

intouch

NEWSLETTER

The Kingswood Benefice of Clothall, Rushden, Sandon, Wallington, and Weston



KINGS WOOD BENEFICE

Welcome to this edition of In Touch.

My but we have been having some wild, windy and snowy weather but, luckily, seem not to have had as much of the white stuff dumped on us as other places! It reminded me of a poem that I used to use when I was a teacher on snowy days when we would get the grey sugar paper out and the white chalk and do snow pictures (grey sugar paper works better than black). It was a task the children loved as it allowed them to sit and stare out of the windows at the falling snow – something I love doing as well. The poem is printed in this edition for you to share along with some lovely pictures taken by Margaret Auld of the sunrise and deer out at Offley Green. Hopefully, by the weekend we will have warmed up a bit in time for St Valentine's Day on Sunday – so I have included some articles about the traditions connected with that celebration. And before you know it Shrove Tuesday will be with us as well and then the start of Lent – the year is just rushing by us again. Stay well and Stay safe. **With blessings Fiona**



HOLY DAYS

14th Feb: Valentine's Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day - 14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

WHEN ALL THE WORLD IS FULL OF SNOW

BY N.M. BODECKER

*I never know
just where to go,
when all the world
is full of snow.
I do not want
to make a track,
not even
to the shed and back.
I only want
to watch and wait,
while snow moths settle
on the gate,
and swarming frost flakes
fill the trees
with billions
of albino bees.
I only want
myself to be
as silent as
a winter tree,
to hear the swirling
stillness grow,
when all the world
is full of snow.*



The very first Valentine card, a legend



The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home with their wives, instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but who couldn't. So secretly he married as many couples as he could - until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death.

While he was in prison awaiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14th February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

So, the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from
your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.*

If you would like to donate to any of our churches in the current crisis - details are below. We would be very grateful in your help to keep our churches going.

Thank you.

PCC OF RUSHDEN
LLOYDS BANK: 30-94-30 A/C 01845350

SANDON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
BARCLAYS BANK: 20-73-26 A/C 53610802

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Shrove Tuesday: *Who's for pancakes?*

by David Winter

Why do we have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, as we call it today? And what is Shrove Tuesday? And why do thousands of people feel it rewarding to race along a street somewhere tossing pancakes from their frying pans as they go?

Well, the answer to the first question is that it is the day before Lent begins and for well over a thousand years that has meant it was the last chance to enjoy meat, fat and other tasty dishes until Easter Day. The 'Lent Fast' was widely and strictly observed. The food in the larder wouldn't keep for six weeks so it had to be eaten. With all these rich foods no wonder the French call it 'Fatty Tuesday' – Mardi Gras.

So, what have pancake races got to do with all this solemnity? 'Shrove' is an old word for 'forgiven' and in those days to prepare for the rigours of Lent people would want to confess and seek forgiveness – not quite what you want at a party. The answer is quite simply enjoying yourself while you can! So, on Shrove Tuesday this year let's have some fun and make it last as long as possible.

The most convincing (and amusing) of the explanations of pancake races is of outwitting the Sexton who rang the curfew bell that marked the start of Lent. He was reluctant to do it while the race was unfinished. So, the revelry caused by dropped pancakes, postponed the inevitable.

Since the Reformation it has not been so rigorously observed in Britain, but still people will resolve to 'give up something for Lent'. Six weeks is about right as a duration and Sunday has always been exempt but make the most of those pancakes. They may well not reappear until April 12th!



Snowy sunset
at Offley Green
looking towards
Rushden by
Margaret Auld



The deer at
Offley Green by
Margaret Auld