



Come Singing Newsletter, nearly May, 2025

Dear Everyone,

We've made it through April and suddenly it's summer! You may be delighted that Chaucer's 'Aprille with his shoures (showers) sweet' didn't live up to its description, or wishing now for a bit of rain to help new growth and greenery. Whatever the case, the young leaves on the trees are already changing from that wonderful smoky grey-green haze to something richer and more vivid, and every day there's something new to spot. One of my annual favourites is the wisteria in St. Giles' churchyard, closely followed by candles on the chestnut trees in Aylsham Road...



On April 10th, 1736 Robert Marsham of Stratton Strawless made a note to himself that he'd seen the first swallow of spring. Nothing much remarkable in that, but this was the beginning of his habit of recording other 'Indications of Spring' - hearing the first cuckoo, seeing the first bluebell, hawthorn in leaf, and so on - which lasted for the next 62 years. His work, which later became known as the study of phenology, was carried on by generations of the family until 1958, and now the Marshams' record is one of our most precious sources of information in tracing how climate has changed. How wonderful that simply observing things should turn into such a valuable endeavour - and in Stratton Strawless!

Here's another musical first...

On hearing the first cuckoo in spring

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGv9bV27ztY>

And a quiz to remind you of rain and how it feels to need an umbrella!

Answers at the end.

1. A cure for a Cockney accent!
2. The upside -down inspiration for a fundraising festival for local community organisations in Docking...



3. 'I will wait for you '. one of the most romantic love songs ever, was the theme for which film?
4. From 'Bambi'. a Disney favourite for this month!
5. Where did an invitation to 'Please share my umbrella' lead to romance?
6. A handyman who can also 'darn a sock or fix a clock, an apple cart, a broken heart' but what's his real job?
7. A Buddy Holly favourite: 'The sun is out, the sky is blue, There's not a cloud to spoil the view, but...'
8. And it might as well...
9. Who in Easter Parade is 'looking for a girl who saved her love for a rainy day'?
10. 'Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden' - a song for Spring!

Thoughts this week of the Pope brought to mind a very different Norwich cleric who perhaps gave his name to a street off Unthank Road? Dr. Henry Bathurst was consecrated Bishop of Norwich in 1805 at the age of sixty-one. Known for his 'great geniality and affability', he talked a lot from the outset about 'life's last stage' (which in his case lasted over thirty years until he died in post at ninety-three!) and was not very active in governing the diocese. He did though enjoy playing cards, and is recorded as saying 'I cannot see to read but I can see the dots on the cards'!! He probably had a relatively peaceful tenure. His statue is in the north transept of Norwich Cathedral.





It'll soon be time to start thinking about picnics and eating outdoors, with all the pleasures of hampers, pavement cafes and ice cream as well as perils of sand in the sandwiches, wasps and sudden cloudbursts... My niece recently gave me what I suppose is a mess tin(?) to take on safaris. It deserves more than my modest bus trips, but certainly does the trick of keeping the egg salad separate from leftover fruit crumble, makes me feel very professional and will encourage exploration further afield!

Here's another quiz, this time about food and eating out.

1. 'I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar place... in that , the park across the way, the children's carousel, the chestnut trees, the wishing well...'
2. The perfect scenario for a hamper: 'The birds above all sing of love, a gentle sweet refrain, the winds around all make a sound like softly falling rain. Just two of us together we'll plan our honeymoon', but where?
3. But some can only dream hungrily of pate and grapes, washed down with a bottle of wine... 'The little man walked up and down to find an eating place in town. He read the menu through and through to see what 15 cents could do'. What did he get for his money in the end?
4. If only he could have been welcomed like this! And what would have been on the menu? ' Oh, I don't know where you came from 'cause I don't know where you've been. But it really doesn't matter - grab a chair and fill your platter and dig, dig, dig right in!'
5. And on the subject of baking, what cake would be suitable for 'Tea for two'?
6. Where would you find ' Jambalaya, and a crawfish pie and a file gumbo'?
7. No humans welcome at this furry event!
8. If you're in love, the simplest food will do - a wonderful song by Jack Buchanan and Gertrude Lawrence.
9. And after a sleepless night: 'I'm feelin' mighty lonesome, haven't slept a wink. I walk the floor and watch the door, and in between I drink....'
10. The best-ever song about food fantasies! Hot sausage and mustard, cold jelly and custard, pease pudding and saveloys are just the beginning...

In gentler weather we all tend to get out a bit more. Jane was talking recently about Norwich music in the 50's, when bands played at the Samson and Hercules, and jazz fans met at venues like the Bedford, the Orford Arms cellar and the Jolly Butchers (presided over by Black Anna.) (Cellars seemed to be especially popular!) This was the time leading to the swinging 60s, and in 1956 Norwich was one of the first cities outside London to show the film 'Rock around the clock'. There was a certain amount of worry that the film would lead to bad behaviour: the Mayor of Lowestoft, Mr. W. F. Pretty, said that he hoped no cinema in the town would show it, and was adamant that Teddy Boys and jiving to rock 'n' roll were unacceptable. His objections carried no weight, though, and in fact subsequent showings in Norwich and Great Yarmouth did lead to disturbance and arrests - hard to imagine these days!

We'll all have our own ways of celebrating VE day on May 7th, whether as part of a community event or more privately. Rather than calling up the music of the time I've been thinking about the role humble knitting played in the war effort. People knitted everywhere - on the bus or train, in the underground air raid shelters, at home or in gaps at work. And not just women: men were often skilled knitters. The pullover below (now in the Imperial War Museum) was made from scrap wool by prisoner of war Ronald Eastman, a handicraft teacher before the war, while he was in Eichstaett camp.



There was some anxiety on the part of the War Office that knitting patterns, with all their numbers, letters and instructions, might be used to transmit coded messages, and in the end they banned the sending of patterns abroad. Perhaps it wasn't so far-fetched as in Belgium the resistance movement recruited older women whose homes overlooked the railway yards to keep notes in their knitting of the comings and goings of trains...



It's comforting to think that such simple things can make a difference, whether keeping people warm or passing on vital information.



A great knitting song! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9O6JmT39Og>

And on that happy note that's probably quite enough of this ragbag newsletter!

Enjoy this July-in-April weather and we'll hope to see you soon at the Millennium or Earlham singing. Remember that it's a 5 -Tuesday month, so the next Millennium will be on Tuesday May 13th, with Earlham on Friday the 16th of the same week.

Keep well and have some fun if you can!

With best wishes and love from all at Come Singing

Rain and umbrellas quiz answers (*=pesky ads!)

1. Morning has broken
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJGL0nXdJMY>
2. *The rain in Spain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVmU3iANbgk>
3. Pennies from Heaven
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjKp0G3dOK0>
4. Les Parapluies de Cherbourg
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaY6iWmQXS4>
5. April showers <https://youtu.be/S-FUcrQhTBY>
6. Bus stop <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt75wQ0JypA>
7. The umbrella man
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcHxS7cLEjc>
8. It's raining in my heart
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7g7KgEcAGs>
9. It might as well rain until September
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adD0xbZZni4>
10. A fella with an umbrella
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH9ocQUJi7s>

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Eating out quiz answers

1. In that small cafe... I'll be seeing you
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3C5zYKluoxg>
2. Cruising down the river
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYtKjeaTbQQ>
3. One meatball <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=po5rUasUWIg>
4. If I knew you were coming I'd have baked a cake
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1wEVPqFFCg>
5. Tea for two <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-wM9-Xp4xw>
6. Teddy bears' picnic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZANKFxcRKU>
7. On the Bayou <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5lmncN-rQc>
8. 'A Cup Of Coffee, A Sandwich And You'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym0WE7rt1h0>
9. *Black coffee https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzGvMD0r_cw
10. Food glorious food <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7PONiKGUs>