

The Agiot

66th Edition

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The Troggs

WILD IN CONCERT 2012

Who can forget "Wild Thing"? The Troggs have always been remembered for this 60s anthem, but it is just one of their many hits. "With A Girl Like You", "I Can't Control Myself", "Anyway That You Want Me", "Give It To Me" and "Love Is All Around". They all followed in rapid succession to give The Troggs world-wide acclaim. Dubbed by many as the "first British punk band" they have continued playing in their own uncompromising style of good basic rock music.

Never strangers to controversy, many of their records were considered by the "powers that be" too suggestive for the masses, and they consequently banned them. The Troggs still boast original founding member Chris Britton on lead guitar, along with Pete Lucas on bass and Dave Maggs on drums and special guest Chris Allen on lead vocals (Ex Denny Laine Band, The Commitments and part time Animals). Their popularity has never waned and they are still in great demand around the world, where they regularly headline festivals attracting thousands of fans. Their appeal holds no age barriers,

fans ranging from the stalwarts who have supported them throughout the years to the many new fans from the younger generation.

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Wild Thing - With A Girl Like You - I Can't Control Myself - Anyway That You Want Me - Give It To Me - Night Of The Long Grass - Hi Hi Hazel - Love Is All Around - Evil Woman - Feels Like A Woman, plus many more

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Village News

By
Paul McMann

Although we are enjoying better weather than most of Europe our only Western Easter visitors are Paul and Mickey bringing the Grov-ey-bus for use later in the season.

Uncle Angelos has suffered a stroke and has been rushed to hospital.

While I have been preparing this Hedges has had kittens on the settee in my apartment.

Mother and babies are not doing well. I can say as much for the settee. I am now going to try to clear up the mess.

It has been an incredibly wet winter, and this Spring to date has

had dull, grey English skies mixed with Corfu blustery winds. Quite a few trees have come down in the gales.

But today the sun is out on this first day of April and shortly we expect our first serious invasion of visitors old and new.

The Great Fence War rumbles on with many comings and goings to the Court by the interested parties concerned. There have been hearings and adjournments. The real show will commence in a few weeks' time; this is but the 'phoney war'.

FOR THE PATHETICALLY UNFIT

The World Famous Corfu Losers' Cup is due to be held in May, on the 11th of that month [Saturday] starting at the Corfu Golf Club at 11.00A.M. Admission to this 'Classic' carries a 5 Euros joining fee, half of the contributions going to local charity, the other half to the Agiotfest fund.

At present over ten people have enrolled but there is room for a few more. Anybody wishing to make a fool of themselves can ring Paul Scotter on 6948701369 for fuller particulars.

This is what Corfu Needs

By
Paul McGovern, Editor

These are some photos from the Havoli taverna, for a brilliant Charity Darts event held on Sunday 31st March.

The place was packed to the rafters and 73 people entered the event. There were between 150 and 200 in the taverna playing on four dartboards.

A fuller report on this great day will appear here in the May edition.



"The Champion"

Corfu Weather Statistics

March 2013

Min. Temp: 14°C

Max. Temp: 23°C

Avg. Temp: 17°C

Max. Precipitation: 8.9 mm

Avg. Wind Speed: 60km/h



The World of Simon

By
Simon Baddeley

And then the most marvellous thing as glorious as the most beautiful thing - as elusive as the end of a rainbow and as real - the wondrous land; 'a sophism to believe that there is any strict dividing line between the waking world and the world of dreams',,,

'You enter Greece as one might enter a dark crystal; the form of things becomes irregular, refracted. [Mirages suddenly swallow islands](#), and wherever you look the trem-

bling curtain of the atmosphere deceive. Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape. Greece offers you something harder - the discovery of yourself...(We) for example, are confined by the sense of several contemporaneous lives being lived inside us; the sensation of being mere points of reference for space and time...'



Joke sent in by
Les Woods

Aunty Lula's Love-bites

Lasagne with Ricotta Pesto

Ingredients:

200g Basil Leaves
175ml Olive Oil
75g Pinenuts
4 Garlic Cloves, chopped
25g Edam or Cheddar Cheese,
grated
50g Ricotta or Curd Cheese
Salt
50g Butter, softened
250g Lasagne
Basil Sprigs to garnish

Go:

1. Put the basil, oil, pinenuts and garlic in an electric blender or food processor and work until smooth.
2. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the cheeses and salt to taste. Beat in the butter.
3. Cook the lasagne in two batches for about 1 minute, until 'al dente'. Drain and keep warm.
4. Add 1 tablespoon of the cooking water to the pesto and mix well.

5. Arrange a quarter of the lasagne on a warmed serving dish and cover with a quarter of the pesto. Repeat the layers.
6. Garnish with the basil and serve immediately.

Bon appetit!

Fleishpots Of The North - The day Edward Lear visited Episkepsi

By
Mark Thompson

I believe the childhood of many of my generation was blessed or blighted, depending upon your point of view, by the nonsense poems of Edward Lear. I am aware that Alexander McCall Smith has recently written of how much of Lear's poetry is 'so poignantly true about human suffering'. Whilst the poems were set out in the classic *anapestic meter* and thus offering young readers early training in poetic form, compared to the rude ones doing the rounds behind the bike sheds when I was at school, Lear's efforts seemed somewhat tame.

During my childhood and for some time afterwards I believed, in my ignorance, that these poems represented the acme of Lear's work. Though as a beautifully staged exhibition in Corfu Town last summer so amply demonstrated nothing could have been further from the truth.

Lear was first and foremost a portraitist and landscape painter and throughout his life this was, what he called, his 'bread and cheese' work. Lear travelled widely in Europe and beyond producing drafts and 'works-in-progress' and on his return to England would tout these sketches to the *nouveau riche* created by the Industrial Revolution. Many of such people knew little or nothing about art but had large spaces on their walls to fill, thus many of his works were on the grand not to say epic scale; in the same way as such people buy books by the yard to create the impression of intellectualism.

Lear's first and long term patron was William Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby for whom Lear drew, painted and wrote. This close collaboration has given rise to the suggestion that Stanley in fact wrote the nonsense poems but felt it was inappropriate for them to be published in the name of a peer of the Realm. Lear's name was used, *Lear* of course being an anagram of *Earl*. Modern scholarship asserts that Lear was

undoubtedly the author.

Lear was the penultimate and youngest to survive of 21 children and from an early age, due to financial constraints, he lived with his sister Ann who acted as his mother until her death when he was nearly 50. Lear suffered from epileptic seizures, bronchitis, asthma and in later life partial blindness. Lear was a confirmed bachelor, indeed for 40 years, until his death, he maintained an unrequited passion for barrister Franklin Lushington who he had first met in Malta in 1849.

Despite all these problems Lear travelled extensively throughout his life, for instance between 1848/9 he passed through Greece, the Balkans and Egypt. This was, of course, before the Thomas Cook Group had established itself in Europe, before the ATM or cash machine or indeed the Package Tour Regulations. All of which appear to be prerequisites for modern trouble-free travel.

We know from the aforementioned exhibition that Lear visited Corfu at this time and painted many scenes of and from the island. Some locations are almost unchanged though many others are unrecognizable. Whilst there are views of Nimfes there is no pictorial evidence he visited my village of Episkepsi. Nonetheless I have the strong conviction that he did, after all Episkepsi is only a short distance from Nimfes and we know Lear depicted views encompassing what is now Acharavi and coastline in the vicinity of Agios Spiridon. Therefore in my opinion and in all likelihood Lear visited Episkepsi.

I will go further and say that it was whilst in Episkepsi that Lear put down his paint brush and took up his pencil to write what became his famous nonsense verse. The simple fact is that there were so many strange not to say eccentric characters in Episkepsi, and such is still the case today, that he could do little but attempt to record them for posterity. You will note that

Lear illustrated many if not all of the poems using the evidence of his own eyes.

Thus as a result of hard work and strong drink I have indentified the descendants of those personages that Lear originally described. I know, for instance, which families were respectively the Quangle-Wangles, the Pobbles and the Jumblies, which family boasted an old man with a beard and perhaps most interesting of all upon whose land the Bong-tree grows. I have seen the plans for the beautiful 'pea-green' boat and the apotheki in which the owl and pussy-cat allegedly lived before leaving in the same. Though of necessity when asked 'who is who' I have to change the family names to protect the innocent.

Therefore even today when the men of my village gather over their foaming tankards of ouzo or come together whilst enjoying the 'olive-gatherers' lunch, the Greek equivalent of the ubiquitous 'Ploughman's Lunch', though in this case being horta and chips served with a generous helping of avgolemono sauce (though we tend to call it avrio lemono-in the hope that 'tomorrow never comes'!) the talk is invariably of the strange Englishman that once visited the village and promised but never sent a copy of the book he was writing. Perhaps in the circumstances this apparent omission was understandable.

Lear's memory lives on because as any of the shop assistants in Acharavi will tell you 'if you want nonsense go to Episkepsi'!

Yours in the fleishpots,

Mark Thompson.

When Nitsa was Young

By
Lord Biro

Chapter 7: The Young Warrior



Those were good days in Corfu, low carbon emission was the norm, not imposed by Governments.

Not much in the way of toys then, he remembers a toy car, a barrel hooped he rolled with a stick. He never went to the sea, it was not for swimming in. Kostas never learnt to swim.

He had dogs and remembers Peleko, Mauritz, Dick, Leon and Lieben especially.

Life was basic but the family never went hungry. After all, his grandmother Aggeliki was the head cook at the Kourkoumelis mansion. At 13 he finished school to work in the fields. He could look after himself from an early age, I remember his mother telling me that when she was with us, but Kostas said he always got a smack when he was fighting.

Kostas loved the groves, hills and valleys and roamed freely. He was a hunter and graduated from catapult to gun by the age of 22. Also roaming freely in those bygone times were jackals, foxes, and many hares. Owls too were abundant, and pine martens were present. The Forestry Commission laid much poison for vermin, and its effect was indiscriminate, and allied to over-hunting this led to the extinction of many species on Corfu.

Kostas' father was a 'policeman

for the fields' [Agrofilakas], employed by the state. He travelled around by horse and cart. He had served in the 1912/13 War under King Konstantinos against the Bulgars and Turks and was very proud of his medals and certificate [shown here]. Where the taverna now stands was then a far more modest k a f f e n i a / c o r n e r s h o p [Pandopoleion]. It sold fuel for fires, basic food-stuffs ,rice, sugar, cigarettes and wine.

He remembers going to the cinema in 1939 and seeing a Documentary about Attaturk. Kostas' father wore a long jacket, long enough for his son to hide under. He was 12 and considered too young for such a film.

In 1940 war came to Corfu. Aero-planes peppered the skies so the family withdrew their livestock to the hill at Capri, between Agios Ioannis and Kokini. Her Kostas helped his father to tend the flock of forty sheep and the four cows they owned, until the end of the War. Here, as now, he harvested the olives and grew vines. The old bothie, whose ruin still stands, was covered then, so they would stay at Capri with the animals. Vegetables of every kind were grown closer to the village, at Barbaranni.

From the 25th November of that year [St.Katherine's day] the rumour around was that the Italians dropped bombs on Corfu every day for six months. Afra was hit several times, but the bombs never reached Agios Ioannis. The Italian army arrived in 1941 and when the Italians switched sides the German Stukas bombed Corfu Town on the 14th September and their army moved in at the end of 1943and incarcerated their former allies at the airport for several months.

During the Italian occupation there was a lot of looting by the army of Suppliers, largely of olives, wine and bread. Trade from abroad was restricted and for forty days there was not much to eat. In the town some died from hunger. Others came out to the fields in search of lakona and to take olives. The Italians had check-points at three places along the main roads into town; at the cross-roads in the area known as Capucine, near to where now stands the large Dimitras supermarket and a third near where now stands the Kotsovolos shop. These were strategic spots to intercept food and wine bound for the market.

The Germans had a different style. They did not confiscate but did require absolute compliance. An exciting incident happened in October,1944. Nine Allied parachutists landed in the Ropa Valley. Local villagers rushed over to them, changed their clothes and hid them. This was reported to the Germans who set up search units.

Kostas and his cousin Uncle Lollos were feeling hungry, so they went down to the valley known as Vrissi, scrumping apples from Rika's grandmother's trees. She saw them and screamed out, 'You little devils, get away from my apple trees!' They bolted, but did not realize that on the other side of the stream was a German patrol of twelve soldiers.

HALT! HALT!



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When Nitsa was Young - Chapter 7
Continued from Page 5

Kostas had not seen them and Lollos warned him to look behind. The Germans were prepared to shoot, they thought the boys might warn the English. Kostas [a bushy-tail even then, offered the Officer an apple. Realising the true situation the officer said, ' Sacramento! Ein moment kaput!', lowered his gun and let them go. They searched the Hotel, where lived the three spinster sisters, but found nothing but discarded clothes.

The villagers, after six days, dressed the parachutists as field guards and the guards themselves pretended to be their prisoners. In this way they went to the old port and thus escaped to the mainland.

On another occasion eight Jews escaped their quarter in town and sought refuge in our village. For one year they were hid by day among the bushes in the area now

known as Panorama [where Derek and Carol Pullen live] and at night in stables at the back of Old Nikos' former cottage. They survived the Occupation. In 2000 three American Jews [the children of the refugees] came to Agios to thank the older villagers for saving their families.

There was a single German sentry box opposite near where Aqualand now sprawls. There was a regular unit of four men here, who demanded and got local accommodation.

Many cypress trees were felled by the invading army and set as stakes in the Ropa valley to deter planes from landing.

At the Troumpeta pass on the 13th September Greeks in the hills fired down upon the soldiers. In retaliation the Luftwaffe bombed the town. It burnt for two months At Doukades a field guard was shot dead. Some Germans were killed

and several Italians had been beaten up.

Then by October of 1944 the Germans were gone and there was marching and singing, and the bells rang out over the island.

The Islanders had certainly not asked to be occupied but at least there were no executions.



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Ash Wednesday

By
Dr. Lionel Mann

Back in the early sixties I was deputy headmaster of an independent boys; primary school. The founder-headmaster, more than seventy years old, looked in daily, stayed to lunch, but left the day-to-day running of the school to me although I was the newest and youngest member of the staff. I trod very carefully!

Our Kindergarten classes of four- and five-year-olds was housed in the classroom-gymnasium-pavilion complex at our large sports-field some two-hundred metres from the main school and one of the most photographed sights in the tourist-centre town was the midday procession of fifteen pairs of little boys in their navy-blue caps and blazers, grey shorts and socks, black shoes, escorted by their two teachers, coming to lunch or returning afterwards from the main building. They were referred to as The Munchkins by the older pupils.

With the exception of afternoons when the field was in use by older pupils for hockey in the winter or cricket in the summer, the little ones had the run of it for breaks between lessons apart from one corner, out-of-bounds where our caretaker-grounds-man burnt rubbish.

One November mid-morning break the two mistresses were enjoying a cup of tea while watching their charges through the large windows along the front of the building. The infants were all playing in the farthest corner of the field but nothing seemed amiss until a little pixie, grey from head to foot except

for two tear-streaks down the face burst in upon them. The field was surrounded by tall trees and in the autumn the grounds-man raked it daily to clear fallen leaves; the previous day, because a strong wind was blowing in an unsuitable direction he had burnt a big heap of leaves in that far corner instead of in the usual place. Now the little horrors were throwing the powdery ash over each other.

I was in the staffroom with the rest of the staff, awaiting our call to lunch after the pupils had been served when the KG mistresses came in, collapsed into chairs and shrieked with laughter. The staffroom was a happy place with plenty of humour, but this was something special. We waited for an explanation. Between gasps of merriment we were told of the infants' escapade and their teachers' need to shower all thirty pupils and to brush and sponge clothing. The room rocked with laughter.

Every evening I prepared a bulletin to be pinned to the school notice board the following morning. The first item the next day read, "In order to conform to the Kindergarten calendar in future this school will observe Ash Wednesday on the second Wednesday in November." Word had spread; staff and parents enjoyed that.

A Corfu Ghost

"THE MORO" Aleko
Damaskinos

Whenever something goes wrong here in Corfu, the "Moro" is always to be blamed.

Every village on the island has its own "Moro".

He can be anywhere...

Of course this could be dismissed as utter nonsense, many though will not discuss the matter further...

He has no shape or form and haunts lonely places and solitary people!

Lights are left on all night and the television plays non-stop in the bedroom of the ones who live alone.

He is older than the "vampire", invisible and preys upon the ones who are alone!

In general the Greek people don't like being alone, so this anxiety created the "Moro" as a warning.



Chaplain's Chat

Articles from the chaplain's column in *The Corfiot*, (written between 2003 and 2008 by Revd. Dr. Clifford Owen)

Author's Preface

I had never visited Corfu before I went there in December 2002 to take up the post of Chaplain to the Anglican Church of Holy Trinity. The interest and excitement of the island begins for the visitor as the aircraft makes its approach to Corfu airport. The usual approach is from the south and the last kilometre of the run-in brings the aircraft down almost to sea level before it passes between two steep hills to reach the end of the runway. From the north the approach requires an accurate tight left turn over the harbour and is perilously close to rooftops before the touch down.

After the airport arrival the drive through the narrow streets and along Garitsa Bay gives the first time visitor a dramatic vista of the Old Fort with the neo-classical church of St. George nestling at its feet. Then comes the Palace of Saint Michael and St. George, former residence of the British High Commissioner, built in those far off days when the British still walked tall, with stone from the not too distant island of Malta. Corfu is striking. It still has the last vestiges of empire about it if one cares to look. The French left their architectural mark in the early nineteenth century in the form of the Liston building by the Spianada. But it was the Venetians, who ran the island from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, who truly be-

queathed the feel of modern Corfu. Still to this day it is the famous olive trees which give the island its distinctive 'green feel' (in contrast to Malta). But its history reaches back millennia Corfu is today and will remain irrevocably Greek. You cannot say 'Corfu' without saying 'Spiridon'. The mummified remains of the saint are housed in his prominent church in the old town. He is processed around the city four times a year with a reverent pomp; and he has given his name to a large number of the males on the island: Spiros

Corfu was in the 1980s an extremely popular place for British package holiday makers. It was relatively cheap and many of the British girls, and occasionally some of the boys married Greek partners. A significant number of those marriages still form the backbone of the congregation at Holy Trinity Anglican Church. Although the numbers have diminished, over a quarter of a million British still visit the island each year, apart from many thousands of other visitors from around Europe and the wider world. It remains a popular place and as the recent TV documentary series *Corfu: a tale of two islands* showed, it is still a place that people fall in love with.

About ten thousand British are now resident on the island. I often used to discuss the accuracy of this number with the then Vice-Consul. I had heard of estimates ranging from five to fifteen thousand; but ten is not wildly inaccurate. By any reckoning, Corfu is a large island parish. Not only does it have the anglophile population of an English

urban parish, it is geographically the size of a small English county: nearly fifty miles long and seventeen miles at its widest point at the top; a bit like a bent nail! It is also mountainous, especially in the north. Visits to the north or south of the island from Corfu town were at least half a day's work. After six years I became quite fit just turning the steering wheel on the mountain road bends!

So it was into this new and fascinating environment that I tried to find my feet in 2002. I had not been there long before I ran into Hilary Whitton-Paipeti. Hilary had started an English language magazine *The Corfiot* a few years earlier. The magazine had some obvious tasks like linking up ex-Pat residents, offering help with the many sides of Greek bureaucracy! It complemented the English language newspaper *Athens News* by offering a more local focus, but above all it encouraged the prospective property buyer! There are thousands of ex-pats who were helped to find a suitable Greek built home in those years, especially for renovation, through the pages of *the Corfiot*. But it was not long before I as the new Chaplain was invited to take up the monthly column in the magazine called 'Chaplain's Chat'.

Hilary was a generous editor and left me with a completely free hand as to what to write. Her only requirement was on the maximum length of the article. (a good restriction for any vicar!).

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Chaplain's Chat
Continued from page 8

So it was left to me to write as the mood took me each month for an ex-pat population whom I hardly yet knew, and the vast majority of course never naturally came near Holy Trinity Church. To be honest it was a challenge I had always wanted. Most Anglican clergy are used to and expected to write 'their bit' in their own church and parish magazines each month. But this was something different. I had to decide where I was aiming and think (and pray) carefully each month what the subject should be. So I simply chose topics of the moment, or the season, or some personal story, and wrote simply as minister's comments upon what I thought would be of common interest. Only occasionally did I come straight in with a religious subject. I tried mainly to write on topics that showed the chaplain was a human being, living on the same island, and struggling with the same language, the same diet and the summer heat that they were. If I majored on anything religious it was my new experience of the Greek Orthodox Church. The experience of Greek Easter is a case in point. To experience Easter as orchestrated by a Greek family is to share in something much more significant than the average Christmas in the United Kingdom. I have to say quite boldly that we in England have lost something precious. Indeed living in Corfu one begins to feel just how much the Orthodox Church is so woven into the fabric and culture of the island, and indeed the Greek nation. At Greek Easter even the receipts for postage stamps have 'Christos Anesti' (Christ is Risen) written on them. Living in Corfu made me realise just how secular we have be-

come in England. So in the articles I tried to articulate some of these feelings in, I hope, our common English language. So what you will find in this book is a selection from the sixty articles that I wrote over nearly six years. Half of the articles have a Corfu connection, and the other half could have been written for anywhere else.

For a slight contrast I have included a few shorter articles from *Parson's Paragraph*. These pieces were written 'in-house' for the church's own *Pulse* magazine. You may spot that the style is different. Finally I have included one last sermon. During the course of six years on the island we got to know the other churches very well. We carried out many joint worship experiments. One of our best was a 'Songs of Praise' held in the Conference Room of the Corfu Palace Hotel, with powerpoint presentation in English and Greek. This was held jointly with the Greek Evangelical Church, with verses of hymns sung and lessons read in both languages. But the sermon is my last word at our annual unity week gathering in January 2008 in the Roman Catholic Cathedral. By that stage I was able to read part of the sermon in Greek myself with a good chance of it being understood!

But did 'Chaplain's Chat' reach the intended target? The irony here is that hardly anyone in our church congregation regularly read the *Corfiot*! It didn't matter because I wasn't writing for them. But what I did find most rewarding was that it was on the Saturday morning international walking group (which was also led by Hilary Paipeti) and spontaneously in the supermarkets, that ex-Pats would stop and comment that they had found a *Chaplain's*

Chat article of interest. Usually the people were unknown to me until I met them out walking or shopping.

So I hope the readers of this collection will find something of interest. Who knows? Some of you may even want to visit the island of Corfu for yourselves!

Lent, New Age & the Archbishop of Canterbury (*Corfiot*, March 2003)

Half a century ago in a primary school playground I overheard the question, 'What are you giving up for Lent?' The answer was usually something like sweets, chocolates or for the serious going 'to the pictures' (TV was still a rarity) One child said that his father would be putting sixpence in the swear box for any expletives used. I went home and asked my parents: 'What's Lent?'

The answer was: 'It's a religious time of abstinence, when you are not supposed to enjoy things', which was interpreted by this child to mean that if you are serious about your religion then it is better to look miserable!

The notion that Christianity has a direct link with killing pleasure still runs very deep. We 1950s kids also knew when Lent started because it had a wonderful feast called 'pancake day' (Shrove Tuesday) which had its roots in the final feast before the Lenten fast. In modern Greece, 'Clean Monday', the day before Shrove Tuesday is celebrated party style before the lights are dimmed down for the next forty days.

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Chaplain's Chat
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The consciousness of Lent as a quasi-folk practice on a religious base has very much faded over the last half century as England has sunk under the weight of a relentless secularisation, but in a new and wholesome way Lent has been quietly making a comeback. Gone are the days of seeing the season simply in asceticism. Nowadays it's the season for courses.

'Which Lent Course are you doing?' is the cry from one church to another. For twenty years at least, Christian denominations have produced a wealth of booklets, cassettes, videos, CDs, all designed to stimulate, refresh and challenge. Lent has become the priority season for getting Christians back to square one of the Faith and looking again at spiritual roots. Lent has also become a prime ecumenical time when Catholics, Anglicans, and Free church people cross the street to meet and learn about each other. I had the pleasure of writing the Lent Course for BBC Radio Stoke, and then when Holy Week came I was invited to attend a public service in a Stoke-on-Trent church to meet the radio listeners to the course and answer questions.

Many reared in a traditional Anglican way may have received little in the way of teaching since Confirmation class, done under sufferance in teenage years. So Lent has over recent years become very much revalued; and the traditional services on Ash Wednesday (with ashes) and Maundy Thursday (with foot-washing and commemoration of the Last Supper) are very meaningful occasions.

But this is all 'in house'. What

about the majority of English speakers who might locate themselves well beyond the walls of the church? There was a recent Sunday Times article on the burgeoning interest in New Age practices. It took its cue from two sources. One was Cherie Blair's use of energy giving pendulum crystals. The other was the recent publication by the Vatican of a report which was in effect a spiritual health warning on New Age practices. Some are ok, some neutral, some condemned as dangerous, and still others as pagan and of dubious spiritual roots. To quote the article (by one Richard Owen - no relation!)

'Psychic mediums, consciousness-expanding sects, human potential movements, modern witchcraft (Wicca or women's spirituality), earth forces, rebirthing, reincarnation, vague talk about the Oneness of Being - they're all out. Worse than that, they are dangerous. 'Catholics have a choice,' says the Italian newspaper La Repubblica. 'Jesus Christ or the Age of Aquarius. One or the other.'

In every church that I have served in New Age practices have come up for discussion - not en bloc but individually. I have had to think up a response to many things from horoscopes and yoga to ley lines and a range of healing practices. The main questions have been : is this practice Christian or pagan. How can we tell where 'sound religion' stops and dangerous sects start?

Who has the right to judge in these matters? Catholics seem to have the Vatican. We Anglicans have a new Archbishop of Canterbury! February saw the enthronement of the Rt. Revd. Dr. Rowan Williams. Already there are superhuman expectations of him. Many are hoping he will fill the pews again. He will not

be able to do that single-handedly, but what he will bring to the job, apart from impeccable academic credentials, is a saintly openness and an ability to think on his feet with a speed that the rest of us can only dream of. But he has a touch of that luminous spirituality that was recognised in cardinal Basil Hume. He will be, in short, a man of God with great wisdom. He will, I expect, give much discernment on New Age matters, but his prime purpose, as he has stated, be to try and let Christianity once more capture the public imagination in an exciting way. Secretly I hope he confirms what I believe, that Christianity essentially is an invitation from a first century man, who was also claimed divine, to follow him.

Have a good Lent.