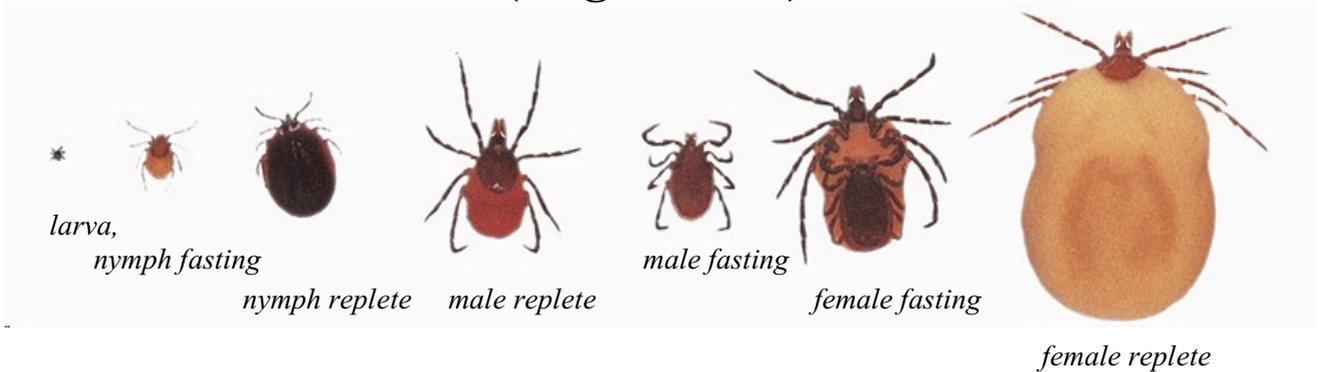


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BOLDRE STILL AND BOLDRE (August 2014)



Ixodes ricinus (New Forest Tick) - the Vicarage Garden (See article 48 below)

*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 2014** 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>*

(52) “This and That” - 31 August, 2014

Fanatics

Be they bible-thumping brats,
Or incense-reeking sanctuary rats,
Fanatics ruin, wreck, besmirch
Our quiet, temperate English Church.

Be they happy-clappy loons,
Or charismatic, joy buffoons,
Fanatics ruin, wreck, besmirch,
Our languid, lovely English Church.

Healing freaks and rabble-rousers
And kill-joy, puritanic wowsers,
If fanatical, besmirch
Our tasteful, gentle English Church.

The English Church, if it's authentic,
Is dilly, daft, absurd, eccentric,
But never ever mono-manic,
The which engenders quiet panic.

The English Churchman's proper diet
Is gentle, understated, quiet;
Allows for compromise and doubt,
Welcomes all, kicks no one out.

The English Church equivocates,
In long debates deliberates,
It tolerates and vacillates,
Accommodates, procrastinates.

But crude, fanatic rabble rousers
And manic, cyclopean wowsers,
Deplore restraint, disdain sweet reason,
Despise all compromise as treason,

And in their crude fanaticism
Don't draw the line at even schism,
And so invite in crude reaction,
Partisanship, strife and faction.

For fools like me, with all we've got,
Do battle, for our blood runs hot.
We mock and fight and rant and roar,
Which only brings them back for more.

Whereas the truly English way
Lets fanatics have their say,
Disdains to fight, with well bred hauteur,
And drowns the fools in milk and water!

Andrew Neaum

A great word "*wowser*". It originated in Australia and originally meant something similar to the word "*lout*". Around 1900 it shifted to its present meaning: a person whose sense of morality compels them to deprive others of their sinful pleasures, especially liquor.

John Norton, editor of the Melbourne scandal-mongering newspaper, "*Truth*" (now happily defunct) claimed he first used the word in 1899. Others have claimed the word to be a "*backronym*" from an Australian temperance slogan, "*We Only Want Social Evils Remedied.*"

The Australian writer C.J. Dennis defined wowser as "*an ineffably pious person who mistakes this world for a penitentiary and himself for a warder*". There are far too many such folk around.

(51) "This and That" - 24 August, 2014

The week's most enjoyed metaphor comes from the pen of Theodore Dalrymple. Talking of Brussels he says, "*Many of the buildings were defaced by graffiti, the architectural equivalent of tattoos and just as idiotically egotistic.*"

Dispassionate

At last it is done. The reading of MacCulloch's "*History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*" is completed. Nearly all it I read in the middle of the night on a back-lit Kindle to help send me to sleep. Once I had sleepily negotiated the first thousand years the book became interesting enough to keep me awake rather than set me snoring.

MacCulloch is not partisan enough for my taste. My preference is for more opinionated and acerbic writers. Not that I would want him to excuse or make light of all the nastiness in our Christian past, but he is so dispassionate he appears more of an outsider looking in, than an insider reflecting upon what he knows and intimately loves. An excellent historian then.

Holy Communion

My next middle of the night Kindle read was Rowan Williams' little book: "*Being Christian*". Based on a series of talks given in Canterbury Cathedral it has a short chapter on four Christian "essentials": Baptism, the Bible, the Eucharist and Prayer. I loved it, particularly the chapter on the Eucharist which is gloriously illuminating. There follow a few snatches.

".....One of the essential truths about the resurrection is that Jesus is still doing what he did before; and part of what he is still doing is exactly this offering and accepting of hospitality. When in Luke's Gospel, Jesus comes through the locked doors to the disciples, the first thing he says after telling them not to be afraid is, 'Aren't you going to give me something to eat?'"

".....Reverence for the bread and the wine of the Eucharist is the beginning of reverence for the whole world in which the giving of God's glory is pulsating beneath the surface of every moment."

*".....One of the most transformingly surprising things about Holy Communion is that it obliges you to see the person next to you as **wanted by God**. God wants that person's company as well as mine. How much simpler if God only wanted **my** company and that of those I had decided to invite. But God does not play that particular game. And the transforming effect of looking at other Christians as people whose company God wants, is - by the look of things - still sinking in for a lot of Christians, and taking rather a long time...."*

Supermarkets

I have always loved shopping in really good supermarkets. In Fortnum and Masons or Harrods I tend more to drool than buy, but am very happy that the largest supermarket in Lymington is Waitrose, a pleasure to shop in. However, now and then, to keep our feet on the ground, we take a trip to New Milton to shop in Lidl's. The continental flavour and

unusual brand names of much of what is on offer provide a welcome change, and of course the prices gladden the heart and lift the spirit. One of the best columnists in my beloved *Spectator* is Rory Sutherland, the vice-chairman of Ogilvy Group UK. He writes every other week as “*The Wiki Man*” and is clever, droll and very well informed. He once let on that his wife is a Church of England Vicar, which makes him more than usually interesting. Last week he spent some time on the subject of “status signalling” and told us of a woman whom his father overheard in the Monmouth Lidl answering her phone with the words ‘*I can’t talk now, I’m in Waitrose....*’.

(50) “This and That” - 17 August, 2014

As a badge of office and change from a dog collar I sometimes wear a pewter Celtic cross which I bought on the island of Iona fourteen years ago. Before leaving for Australia I hid it so successfully from any random raider of the empty Vicarage that even I now cannot find it.

Why harvest festivals?

We began harvesting our new Vicarage garden months ago. By the time of the Harvest Festival next month the best of our produce will be long gone. Anything we take along to decorate the church is likely to be a tad blowsy. Hopefully our gratitude for the harvest will be still as warm and fervent as it is now. What joy the garden has given us and continues to.

An article I have just sent to “The Bridge” asks why we bother with Harvest Festivals. Surely gratitude is our prime motive for such celebrations. We sometimes pretend to pity agnostics and atheists for having no one to thank for all the good things that happen to them, not least the harvest. They, however, are not impressed by our pity. Austin Cline says in a recent article ‘..... *we (atheists) can thank the people who are directly responsible for whatever good fortune we are thankful for. We don't ignore them in favour of an irrelevant, imaginary being.*’ He goes on to list all sorts of people and professions responsible for humanity’s well being deserving of gratitude.

It is not enough though, is it? We who believe in God perceive there to be a greater and more universal beneficence. Human ingenuity, expertise, and achievement do indeed need gratitude and honour and we believers do not “*ignore*” them as Cline rudely suggests. However there is a wider “givenness” to things. All human achievement is dependent upon a framework of order and predictability, upon laws of nature and physics that allow all human achievement. Who are we to thank for this, but God?

Grrr!

Every vegetable garden needs ready to hand a good patch of bamboo and a clump or two of New Zealand flax. The Vicarage garden now has both. The bamboo canes have been hidden among the laurels and rhododendrons for years. They are so long that our runner beans have been able to climb pretty well twelve feet high and we need the help of a step-ladder to harvest them. Thin strips of the strong, durable but biodegradable New Zealand flax we use to tie up any plants in the garden that need support. Rabbit proof and deer proof our most troublesome pests in the vegetable garden have been mice. They empty whole broad bean pods of beans and gobble their way into the tops of plump beetroots. Grrrr.

From the back

It was good last Sunday to be a member of the congregation in my own church. Sitting at the back of St John's enabled me to appreciate its modest beauty afresh. For example how humble its solid, ancient and worthy pillars. They are no taller than I am, I could actually see onto their tops. Also I do love the doors to the pews. They emphasise the security that comes with the gentle and traditional practice of faith. Being an old fashioned kneeler for prayer saying, I did discover, to my regret, that the heaters beneath the pew seats mean that only a dwarf can kneel comfortably in the pews.

The Eucharist, taken with quiet and confident authority by Alan Graham, flowed peaceably and purposefully to its conclusion. The lessons were beautifully and distinctly read and the intercessions were well constructed and economical rather than verbose. The choir was melodiously distinct and the organ, as always, was played sensitively where necessary and with splendid panache when appropriate. The guitar solo during Communion was a sheer delight.

Sitting at the back enabled me to count everyone present. Fifty one. Nowhere near enough, but not at all bad either.

(49) "This and That" - 10 August, 2014

It has been an excellent, rainy winter in south eastern Australia so far. When we left we took a back way to Melbourne airport that avoided the city entirely and noticed great mobs of kangaroos just over the road from the airport runways. Well over a hundred of them were feeding on lush, bright green grass. Australian paddocks in Victoria are greener than the sunburnt fields we viewed from the plane on our descent into Heathrow a couple of Saturdays ago.

Linton and Skipton

A week prior to our return we stayed with friends from my first Australian parish. Their farm is on the outskirts of Linton, a village that is about twenty miles west of Ballarat. They run about 8000 sheep on their farm and declared this season to be the best for many years. The paddocks are covered with good feed and crops of wheat and barley look excellent. Interestingly we were told that a merino fleece fetches around \$44 at the moment. Twenty seven or so years ago I won a merino sheep in a competition and sold its fleece for \$52. Given that sheep farming is hard work it is little wonder that more and more farmers are turning to cropping. There are better returns for far less work. Alice, our hostess is one of the finest cooks I know and our evening meal was splendid. A perfectly cooked, crisply crackled, belly of pork on a bed of exotically flavoured cous cous. Good meat eating and fine wine drinking are a feature of Australian hospitality. Burp, belch and how's your father.

Pleurisy Plains

I remember my first Australian parish with great joy. The parish's centre was Skipton, a small village of only 600 people. We had congregations of between 30 and 60 each Sunday in its lovely little church. There was a fine though small choir, a good team of servers and a daily Eucharist. The Rectory, while adequate enough, was the worst and smallest I have ever lived in. It was where we began to Australianise ourselves as a family. To do this in so thoroughly rural a setting was lovely. Skipton is on the eastern edge of Victoria's Western Districts, sometimes called "pleurisy plains". The winter

westerlies bring bitter and cold squalls that usually drag in enough rain from the north to fill the many lakes and paddock dams sufficient to last through the hot, dry summer. The rectory was heated by one of the early wood-burners. I would go out regularly to cut dead eucalypt trees with local farmers to feed its voracious appetite. I learned by my mistakes how to chop the contorted and twisted hardwood logs we chain-sawed in the paddocks. They had to be shelled rather than split, but I was not at first aware of this. So I used an axe and wedges, ending up full of frustration, empty of expletives and with a log spiked like a hedgehog with jammed wedges. After a lesson or two I bought myself a Canadian splitter and became an expert.

The parish had three out-centre churches, one of which was Linton where we stayed for the first night of this visit. We then moved on to stay in Skipton itself with another old friend and parishioner called George Lines and his wife Robyn. George, an agricultural scientist, is one of the brightest men I know, eccentric, outrageous and yet also wise, broad of sympathies, highly literate, a fine and witty versifier and a thoughtful Christian. Not one of those narrow, cyclopean scientists. We had an uproarious time.

Laudator temporis acti

Such visits are bitter sweet though. Many old friends and parishioners have died. The lovely little children we were bringing up in those long gone days are now adults, some of them parents themselves and their mother has died and so on and so on. Happiness is all the more poignant in retrospect, not least just because it was once upon a time. When we went to church on Sunday there were only five of us in the congregation. The service was taken competently by a bespectacled laywoman whom I nicknamed to myself “Mrs Magoo”. The Rectory is now rented out to the unchurched. *Ichabod*, (the glory has departed) and I become *laudator temporis acti* (a praiser of times past).

(48) “This and That” - 3 August, 2014

Two Mondays ago I was out visiting parishioners feeling very far from buoyant, only too happy to let Diana do the driving as well as most of the conversing. All was not well with me. The slightest exertion brought on grogginess and a shortness of breath.

We returned home and discovered my pulse rate to be a mere thirty five beats a minute. A visit to the doctor and an ECG revealed full heart block. We headed straight to Southampton hospital’s A & E where I was processed immediately, cheerfully and well. I was then stretchered off to the Cardiac Care Unit where I was only too happy to let a corner of a twelve or so bed ward become my refuge and home for five days. The air conditioner was out of commission and so it was hot.

Splendid nurses, odd bedfellows

Hospital wards are interesting places. This one was notable for splendid nurses and odd bedfellows. One of the nurses was a vivacious Ndebele young woman, delighted to discover that I had long and strong connections to Zimbabwe. She gave me a hug and kiss when I left, saying how lovely it had been to meet a fellow African and Christian, and that I was like a father to her. All the nurses were efficient, solicitous and kind.

Five days residence made me the ward’s longest stayer, so I witnessed a fair turnover of patients, both men and women. Opposite me for a couple of nights was a great

mountain of a man whose stertorous snores ripped the air violently apart throughout the night. They were the wet, gurgling, nasal snores of a lifelong smoker. It was only my back-lit Kindle and Diarmaid MacCulloch's great tome "The History of Christianity" that allowed me to suffer serenely rather than resentfully. The second most notable of my fellow patients was a man who whistled from dawn until dusk. He did so tunefully and well, but relentlessly, breaking off only to eat, for his ablutions and to sing. I suffered this for my last two days in hospital, he was still there when I left. The insufferable was rendered sufferable once I had gathered that he was less egotistical than down right dilly. Not showing off at all, it was his way of making sense of a puzzling world. To tell him to be quiet would have been cruel and I doubt if he would have been able to.

Lyme disease the culprit

The teams of registrars, consultants, specialists and trainees who came to see me were impressive. They seemed puzzled that I should have severe heart block with no pain or symptoms, other than a slight shortness of breath and grogginess when standing up. While I was sitting up in bed both my heart and self appeared in excellent condition, except for that slow pulse rate. One of the specialists then asked, as an afterthought, if I had recently been bitten by a tick. Indeed I had. They decided to test my blood for Lyme Disease, expecting nothing as results in their experience were always negative. To their surprise, and I think delight, they discovered Lyme Disease to be the culprit.

A mysterious disease Lyme Disease. Until I came to the New Forest I was unaware of it. A specialist on infectious diseases decided I should have a twenty one day course of a powerful intravenous antibiotic. This I am still undergoing, delivered at Lymington's fine hospital each morning. I also have a pacemaker tucked firmly into its little flesh pocket beneath a dressing that will hopefully be removed tomorrow. Unfortunately the somewhat gruelling though very interesting operation to insert the pacemaker had to be undergone twice, as one of the electrical leads did not embed quite firmly enough the first time. The operation is done with only local anaesthetics and I opted for no sedatives so as to appreciate fully what was going on, as indeed I did. Of all the tests that followed the operation the most fascinating was how, with the aid of an electronic device and a few leads attached to my body, specialists can fiddle with the heart's rate, zooming it well up into the hundreds and right down to the thirties in seconds.

Deo gratias

I am now home, full of vigour, denied a full, hot shower until tomorrow (because of the wound's dressing), not allowed to drive for six weeks, limited in the use of my right arm (until the pacemaker's leads are firmly settled in), with a cannula in my right arm for another couple of weeks, Lyme Disease in its death throes in my system (hopefully), a deeper awareness of and distaste for ticks, gratitude for the NHS and all its good servants, as well as to God, solicitous parishioners and a splendidly loving wife.

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