

## THIS AND THAT 198

If to climb into bed each night is as pleasurable and satisfying as to climb out every morning we are truly blessed.

If to return home from a holiday is as good as setting out, likewise. Existence parenthesised by blessing.

### Wheat production in France

This year's trip by car through France, Spain and Portugal was novel and revelatory. Unsurprising. Until we returned to England and came here to Pilley Hill four years ago, calling in at Antwerp on the way, I had not set foot in continental Europe since 1971. For over forty years my life has been Africa, Australasia and a South Atlantic island.

Even before 1971 my exposure to Europe was limited. A mere week in Provence before sailing back to Africa from Trieste (an extended twenty first birthday present). A few trinity weeks in Madrid, followed by a stopover in Paris for a couple of days. A fortnight's holiday in Corfu.

What first stuck me, as we hurtled at great speed down the toll way to Rennes, and then on the next day to Bordeaux and beyond, was the extent of agricultural productivity. Acre upon acre upon acre of ripening wheat, planted in great hedgeless swards for mile after mile.

I hadn't realised that the EU produces more wheat than any single country in the world and that France, on its own, produces more than either Australia or Canada and more than double the United Kingdom's output. Most surprising of all is that China produces more wheat by far than any other single country in the world.

### Garlic and foul wine

The next and most pleasing of surprises were the long and leisurely French evening meals. Diana's friend Christiane served up my first of these since my 1967 stay in Provence. There we had stayed with English friends rather than French and what I most remember is being introduced to garlic. My traditionalist English parents could not abide the divine bulb.

I was an instant convert. Bowled over by a garlicky ratatouille. Our hosts all those years ago disposed of the grapes from their vineyard to a local cooperative. The wine that was produced and returned to them they considered so foul they drank it fortified with blackcurrant cordial.

Our evening meal in Rennes began with a lovely fortified cherry wine aperitif and dried fruit and nuts. Then came a couscous dish with an exceedingly rich and tasty paté and a salad. In my ignorance I took this to be the main course and helped myself accordingly. Then to my surprise a great plate of carved roast lamb was tabled, with only flageolet beans as accompaniment. Delicious. There followed a selection of local cheeses with splendid French bread and finally a great bowl of cherries. All the while good talk about Africa, families and friends. I discover that pale green flageolet beans are baby haricots, picked and dried before ripe.

### Dangerous Sassafras

We had arrived in time for a lunch of pork and sweet potato. After this we went for a walk along the Vilaine river in weather warm enough to liberate my feet into sandals. We then walked around the seven and a half acre *parc Hamelin Oberthür*, which has some interesting trees including a small spinney we did not recognise. These turned out to be *Sassafras Albidum*. To our delight the Wikipedia entry had a photograph of the very spinney in the Rennes park we had just seen. An American tree *Sassafras* has traditionally been much used as a spice, the basis of a root beer and, ironically, as a medicine, for it is now considered to be carcinogenic.

### Orangutans and violins

Rereading *A Tale of Two Cities*, I am immersed in matters French, but of French authors have read only a novel by Balzac and a play or two of de Maupassant.

One of my four wedding sermons is based on a quotation from Balzac: *The majority of husbands remind me of an orangutan trying to play the violin*. The atheist Proust has given us an almost acceptable take on atheism: *The highest praise of God consists in the denial of Him by the atheist, who finds creation so perfect that he can dispense with a creator*.

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

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### THIS WEEK: TRINITY TWO 25 June 2017

St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion  
St Mary's South Baddesley: 9.30pm Matins (BCP)  
St John's Boldre: 10.30am Holy Communion & Children's Club  
St John's Boldre: 6.30pm PATRONAL FESTIVAL Evensong

### For Prayer This Week

World peace and mutual toleration and respect between faiths. Sufferers from persecution. Victims of disaster or misfortune. All in government. Our congregations actual and potential.  
Prayer requests: Heather Collins-Wells, Colin Erne, John Hudson Davies, Janet. Rest in Peace: Jim Butchart.

### Activities This Week

Mon 26 Jun - 4.30pm Bible Study Ph. 07786194282 for venue  
Tue 27 Jun - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. Seated exercise to music at St Nicholas' Pilley & refreshment  
Tue 27 Jun - 7.30pm Licencing Richard Elliott - St Mary's  
Wed 28 Jun - 10.30am St Nicholas' Pilley, Communion + Coffee  
Thu 29 Jun - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. As on Tuesdays

### NEXT WEEK: TRINITY THREE 2 July 2017

St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion  
St John's Boldre: 10.30am Matins & Children's Club  
St Mary's South Baddesley: 6.30pm Choral Evensong

### Dates for the Diary 2017

Sat 15 Jul - 12.00pm St John's - Wedding Michael & Emily  
Sun 16 Jul - 3.00pm St Saviour's Brock - 'Songs of Praise'  
Sat 22 Jul - 3.00pm St John's - Wedding Andrew & Jennifer  
Fri 25 July - 8.50am WG School end of term Service  
Fri 1 Sep - 2.00pm St John's - Wedding Simon & Ionella  
Sat 9 Sep - Ride & Stride - St John's & St Mary's 10 - 6pm  
Sat 9 Sep - 1.00pm St John's Wedding James & Camilla  
Sat 23 Sep - 7.00pm Boldre Memorial Hall - Harvest Supper

### .6.30pm THIS SUNDAY-TODAY PATRONAL FESTIVAL EVENSONG

The music will be superb, the preacher remarkable, and the atmosphere electric. All lovers of St John's should be present. The Director of Music is Timothy Rice ARCO ALCM. The Preacher is the Revd Dr David Neaum-Chaplain of St Catharine's College, Cambridge. There will be a cup of tea and nibble afterwards.

### 1 JULY BOLDRE CHURCH & VILLAGE FETE

The Boldre Church and Village Fete is in Pilley at the Boldre Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground on Saturday 1 July 1-5pm. It will feature all of the usual attractions and much more!

Most stall holders are well stocked, **but we are very, very short of bottles for the bottle store**. Any interesting contents are acceptable. They don't have to be wine or alcohol. Shampoos or whatever. Please. **Also cakes, biscuits pastries...** on the day or day before, both for the stall or to serve with cups of tea.

### GRAND DRAW TICKETS

If you haven't received a book of draw tickets to sell. Please ask for one (or two or three). If you have sold a book ((or two or three) please return the stubs with the cash to the Vicarage (01590 718439), the Benefice Office (01590 673484), or to Graham Edmiston (01590 678550) or ring one of us to collect them. We need to sell every ticket we have. Stubs need to be returned to the Vicarage or given to Diana or Andrew by 28 July, please.

### 2 JULY PEACE WALK 2017

The twentieth annual Peace Walk is on Sunday 2 July beginning at 12.15 at the Peace Fountain, East Park, Southampton. Several faith community centres are to be visited: a Synagogue, Sikh Temple, a Mosque and St Mary's Church. Bring along friends and family to join in. (Contact David Vane 07545982838)