

Dear Family,

The recent mild weather has made the arrival of December even more sudden than usual - it always seems to creep up on me! Writing Christmas cards for overseas mailing made me realise that this Newsletter must be ready to enclose with the cards. I hope you all have a good festive season; I shall be spending mine at Seaford and look forward to the excitement displayed by the grandsons.

In the June Newsletter I mentioned the discovery by David and Ruth of Maria Copplestone with sons George and Thomas in the 1841 Census of Heaton Gate in Lancashire and asked if anyone had ideas as to their background. Soon after this I was pondering the problem again and it came to me - Maria was wife of George Horatio C., son of Thomas Mitchell C., the RN Master in Nelson's fleet. George was a carpenter and probably worked as such on the Estate, but was not at home on the night of the Census. A few weeks later I was at the PRO at Kew and decided to look at a source so far not inspected, that of applications by seamen and coastguards for places at Greenwich Lower School for their sons and daughters. I found three, one of whom was George Horatio, applying for his son, George William and among the papers was a copy of the marriage certificate of George H. and Maria Barker at St. George the Martyr, Southwark in 1825. Also included was the actual letter of application written by George H. in 1836, when he was at the Coast Guard Station at Cawsand (Plymouth area). He writes 'I have been in the Royal Navy between 3 and 4 years and in the Coast Guard Service nearly two years. My father Thomas Mitchell Copplestone being in the Royal Navy between 20 and 30 years and most of that time a Master, but now dead.' George passed the test and entered Greenwich Hospital Lower School. I wonder how many more untried sources are waiting with such useful information?

Both Art in California and Dick in Connecticut have received letters from an organisation in Ohio telling them that they have exciting news for them and fellow Copplestons. After 'months of work' they said they were ready to publish 'The World Book of Copplestons' adding 'and you Mr. Richard G. Coppleston, are listed in it'. It is said to be an extensive international directory of Copplestons and is an 'Heirloom Edition' and certain to be quite a rare and valuable addition to the Coppleston family library. They say they have spent a great deal of effort and thousands of dollars in locating Coppleston households over the world. Well, I spent two days in the City Business Library years ago extracting Cops from international telephone directories and it didn't cost me a penny. I update from time to time of course. One of the things included in the book is 'The role of heraldry during the medieval period and the development of family crests with ancient symbols and what they mean'. If they don't know the difference between Arms and crests, they aren't worth the powder to blow them you know where and in case they circulate here (they have done so on previous occasions) I warn you that the equivalent of \$30.00 should not be carelessly thrown away. From curiosity, Art ordered the book and I eagerly await his comments. Various organisations here advise family historians to have nothing to do with these people and I heartily concur.

I am illustrating a Certificate of Burial in Woollen which a number of you may not have seen. Rev. Coriolanus Coppleston, 4- and 5-gts-gfr of many of us, was Curate-in-Charge at St. Mary, Luton from 1771 to 1800 when he died and it is 199 years since he signed this certificate which appears in Tate's 'Parish Chest'. Sheep made much money for landowning gentry and impoverished many of the already poor - witness the Clearances.

Some of you may not know that dear Syd Copplestone died in April. I did not know until August when Ivy had a friend 'phone me to ask what she should do about the Devon FHS Journal which had just arrived. I wrote condolences to Ivy and told her that I would notify the Society, but have not heard from her. Syd's enthusiasm for the family history will always be remembered.

I end with some entries from The Times Index for 1860 - they are accidents, not to our own family, but interesting. 'Fred Drake Burnt to Death in a Baker's Oven at Lambeth'; 'Miss Ward from swallowing Arsenic with Treacle instead of Sulpher'; 'James Cleery, Burned to Death in his Room while Helplessly Drunk'; 'A Seaman On Board the Royal Albert whose arm was blown off from a Lady's Dress in passing catching the Hammer of a Gun and Firing It.'

Rowemary Dowie just 'phoned - her Mom's 91st birthday has been celebrated - are there any other nonagenarians in the family?

Take care, enjoy life and let me know any family news. I've been a poor correspondent of late and promise to improve!

Your Coy,
Muriel.



To the Reverend the Minister of Luton Susannah

Punter of the Parish of Luton in the County of Bedford maketh Oath, That the Body of Mary Hingham of this Parish which was lately buried at the Burial Ground St. Mary's Rectory was not wrapped up, when buried, in any Suit, Sheet, or Shroud, but what was made of Sheep's Wool only; nor put into any Coffin, lined, faced, or covered with any kind of Cloth, or Stuff, but what was made of Sheep's Wool only, according to the Direction of an Act of Parliament, intituled, An Act for burying in Woollen. Taken and Sworn this second Day of December 1795

Before me Coriolanus Coppleston

N. B. Affidavits of Burial in Woollen must be delivered in to the Minister of the Parish where the Deceased was buried, in eight Days from the Time of Burial, on pain of the Penalty of Five Pounds for neglect thereof.

Acts of 1666 and 1678 provided that no corpse should be wrapped in anything other than wool. A £5 penalty was imposed on families who ignored the law - half of this went to the poor, the other half to the informer.