

# RINGMORE

## PARISH NEWSLETTER

**OCTOBER 2000**

**ISSUE NUMBER 182**

**EDITOR: GEOFF DYKES**

**DEADLINE Thurs 26th**

### THIS MONTH

MONDAYS: Short Mat Bowls Parish Room 7.30pm

WEDNESDAYS: Step Aerobics Parish Room 8.30pm

THURSDAYS: Quiz Night at Journey's End 9.00pm

FRIDAYS: Music Night at the Journey's End

3rd Millennium Open Meeting - 7.30pm - WI Hall

4th R Brit Legion Meeting - 7.30pm Royal Oak Bigbury

9th SH Police Liaison Meeting Kingsbridge Coll 7.30pm

19th Beer Festival at Journey's end

24th Parish Council Meeting - 7.00pm WI Hall

25th Jazz Night at Journey's End

Start of RBL House-to-House Poppy Appeal

RBL visit to Britannia Royal Naval College

Journey's End closed on Mondays for the Winter

Nov

3rd RBL Auction at JE

11th RBL Coffee Morning

12th RBL Remembrance Service

13th RBL Whist Drive

### Mobile Library

Dates:- 13th & 27th

Ringmore Church

12.05 - 12.30

Challaborough

12.35 - 12.45

St Ann's Chapel

3.15 - 3.30

Kingston Fire Station

3.45 - 4.30

Rainfall - Fiona Batten



Last Month  $3\frac{1}{2}''$

Average - last 10 years -  $2\frac{1}{2}''$

High - 1992 & 93 -  $5''$

Low - 1955 -  $\frac{1}{2}''$

Please send items for inclusion in the Newsletter to:

The Editor

Ringmore Parish Newsletter,

Ringmore Vean, Ringmore, TQ7 4HL

or put them in the letter box in the garage door

## THANK YOU

A big 'THANK YOU' for the many cards, messages and kindnesses which so helped me to remain cheerful and positive after my recent operation. It's good to be back in Ringmore and making a steady recovery.

Ann Bracey

An interesting situation was highlighted at the September Parish Council meeting. Often councillors are approached by electors and 'told' of something which is disapproved . . . 'and what's more I'm not the only one!' So the councillor arrives at the meeting as a mouthpiece for any number of villagers, none of whom bother to come to the meeting. All the councillor can say is 'I know of a lot of people who support this'. It is difficult to be convincing without names and the extent of support for the motion is impossible to gauge. Parish Councillors are always willing to speak on behalf of the electors but if he or she is unsuccessful in the debate, they cannot be held solely responsible for the point being lost. Regardless of the number on whose behalf the councillor speaks, he or she has only one vote. If you feel strongly enough about a subject, come to a meeting and tell the whole council. Councillors do not represent any particular part of the village, they all represent everyone.

The Royal British Legion has arranged a visit to the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth - details are elsewhere.

Britain has not had a world champion at Table Tennis since one Johnny Leach almost 50 years ago. The opportunity to put that right is at hand. Ping pong will take place on Tuesday evenings - again see elsewhere.

There is an article on problems facing the Avon Water Skiing Club. In printing the note, no particular stance is advocated but there are club members in the village who are concerned for their sport.

There was almost a delivery crisis facing the Newsletter as three of our distributors were unable to 'do their round' this month. In addition, Sue & Adrian Muller have decided to call it a day after many years of support. Their help is gratefully acknowledged; they have often readily stood in for others, sometimes delivering well over half the total around the village. Their reliability will be missed . . . but it will have to be replaced.

In spite of the confusion over dates for the Harvest Supper, everyone turned up on the right night. It was Derek Matten's last official appearance in Ringmore and he was given a splendid farewell.

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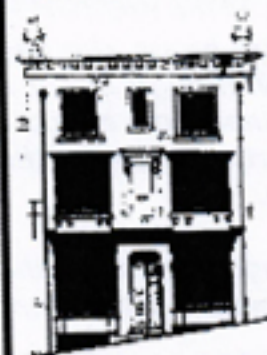
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## October 2000 at All Hallows

### Harvest



*The Minister writes:*

Mary Smallwood, Bigbury Churchwarden, referred to this as my "valedictory letter". It sounded a bit final, until I remembered that my School magazine, *The Red Rose*, always had a page headed SALVETE (welcoming the new boys and members of staff that term) and VALETE (saying farewell to those leaving). That set the grey cells working, and I thought of the Valeta that "Mr. Pastry" used to dance so magnificently alone. A fine dance I've had here these past five years, too! Three Churches, three parishes, three sets of committees – and that "part-time"! But it's been fun.

My dictionary tells me that *saleta* or *seleta* is a Spanish word meaning "weathercock", and I thought: how appropriate! It should be the job of the Church to recognise in which direction the wind is blowing and to see that the "wind of the Spirit", of which the Bible speaks from the very first page on, is literally inspiring everyone possible. If that is what we've been doing together these past five years, even in a small way, then our time has not been in vain.

During the "minister-less" time (which may well last a few months), please address all pastoral and personal matters to the Team Rector, Canon Bob Campbell-Smith (830260) or to Michael Tagent (810520), who, together with the Rev. Michael Wilkinson, will be looking after Sunday services. Matters concerning All Hallows and the parish generally should be addressed to the Churchwarden, Yvonne Sheppard, on 810641. The post of House-for-Duty Minister is being advertised in the Church press from September 29. Michael and Yvonne (and Bob, of course) will keep you posted.

May God bless and guide you as you seek a new Minister for this lovely part of the Lord's vineyard, to continue the work together. Valeta: may it go well with you all.

Sincerely yours,

Derek Matten, Minister

The Church House, Ringmore

Tel: 810565

### DIARY FOR THIS MONTH:

Date:	9 a.m.	11 a.m.	6 p.m.
October 1	<b>Kingston</b> Holy Communion (ASB) & Children's Church	<b>Ringmore</b> <b>Harvest Festival Service</b>	<b>Bigbury</b> Evening Prayer (BCP)
October 7 (Saturday)	7.30 p.m. <b>Kingston's Harvest Supper in the Reading Room</b>		
October 8	<b>Ringmore</b> Holy Communion (ASB)	<b>Bigbury</b> <b>Harvest Festival and Lunch in the Royal Oak</b>	<b>Kingston</b> <b>Harvest Festival</b>
October 15	<b>Bigbury</b> Holy Communion (BCP)	<b>Kingston</b> Worship at Eleven	<b>Ringmore</b> Evening Prayer (BCP)
October 22	<b>Ringmore</b> Holy Communion (BCP)	<b>Bigbury</b> Baptism at Eleven	<b>Kingston</b> Evening Prayer (ASB)
October 29	10.30 a.m. <b>United Team Service in St. George, Modbury</b> (no Service in "our" three Churches this Sunday)		
November 5	<b>Kingston</b> Holy Communion (ASB) & Children's Church	<b>Ringmore</b> Worship at Eleven	<b>Bigbury</b> Evening Prayer (BCP)

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## WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

The first meeting of the new season was well attended, as is usually the case when a local speaker is coming for the evening. On this occasion it was Matthew Holland, taking the place of his father Dave, who was unable to attend, to give a fascinating talk on the Bigbury Mint. The Mint is now actually in Ivybridge, having grown in size and importance over recent years into the successful and well-known business which it is today. The firm designs, makes and despatches, sometimes worldwide, an incredible variety of medals, commemorative artwork, coins and medallions of all kinds in bronze, silver and other materials. Most of us had no idea that such beautiful and intricate work was being produced in the Ivybridge Studio and Workshops. It was a most informative talk, with slides, and members were very appreciative. Matthew was warmly thanked and was obviously well-known to several members.

Naomi Warne

## VALETE

Mary and John Parry will be leaving Noddon Farm House this month. They have been staunch supporters of all that is good in Ringmore as well as being friendly and convivial neighbours. Slapton's gain will be our loss and we wish them well in their new home.

## Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion have arranged a visit to the fascinating Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth on Wednesday 25 October 2000, leaving Ringmore by coach, promptly at 12.45pm to start the tour at 2.00pm. The tour which, consists of a drive around the outside of the College followed by a walking tour inside, is fully guided, and will last approximately 2½ hours. However, your attention is drawn to the fact there are many stairs and quite a lot of walking once inside - the College boasts the second longest corridor in Europe. Unfortunately there are no facilities for disabled access. Numbers are limited to 45 and places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

The cost of this visit will be £10.00 per person. Tea and biscuits at an additional cost of 50p each will be available at the College but must be ordered in advance. The College has only been open to the public for a short time and the trip is well worth it.

For further information or to book a place or places on this trip please ring either Robbie McCarthy on 810758 or David Young on 810590 by Sunday 15th October 2000.

Robbie McCarthy  
Hon. Secretary

# Journey's End Journal

Here we are into October preparing for the Beer Festival (more of which later) and the Bonfire Night Celebrations.

September saw the start of the Quiz Nights and they got off to a very good start! Many thanks to the quiz masters and mistresses and the contestants. The October line-up has Geof on 5th, James Stevenson on 12th, Phil on 19th and Carl on 26th.

Our music night continues with TQ7 on 6th, Fiona on 13th, Hanging Johnny on 20th and Wendy on 27th.

Hanging Johnny and the sea shanty crew ties in very nicely with our Beer Festival which starts on 19th and which has a distinctly nautical flavour or should we say feel. The beers will flow all week and to help things along we have Sweet 'n' Hot playing a Jazz Night on Wednesday 25th.

We've been collecting for a Fireworks Night celebration but in order for it to go ahead we need some help with a venue and some volunteers. If you have some time and would like to get involved, please let us know.

As from 30th October, the JE will be closed on Mondays for the Winter months.

Debbie and Graham

## TEN YEARS AGO . . .

The news from the JE was startling . . . Yogi King had switched from lager to Exmoor!!

BT was slow to instal lighting in the new vandal-proof telephone box hence it was vandalised twice.

MP, Anthony Steen, was visiting Bigbury 'once again' on his village tour to listen to electors.

*Has this happened recently?*

With the onset of Autumn, local classes were being organised for Painting, Flower Arranging, Picture Framing and Basic Dance.



Tel 01548 810205

Mon - Sat Noon - 3.00pm

6.30pm - 11.00pm

Friday: Early Doors Club 6.00pm

Food: 12.30pm - 2.30pm & 6.30pm - 9.00pm

Sun Noon - 10.30pm

Food: 12.30pm - 2.30pm & 6.30pm - 9.00pm

## Newsletter Distribution

**This is a plea for volunteers.**

The Newsletter has been delivered for many years, in rain or shine, by Fiona Batten, Thelma Mann, Stan Brunskill and Sue and Adrian Muller. This month Sue and Adrian have retired, as you know, and by coincidence, Fiona and Stan were unable to deliver. Thankfully, Phil Errett gave a helping hand.

Now seems an appropriate time to ask for more volunteers to be first-line distributors and substitutes when needed. There are anomalies in the present rounds and if these are ironed out, no-one should have more than two dozen copies to deliver.

The areas to be covered are:

- 1 From Walnut Tree Cottage to Lower Manor and Cumberland Cottages.
- 2 Crossways, Cockle Lane and the houses around the former Post Office.
- 3 From Trewarne up to Higher Manor and out to Houghton Cottages.

The remaining areas of the village are covered.

If anyone is willing to help perhaps you would be kind enough to get in touch with the editor.

Geof Dykes

## SHORT MAT BOWLS

The Club is holding its annual fancy dress party on 2nd December at 7.30pm in the Parish Room. Tickets are only £7.00 each for an evening of food, games and live entertainment.



The theme for the evening is Cowboys and Indians interpreted as broadly as you wish, or not at all if you prefer.

Tickets will be limited, so watch out for further information either in next month's issue or on posters around the village.



Alan McCarthy

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# The Royal Oak Bigbury

Telephone: (01548) 810313



As promised last month, here is The Royal Oak Christmas Day Menu

*Melon Rose presented with Bigbury Berry Coulis  
Oak Tomato and Basil Soup  
Cove Prawn and Smoked Salmon Parcel*

*Royal Sole*

*Salcombe Lemon Sorbet*

*Traditional Christmas Roast Turkey with all the trimmings  
Poached Salmon Fillet served with St Ann's Dressing  
Marts Vegetarian en croute*

*Everyone's favourite Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce  
Tina's Lemon Chiffon  
Christmas Basket of Salcombe Dairy Ice Cream*

*Selection of English Cheese and Biscuits*

*Coffee and Mince Pies*

**£29.95 per person - Bookings essential - phone Martin or Tina for details**

Wed 4th Oct - 8pm - Royal British Legion meeting  
Sun 8th Oct - 12.30pm - Church Harvest Lunch  
Sat 21st Oct - Music with Wendy Jamieson  
Tue 31st Oct - Come and enjoy the 'spirit' of Halloween at The Oak

Promotions start 1st October - £1 voucher for every £1 spent on the bar - collect the vouchers and use them to bid for items in our auction on Thurs 16th November.

From 1st November our opening times will be as follows:  
Mon, Tue, Wed and Fri - 12-2.30 & 5.30-11 - food served 12-2pm & 7-9pm  
Thu & Sat - Midday - 11pm - food served 12-2pm & 7-9pm  
Sun - Midday - 10.30pm - food served 12-3pm & 7-9pm

Diary for October  
Mondays - Euchre - all players welcome  
Wednesdays - Pool - players required  
Fridays - Darts - support your local team

November dates for your diary:  
Sat 4th - music with 'Daylight Robbery'  
Sun 5th - Bonfire Night with fireworks and mulled wine

## MODBURY TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE SITUATIONS VACANT

The new Tourist Information Centre opened in Modbury Court in April this year, after ten years in temporary premises. The Centre offers a wide variety of information services to both locals and holiday visitors. The season runs from Easter to the end of October. To achieve this we use the services of two part-time managers and a number of volunteer helpers. At the end of this season one of the managers and two of the volunteers are retiring and we shall be seeking to fill these vacancies shortly.

The manager will spend two or three half days each week organising the office, overseeing the volunteer rota, liaising with accommodation providers and neighbouring offices, producing the Modbury brochure, etc. The post would suit a recently-retired person or someone who wishes to return to work after an

absence from employment. Training will be provided to NVQ standards and a small honorarium is paid. Volunteers spend one half day each week manning the office, disseminating information, arranging accommodation bookings, etc., in a very pleasant environment.

The post would suit a person with some regular time to spare who enjoys meeting people and tackling the occasional challenge! Volunteers are given a concessionary pass which enables them to visit local attractions.

Anyone interested in this opportunity should initially write (with brief personal details) to arrive before October 31st, to  
The Manager,  
Modbury Tourist  
Information Office  
5 Modbury Court,  
Modbury PL21 0QR

*Entertainment*

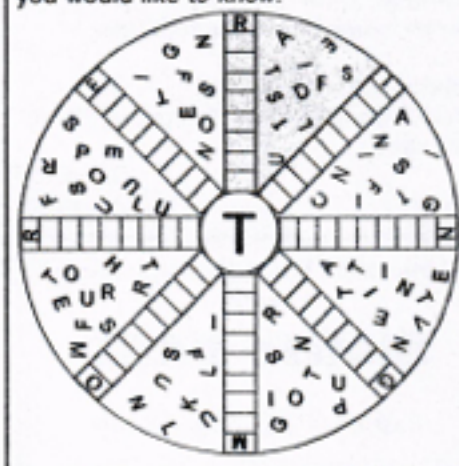
## September SOLUTION

DISPLACE	SHIFT
ANECDOTE	TALE
ENCOUNTER	DUEL
ABRADE	SCRAPE
CITADEL	FORT
ACHIEVER	DOER
RESONATE	PEAL
OVERCOME	BEAT
QUESTION	ASK
NARRATIVE	STORY
AUSPICE	OMEN
KETCHUP	SAUCE

Once again all answers were correct; The Beginners, Matchman, Taurus, Gemini and Su Da Nim. Thankfully the latter resorted to paper although it was obviously distasteful as it was not his forebears who invented it! Only one of you is submitting an answer via email although I suspect a second might if they didn't enjoy scribbling entertaining asides on the answer sheet. However presumably prior to 1840 your answers would have arrived by messenger or even pigeon! Producing the Newsletter could have been a messy affair!

## October

This month it is words again. Each jumble of letters forms a synonym of a word which will fit in the preceding column. All words end in T. When the answers are placed in the correct order, the initial letters form a very important word. There is no bonus; just thought you would like to know!



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## TABLE TENNIS

Lying in a corner of the Parish Room gathering cobwebs is a table tennis table. All that's needed now is a duster and people to play the game! Tuesday evenings seem to be a good time of the week, with perhaps children playing between 600pm and 700pm and adults 700pm to 9.30pmish?

If you are interested and/or have any spare bats, balls, net etc please contact me, Phillip Errett on 810547. Hopefully we could be up and running mid October.

### Royal British Legion

Bigbury Kingston Ringmore

POPPY APPEAL 2000

Advance notice of dates for this year's activities.

**Saturday 25th Oct - Saturday 11th Nov**  
House to house collection may take place.

**Friday 3rd November**

Auction at Journey's End, Ringmore. Items for auction and pledges wanted. Whisky raffle will be drawn at end of evening.

**Saturday 11th November**

Coffee morning at Sedgewell Sands, Bigbury on Sea. Starting at 10:30 am, raffles, bring and buy and cake stall.

**Sunday 12th November**

Remembrance Service at Kingston Church, commencing at 10:50 am.

**Monday 13th November**

Whist Drive at W.I.Hall, Ringmore 7:30 for 7:45 start.

Guy Eddy  
Poppy Appeal

Come and Dance the Night away  
with

### SHAM'S BAND

Pasties - Puds - Bar - Raffle  
on

**Saturday 21st October**  
**7.30pm**

at  
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Adults £5 Children under 12 £2  
in aid of

**Modbury Primary School**  
and  
**St George's Roof Fund**

Tickets: Pickles Hardware, Modbury

## Water-skiing

on the

### River Avon

**Blot on the landscape,  
or sport under threat?**

You may have heard some recent comment around the place suggesting that water skiing on the Avon is harmful to the environment - you may even have seen a petition saying it should be stopped. Certainly the Management Company at the Bantham end of the river, Evans Estates, has decreed that water-skiing should be banned on the Avon and that they will do all in their power to achieve this.

They say that they have to take this stance as public opinion is against water-skiing and they must back that popular view - clearly they've seen that petition! And as an example, they have already demanded that the Aune Valley Ski Club should remove its training course of buoys halfway up the ski area, a course which has been in existence since 1986 and which the Ski Club considers vital for teaching junior members to improve to competition level.

So, are Evans Estates right? Maybe. Let's just examine the facts about water-skiing on the Avon. The Ski Club is affiliated to the national governing body, British Waterski, who themselves are accredited by Sport England (previously the Sports Council). British Waterski has conducted extensive research into the supposed environmental effects of the sport. This and other research tells us that, properly controlled, the presence of water skiing does no harm to the local ecology and, in some situations, the aeration of a fast moving propeller actually improves water quality by oxygenation and breakdown of pollution. (If you got dunked in the Avon as often as I do you'd definitely see this as a plus!) A fast moving ski boat planing across the water generally creates less wash than a slower craft travelling by displacement. And Club boats are limited by agreement with the Harbour Office in Salcombe to a maximum engine size to minimise noise.

And what about the report from Devon Wildlife commissioned by the South Hams District Council? This found no detrimental environmental effects of water-skiing on the River Avon. The main cause of concern for the heron population was the decline of certain pine tree species along the riverbank.

But, you say, haven't I heard that fast boats on the river are out of control and driven by tearaway youngsters? Well, water-skiing is only allowed on the river within the terms of the Byelaw passed in 1987. This restricts the area used for skiing, and the only boats allowed to exceed

the 8-knot speed limit even in this ski area are those to which the Harbour Master at Salcombe has given a written Consent and boat number. Because of the value the Harbour Master places on the Ski Club policing its own members, Consents to exceed the speed limit are currently only given to members of the Ski Club. Indeed, the Harbour Master has stated that the Avon River Patrols job is made much easier by the professional attitude of Club members. (There are of course other boats with powerful engines on the river from time to time - you can recognise a Club boat by its large black number and a prominent coloured membership sticker).

Examples of the ways in which the Club and the Harbour Office further work together include an agreement to restrict the number of boats in the Club (and therefore with Consents), and voluntary financial contributions from Club funds to the SHDC costs of running the river Patrol - every year since the Patrol started.

As for it being a sport for young tearaways, I suppose it's time for me to declare my hand and let you know that, as the Chairman of the Club, I can tell you that water-skiing has been enjoyed on the river for at least 30 years by some of our members. So that tells you how old some of us really are - if you'd seen the grey hair and wrinkles at our recent Club meeting you'd know what I meant.

Many of our members are passionately interested in the continued well-being of the ecology of the Avon estuary, particularly its sheltered boating, the wild life (especially the herons) and the general tranquillity of the area. We sail, swim and count the new cygnets just like other Aune Valley enthusiasts. We already have one member who is also a long-standing member of the Aune Conservation Association, and several more of our members have applied to join it this summer. We intend to work hard with the SHDC and other bodies within the Forum proposed under the Estuary Management Plan. We also water-ski, but hopefully you can see we try to do this responsibly and within a professional framework.

Well maybe we would say all this, wouldn't we? But don't take my word for it! Ask yourself instead why several hundred people in the South Hams recently agreed with the following statement: 'We the undersigned support water-skiing on the River Avon provided that it's carried out under the jurisdiction of the Aune Valley Water Ski Club and with the consent of the Harbour Master at Salcombe.'

Maybe because, for this petition, all the facts were put before them rather than the misconceptions.

Hugh Croad  
Chairman, Aune Valley Ski Club



# RINGMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting: Tuesday 26th September  
Present: 5 Councillors (apologies from Rob Batten and Jackie Tagent); The Clerk; District Councillor: Bryan Carson; Neighbourhood Watch: D.Young; Millennium Committee: G. Eddy and one other member of the public.

## Matters Arising from Previous Meeting:

The pile of rubbish located at Cross Park has still not been removed but a letter from South Hams Housing Association has been received stating that it will be dealt with. The boundary hedge and wall of 1, Cumberland Cottages has not yet been improved but it is understood that the owners are taking action. Both these matters will be reviewed at the next meeting.

The Council voted to proceed with the erection of a litter bin in the higher part of the village and, by a majority vote, decided that it would be sited near the telephone box.

## Matters Raised by Parishioners:

David Young advised the meeting that the donation boxes in Ringmore and Bigbury Churches had been broken into on the 14th September. A few days later Kingston Church suffered the same offence. The planned Neighbourhood Watch Forum to promote best practice and share views and ideas is to take place shortly and Mr Young will attend as Ringmore's representative.

Cllr Dykes raised the matter of the number of advertising posters that appear both on the Parish Notice Board and attached directly to the bus shelter. It was felt that posters concerning matters or events related to the parish or parishioners were acceptable but not others. Councillors will keep an eye and remove or tidy up as appropriate.

## District Council:

Mr Carson reported on the improvement in performance of the Leisure Centres and recent incentives to increase use. He also advised that the recycling programme was having a significant impact on cutting the amount of rubbish going into landfill sites. Cllr Allan expressed concern that at the last collection a number of households had not had all rubbish removed. Mr Carson knew of no reason for this and was confident that the next collection will clear it all. He will, however, follow it up on our behalf. Cllr Carson advised that the cattle market in Kingsbridge is to be demolished as it is unsafe but it is not yet known to what use it will be put.

## Millenium Committee:

A meeting had been held in early September. Guy Eddy reported that finance was still being sought for the proposed clock on the church tower. In spite of numerous phone calls he is still

unable to report positively. The effort continues and Guy was thanked for his dedication and tenacity!

**Footpaths:** Cllr Muller reported that he had made the stile at Oakenbury Plantation dog-friendly and he had now received, at no cost, a kissing gate for erection on the footpath from Belle Vue.

## Any Other Business:

Autumn is here and leaves are falling. Please help keep drains and gutters unblocked. Cllr Freeman will ask Devon Highways to send the road sweeper lorry to clear the sides of the roads.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday 24th October 7.00pm WI Hall

Carol Allan

## RINGMORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

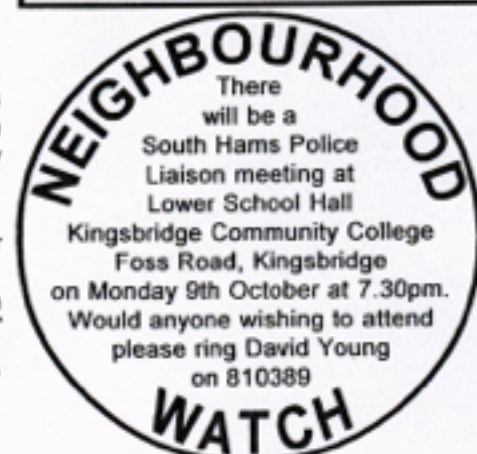
In the autumn, the thoughts of the English turn to lighting fires and entertaining friends. The tradition of feasting is revived once the long dark evenings make their presence felt. But feasting is not on the scale it once was and the truly enormous banquet is now a rarity. Perhaps this is no bad thing. It may be that our international reputation for terrible food was acquired at such events. Mashed potatoes for five can be made into a gastronomic delight, but the same for five hundred is a daunting prospect. The hazards of mass catering must have loomed large for Richard of Bordeaux's three hundred cooks as they struggled daily to prepare twenty-eight oxen, three hundred sheep and innumerable fowls for consumption by the court of that 'best and royallest viander of all Christian kings.'

It is mind-boggling to think even of assembling the raw materials for such meals, let alone cooking them and getting them to table. But at least there were few cutlery problems for early feasts since knives and forks were not generally used until late in the fourteenth century. Until then, food was placed on trenchers: rounds or squares of baked bread. This does not mean that meals were taken without ceremony or delicacy of manners. Great feasts were heralded by a trumpeter followed by pages bearing basins, ewers of water and napkins for the cleansing of hands. Table manners were important. Like Chaucer's nun, diners would have been 'at mete wel y taught'. Such cutlery as did exist was of beautiful workmanship.

When platters were used there was one set for every two persons and drinking horns were similarly shared. Supplies of drink were copious. For the wedding of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry II, two

Has anyone found a hand trowel in, or around, the Churchyard within the last couple of weeks? It has a stainless steel blade and plain wood handle and looks well-used. I am very upset to have lost it, as it belonged to my mother, and I have 'known' it for most of my life.

Annabel on 810729



hundred ships were required to carry the wine from France.

Historical writings abound in accounts of notable feasts, memorable more for their vital statistics than their palatability. Mrs Beeton began a set of instructions for a picnic with 'Take a hundred eggs...'. The gimmick was not unknown. In 1820, the Matthew Russells threw open the recently-restored Brancepeth to their friends at Christmas. For the occasion they had lovingly fattened a large turtle, and a procession went to the cellar, preceded by Patterson, the butler, holding a lighted candle for fear of foul air.

In old recipe books there are directions for setting gilded fish in jelly, recreating Solomon's Temple as a flummery and giant beasts in barley sugar. In Lancashire, bush eels (our grass snakes) were favourites at feasts. Elsewhere, thombacks, bearbets, holberts and couzers - all kinds of fish - were consumed on high occasions. Black and white hogs puddings were popular, a single pudding often containing twenty eggs and a pint of cream. Oysters were no delicacy. Dr Johnson bought them for his cat at a shilling a barrel. Fruit was considered unwholesome.

In the twentieth century, although the scale of entertaining is usually modest, fried locusts, frogs legs, crocodile tails, ostrich cutlets, insect wings and octopus stewed in its own ink are not rarities on English menus. What motivates these adventures in edibility is the desire for good food and good company, and the pleasure of surprising and impressing one's guests. It's a pity that rampant globalization will soon make it more difficult to maintain the surprise element at convivial gatherings.

Di Collinson