

Getting Started with the Davy Notebooks Project

U3A Collaboration (March 2022)



24 March 2022

Dear U3A member,

Hello! I'm Dr Andrew Lacey, Senior Research Associate on the Davy Notebooks Project, based in the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. It's a real pleasure to welcome you to our project as a volunteer transcriber, and I'm looking forward very much to working with you over the coming weeks.

You're joining the project at an exciting time for us. Using the people-powered research platform Zooniverse, we're transcribing the 70 Davy notebooks that we know about, which are held in the archives of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, in London, and at Kresen Kernow, in Cornwall. We're very close to reaching the 50% completion mark – we've transcribed almost 35 full notebooks so far. Many of these notebooks have never been transcribed before – you could be the first person to transcribe Davy's words as he left them two-hundred years ago!

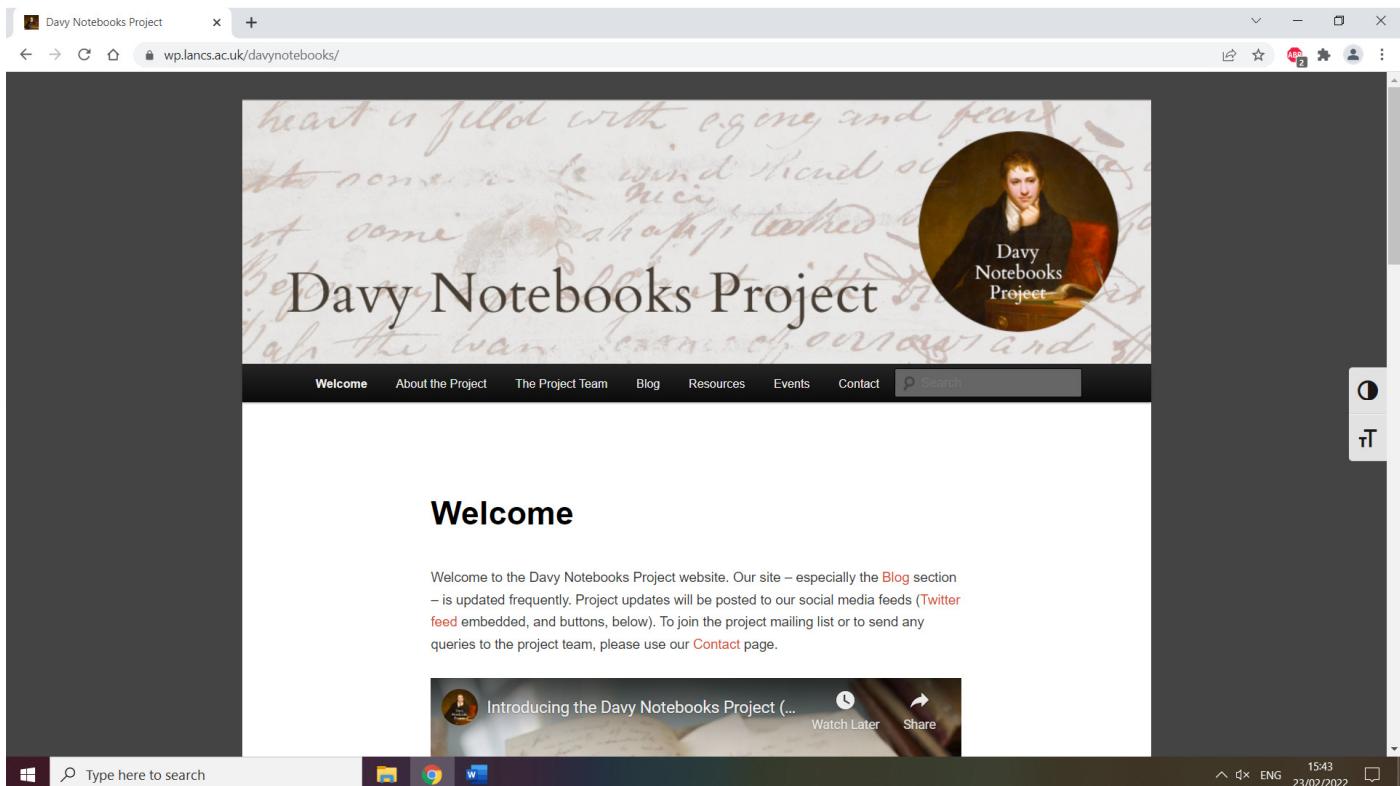
I hope that you'll find Sir Humphry Davy's notebooks fascinating documents to work with. While Davy (who was born in 1778, and died in 1829) was the foremost chemist of the early nineteenth century in Britain, he was also a poet, moving in the same literary circles as Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Wordsworth. His notebooks contain poems, as well as sketches (some of which are embellished with watercolour paints). He was a keen traveller, making several tours on the Continent in the 1810s and 1820s. Davy also firmly believed in the principles of applied science – of putting ideas developed in the laboratory into practice in the outside world – as we see through his work on the miners' safety lamp (1815-17), which vastly increased Britain's industrial capability and saved many lives below ground, through his attempts to unroll, using chemical means, the Herculaneum papyri carbonised by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD (1818-20), and through his work on protecting the copper hulls of Royal Navy ships using electrochemical means (1823-25).

Davy's interests were varied: as well as records of his chemical work and poems, his notebooks contain material on agriculture, astronomy, geology, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and more. As I hope you'll find out for yourself, Davy's notebooks frequently challenge the idea that the arts and sciences are somehow 'separate'. Davy clearly didn't see them as such – we have, for example, lines of poetry in amongst records of Davy's chemical researches. Rather, 'artistic' and 'scientific' methods both offered, for Davy, important ways of exploring the mysteries of the world around him.

If you'd like to learn more about Davy and the Davy Notebooks Project, we have a project website:

wp.lancs.ac.uk/davynotebooks

To find out more about the notebooks that we've transcribed so far, please see the **About the Project** page. The **Resources** page contains lots of useful information on Davy, including full and condensed chronologies of his life, and electronic versions of his published works. Our **Blog** is updated regularly with interesting findings from the project so far.



If you'd like to view the website in High Contrast mode, please click the top button, on the right:



If you'd like to increase the font size of the text on our website, please click the bottom button, on the right:



Let's begin by signing up for an account on Zooniverse.

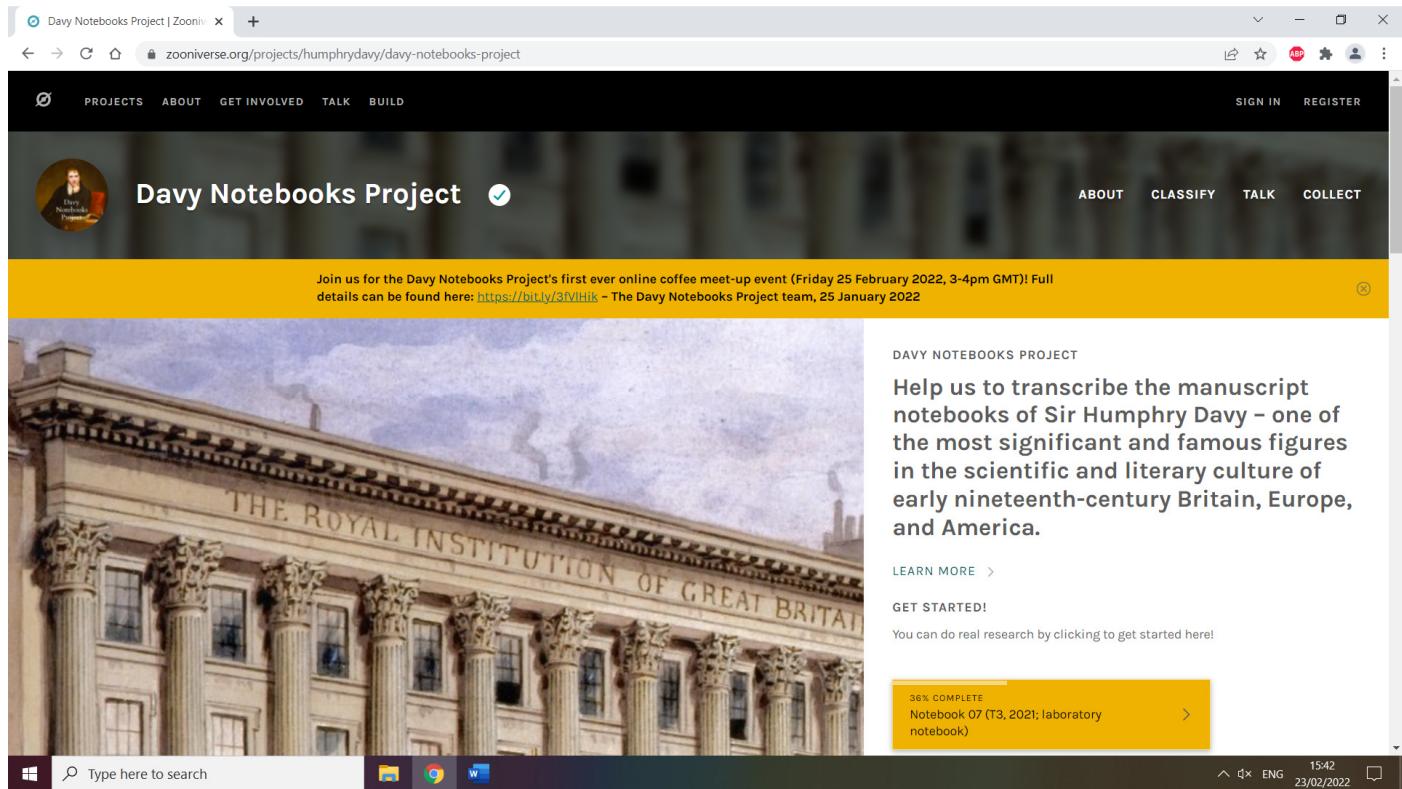
Signing up for an account on Zooniverse

1. Go to our Zooniverse project page:

<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project>

If you prefer, you can use this shorter link, which will also take you to our Zooniverse project page:

bit.ly/37ait6c



2. Click the **Register** button, in the top right:

REGISTER

3. In the window that pops up, fill in the following information:

- Username: you can choose any username that you like, **but we ask that you include the characters ‘U3A’ somewhere in it**, as in the following examples: JaneSmithU3A, U3ARobertJones, FamilyHistorianU3A, U3AOxford1950, Blue22_U3A. This will allow us to track your transcription work as it comes through the Zooniverse system, and will enable us to better tailor the types of transcription work we offer to future U3A volunteers.
- Email address: you can use any working e-mail address.
- Confirm e-mail address: make sure that this address matches exactly with the one you previously entered.
- Password: you can choose any password that you like. Try to make it memorable, as you'll need it to log in again if you log out of Zooniverse during a transcription session.
- Confirm password: make sure that this password matches exactly with the one you previously entered.
- Real name: this is optional. Please enter your real name if you'd like to.

Tick the box that says you agree to Zooniverse's standard privacy policy.

SIGN IN

REGISTER

Welcome back!

Please create an account to start doing real research.

If you are under 16 years old, tick this box to confirm that you've completed the form with your parent or guardian

USERNAME (REQUIRED)
JaneSmithU3A
This will be shown publicly on message boards, etc.

EMAIL ADDRESS (REQUIRED)
janessmith55@gmail.com

PASSWORD (REQUIRED)

CONFIRM PASSWORD (REQUIRED)

CONFIRM EMAIL ADDRESS (REQUIRED)
janessmith55@gmail.com

REAL NAME (OPTIONAL)
Jane Smith
We'll use this to give you credit in scientific papers, posters, etc.

You agree to our privacy policy (required) ([Read our privacy policy](#))

4. If you like, you can tick either of the optional boxes that follow. I'd recommend that you opt in to receiving occasional e-mails from Zooniverse, as they contain information on new projects that might be of interest, but that you don't opt in to test new projects, as more experienced Zooniverse users tend to do this. When you're ready, click the **Register** button.

It's ok to send me an email every once in a while (optional)

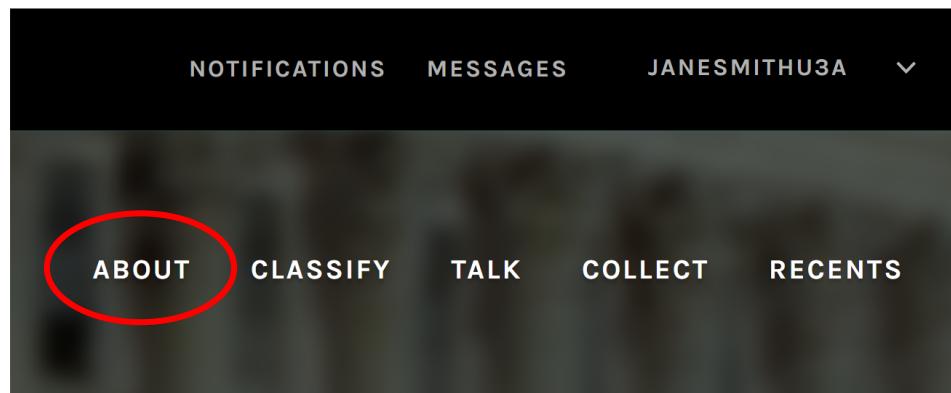
I'd like to help test new projects and be emailed when they're available (optional)

Register

5. Now, in the top right corner of your screen, you'll see that your account has been created, and that you're logged in under your new username.



6. Before you start transcribing, I'd recommend that you have a quick read through the **About** pages for our project. The button is at the top right of the page. (Important note: don't click the About button in the top left of the page – this will take you to Zooniverse's general about pages, rather than the Davy Notebooks Project's specific about pages):



Join us for the Davy Notebooks Project's first ever online coffee meet-up event (Friday 25 February 2022, 3-4pm GMT)! Full details can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3fVlHik> – The Davy Notebooks Project team, 25 January 2022

ABOUT CLASSIFY TALK COLLECT

RESEARCH

Research

Research

Aims

Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) was perhaps the most famous chemist of the early nineteenth century. Following on from a successful Zooniverse pilot project (March-December 2019), during which we intended to transcribe five of Davy's notebooks but actually managed to do eight, this project aims to transcribe the remainder of Davy's notebooks, which number seventy-five in all. (As we write at the start of the full project, that's eight down, sixty-seven to go!).

The early notebooks selected for the pilot run began to reveal, in a new and exciting way, how Davy's mind worked and how his thinking developed. From the work we've done so far, it's clear that Davy's notebooks, containing details of his scientific experiments, poetry, geological observations, travel accounts, and personal philosophy, present us with a wide range of fascinating insights, many of which are unique to the notebooks. Having said this, some passages - such as those in which Davy discusses sex, gender, and race, sometimes employing crude stereotypes in the process - are, of course, much less edifying. There remains much work to be done on Davy's notebooks, and much more to discover: **aside from the eight pilot project notebooks, many of the pages of Davy's notebooks have never been transcribed before.** By transcribing these notebooks, we'll find out more about Davy the man, his life and work, and the cultures and networks of which he was part.

Type here to search

17:55 23/02/2022

You can find out more about the research we're doing by scrolling down this page. If you'd like to know more about the project team or to read our frequently asked questions (FAQ), you can select these options on the left.

- When you've finished reading our **About** page(s), return to our main page by clicking the name of our project, in the top left:

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ABOUT CLASSIFY TALK COLLECT

ABOUT RESEARCH THE TEAM FAQ

Research

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Aims

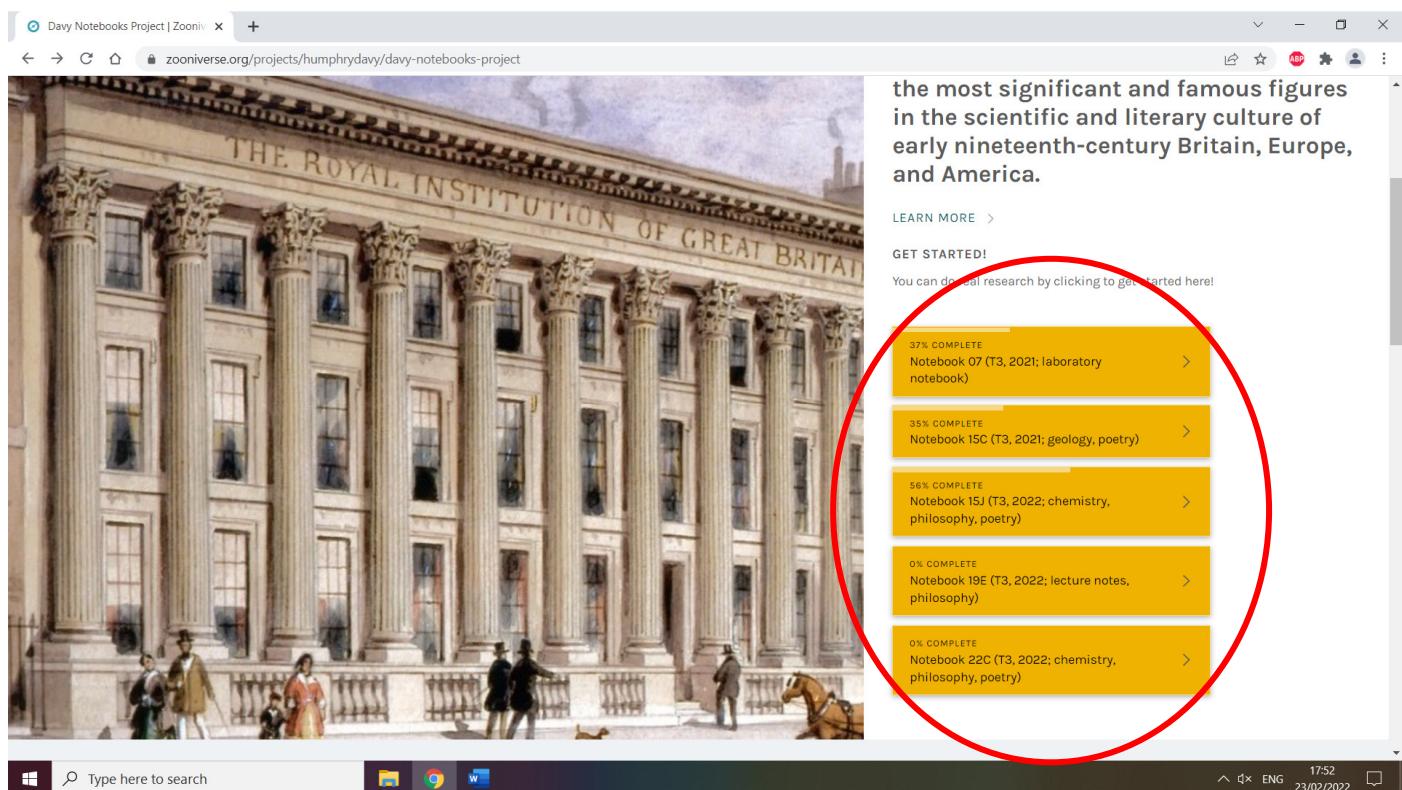
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Now, let's locate the notebook(s) that we've identified as being particularly suited to U3A volunteers.

Locating our notebook(s)

8. On our main page, find the collection of yellow buttons on the right. Each yellow button represents one active notebook that our volunteers are currently transcribing. You can see the name of each notebook, as well as the progress we've made in the transcription of that particular notebook, expressed as a percentage.



9. The list will look something like this. Important note: the collection of yellow buttons will differ slightly when you join the project. There might be more or fewer yellow buttons, the names of the notebooks might be entirely different, and the progress percentages in each yellow button will be different. But don't worry! This is because the project is constantly ongoing, and different notebooks will be active at different times as we proceed:

- 37% COMPLETE

Notebook 07 (T3, 2021; laboratory notebook)

[>](#)
- 35% COMPLETE

Notebook 15C (T3, 2021; geology, poetry)

[>](#)
- 56% COMPLETE

Notebook 15J (T3, 2022; chemistry, philosophy, poetry)

[>](#)
- 0% COMPLETE

Notebook 19E (T3, 2022; lecture notes, philosophy)

[>](#)
- 0% COMPLETE

Notebook 22C (T3, 2022; chemistry, philosophy, poetry)

[>](#)

10. For the purposes of our collaboration, we're especially interested in notebook(s) with '[U3A]' in the title, like this one:

0% COMPLETE

Notebook 04B3 (T4, 2022; electrochemistry, lecture notes) [U3A]

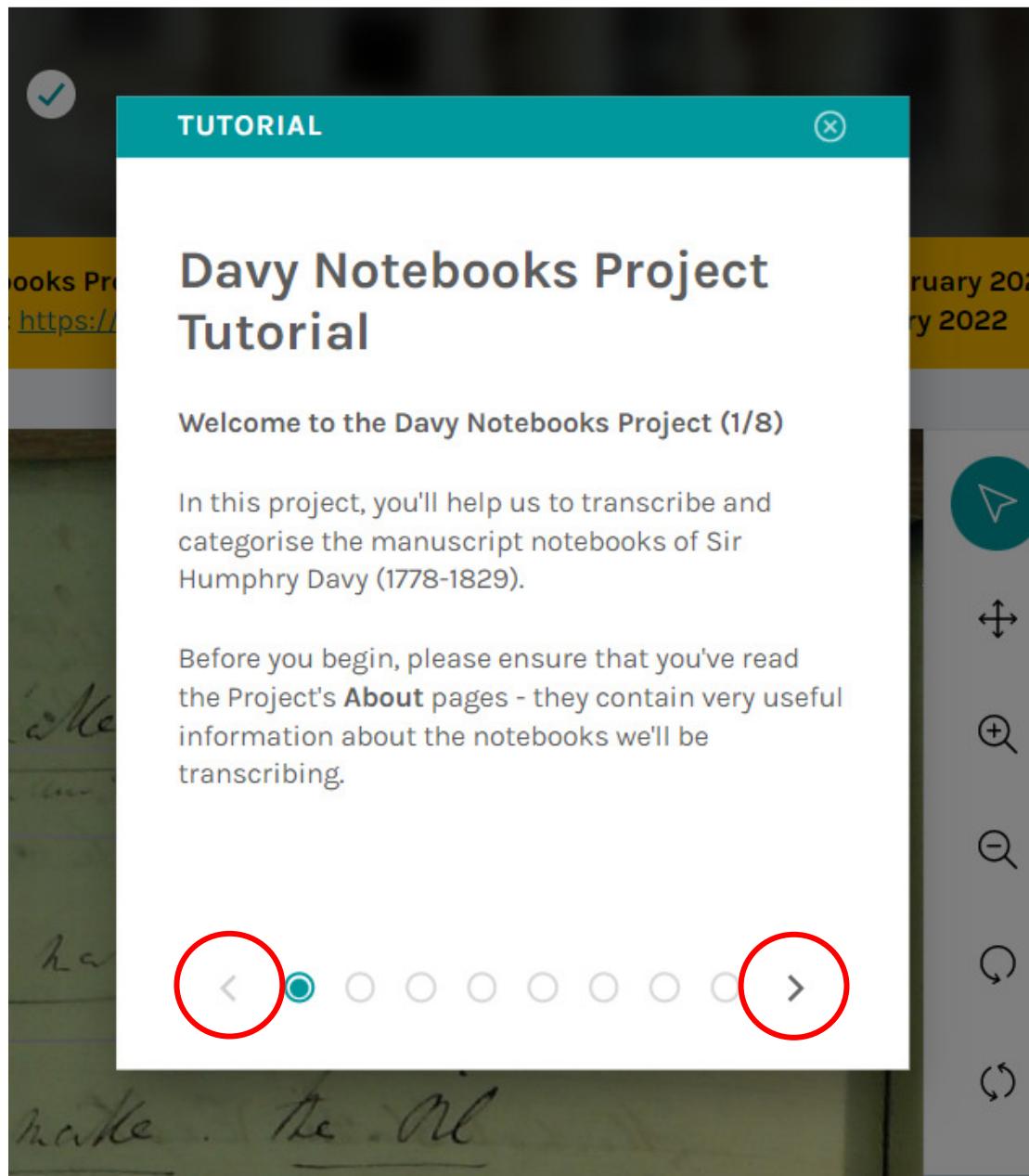
[>](#)

You can select any notebook, but notebook(s) with '[U3A]' in the title are especially recommended: these are the notebook(s) that we've discussed in our meetings, and have settled on transcribing together as a group.

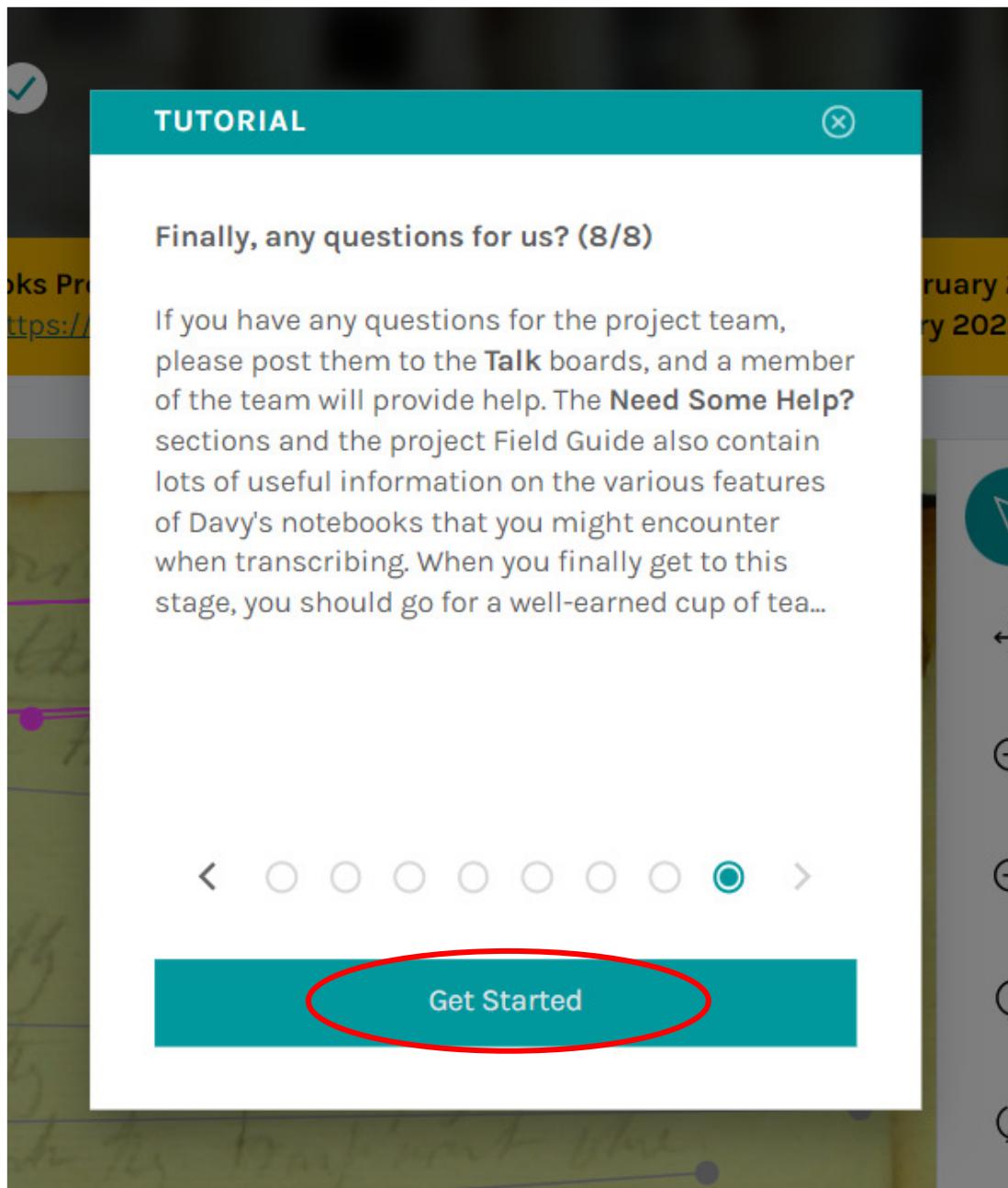
11. Click the yellow button for the notebook you'd like to work on:



12. A window will pop up. This is our project **Tutorial**, which describes how we'd like you to transcribe Davy's handwriting. There are eight numbered steps in the Tutorial – move through the steps by clicking the right and left arrows at the bottom of the pop up window.



13. When you've read through the **Tutorial**, click **Get Started**, at the end of the Tutorial:



14. You'll be taken to the transcription task, and you can begin. If you need to refer back to the **Tutorial** while you're working, there's a button on the right that will open it up:

Notebook 07 (T3, 2021; laborato) +

zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project/classify/workflow/19684

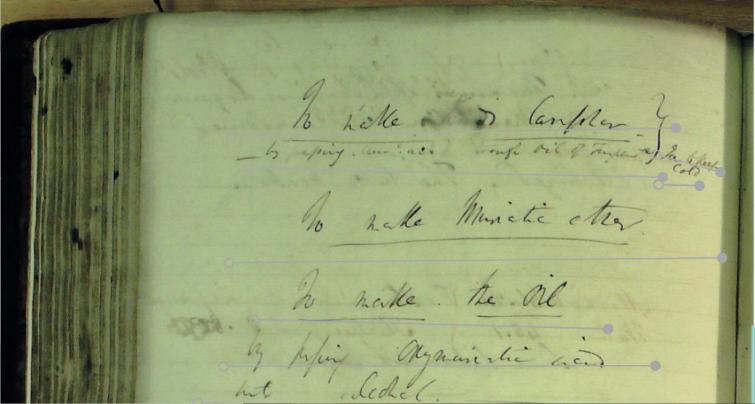
PROJECTS ABOUT GET INVOLVED TALK BUILD SIGN IN REGISTER

Davy Notebooks Project

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ABOUT CLASSIFY TALK COLLECT

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TUTORIAL

Davy Notebooks Project Tutorial

Welcome to the Davy Notebooks Project (1/8)

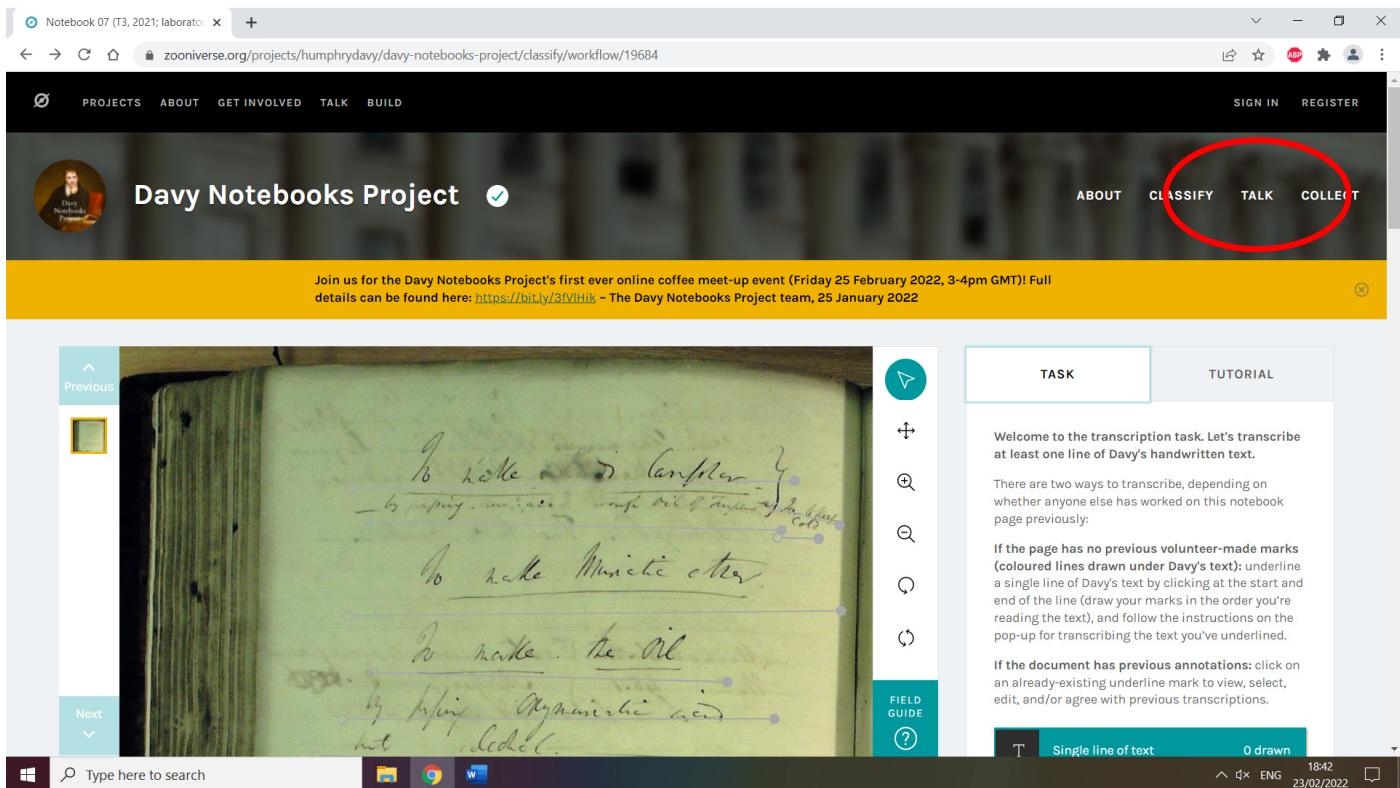
In this project, you'll help us to transcribe and categorise the manuscript notebooks of Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829).

Before you begin, please ensure that you've read the Project's [About](#) pages - they contain very useful information about the notebooks we'll be transcribing.

18:32 23/02/2022

Some important things to remember

- Nothing that any volunteer transcriber does for us is ‘final’, so don’t worry! Every single transcription is reviewed and edited by a member of the project team, so please don’t feel as though you’re doing this ‘on your own’, as it were – this is a collaborative effort!
- Transcription is difficult at the best of times, and Davy’s handwriting can be especially difficult. All we’d like is for you to give it your best try! We know that many of you will be coming to Davy’s handwriting for the first time, and reading it gets easier as one becomes more familiar with it.
- We have a project **Field Guide** (available to view on Zooniverse; I’ve also sent a separate PDF version), which lists idiosyncratic features of Davy’s texts that you’ll encounter as you work through the notebooks. If you encounter something during the transcription process that seems a little unusual, there may well be an entry for it in the Field Guide.
- You can’t ‘break’ the project in any way by experimenting – it’s very robust. Don’t feel wary of exploring and clicking things to see what happens! Sometimes that’s one of the best ways of learning.
- Finally, we want you to enjoy transcribing the notebooks. If you decide that this just isn’t for you, then that’s absolutely fine, of course. We’ve tried to make the transcription task as straightforward as we possibly can, but there’s no denying that there’s still a fair level of complexity involved.
- The project team are always on hand if you’re encountering difficulty or have any questions. You can post a thread to our public **Talk** boards, or you can write to us directly. The **Talk** button is in the top right:



Our e-mail address is:

davynotebooks@lancaster.ac.uk

If you require an especially quick response, please write directly to me. My e-mail address is:

a.lacey2@lancaster.ac.uk

Thanks again for expressing an interest in the Davy Notebooks Project, and let's see how we all get on with transcribing Davy's notebooks. Happy transcribing!

Andrew Lacey

24 March 2022