



## Cotgrave and District U3A

### Keeping in Touch

Having developed a wonderful relationship with and between all our members, it would be very sad to lose it as a result of the current medical furore, so we thought it might help just a little to send out a weekly (or thereabouts!) letter aimed simply at keeping in touch. This is the very first – and greatly experimental! – specimen which I have (rashly) volunteered to edit. Please, please feel free to respond by e-mailing me on:



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I will endeavour to acknowledge on behalf of your dedicated Executive Committee who are totally supportive of this venture into the unknown wastes of U3A experience. I should emphasise that we have no intention of making it too serious (though there may well be the occasional attempt to keep a straight face) and, to prove the point, here is an introductory Limerick to stimulate further interest. We might even have a competition with prizes (toilet roles, for example?) if there is sufficient interest.

From Turkey to Azerbaijan  
A woman was chased by a man.  
From October to June  
She remained quite immune  
But I'll bet that 'e 'as 'er by Jan.

One of the cleverest rhymes I have come across – but who knows, we may even better it?

Perhaps an even cleverer Limerick was proposed by a mathematician, Leigh Mercer, as follows:

A dozen a gross and a score  
Plus three times the square-root of four  
Divided by seven  
Plus five times eleven  
Equals nine squared and not a bit more.

Or, in number units:

$$\{12 + 144 + 20 + 3 \times 2\} / 7 + 5 \times 11 = 81 + 0$$

But enough of frivolity.

While we are involved with numbers, I am reminded that I was recently concerned to understand something of early English measurement – all that stuff about furlongs, chains and rods, poles or perches – all very important for an agricultural community such as Cotgrave! (This was for a talk I was scheduled to give to the History Group!). Did you all know that a furlong was that length of



furrow which a pair of oxen could plough without stopping for a rest? No, neither did I. And it obviously raises the question as to how reproducible it could have been – it must surely have depended greatly on the nature of the soil? The pole is even more interesting – it really was the length of a pole, a pole with a spike on the end designed to stimulate the interest of the oxen in reaching the end of this rather mythical furlong. The acre was defined in a similar manner – it was the area which could be ploughed by a pair of oxen in a single day - and worked out as one furlong by four rods, that is  $4 \times 40 = 160$  square rods. Just try to imagine a ‘square rod’! In the days of my youth, there were things called ‘stair rods’ but they were something quite different! Rods and poles are obviously similar but ‘perch’? As a boy, I used to suppose that this was the length of a perch in a hen house but, alas, the truth is far less imaginative. The name comes from an obscure Latin word ‘pertica’ which seems to be related to the military ‘pike’, yet another form of rod with a spike on the end. Finally, it is convenient to remember that a rod is very closely equal to 5.0 metres, so it may amuse you to know that, in the present turbulent times, we are not obliged to stay ‘poles apart’ but merely two-fifths of a pole.

Further to the perturbations engendered by the by-now infamous virus, it was heartening to come across the following comment from the Yorkshire artist David Hockney:

*‘Do remember, they can’t cancel Spring’.*

The photograph is his answer to any gloom and despondency which any of us may be feeling – I hope you like it. The daffodils really are magnificent this year, aren’t they?



See you next week. Keep well.

John