

Dear Family - Seasonal Greetings! A further six months have now flown past and I am wondering what has been accomplished. I have acquired another furry friend, Sheba (to match with Joyce Coplestone's wee dog Azel) and I was kept busy nursing her through bronchial asthma for a couple of weeks. She is now healthily establishing her territory in the garden against the rest of the neighbourhood cats. Grandsons Paul and Mark have pronounced her nice, but not, of course, as handsome as their puss, Freddie.

Regarding quite another Freddie, a number of enthusiastic comments have been received from you about 'The Great Philosophers' programme on BBC2, November 22nd, in which our cousin Frederick Copleston SJ, Emeritus Professor in the University of London, discussed Shopenhauer with Bryan Magee. We freely admit that some of the discussion was 'over our heads', but we were greatly impressed. Son Michael and I are visiting with him just before Christmas.

An enthusiastic cousin gathered in this summer is Doug Cooper of Moniton. His mother, Gladys, married first Cooper, then Diamond and she was daughter of Samuel and Ada (Bedford) and granddaughter of the Samuel who married Elizabeth Barrett in India in 1866, of which more anon. Doug, Vera Page and I had a day at the Record Office in Exeter in October and Doug and his family have since done further work towards solving some of our mysteries. It is wonderful at last to have someone willing and able to look up records in Exeter, living in the area. To return to Samuel and Elizabeth: I at last managed to find the marriage at the India Office Library in September. 24th May. Samuel Copleston, 27, Sergeant HM's 101st, bachelor, residence at time of marriage Dugshaie, father's name (not given - I wonder why?) and Elizabeth Barrett, 17, spinster, father Frederick Barrett. By Licence. Witnesses John Smith, Margaret Barrett. Minister W. Augustine, BC Chaplain, Dugshaie. This was in Bengal Presidency and the family legend that Elizabeth was only 13 at marriage is hereby dispelled!

Derek tells me bookings have come in thick and fast for the Gathering next May Spring Bank Holiday in Barnstaple and if any who wish to attend have not contacted him I suggest you do so soon - or find other accommodation there! (Derek Copleston, 5 Nags Head Lane, Rochester, Kent ME1 1BB). Our thanks must go to Derek and Betty for finding the Motel and obtaining a block booking - not to mention all the correspondence involved. I have started investigating various places to visit, gathering background material and contacting helpful people, towards the making of our itinerary. I'm sure we all look forward to this Fourth Family Gathering.

During my few days with the Kitchens in Crediton in October Twizzle (Mary) drove me to Ashburton, a place I've long wished to visit because of the early family there bearing many of the same names as the Coplestons of Copleston and therefore, I suspect, descending from a younger brother of Adam or an earlier forbear. I had seen them in Churchwardens' Accounts for Ashburton and in other sources, so you may imagine my delight at seeing in a small list of Churchwardens inside the Church the name of 'John Colpstone' for 1489! The Accounts give this peculiar spelling for two generations there, but then revert to 'Copleston'. A beautiful Church and as always a moving experience to tread where our ancestors trod. We visited Buckfast Abbey also that day, another 'first' for me.

An item from the 'Exeter Flying Post' for December 18th 1772 is "All persons indebted to the estate of Mr. Thomas Copleston or of Mr. Robert Prowse late of the city of Exeter, Grocers and Linen Drapers, deceased or to the estate of Ann Nicholls of Ideford, widow or to Messrs. Portbury & Furlong as Executors in Trust of the Will of the said Robert Prowse or to any or either of them are desired forthwith to pay their respective debts to Mr. Thomas Penson of Dawlish or to Mr. Samuel Sweeting in Exeter or they will be sued for the same." Thomas was Mayor of Exeter and lived in St. Mary Arches and buried in the Church there with a floor stone which had disappeared when I last visited the Church. Robert Prowse had been his apprentice and was later taken into partnership; his name appeared on the floorstone and that of Thomas' wife Theodora (Banckes). Thomas was of our Bideford family.

I am now almost certain that the large Cornwall tree, begun with the help of Moira Tangye and built with the aid of Robert Jago's findings, goes into the pedigree at John Copleston, son of the first marriage of George of Ley in Morwenstow to Mary Carent. John, of course, is given 'ob.s.p.' by Col. Vivian in his Visitations of Devon, but as we know, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Arundell in 1570 at Morwenstow. They had two sons and four daughters. The first daughter was Katherine, who had a base son, Tymothy in 1597 whose father was reputed to be Trumtells or Trumbells. Katherine later married Anthony Chinge at Poughill in 1599. Tymothy married Alice Warrington in 1627 at Kilkhampton and they had two sons, John, 1627 and Richard, 1630 - also probably the Tymothy who married Hepolita Juell in 1667, but his baptism has not yet been found. Richard married Mary Chollocomb at Kilkhampton in 1658 and they had Joan, 1659 and Richard, 1660. This Richard married Margaret Stevens at St. Cleer in 1682. A Richard was born in St. Cleer in 1688 whose father is given as Richard, but the mother is not named. They appear to be the only family in St. Cleer at this time of our name and it could be their son Richard who married the Susannah at the head of the Cornwall tree. If this is the case, all the descendants are from a female Copleston and their name could well have been Trumtells or Trumbells!

The other possibility is a descent from John, son of John Copleston and Elizabeth Arundell. whose descendants include a Richard born in Lanreath in 1707, son of Jonathan (or John) and Catherine. Since Richard and Susannah's first child was born in Bocomoc in 1736, the dates would fit. The preponderance of Richards in this family lends support to either theory. I can see no other branch of the family where they could possibly 'fit' and am spending much time on this near and yet so far situation. Of course, if I am right, my branch would no longer be the seniors of the Coplestons, for it descends from George of Ley's second marriage to Agnes Drew, so our noses will be put out of joint by a family of Cornish Coplestones! Oh, woe. On the other hand, if they do descend from a female - how do the priorities lie then? I will leave you wondering for the next six months - although it would be nice to have the solution to present at the Gathering.

Among the Cops who suffered damage from the 'Big Wind' are Olive and Reg at Hadleigh, Essex and Milly Short who lives in Orpington. I was in Devon at the time and there was no problem in that area, but my lovely local Lloyd Park has been closed due to damage there.

Thank you for all the letters, news, clippings, etc. of the past half year. Willis sent a copy of 'The Welsh Churchman' of October which had a picture of the young Edward Copleston, later Llandaff and the first part of an article on him - I look forward to the conclusion. David and Ruth, with David's Mom, moved to a bungalow, still in the Chester area, in July - I'm sure we all wish them well. One of the clippings sent me is from the Property section of the Western Morning News which describes the Old Rectory as being built in 1845 - it was begun in the 17th and additions made in the 18th. Grand homes built by Coplestons are mentioned (although they spell the name 'Coplestone!') - I would like to see these; so far as I know, all the big houses were brought into the family by advantageous marriages. Since the village concerned is Offwell, it can be seen from the graves in the Churchyard that there is no other spelling than 'Copleston' in the vicinity and I agree with Hermione that they might at least get the spelling right!

Does anyone know of Alfred Roy Coplestone who was born 1918 at Faversham, Kent? He is grandson of Joseph who was born in India, whose father, also Joseph, was in the 70th and 30th Regts. of Foot in Bengal. They are among the descendants of Azel and Bathsheba of Thorverton and Ian Stoyale, local historian there, has a removed cousin in New Zealand whose cousin also descends - small world! You could chat with someone on a bus and find they were related to you, providing your families survived the Peasants' Revolt, the Wars of the Roses and the Black Death!

I hope you all enjoy Christmas and wish you a good New Year. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Fourth Family Gathering next Spring Bank Holiday at Barnstaple. Any cousins and friends in the vicinity are welcome to visit us in the evenings at The North Devon Motel, Taw Vale, while we are there.

Your cousin, Muriel