

AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA

Australia, Australia, Australia. The antipodes, the antipodes, the antipodes. Drill down, down, down in a straight line through the earth, hey presto - you are in Australia. Australia, Australia. So far away. Our antitheses, our antipodes, our opposite.

Not really though. Drill down, down, down in a straight line through the earth from anywhere at all in Britain or Ireland, and you will pop up beneath the great Pacific Ocean well to the south of New Zealand.

Indeed, only 15% of the world's whole land mass is antipodal to other areas of **land**. Drill down, down, down through the earth from 85% of the world's land surface and you will pop up on the opposite side of the world under an ocean, not onto land.

The theology you encounter in this short sermon today might be shonky. But the science is spot on.

Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson

Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson. Curate of Boldre, in 1784/85. Not Vicar, curate, just curate. Significant Australian though. Chaplain to the very First Fleet, fervent evangelical, zealous for souls and so possibly a little po faced, but with the courage of his convictions. Excellent with convicts and prisoners, be they on the high seas or on land in the colony of New South Wales. Celebrator of the first Eucharist in Australia, builder of the first church. Not the easiest fellow to get on with. At odds with the authorities. No push over. Hard worker, excellent farmer.

The biography you encounter in this short sermon today might be shonky. But for concision and brevity it is spot on.

Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum

Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum. "House for Duty" priest of Boldre from mid 2013. Not Vicar, "House for Duty" priest, just "House for Duty" Priest. Insignificant Australian. Insignificant Australian Citizen. No evangelical, but rather a fervent, liberal catholic. Not at all zealous for souls, but passionate for God, albeit in an often oblique or paradoxical, or ambivalent way. Not at all bad with convicts, prisoners and the criminally insane. A prison chaplain as well as parish priest in Ararat, Victoria, Australia for six years. Builder of one large church and one chapel in Zimbabwe, and of an impressive Church hall in Wodonga Australia. The very, very easiest of fellows to get on with. At odds not so much with the state authorities as with the church authorities. A bane and baiter of bishops. Hard worker, keen gardener, a farmer too, though only for three months.

*The **autobiography** you encounter in this short sermon today might be shonky. But for concision and brevity it is spot on.*

St John the Baptist Boldre, Boldre, Boldre

St John the Baptist Boldre, Boldre, Boldre. The loveliest of ancient churches. Its dimensions modest, its setting perfect, its proportions homely, its antiquity awesome. Full of people who love it to bits, but who also love Australia, have visited Australia, have relatives and friends in Australia. Folk who yearn for Australia's sun, spaciousness, great distances; its surf, beaches, sailing, bush-walking; its toothsome, meat-bountiful, fly-blown barbecues; its marsupials, cockatoos, lyrebirds, bower birds, cassowaries and emus; its gaudy banksias, glorious wattles, grevilleas and blue-green eucalypts; its gung ho, laid-back, sun bronzed, drawling denizens; its Edna Everages, Sandy Stones, Les Pattersons and Barry Mackenzies.

The geographical data you encounter in this short sermon today might be shonky, but for brash concision and brevity it is spot on.

Christianity, Christianity, Christianity

Christianity, Christianity, Christianity. The sweetest, soundest, loveliest of faiths. Based as it is on the life and teaching of the enigmatic, intriguing, fascinating, radical, open-hearted, companionable, paradoxical, peripatetic, pacific, impossible to pigeon-hole Jesus of Nazareth. A faith irresistible and compelling to any one with a heart. A faith accepting of doubt, hesitation and caveat; beautiful and compelling even when shorn of its metaphysical superstructure. A faith which, when nut-shelled, when stripped of its dogma, doctrine, hypocrisy, mumbo jumbo and all too prevalent superficial clap trap, offers the most profoundly simple and yet satisfactory answer to the riddle of human existence. "Why do we exist?" Answer: "We exist simply to learn to love. To die to self and selfishness and learn to love." A love best summarised by a Cross.

Christianity, Christianity, Christianity, the sweetest, soundest, loveliest, loveliest of faiths. Spot on.

When connected, spot on.

Australia, Australia, Australia. Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson, Richard Johnson. Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum, Andrew Neaum. St John the Baptist Boldre, Boldre, Boldre. Connected, joined, brought together, to celebrate today, by Christianity, Christianity, Christianity, the sweetest, soundest, loveliest of faiths.

Disconnected, disjointed, separate, fragmented, apart, all of us decidedly shonky, Linked together, in Jesus of Nazareth, spot on!

(Homily at St John the Baptist's, Boldre, by Andrew Neaum, at a Service close to Australia Day celebrating the connection between St John's Boldre and Australia's First Fleet, the Chaplain of which was a Curate at Boldre in the late eighteenth century. 1 February 2015)

[Home](#)