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Ebeneezer Scrooge was Adam Smith's great nephew [1]

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Strange as it may seem, the original upon which Dickens based Ebeneezer Scrooge was indeed Adam Smith's great nephew. And given that today is the day that everyone and his dog is going to be reading A Christmas Carol today sounds like a good day to tell you about it [3].

> The story goes that Charles Dickens was visiting Edinburgh to give a public reading of his work in 1842, and spent some time looking around the Canongate church graveyard. He saw one grave that made him shudder. The name on the grave was Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie--mean man." According to Peter Clark, a British political economist who seems the starting point for this story, Dickens misread the inscription. It actually said "Meal man," because Scroggie was a corn merchant.

Scroggie was far from being the Scrooge of the story being somewhat licentious by nature, tupping at least one servant over a gravestone and into pregnancy, goosing a Countess at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and in general enjoying the good things in this life while there was time to do so. And, of course, as a corn merchant he saved and improved far more lives than anyone just giving away their money does, as his Great Uncle points out in Book IV, Chapter 5 (start at para 40) of the Wealth of Nations [4].

But I think this now replaces my previous favourite factoid about Smith, that previous being that when a Professor he employed James Watt to come and fix the university steam engine. Well, it's either that or the one about David Ricardo first reading Wealth of Nations in a house I used to cover on my newspaper round (no, I'm not *that* old that the events over lapped).

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