

St. Dyfnog's Church Newsletter.

Llanrhaeadr.

August 2009.

From the Vicar

This has been a popular few months for Weddings. We thank God for the newly married couples and hold them in our prayers .

At this point in the year we are all hopeful of some sunshine, holidays perhaps, or simply the enjoyment of the countryside around us - we thank God for his many blessings.

This weekend an Atheist Camp / Holiday for children will be held to " counter the unhealthy influence religion has in the lives of children " - never did my children any harm! Perhaps Dawkins & Co are nervous that God might just exist!

Over the past month or so we have experienced the anxieties - real or imaginary - which have accompanied the Swine Flu Pandemic. The loss of members of our Armed forces in Afghanistan and the ongoing concern surrounding the world economy.

Global warming and the environment, trade justice and famine.

All of which can seem so overwhelming and leave us feeling powerless in the face of huge issues and tempt us to forget that seemingly small acts of generosity and love can be blessed and transformed for widespread good.

It is always a temptation to look at huge needs and dismiss what we are able to do as being pathetically inadequate so that we end up being too discouraged even to use what we have. The story of the feeding of the five thousand teaches us that anything we offer for God to use, however small or insignificant it may seem to us, is gathered up, blessed and redistributed for the use of others, in ways beyond our imagining.

Even a smile can spread wider than we might think : -

" Smile awhile, and when you smile another smiles,
and soon there's miles and miles of smiles,
and life's worthwhile because you smile! "

Michael

A Cook's Tour of the Past (cont.)

Anglo-Saxon.

When the Roman occupation ended in the early 5th. Century the country's organisation collapsed and their towns and villas fell into ruin. The new invaders, the Angles and Saxons found a forested land of downland and marshes. There was timber for building, land for grain and pasturage. They could farm, while rivers and sea provided fish and the forest game.. It was a feudal economy with dairy farming. As manuscripts preserved in the monasteries, retain the Roman influence in their cookery recipes, such as pigeon with sharp sauce or oyster pates. Salt and fat were highly valued.

The Middle Ages.

The next occupation , in the 11th century affected the whole country. The Normans were even more organised than the Romans. Their Domesday Day Book was a detailed survey of the country's economy ready for exploitation and taxation. The law of the forest decreed that hunting was forbidden to the peasant communities, nor could they collect timber, firewood or acorns from the forests without severe penalties. The peasant diet was rye bread, pease pottages, some bacon, eggs, cheese and milk, with wild fruit and herbs. It was a life very dependant on the Grace of God . A poor winter, or animal diseases could be catastrophic. The Black Death scythed the 14th. Century population, but gave the peasants who survived bargaining power in the employment market.

The Middle Ages 2.

Domestic accounts of the monateries and large country houses reflect a comfortable standard of living . By the 16th. Century the country was called a nation of beefeaters, though flesh, fowl and fish were all plentiful. Ale was home-brewed. Vegetables are not featured in the accounts- not because they were not grown, but because the seeds were harvested and sown year by year without passing through the household records. Autumn was a season of intense kitchen activity as provisions were harvested and preserved for leaner months and Christmas festivities. Salted meat, dried fish, pickled vegetables, chutneys and jams filled the larders in careful households.

The Middle Ages 3.

The Crusaders returned from the East with spices and new recipes to enlarge the wester diet. The Church imposed sumptuary laws from time to time without much effect though much fish was eaten. The great occasions such as a royal marriage or coronation could rival a Roman orgy in the number of courses and the variety of dishes.

The cook in Chaucer's Caturbury Tales was a representative expert in his field. He

baked his chicken with marrow bones (very popular) and sharp spices, "poudra-marchant tart and galingole", made thick soups, "mordreux" and a "well baked pye". He was also a connoisseur of London ales. The city's markets sold "pot herbs" and the town houses grew a variety of vegetables in their gardens. An Elizabethan dinner would start with a Grand Sallet as an hors d'oeuvre. Flowers were used as ingredients. Corpus Christi, Cambridge, has a 16th. Century recipe book from Archbishop Parker's library describing a tart of borage flowers or marigolds or cowslip flowers mixed with 3-4 eggs and sweet curds or 3-4 apples with butter, egg yolkes and mace baked in the oven. Venison was served with frumenty (stewed creed wheat) boiled to a mash and creamed with milk. Blamanger or bladissorye were very popular - minced chicken or fish mixed with broth and ground almonds or rice flour. (No cornflour to thicken in those days) Dentistry was so poor that it may be the reason why our ancestors liked soft food! Englishwomen were known for their fie complexions and black teeth! to be continued in the September Newsletter.

The things children say!!

A kindergarten pupil told his teacher he'd found a cat but it was dead.

"How do you know that the cat was dead?" she asked her pupil.

"Because I pissed in its ear and it didn't move," answered the child.

"You did WHAT!" the teacher exclaimed in surprise.

"You know" explained the boy, "I leaned over and went 'pssst!' and it didn't move".

An exasperated mother, whose son was always getting into mischief, finally asked him "How do you expect to get into Heaven?"

The boy thought it over and said,

"Well, I'll run in and out and in and out and keep slamming the door until St. Peter says, "For Heaven's sake Dylan, come in or stay out!"

A certain little girl, when asked her name, would reply, "I'm Mr. Sugarbrown's daughter."

Her mother told her this was wrong, she must say, "I,m Jane Sugarbrown">

The Vicar spoke to her in Sunday School, and said, "Aren't you Mr. Sugarbrown's daughter?"

She replied, "I thought I was, but mother says I'm not."

A little girl asked her mother, "Can I go outside and play with the boys?"

Her mother replied, "No, you can't play with the boys, they're too rough."

The little girl thought about it for a few moments and asked "If I can find a smooth one, can I play with him?"

Clwb y Pentan - Members took a nostalgic trip through the Dee Valley on a steam train. The journey began at Carrog and ended in Llangollen. Fortunately the weather was in our favour. In Llangollen we all went our separate ways for a couple of hours. I spent much of my time in a second hand book shop!

It is hoped that members will enjoy further excursions in the future. -Dewi Roberts

River Blessings - continued from July newsletter.

In Devon, the river Dart at King's Wear and Dartmouth is blessed. Tourists who have visited the village and harbour at Brixham may have witnessed the 'Blessing Ceremony' of the fishing fleet. This custom seems to have begun in the 19th century on Ascension Day.

In Hampshire the Vicar of Mudeford blesses the waters from a boat.

In Kent at Margate at Epiphany, which is an important date in the Greek Orthodox Calendar, the Greek Cypriot Community, led by their Archbishop, throw a crucifix into the sea, which is later retrieved by a swimmer. In Folkstone, on the Sunday nearest to St. Peter's Day (June 29th) and nearest to the high tide on the Quay, the seafarers Church St. Peter's, the sea and fisheries are blessed. Likewise in Broadstairs on the old jetty at the end of April. At Whitstable, the Blessing takes place during the Oyster Festival, at Reaves Beach. The date for the Oyster Festival is on St. James's Day - July 25th.

In Norfolk the Broads are blessed from the ruins of St. Benets' Hulme Abbey, near Horning by the Bishop of Norwich on the first Sunday in August.

In Northumberland the Tyne is blessed, also the sea with a choir on board ship, supported by the clergy. A 'Blessing' takes place at North Shields, and at Noeham on February 14th. On the river Tweed the salmon fishing is blessed before mid-night and before the start of the netting season. The first catch is given to the vicar!

In Yorkshire at Whitby, I witnessed the Ascension Day Blessing of the Sea. On the eve of Ascension Day at 9pm the "Penny Hedge" takes place. This may be the oldest Manorial Custom in England. A hedge of stakes and woven osiers is created on the beach at Boyes Saith in the harbour. This must stand for three tides, a possible relic of fence building as part of a tenant's rent. This planting of the Penny Hedge is 800 years old!

Finally, in London, the clergy and congregations of Southwark Cathedral at St. Magnus Church meet on the centre of the bridge for a short service, then hurl a crucifix off the bridge into the Thames on the Sunday after Epiphany. This was the first event on the bridge in its 800th year as a permanent stone crossing.

From the "Blessing" of the river Teifi at St. Dogmael's by the Bishop of St. David's I have been able to delve into these ancient traditions. After all we are citizens of a seafaring nation. We are surrounded by water, an island nation. Our rivers and waterways have long been associated with trading. Our livelihood has long been dependant on the sea and it has protected us from invasion since time immemorial.

Pamela A Roberts

We would welcome more articles like this for the newsletter, perhaps tales from your youth, interesting holidays, unusual experiences etc. etc.

Archbishop's Fund

Many of you were kind enough to send in your 'bangles, baubles and beads' for the stall at the Miri Haf, you will be pleased to know, that despite the constant drizzle we were able to raise £100 for The Archbishop of Wales Fund for Children, indeed we have enough stock to have a second outing with the stall - thank you all very much-

Jane and Shirley

Would you believe it?

Health and Safety Regulations gone mad!

The family Labrador dog snoozing next to the Aga is a familiar sight in Farm House Bed and Breakfasts across Britain. No longer - because of an E.U. directive. Thousands of B&B owners are threatening to close..

Students at Anglia Ruskin University have been warned against throwing their motor-board caps in the air at graduation ceremonies in case the hats land on someone's head. "The health and safety of our students is paramount" they were told.

Morris Dancers have been barred from meeting in a social club owned by the Royal Mail due to health and safety concerns. Why? In case anyone is injured by the sticks and hankies waved by the Morris Men (they have been using this hall since 1977) The Royal Mail excuse- nobody would be on hand to see that safety rules were enforced!

Busy times in church with visiting parties.

June 21st. Aw 44 people from Ebenezer Welsh Independent Chapel in Llanfair P.G. wanting a talk on the Jesse Window - in Welsh.

Then on the following Saturday - The Village Gala Day- two parties came. The first at eleven o'clock 27 members of Bethal English Presbyterian Chapel in Garden Village Wrexham. They expressed a wish to join in the Gala and perhaps have lunch there? The Gala Committee agreed and at 12.30 a sit-down cold lunch was ready for them in the school hall, prepared by Wayne and Cheryl Williams Rosemeade, obviously well used to mass-catering at Capel Mawr Denbigh.

At noon, while this party was still exploring the Church the second party arrived. This was Clwb Eryri, sixteen Welsh men from Llanberis on a tour of several places of note in Denbighshire. They opted to go and up and see the Well until the coast was clear in the church. Naturally they wanted a talk in Welsh. (among their number was a very well known member of the famous singing group 'Anwel) Interestingly, this is a group who meet every month to hear talks - by whom? - by the members themselves, such is the variety of talents in the group. Only once a year do they have a visiting speaker. They were off to Llanyrys Church and several other places, ending their tour at Llangernyw at the Sir Henry Jones Birthplace and Museum with supper at the Bridge Inn.

Having said farewell to Clwb Eryri, I hastened to join the first party in the school and enjoyed, by invitation, a delicious meal of Coronation chicken (my job certainly has its advantages!!)

My thanks to June Hughes and Jean McCarter for manning the stall and chatting to the visitors, helping them to find their way around the church.

Helen Jenkin-Jones.

Article in Y Bedol

In the June issue of "Y Bedol", the Welsh neighbourhood paper, I spotted an article written by a

Ruthin minister, writing of two contrasting scenes he had witnessed on the previous Maundy Thursday.

At a local supermarket, the shop girls were "celebrating" Holy Week by sporting head bands with pink rabbits' ears while further down the road, at Llanrhaeadr, he was confronted by a tall wooden cross with the invitation; "Come and stand by the Cross for an hour on Good Friday" (It was informing of our performance of the 'Crucifixion') He congratulated the parishioners of St. Dyfnog's for this challenge to passers-by. (Our thanks to Roger Mullock for erecting this striking cross)

The Minister asks what is the cost of standing up for proper observance of Holy Week or of a Sunday, for that matter, and tells a sad little story of a teacher asking his class on a Monday morning how many of them had been to church or chapel the day before. Utter silence, but then at last one little boy dared to put his hand up - while the rest of the class laughed at him.

The Deanery of Denbigh and Dyfryn Clwyd Pilgrimage: 19-07-09.

Llanynys.

Despite a rather wet afternoon the church at Llanynys was full of pilgrims, who had walked from Ruthin, Denbigh, Llanrhaeadr and Llandyrnog. Many children and dogs gave the service a real 'family' feel! The bi-lingual service was led by Bishop Gregory, attending his first pilgrimage. Tea and coffee, served by the ladies of Llanynys to accompany our shared picnic, very welcome after a rather wet walk!

Mum found Jenny washing the new kitten with soap and water "I don't think Mother Cat would like her kitten washed that way".

"Well, I really can't lick it", came the reply.

Some electricians were installing new lighting in the roof of Liverpool Cathedral. One accidentally left the lift doors open, making it impossible to call it down again. Visitors, gazing in rapture at the many beauties of the Cathedral were startled to hear the Clerk of Works yelling heavenwards, "Peter, close the gates!"

Earthy Types

We all know the name John Innes - associated with quality seed and potting compost - but strangely the man had nothing to do with this area of expertise. Born in 1829, he made money as a property developer, but took an interest in horticulture and specified in his will that a school be started to train gardeners. Eventually the board of agriculture decided to fund a research institute and the composts were developed to aid research into genetics!

He who plants a garden, plants happiness - Chinese proverb.

National Garden Scheme Sunday July 12th Llanrhaeadr Gardens.

Sunday July 12th. Was very busy in Llanrhaeadr as many happy people walked from garden to garden, it was good to see so many people walking between the gardens, all happily exchanging views, explaining how to find the next garden, comparing notes on those already seen. The gardens were all so different, the well established Bryn Dyfnog, with secret paths wandering up the hillside, with interesting and unusual plants around every corner, Tan-y-Parc situated so near to the main road but so quiet and peaceful with newly planted borders and small cottage garden containing very pretty plants humming with bees. Also in this garden, surrounded by all this beauty wonderful teas were served! Large slices of lemon cake filled with cream, scone with more cream and strawberries plus a cup of tea, no wonder we had to walk to the next garden! Then it was up the hill to Parc Bach, the garden with fantastic views across the Vale of Clwyd, island beds crammed full of unusual plants, some with great height waving in the breeze, with the added bonus of the owner, Mrs. Watkins answering questions and explaining how she proposed to alter some of the beds for next year, and the reasons for the re-arranging, a steep learning curve for some of us! Next it was into the car, for a drive to Brondyffryn, here a completely different garden waited, open lawns, single clipped trees and bushes, magnificent views and behind the house a pond and waterfall giving another dimension to the garden. Then round to the sales table, plants to buy, new potatoes, lettuce then home to plant out new plants, cook, eat potatoes and lettuce, end of a perfect afternoon!

Many thanks to all who supported the National Garden Scheme on this particular Sunday - a share of the profit is donated to St. Dyfnog's Church

Pest Control.

Did you know that the Victorians had their own very formidable type of pest control in the form of guinea pigs which they let scamper about the vegetable patch to keep unwanted pests at bay.

Attic Sale

To be held at the Vicarage on Saturday 15th August from 10.30am until 3pm

Barbecued snack lunch available

Saleable items may be left in the stable yard by prior arrangement

Please telephone 890250 or email - dyfnog@btinternet.com