolved into thin air; first a shimmering of its huge body, then the whole becoming transparent so they could see the trees through it, and finally a strange green wisp of nearly nothing cascading upwards to the darkening evening sky.

“See, Will, as I told you, I brought him here and can send him hence.

**All such spirits are melted into air, into thin air and leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and lo, our little life is rounded with a sleep. I would it WERE bedtime, Will, and all is well.”**

“Such things I would not believe were they played upon a stage! Are you a magician awakened from ancient times?”

“Ha! If that had been played upon a stage, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction! No, I am a young man with a purpose in life, to rid this land of England of terror... by whatever means I can.”

“A purpose! So do you intend to be immortal, since fair England always has, and presumably always will, been in terror of something or other. A youth like you!”

“Alas, **Youth's a stuff will not endure!** I shall continue on my travels... tomorrow. And you? I suppose this adventure will go into your writings?”

“No one would believe it--- how could I make it seem even likely to be true?”

“Words, Will, words, words. The magic of words jumping from a page, or issuing from a storytellers' mouth, entrances folk for ages after they first appear.”

“Words, you *are* right... and you have given much food for thought in my writing!”

“Ah, Food! And if you act on't it may yet bring you a full belly. **There is a time in the tides of men which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.** Maybe, Will, maybe you will be remembered for your words... for I have seen you scribbling as I speak. But how far have you got with this play, and what is't called?”

“Oh, but a little way ....merely some two thousand words yet. Of two lovers, Romero and his Judith.”

“A romance, or a tragedy? **Speak the speech, I pray you.**”

“Nay; ti's but half finished, t'would not sound right, and t'is almost dark.”

“Now were I a writer, **I could a tale unfold** and not be afeared to declaim it to all who would listen. How else would the world hear my words?”

“This will be heard, I have a ready bunch of rascals in London to strut the grand stage. And now the sun sets-- ‘til the moon brings her light on us, so goodbye Friend George, and thanks be for your company.”

“Indeed, **hung be the heavens with black and yields the day to night.** I would were bedtime, Will, and all well. **Good night, then. Parting is such sweet sorrow;** who knows **when we two shall meet again...in thunder, lightning or in rain.** Till then, sleep well, and **good fortune tend you.**”

And so ends our tale. Did they live happily ever after? We do not know.

But their words do.

So it must be true, not a ‘once upon a time’.

41 quotes

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So, once again, as Boris is fond of reminding us:

*Now, if you would the bug avert,  
Obey the rules, however curt.  
Remember that, to stay unhurt,  
You really must remain alert.*

That's in the style of Doug's cow, but, as you all know by now, my preference is for the limerick:

*There's a time in the doings of men  
When we all should accept regimen  
But the goings and comings  
Of Dominic Cummings  
Have ignored this agen and agen.*

By the way, the importance of staying alert is well illustrated in the attached cartoon which appeared in The Times, the other day – I thought you might enjoy it.



See you next week - Keep well,

John