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BOLDRE STILL AND BOLDRE (July 2022)



Medieval Street, Wells Somerset

*The Reverend Canon Andrew Neaum became the “House for Duty” Anglican priest of the lovely Boldre Benefice in August 2013. The Vicarage in which he and Diana live is on the edge of the New Forest, a couple of miles north of Lymington in Hampshire. He is old fashioned enough a priest to visit his flock in their homes, but “house for duty” clergy are supposed to work only two days a week and Sundays, which means visiting everyone in the parish takes a long time. The following are the **July 2022** weekly ruminations, aired prejudices and footling observations that in the weekly pew sheet augment his visits and help keep folk in touch week in and week out. Earlier articles are available from the Article Page on this Website:*

<http://www.andrewneaum.com/articles.htm>

(462) “This and That” - 31 July 2022

Being a qualified teacher, as well as a priest, schools have played a large part in my life. As a child I attended four primary and three secondary schools. The most fondly remembered of the primaries being Digglefold, the last of them, in what used to be Rhodesia. It has its own website these days. It was recalled at the recent William Gilpin school leavers’ service in St John’s:

Lines for William Gilpin School Leavers’ Service

(to be recited aloud with verve and gusto)

The School I left when 12 years old
Was funnily called Digglefold!
Not wriggle, niggle, jigglefold,
Nor giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.

In southern Africa’s Zimbabwe,
It’s seven thousand miles away.
A country school, like William Gilpin,
Fun to study, work and play in.
Its teachers laughed far more than frowned,
Even when we fooled around.
Digglefold, yes, Digglefold,
Not giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.

Not strict, not dull, not fuddy duddy,
But hugely keen on nature study.
We kept as pets pied crows and snakes,
And studied them with all it takes,
And birdwatched drongos, bulbuls, spinetails,
Hoopoes, Hammerkops and quails.
Digglefold, yes, Digglefold,
Not giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.

A boarding school, for those too far
To get to school each day by car,
Our beds were draped in long white nets,
Thanks to dread mosquito threats,
And flying ants invaded dorms
In summer’s wild, thunder storms.
Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.
Not giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.

In mornings only were we taught,
The afternoons being all for sport.
In summer’s heat, all dressed in white
We made a sizzling, dazzling sight,
In winter’s cold and soccer mad
When winning glad, when losing sad.
Digglefold, yes, Digglefold,
Not giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, yes, Digglefold.

The School I left when 12 years old
Was funnily called Digglefold!
And now at seventy six years old
I'm still in love with Digglefold.
Not wriggle, niggle, jigglefold,
Nor giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, dear Digglefold.

In twenty twelve I had a whack
At saying so, by travelling back
And found it still so much the same
Again I revelled in its name:
Digglefold, dear Digglefold.
Not giggle, squiggle, wiggelfold,
But Digglefold, dear Digglefold.

I trust that William Gilpin leavers,
Like me, will always be believers
In just how lovely William Gilpin
Has been to study, work and play in.
And if seven thousand miles away
And ancient, stooped and bald and grey
Will have a bold, adventurous whack,
At somehow, somehow coming back.

(461) “This and That” - 24 July 2022

It is a quarter to six in the morning of England's predicted hottest ever Monday. A cool, gentle breeze drifts in through the study window and collaborative in loveliness, the endlessly melodic keyboard trios of Johann Christian Bach soothe my spirit.

Craven wusses

On last Friday evening there was a wedding rehearsal in St John's. As we began a run-through of the ceremony it was good to have with me, at the chancel step, an Australian groom and three of his Australian mates. All of them young, tall, confident, handsome and mightily accomplished. We agreed that the panic in the pommie press, at the prospect of a mere two day heat wave, revealed our headline writers and news-mongers to be the saddest of craven wusses.

Mates, sheilas, blokes and larrikins

At the wedding itself, to help make the Australians welcome, I introduced the service as follows:

Welcome to this very special church, St John's. Notable not only for its antiquity, tranquillity, beauty and as a meeting place between time and eternity, but also for its links to Australia. The Chaplain to the First Fleet was once a curate at St John's which, being so, we celebrate Australia Day every year with gusto and panache. The present priest in charge here, the ugly old devil talking to you, is an Australian Citizen and, until coming to Boldre, was Rector of Shepparton in Victoria. Then to cap it all, the beautiful church's ancient tower is scaffolded and corrugated ironed, as a reminder to our Australian groom and his family and friends of the Australian outback, where corrugated iron and the often rusting ironwork of windmills, shearing sheds and outdoor dunnies characterise humanity's tenuous, fragile presence there. We've even laid on the promise of intense Australian heat. This place, St John's, is today less pommie than any church in England. So feel at home, feel at home.... mates, sheilas,

blokes and larrikins. Enjoy a wedding of weddings, one bringing together not only a man and a woman, but also a northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere continent.

Poetry from all over the world

Our post matins daily poems at present come from an anthology called *Divine Inspiration: The Life of Jesus in World Poetry*. It's a substantial book of verse from every continent and century. It will take us many months to complete. This Monday's offering was a short lyric called *Mary's Poem*, by Katherine Wakefield. It begins:

*When she heard infinity
Whispered in her ear, did the flashing
scissors in her fingers fall
To the wooden floor and the spool unravel....*

"Aha," we both thought, "an anachronism! Scissors in those long gone days? Surely not!" We were wrong! The world's first scissors appeared 3000 - 4000 years ago in Mesopotamia. Like old fashion sheep shears they were fashioned from a single piece of metal, typically bronze, shaped into two blades controlled by the metal strip that joined them. The strip kept the blades apart until they were squeezed. Each blade was a scissor, collectively scissors. The Romans are thought to have first created pivoted or cross-blade scissors, like those we most commonly use today. An old superstition advises us never to hand scissors to our best friend. Instead to place them where the friend can pick them up, or risk the severing of the relationship.

Punching Christopher Hitchens

At last week's wedding I encountered a delightful fellow called Christopher Hitchens. "Are you related to the late, lamented, eloquent, combative, anti-God warrior called Christopher Hitchens" I asked? "Not at all," he replied, "but twice in my life a stranger has come up to me and asked if I'm Christopher Hitchens. When I've admitted to being so, they've punched me in the face...."

(460) "This and That" - 17 July 2022

In the late 19th century, the annual consumption of oysters in London was estimated to be one billion and, in the whole of the United States, twelve billion. Oyster guzzling on this scale was unsustainable and gave rise in America to oyster piracy and oyster wars. In bars throughout America and England the luscious molluscs were shucked before your eyes and downed with the help of a variety of spicy, alcoholic 'oyster shooters'.

Oyster bars

In the early 1820s, the son of a Kent tenant farmer, classically educated in Edinburgh, where he specialised in theology, moved to London. There, instead of theologising, James Pimm successfully established himself as a shellfish monger, opening an oyster bar and, eventually, a chain of five restaurants patronised by the hoi poloi as well as royalty and the gentry. To heighten the delights of consuming oysters, he devised a gin-based drink containing a secret mixture of herbs and liqueurs, served in a small tankard known as a "No. 1 Cup". Hence that peculiarly English summer favourite we call *Pimms No 1*.

Digesting hog roast

So far this summer I have patronised three local fetes. The first was William Gilpin School's and after a quick look round and a hog-roast roll, I gravitated to the Pimms Tent, eager to take advantage of James Pimm's concoction to aid my digestion of hog. Dispensing this most pleasing medicine was Tim Skinner, the Chairman of the School's Board of Governors, and he was such good company I lingered. The fete was drawing to its close and the Pimms to its dregs. Tim easily persuaded me to have two generous pints of those dregs. They did the trick. Hog digestion was sweet, easy and burpless.

The second fete was St Mary's at impressive Pylewell Park. The Pimms refreshment stall was next to the beer barrel and in so patrician a setting I felt impelled to opt for plebeian beer not Pimms, in the company of two congenial fellow priests, Richard Elliott and Simon Newham. There was no hog roast to digest, but a burp or two on the way back to the car added methane to the atmosphere slight enough to be justified by the blessed relief and tranquillity brought to my stomach.

This is my own, my native land

At our own Fete I returned to Pimms and while ordering it was informed by Simon Derrick that his mother had once lived in Duffield, Derbyshire, and so attended the church in which my mother and father were married and of which my grandfather was the vicar. Indeed, his fine mother could well have been christened by my grandfather. We also established that she had attended the same school as my father in Belper.

Their schools instilled in both my parents a love of poetry. My mother's daily diary, during their three and a half years on Tristan da Cunha, records them reading a Shakespeare play each evening in bed. It would have been before the island's generators were turned off at 10.00pm or by softly hissing, golden, Tilley lamp light.

One of my father's oft quoted, favourite poems, by Walter Scott, offers a refreshing riposte to those who prefer us to be ashamed not proud of heir homeland.....

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.

pelf: money, especially when gained dishonestly or dishonourably.

(459) "This and That" - 10 July 2022

Journals written longhand are difficult to quarry for information. My early ones are worse than most for being written lefthand longhand. They're barely legible. To search for a particular event recorded many years gone by requires time, patience and perseverance.

Café quiche, macaroni and pizza

My journals went digital in 1998. It is now easypeasy to find a half-remembered, long gone event. Last week I pressed control F and tapped in the word Fete. The first hit was 'cafeteria', the second 'buffeted'.

The cafeteria honoured by a journal entry was in the Chaplaincy Centre of Dundee University in the year 2000: .. *Margaret had a quiche and salad, which was good, the girls had macaroni cheese, which wasn't bad and I had pizza which was truly horrible. This preceded a flute and piano recital in*

the chapel, music by Braga, Faure, Gluck and Mozart, all of the pieces beautiful and well played. The chapel, so open, spacious and high-ceilinged and with an excellent, resonant acoustic, lends itself to a wide variety of activities ... For three months I'd swapped my Australian parish with the the parish of the Vicar of Invergowrie. He was a part-time Dundee University chaplain and so, while there, was I.

Buffeted in Bass Strait

The buffeting came when we were holidaying on King Island in Bass Strait, between Tasmania and the mainland in 2004:*We had time to kill after dropping off Pete at the tiny airport and so went to have a hot chocolate and pastry in the bakery, before heading for the harbour where, buffeted by wind and in squalls of rain, we read for half an hour. I have now nearly finished the biography of Les Murray. Pete enjoyed his time with us.....He rang last night to say that he had had an uneventful trip and that the great tub of King Island honey and cinnamon flavoured yoghurt was delicious...*

Jumble sales not fetes

Fetes played no part in parish life when I was a priest in Africa. Jumble sales sufficed to raise funds. The relatively poor, black majority ensured high attendance and a total clearance of goods at such events. It was only when we went to Australia that fetes became a feature of parish life. To be successful, and they usually were, fetes require a great amount of planning and a good deal of imaginative, lateral thinking.

Congratulations one and all

From a Christian perspective, the importance of fetes has as much to do with fellowship, cooperation and community engagement as with profit. This year's effort and its result were outstanding. We have raised £9,000, a most welcome record. More important, though, was the huge and happy crowd. In my time here we have never had such numbers. The windy and relatively cool weather meant it was impossible to erect some gazebos and at times to keep warm, but it meant too that there could be little or no sailing on the Solent and visiting the beach was an unattractive alternative.

Congratulations

Congratulations to the Fete Committee under the guidance of Ruth Liley. Many thanks, too, to those who set up the site, transported goods, furniture and equipment and who overcame so effectively and imaginatively the crisis of too few tables. Thanks as well to those at the fete's conclusion, largely the same folk, who so expeditiously dismantled everything and returned it to whence it came. It was a team effort, we all worked hard and had great fun doing so. All the stall holders did magnificent work and thanks to our volunteer doctors who minded the first-aid tent so reassuringly.

So, so welcome

Betty Keeping on stall duty tells me that she observed a woman reverently pick up a piece of porcelain to examine and then, in a foreign accent, ask its price. "Fifty pence" said Betty. "Fifty pounds?" asked the woman. "No fifty pence" said Betty, "where do you come from?" She said "Ukraine" Betty responded "Oh, you are so, so welcome here with us all". Whereupon the woman opened her arms and gave her a huge hug.

(458) "This and That" - 3 July 2022

On Monday the total rainfall at the Vicarage, so far for this year, was 9 inches. If the second half of the year is as dry it means an annual total less than the average for Adelaide, the driest of Australia's State capitals.

On Monday morning, as we passed St John's on our daily walk, we stopped to see if there were any harebells in flower. There was one, the season's first. As I stooped to photograph it, rain began to fall and by the time we got home we were soaked. In a dry year, for someone who loves rain, it was a beautiful experience.

More significant than romance

Although unmarried, W H Auden was wise on the subject of marriage:

Like everything which is not the involuntary result of fleeting emotion, but the creation of time and will, any marriage, happy or unhappy, is infinitely more interesting and significant than any romance, however passionate.

Yes indeed. Clearly to be seen in the marriages with which we are most intimate. Our own and our parents’.

St Alkmund’s Duffield

My parson father, David Neaum, born and raised in Belper, Derbyshire, was married in St Alkmund’s Church, Duffield, to Dorothy Irwin some time before World War II. The officiant at the wedding was the bride’s father, the learned vicar of Duffield. Throughout their lives both bride and groom were blessedly reticent about their innermost feelings and emotions, and totally loyal to each other in front of their children. So there is nothing scandalous, prurient or salacious to report of their marriage, but it was an interesting one.

A cauliflower bouquet

My father, an excellent and funny anecdotalist, was a man of his time and so very much the head of the household, but he was also unusually domesticated. He cooked, washed, shopped, helped choose his wife’s clothes, and played his part in bringing up the children.

He was a man happy to turn his hand to anything, a fine carpenter, while in England a keen beekeeper and always a gardener. When possible he kept his own pigs, butchered them and smoked the hams and bacon himself.

My mother, was no submissive doormat to him. She was feisty, with a mind of her own. Before they were married she nearly showed him the door when, on St Valentine’s Day, he presented her with a real sheep’s heart pierced by a homemade arrow as an expression of his love. She also declined his all too sincere request that her wedding bouquet be a cauliflower laced with violets.

Feral brothers

We take our parents for granted. I never asked my father questions that now intrigue me. He was a trout farmer, why did he become a priest? As a boy he was greatly influenced by a curate and wife at his home church in Belper. Unable to have children of their own, they wished to adopt him, but his parents would have none of it. He did sometimes stay with them though, it was the curate’s wife who taught him his domestic skills.

His own parents were intriguingly eccentric and had six children, the four boys fairly feral. My father’s sermons in years to come were spiced with fascinating anecdotes to do with he and his brothers’ escapades.

Why Tristan da Cunha?

Another question never asked of either parent was why my father, in 1952, left a lovely, rural parish in Staffordshire, with their three young children, to be chaplain on the most isolated inhabited island in the world? Was it a seed sown by a visiting missionary heard when a boy? A sense of adventure? Avoidance of post-war English austerity? Or disillusion with a Church dominated by public school and Oxbridge educated clergy? We’ll now never know, but I do know that it was my mother who drew her husband’s attention to the post on Tristan da Cunha and was as enthusiastic to take it as he was.

Thank you

To my inestimable benefit, their’s was indeed a most interesting and significant marriage, one for which, understandably, I am hugely grateful.

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