

THIS & THAT (211)

I've been an Englishman in exile for most of my life. Happily so. Voluntarily so. Glad to be able to define myself as such against those among whom I've lived. Never one of the crowd. Different. A stranger and a sojourner.

Sorting immigrant sheep from goats

It is one of several reasons for favouring Psalm 39. The phrase: *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were*, resonates. So too does Orlando Gibbon's beautiful seventeenth century setting of its deliciously gloomy verses. My son Peter as a boy, when criticised by his parents, would exasperate or amuse us by quoting verse three: *I held my tongue and spake nothing, I kept silence, yea, even from good words; but it was pain and grief to me...*

Two Fridays ago Diana and I visited Australia House on the Strand. We had been there several times before, but only to the typically brutal and functional immigration and passport waiting rooms and booths. They are specifically designed to dispirit as well as to distinguish hopeful immigrant sheep from expectant immigrant goats.

Guests at Australia House

On this visit we were welcome and honoured guests, not supplicant immigrants. Ushered into the beautiful, grade 2 listed building proper, we were dazzled by flowing marble staircases, fine wooden panelling, gilded ceilings and artful spaciousness. The building was begun in 1913 and many of the materials used in its construction were imported from Australia. Although the exterior is of pommy Portland stone, the foundations are of Australian trachyte. The gleaming interior marbling, in three distinct colours, comes from sites in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. The dark, carved panelling of the Downer Room, our destination, comes from the Moreton Bay Chestnut. Australia's equivalent of the oak.

Impressed by the building's beauty, I suggested to a friendly diplomat that its aesthetic qualities should be better publicised and boasted of in Australia. He responded cynically, maintaining that far from being impressed, Australians would be more likely to query such luxurious surroundings for mere diplomats. He also informed me that Australia House is usually the single largest polling station in Australian federal elections. More votes are cast there than at any polling station in Australia itself.

We were there for Diana to receive her Australian Citizenship once she had pledged and affirmed her loyalty to that fair land. The ceremony was held in the fine Downer Room and the High Commissioner, Alexander Downer, was present to welcome about 22 new citizens in all. The room is named after his father, Sir Alick Downer, who was High Commissioner from 1964 to 1972.

The welcome was all you would expect from Australians. Warm, unaffected, casual and yet wholehearted. There was a sense of camaraderie and quiet pride in Australia. As a Christian I was delighted to note that the majority of new citizens used the first version of the pledge, the one that allows God into the matter: *From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey*. Each new citizen made this pledge individually. As Diana did so I found myself welling up with love of Australia. How could this be?

May Australia win the Ashes

The answer is obvious. After four years living in England, I have ceased to be an Englishman in exile. For the first time since I was six I am now English among the English. Yet it is exile that has defined my life. To be who I am I need to be a stranger and a sojourner. Happily so. Voluntarily so. Able to define myself as such against those among whom I live. Not one of the crowd. Different.

Little wonder that I should well up with Aussie pride in Australia House. I am now an Australian in exile. Able and happy to define myself as such over and against the 53 millions poms around me. May Australia win the ashes.

All Andrew Neaum's weekly articles are at: <http://www.andrewneaum.com/>

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THIS WEEK:	HARVEST	24 September 2017
St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley:		8.00am Holy Communion
St Mary's South Baddesley:		9.30am Matins BCP
St John's Boldre:	10.30am HARVEST FESTIVAL & Children's Club	
St John's Boldre:		6.30pm Choral Evensong

For Prayer This Week

Fellow Christians suffering persecution for their faith. World peace and harmony. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Seasonable weather, farmers and gardeners.
Prayer requests: Heather Collins-Wells, Colin Erne, David, Vanessa and Dominic, Janet. **R.I.P.** Jean Opie

Activities This Week

Mon 25 Sep - 4.30pm Bible Study Ph. 07786194282 for venue
Tue 26 Sep - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. Seated exercise to music at St Nicholas' Pilley & refreshment
Wed 27 Sep - 10.30am St Nicholas' Pilley, Communion + Coffee
Thu 28 Sep - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. As on Tuesdays
Fri 29 Sep - 5.00pm St John's Wedding Rehearsal
Sat 30 Sep - 1.30pm St John's Wedding: Andrew and Jessica

NEXT WEEK: TRINITY 16	1 October 2017
St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley:	8.00am Holy Communion
St John's Boldre:	10.30am PET SERVICE
St Mary's South Baddesley:	6.30pm Choral Evensong

Dates for the Diary 2017

Sun 1 Oct - 10.30am St John's - Pet Service
Sun 8 Oct - 3.00pm St Nicholas' Chapel - Sally on Rwanda
Wed 11 Oct - 8.50am St John's: William Gilpin Harvest Festival
Sat 14 Oct - 12.30pm St John's - Wedding James & Sophie
Sat 21 Oct - 7.00pm St John's: Pot Pourri of Music, Sketches, Fun
Sat 28 Oct - 1.30pm St John's - Wedding Alexander & Alice (?)
Sun 29 Oct - 10.30am St John's - All Saints/All Souls
Sat 11 Nov - 10.45am Memorial Hall - Act of Remembrance
Sat 11 Nov - 7.00pm Memorial Hall - Benefice Quiz St J v St M
Sun 12 Nov - 10.50am St John's - Remembrance Sunday
Sat 18 Nov - 7.00pm St John's - Guitar Recital - Mark Jennings
Sun 3 Dec - 3.00pm St Mary's - Ecumenical Advent Service
Wed 20 Dec - 2.30pm St John's - Hill House School Christmas
Mon 11 Dec - 4.00pm St John's - St Nicholas' Singers Concert
Sun 17 Dec - 6.30pm St John's - Nine Lessons & Carols

6.30pm TONIGHT: HARVEST EVENSONG, ST JOHN'S

Lovely music, and a lovely service. All you could ask for

THANK YOU TO THE HARVEST SUPPER TEAM

Thank you to those who provided such good food for the Harvest Supper, to those who entertained us, to those who served and organised everything so well. It was a lovely evening, a pleasing example of church and village communities as one.

THANK YOU TO THE FLOWER TEAM

Thank you to those who have decorated the Church so beautifully for today's Harvest Festival.

PET SERVICE SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 10.30am

The Pet Service this year is at 10.30am on 1 October as close to St Francis of Assisi's Day as possible. It's a relatively brief service, out of consideration for the animals, but great fun as well as moving. Ask along a friend or two, and their pets.

SAT 21ST OCTOBER 7PM IN ST JOHN'S POT POURRI

Comedy, Musical Theatre and Church Music in aid of William Gilpin School Music Scholarship Project and Church Funds Tickets £10 (to include refreshments) Children under 12 FREE from Maxwell Hamilton, Lymington Tel 01590 672 191 Pilley Community Shop Pilley Tel 01590 673 380 or at Church.

CONFIRMATION

Anyone interested in joining a weekly class in the near future, have a word with Felicity or Andrew.