

26th April 2021

Origins

“All beginnings are very troublesome things.”

Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Traits and Trials of Early Life (1836)

As you may know, I live in East Lothian, and have done for many years. “The Lothians” is a region of Scotland which lies between the southern shore of the Firth of Forth and the Lammermuir and Moorfoot Hills to the north of the Scottish Borders. Most of the region was under the control of the Kingdom of Northumbria up to the 7th century, but, following three centuries of conflict, it was annexed to the Kingdom of Scotland around the 10th century – and we’ve been Scottish ever since!

The origins of the name “Lothian” are lost in the mists of time. Some say it’s from an ancient language meaning, “The country of the fort of Lugus” (Lugus being the Celtic god of commerce). Others suggest it may come from the stream that flows through the region, The Lothian Burn, the name deriving from either “a dark or muddy stream”, or “a flood”, or “bright and shining”. And, to cap it all, there’s a legend that the name comes from King Lot, who was king of Lothian in the Arthurian legend.

It’s a bit of fun and maybe even moderately interesting. But let’s not get too hung up on origins. And that’s particularly true when we define people by their antecedents. I get twitchy when my son is labelled “a son of the manse” – or, in other terminology, a “PK”, or “preacher’s kid”. Why should a child’s origins have any bearing on their place in the world? My father was a coach driver. My mother was a shop-assistant. Does that matter? It matters to me, in as much as I have pride in what they achieved for my sister and me from humble beginnings. My origins may *explain* some things about me, but do they *define* who I am? I hope not. And what of someone who comes from country X, or was educated at Y, or did Z in their teens? It might be moderately interesting, or even a bit of fun. But beware of origins defining what we are at the present time.

“All beginnings are very troublesome things.” So, East Lothian? I’m just happy it’s a beautiful place to live in and that it’s filled with such lovely people. Origins? Nah! I’ll stick with what I know right here and right now.

A prayer for today

Creator God, source of all life, origin of all goodness, let me rest between your beginning and your ending, and know it is good to be where I am, right now. Amen