

Conjuring with Numbers

by Melanie Winterbotham

Our fascination with records goes back a long way, and added a light hearted touch to the news.

The Oldies' Race

On the 2 December 1822 this item appeared in the *Hampshire Chronicle*:

'Three old men whose united ages amounted to 223 years were matched to walk on Monday as follows: - William Churchill aged 80 years to walk from the 13th mile-stone on the Uxbridge road to the seventh and back in three hours, making 12 miles. Wm. Weedon aged 67 years to walk from the same place and back again in three hours and to complete the distance of seven miles and a half. John Childs aged 76 to walk from the stone to the 11th mile-stone, and back again, in three hours, making a distance of four miles. The three men are inhabitants of Ruislip, and the two younger were thought incapable of walking the distance, being so very infirm. Churchill walked the 12 miles two minutes and a half within time. Weedon walked his distance one quarter of an hour within time, and Childs did his four miles half an hour within time.'

William Churchill went on for another 15 years, though nominally gaining 20 in that time. The church clerk decided he must be about 100 when he was buried! He was renting accommodation from a John Weedon in 1833, but was probably being cared for after that. He had married in the 1770s and had a family in Ruislip. **William Weedon** was 66 at the time of the walk, and lived nearly another 14 years till 1836, when his age was accurately recorded as 79. **Child** is a common name in the parish, yet no records quite fit this John. We must give the reporter the benefit of the doubt.

Married Oldies

The *Blackburn Standard* of the 25 April 1838 (and several other newspapers) carried the following:

'There are now living in the parish of Ruislip, Middlesex, a man and his wife, by the name of Dallemore, whose united ages amount to 204 years. The man's age is 103 years, and his wife's 101 years.'

Well, that might have been the case if they had spun out their lives a bit longer, but a good story has been stretched to make the couple centenarians. In fact, the Ruislip burial register shows **Edward Dallamore** had died four and a half years previously, with his age recorded as 95; he was buried 14 Dec 1833. His widow Cecil Dallamore (née Howard) was buried 25 June 1838, two months after this story was published, and her age was recorded thus '103!!'.

Edward was baptised in Harrow in 1737, and Cecil is almost certainly Cecilia Howard baptised 20 July 1740 at St Margaret's Westminster, which would undermine the age claim a little. As Cecil gained two years in two months, we must be a little sceptical. Nevertheless the couple were married in Pinner on the 18 Oct 1764, so had certainly enjoyed (we hope) 69 years of married life; a remarkable story that would make the local papers even today. They had at least three children, one of whom we know survived: their daughter Mary married Richard Kirby in 1793, but predeceased her mother in 1836. The Dallamores farmed at Ducks Hill for at least 30 years before retiring in 1810, possibly to a cottage in Ickenham Road.

Eggs by the dozen and a half

This strange story from the *Windsor Express* was repeated in the *Sussex Advertiser* on the 20 April 1829:

'The landlord of the Swan Inn, Ruislip, Middlesex, having purchased 14 eggs for a shilling last week, of a neighbour, the servant girl drily said "Master, I should like them boiled for my supper." He replied, "you shall have them on this condition – that if you do not eat them in a quarter of an hour

you shall pay the shilling." The girl consented; and to the astonishment of all the family, she ate fourteen eggs, half a quatern loaf, and drank a quart of ale, within the time specified. The same girl is now under an engagement to eat 18 duck eggs in the same space of time. She is remarkably fond of green peas; and as these would prove a luxury should the ducks be in embryo at the time, she will be allowed to take whatever she may fancy to coax them down.'

No amount of research will tell us whether the author had also had a quart of ale!

Reference:

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The Swan Inn 1985