

## Home

### **BOLDRE STILL AND BOLDRE (May 2015)**



**The Vicarage Heath-Robinsonesque Raspberry Cage  
(See Article 87 below)**

*The Reverend Canon Andrew Neaum became the “House for Duty” Anglican priest of the lovely Boldre Benefice in August 2013. The Vicarage in which he and Diana live is on the edge of the New Forest, a couple of miles north of Lymington in Hampshire. He is old fashioned enough a priest to visit his flock in their homes, but “house for duty” clergy are supposed to work only two days a week and Sundays, which means visiting everyone in the parish takes a long time. The following are the **May 2015** weekly ruminations, aired prejudices and footling observations that in the weekly pew sheet augment his visits and help keep folk in touch week in and week out. Earlier articles are available from the Article Page on this Website:*

<http://www.andrewneaum.com/articles.htm>

(88)

## “This and That” - 10 May, 2015

On Monday, as is our wont in fine weather, we took lunch on the Vicarage forecourt.

### Red in tooth and claw

The ancient Bramley apple tree on the lawn below us gladdened our hearts, a large slanting cloudbank of breeze -trembling blossom. Two busy parent blue tits darted in undulating swoops back and forth to their nesting box by the kitchen window. A bright-eyed robin made a dash for the cover of dense jasmine near the kitchen window. Then a sudden, muffled thump and a sparrow-hawk flew lazily out and away from the house. In one of its talons a sad, fluffed bundle of doomed robin. Somewhere in our vicinity there is now a single-parented brood of hungry baby robins.

A footling little tragedy compared to that in Nepal, but saddening to me none the less. The natural world, for all its grandeur and beauty, is a brutal one. Everything preys upon everything. That we human beings, as much a part of that natural world as anything else, should sometimes be saddened by its brutality is a sign of grace. That we can transcend such brutality to lead loving and compassionate lives is astonishing. That out of the cruel, vengeful, tit for tat Old Testament world should arise a New Testament world of turning the other cheek, love, compassion and forgiveness defies belief. Better still, it defies unbelief.

### Pork barrelling

By the time this little article is printed we will know the outcome of the General Election. Before the Civil War in America, slaves were encouraged to compete against each other with the promise of a barrel of salt pork as a reward for success. A barrel of salt pork was also a staple of many larders in ordinary American households of the nineteenth century. James Fenimore Cooper, in one of his novels writes: *I hold a family to be in a desperate way, when the mother can see the bottom of the pork barrel.* Hence the term “pork-barrelling” for reward-offering politicians. I am more inclined to belt-tightening than pork-barrelling. Oh for a politician who is able successfully to popularise less not more as a moral necessity. Dream on.

One of my favourite pieces of political verse, well worth airing after months of electioneering and televised vapidty, is by the eleventh century Chinese poet Su Tung P’o. It was written after the birth of his son:

*Families when a child is born,  
Want it to be intelligent.  
I through intelligence  
Having wrecked my whole life  
Only hope the baby will prove  
Ignorant and stupid.  
Then he will crown a tranquil life  
By becoming a Cabinet Minister.*

### Holding up falling trousers

George Orwell, in his essay: Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War wrote of encountering an enemy running away while trying to hold up his falling trousers. *I had come here to shoot at ‘Fascists’ he wrote, but a man who is holding up his trousers isn’t a ‘Fascist’ he is visibly a fellow creature, similar to yourself.....*

Wise words. To hate effectively it is necessary to see enemies as objects not subjects, as impersonal categories not fellow human beings. Racism, homophobia and snobbery breakdown

in us when we allow into our fellowship those we impersonalise and so begin to identify with them.

A church congregation that is a rag tag and bobtail social mix of sinner and saint and of rich and poor encourages and allows this.

### **Being ribbed**

At Children's Club I was expatiating upon the Creation stories in my usual round about way. A young visiting child called Timothy seemed especially intent when told about Adam's wife, Eve, being created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill. She said, "*Timothy, what is the matter?*" He responded, "*I have a pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife.*"

## **(87) "This and That" - 3 May, 2015**

In a corner of the Vicarage garden, beneath great oaks and among dense laurels, are a couple of clumps of tall, healthy bamboo. These, with several clusters of New Zealand flax, are indispensable to our style of gardening.

### **A garden cathedral**

Last Saturday we spent almost the whole day happily developing and elaborating our raspberry cage. This is now a superb example of Heath-Robinsonesque engineering. Eight or nine foot bamboo canes are topped with upturned two litre milk cartons. Through the handles of the cartons are threaded even longer bamboos to form a roofing frame. The whole structure is covered with fine nylon netting, delicately weighed down to the ground by further bamboo rods painstakingly woven through the net's interstices. To walk into this completed structure thrills us as much as walking into Salisbury Cathedral. A truly splendid edifice, and cheap, except for hours' worth of work. A labour of love, however, is not a cost but a blessing.

New Zealand flax, torn into strips, we use to tie plants to bamboo stakes. Strong, biodegradable and always to hand it is indeed indispensable.

### **St Nicholas' Chapel, Pilley**

The beauty of ancient St John's Boldre, exquisitely set in paddocks and woods, should not be allowed to eclipse the wood-shingled beauty of St Nicholas' Chapel next to the Memorial Hall in Pilley. Built in 1964 by Wing Commander and Mrs Nigel Norris and their family, it was donated to the Benefice in memory of their son, Nicholas, killed in a flying accident while training with the Fleet Air Arm.

I particularly love its low windows. They allow you to see outside even when seated. Blackbirds foraging on the lawn and jackdaws soaring in the wind become a part of one's offering of worship. The 8.00am Sunday morning *Book of Common Prayer* Communion services are very precious. Sunday's sermon is delivered, but there are no notices, no blather, no chatty-watties, no music, no fuss. Cranmer's beautiful liturgy is allowed to flow quietly and unhindered from beginning to end.

If you cannot make Sunday morning at St John's, then this earlier 8.00am Communion at St Nicholas's should be tried. On the second Sunday of each month there is no service there, for it takes place in St Mary's South Baddesley instead. With this lovely option available, rarely can there be a legitimate need to miss a Sunday's church.

## Stephen Fry potential ordinand

Some years ago I read and much enjoyed Stephen Fry's first volume of autobiography: "Moab is My Washpot". Its sequels I did not enjoy. They contain far too much celebrity tittle tattle and gossip.

In his late teens, during one of his most troubled times, having been helped by an Anglican priest, Fry had a conversation with his bishop about being ordained. He was advised to wait awhile until God's grace became clearer. Fry goes on to say:

*The Bishop was right of course, I had no vocation at all, merely the kind of vanity of a Henry Crawford in "Mansfield Park", the vanity that made me think I would make a better preacher, a more stylish preacher than the kind of soggy, incoherent priest that was beginning to proliferate all over England. I knew I couldn't believe in God because I was fundamentally Hellenic in my outlook. That is the grand way of putting it, I was also absolutely convinced, if I want to put it more petulantly, that if there was a God his caprice, malice, arbitrariness and sheer lack of taste made him repulsive to me. There was a time when he had on his team people like Bach, Mozart, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Laud, Donne, Herbert, Swift and Wren: now he had awful, drippy wet smacks with no style, no wit, no articulacy and no majesty. There was as much glory in the average Anglican priest as you would find in a British Home Stores cardigan. Of course what I didn't know was that - looked at in the right way - there is as much glory in a British Home Stores cardigan as can be found in St Peter's, Rome, the Grand Canyon and the whole galaxy itself, but that is because I looked at nothing in the right way.....*

It appears that once upon a time he had some sense of there being a better way of looking at things. Sadly it seems to have diminished.

[Home](#)