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Dear Family,

The Blue Wolf brings you Christmas greetings and very best wishes for the New Year. Of the five crests discovered to have been used by various family branches over the centuries, Wolf is the most popular among the present family. I am very happy to use him since contrary to the bad image given to this beautiful animal, he is a family oriented creature and not given to attacking every human animal who comes into his territory.

It is a long time since I gave news of an anniversary and 1992 marks 500 years since the death of Ralph de Copleston who is ancestor of all of us descending from the Bideford branch. In his Inquisition Post Mortem it is shown that he died holding a dozen manors in each of Devon and Cornwall, along with many acres of land and messuages in various parts of the West Country. Ralph's son John acquired yet more lands and was referred to as 'The Great Copleston', but his grandson, Christopher, disposed most of the property, either selling to pay his debts or giving it and much of his money to his mistress Amy Pollard and the three sons he had by her. Despite the fact that Elizabeth gave Christopher a Free Pardon for the 'manslaughter' of his Godson, Christopher Mons, he learned no lesson, but went on behaving in a manner outrageous even in those times. (How can the deliberate plunging of a dagger in the back of a man not be murder?). Christopher's first son, Hugh, then got himself killed during an altercation in Ludgate in the City of London and a couple of generations later the bulk of the Copleston holdings went with an heiress into another family. How are the mighty fallen!

I am delighted to announce the forthcoming marriage of Paul Copleston in Plymouth next spring and I know you will join me in wishing him and his fiancée every happiness. Last year Paul sent me a copy of an article from 'Devon Life' about the impending sale of Eggesford House. While staying with Twizzie and family a few weeks back, she took me to Eggesford and we looked at the ruined house, amazed at the size it must have been. Originally it was one of the largest estates in Devon - over 16,000 acres and the views from the property are breathtaking. The Coplestons acquired it with the marriage of Charles Copleston of Bickton to Anne, daughter of Richard Reigny, whose family had held the estate since the time of Henry III. It passed to the Chichesters with the marriage of Anne, only daughter of John Copleston and his wife Dorothy, daughter of Sir George Beeston, to Edward Chichester, later Viscount Chichester of Carrickfergus, early in the 17th century.

Correspondence has brought various pieces of information. Vera Page has told me that a kneeler with the Copleston Arms now reposes in the Church at Dulverton and Larry discovered while in Eggesford Church that there is one there, also, among a number of others representing local families. Twizzie had not been in the Church and we were pleased to see the kneeler there - she was impressed, as I thought she would be, with the enormous monuments in the Church to Chichesters and Coplestons. One would not expect such MI's in a small estate church.

Art Copleston in California has been hospitalised and we wish him well - he visited in the summer with Larry and Norma in Ontario. I had a delightful conversation with Melanie Copleston and her Mother and Father in Wales when they telephoned a while back. Melanie is 1st coz to Paul in Plymouth. Another recent call came from Philip Williams, connected to the Samuel family - both Melanie and Philip have been sent pedigrees and I've not yet had comment from either - I guess such a long pedigree is overwhelming and I may have to give more explanation!

A most enjoyable lunch with Father Freddie in late September and he signed a copy of his 'Aquinas' for Larry - I hope the book arrived safely in Ontario!

It was a great pleasure to see John and Elizabeth Coplestone at Michael and family's new home in Seaford a few weeks ago when they came for coffee and met the family for the first time. John descends from Edward Copleston of Instow, the family who added an 'el' to the name and in many cases an extra 'p'. I have come across some Coplestones who have thought they had no connection with the family until I explained the variations and the way they evolved.

I have come across two more anniversaries: In 1492 Walter Copleston of Yealmpton 'gentilman' was commissioned to levy and collect tax in relief of poor towns laid waste in Devon and was also collector of tax for the 'necessary defence of the realm'. Walter's descendant, Arthur, son of Henry Copleston of Yealmpton, was a student admitted to Middle Temple on February 3rd, 1592. We had so many lawyers! I think the Richard de Copleston who represented Muriel de Bruere at the Essoin in Lincoln in 1200 was of that ilk.

Here I must apologise for the appearance of this News sheet; I stupidly chose to use a piece of A3 which is thick and has a shiny surface and it slips in the typewriter, but I'm sure you'll understand my not wanting to type all this again!

I have two sad items of news; Marjorie Copleston died in hospital at Worthing on December 3rd. Her sister Nora had kindly written to let me know that she had been admitted for treatment for her arthritic condition, but she acquired a virus which affected her badly. I sent a card and letter to the hospital and had a further report from Nora, but was shocked to hear of her death. We used to exchange visits until a few years ago when the arthritis prevented travel and I visited Worthing a couple of times a year, enjoying Marjorie's company and that of her three cats - we shared a great mutual interest in felines. I shall miss her and her newsey letters.

A letter last week informed me of the passing of Kate Haycock. Kate's great-grandmother was Jane Galloway and my great-grandfather Josiah Copleston had married (bigamously) Jane's sister Elizabeth Sarah Galloway, my great-grandmother. We had been so pleased to find this relationship and the fact that both our gt-grandfathers were wood engravers. I always enjoyed our correspondence although I never met Kate, whose daughter Deborah sent me the sad news.

A letter from Agnes in Charleston last week told me that she was about to leave for Long Island to spend Thanksgiving with her step-daughter and family and that when she returned she would write answering my queries, for I have made a number concerning my visit there. The News Sheet next June will give a full report on that branch of the family.

Syd in Birmingham is asking for more on the Bonviles and on the great houses the families once held; I promise to do my best to answer in the New Year, Syd! The rest of this month will be hectic, with little or no time for searches or long letters. I expect to be at Seaford for Christmas and look forward to early morning walks over the Downs (no, the weather won't deter either Michael or me from that delight).

I was greatly pleased when visiting Reg and Olive to be taken to Canterbury - I'd not been for a long time and was happy to visit the Cathedral again and stroll around the City. Not long after my visit I was very sad to learn of the death of Reg's brother Harold and I know that you will join me in sending condolences to Eileen. Many of you will remember Harold's cheerful presence at family gatherings.

We become fewer in numbers, our generation, but I do hope that those younger will keep the interest in our great family going - there is a lot, I'm afraid, to deplore in our history, but so very much has been handed down to us. Not land, nor riches, but a great deal that has made us all what we are.

May you all enjoy this festive season and I hope that the New Year brings your hopes to fruition. Do keep writing and stay in touch.

*Your Boz,
Muriel.*