



# IN TIME

Ely U3A History Group Members'  
Newsletter



Edition 11

11 June 2020

Welcome to the eleventh edition of IN TIME. This week we look at the origins of the first contact lenses, Trinity College Cambridge and a surprising church in Worcestershire as well as catching up with items sent to the Disrepair shop and a recommended 'good read'.

To our many contributors, please keep on writing, and if you haven't yet sent anything in to IN TIME please consider doing so. Send your pieces to Maggie Haverson (email address supplied in the email containing the newsletter)

## [The First Contact Lens \(from small acorns\) - Ian Forest](#)

In 1887 Dr Theodore Sämisch of Bonn referred one of his patients to Frederick & Albert Müller, artificial eye makers, in the town of Wiesbaden near Frankfurt Germany. The patient had had most of his right lower eyelid removed and the temporal part of his upper lid due to a cancerous skin growth. The remaining upper lid was knotted tissue with the lashes dragging painfully across the cornea. This left the cornea of that eye exposed and drying. It was expected that the eye would soon be lost with some considerable pain. The patient's left eye had poor vision due to a cataract. Dr Sämisch asked the Müller brothers to produce a device to protect and preserve the eye. The Müllers made what was in effect a blown glass artificial eye which encased, but did not touch the cornea, and held a fluid film to prevent further desiccation. The shell looked like an artificial eye with an opaque white portion, with veining covering the sclera and clear glass covering the cornea. The opaque scleral portion was considered an advantage as it hid any lens induced redness of the sclera. The Müllers called their lens the Müllerschen Kontakt-schale.



*The title page of the Müller Bros book on Contact Lenses 1910 contains a section on their involvement in the supply of the first contact lens*



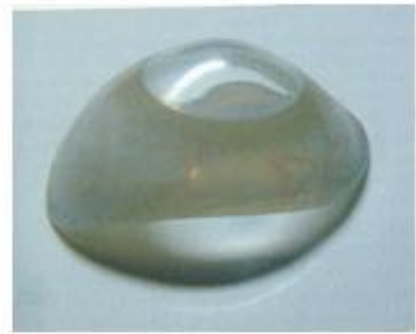
*Blowing a Glass Eye*

The patient wrote a letter (unfortunately now lost) in 1907 stating that since 1887 he had worn the lens continuously, day and night for 18 months to 2 years, when a replacement was supplied. (Tears would corrode the glass over that time period forcing lens replacement). The patient wore lenses successfully with good tolerance and no further corneal damage for about 20 years. It is thought that this and other patients' success with Müllers lenses was due to the portion of the lens resting on the sclera not being a perfect fit. This meant that fresh tears could flush over the cornea and tissue debris would be removed.

Sadly we do not know the name of the patient and so we suspect that somewhere around Bonn and Wiesbaden lies the grave of the world's first successful contact lens wearer along with one of the early Müller brother's lenses.

Glass has been replaced by plastics and modern contact lenses are usually made from siloxyfluoromethacrylates (rigid lenses) or hydroxyethyl methacrylate (soft lenses).

In 2018 the UK produced 789,000,000 contact lenses, 72% of which were wear once lenses (daily disposables), many of which were exported. The factory gate value of these lenses was £292,000,000. It is estimated that there are 3.6 million UK contact lens wearers.



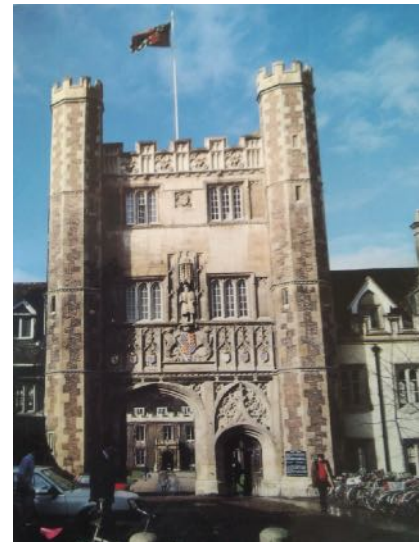
*A Müller glass contact lens C1900 with opaque scleral portion & veins just visible.*

### Trinity College Cambridge - Kate Cann

Growing up in Cambridge one of my favourite collages was Trinity, and the great gate fascinated me.

Cambridge is an amazing place, and as a child, my dad would take me to the city where mind boggling things would happen on Rag Day. A line of pennies (old money) would go through the streets along the pavement all the way to the catholic church. Students would put a car on a college roof, girls were captured and auctioned off, and the leg of a chair was placed in the hand of Henry V111 on the gate of Trinity College.

The great gate of Trinity is older than the college itself, erected in 1490 to 1530 it marked the entrance to the grounds of Kings hall. The statue of Henry V111, the founder of Trinity presides over the centre of the gate and under it the name of Edward 111 who was founder of Kings Hall, on either side are the coats of arms of his sons. Once inside this magnificent gate, the visitor surveys the great court which was built in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth 1 at the instigation of Thomas Neville (Master from 1593 to 1615) - he created the Trinity we know today.



The chapel was begun by Mary Tudor and finished in the reign of Elizabeth 1 inside are statues to great Trinity men, Frances Bacon, William Whewell, Tennison, and of course Newton. The dining hall is one of the finest examples of a great Elizabethan hall, (used I believe in some of the Harry Potter films ) A picture of Henry V111 dominates the dais. When leaving the dining area one passes through Neville's court, where Byron lived as an undergraduate.

At the far end of the court is the library, built by Christopher Wren, the finest building in Trinity apart from the hall. Leaving the library the visitor can pass out onto the backs as the grounds on both sides of the river are called. The bridge over the Cam also bears the arms of Trinity College.

## [The Disrepair shop – cherished memories](#)

Some responses to our disrepair articles

### Sunday afternoon tea - Lilian Painter

Reading Maggie Haverson's memories of her mother's tea set reminded me of Sunday afternoon tea which was always special when we were young.

A tablecloth was always laid, teacups, saucers and side plates set out. A plate of bread and butter (or was it margarine?) was prepared as was a small ham salad - at least we were told it was ham but could have been spam! To accompany this there was a choice of fish or meat paste and of course a jar of jam - for some reason this always seemed to be plum. After this jelly and blancmange was served. The blancmange had to be turned out from a mould which had round indentations in the top and it was always very satisfying if it turned out whole, a bit like trying to turn out a sandcastle. To finish off there was usually a Victoria sponge.

This might seem an everyday memory but nowadays many families do not even have a dining table so eat from plates on their lap whilst watching television and only ever drink out of mugs so things like this which were everyday (or Sunday) occurrences are now something from the past although there is a trend for cafes and hotels to serve afternoon tea.



### The Dragon Dish – Cassandra Rogers



Kate Cann's blue dragon dish was immediately recognised by my family as we have some pieces in the same pattern ourselves. Cups and saucers, a bowl once used for sugar, plates, and also a handsome large oval dish for carving joints and poultry on. The latter piece is in perfect condition, the gold rim, good blue dragons and not a chip nor a hair crack anywhere. (sorry Kate) I found it in the proverbial Charity Shop.

There seems to be a present Royal Cauldon Pottery making odd shaped, coloured teapots and other items but the dragon china is not manufactured as far as I can see. Quite a number of pieces appear on e-bay, which indicates that they must be popular to perhaps collectors. They are definitely not Chinese. We love it for itself and for the memory of it being used as a breakfast set in the Grandparents house.

## [Reading Corner](#)

### Threading through History – Maggie Haverson



I love fabrics, threads and wool almost as much as I love books and reading so for me this book could not have fit the bill better. For those of you interested in fabrics and sewing this lovely book is a must. Kasia St Clair's *The Golden Thread* traces the history of fabric its production and use from the origins of weaving to modern day fabric production and use.

It starts by describing the flax fibres found in ancient caves then moves on to the wrappings of Egyptian mummies, silk production and the silk roads, the Viking woollen sails and the importance of

wool in medieval England. It delves into lace making and luxury fabrics of the Elizabethan age and then describes the emergence of the cotton trade before looking at the development of modern day synthetics, all-weather and sports fabrics. It is a mine of information and fascinating facts. *The Golden Thread – How fabric changed history, Kassia St Clair, John Murray, 2018*

### [A surprising church in Worcestershire - Helen Moore](#)

Following on from the article about the Mappa Mundi in Hereford Cathedral I thought I would share another interesting find in that direction – Witley Court. The Court itself is in ruins following a fire in 1937 but the church survives as does the now restored Perseus and Andromeda Fountain.

The extent of the building and the fountain are impressive but it is the Church of St Michael and all Angels, Great Witley in the grounds of the Court which is really surprising. The Great Witley estate was bought by Thomas Foley in 1655. His grandson the first Baron Foley, planned to build a church but died before he could do so. His wife Mary and son, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Foley completed the work including on the death of Mary a memorial to Thomas and Mary sculpted by Michael Rysbrack at a cost of £2000.

In 1747 the church was transformed with the acquisition from the Duke of Chandos' Canons Palace of 10 hand painted glass windows by Joshua Price and oil on canvas paintings including the "Ascension" by Antonio Bellucci together with the necessary changes to the fabric to accommodate them. Papier mache copies of plasterwork from the palace were added. Several owners added to the interior including Sir Henry Smith, a carpet entrepreneur from Kidderminster, who bought the court in 1920 and added electricity to the church. Since the fire, without the benefactors, the church deteriorated but has now been restored by the community and continues as the Parish Church.



*Interior of St Michael and All Angels*



*The fountain*

As for the Court itself, it changed hands several times as the fortunes were made and lost. From the point of view of an Ely resident, the tenant of the Court from 1843-1846 was the Dowager Queen Adelaide wife of William IV. In the 1850s the then owner, Lord Dudley, had the house and formal gardens remodelled including the Perseus and Andromeda Fountain. About that time the Court reached the peak of grandeur with lavish house parties with guests including the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. In 1920 his son sold the property to Henry Smith. After the fire in 1937 the insurers did not pay up so the estate was split up and sold in lots. The house was stripped of anything of value. In 1972 it was taken into the care of English Heritage.

(The photos are from Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Witley#External\\_links](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Witley#External_links) and English Heritage <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/witley-court-and-gardens/history/>

## Petty's Pick of the Week

Every day Mike Petty posts on his Facebook group "Fenland History on Facebook" a number of newspaper clips from his massive archive of local events reported "on this day" <https://www.facebook.com/groups//102684982076955>

### ***Loo thefts – Ely Past Snips June 7th 1929***

Fittings and toilet rolls have been missed from the public conveniences in Ely, as many as nine toilet rolls had been missed in a week.

On Friday the suspicions of the attendant were aroused by a man leaving with "a rather bulging pocket". The matter was reported to the police.

This sort of thing had been going on for a considerable time and proceedings should be taken against the person concerned. If they acted now it would 'nip in the bud' this sort of thing and let people know that the property of the Council could not be interfered with in this way. – 29 06 07(2) ES



This story appeared in the Ely Standard on this date.