

I want to walk through crisp gold harvest fields,
Through meadows yellowed by the August heat;
To loiter through the cool dim wood, that yields
Such perfect flowers and quiet so complete—
The happy woods, where every bud and leaf
Is full of dreams as life is full of grief.

August, named for Caesar Augustus, is the month when past glories that once were Rome elide with present glories of a sunny summer's heady height. The ancient festival of harvest, more ancient than ancient Rome by far, began on Lammass Day - 1st of August - when the first wheat was harvested - once cut it was taken to made into a loaf of bread which in its turn was broken in four pieces and offered back to the gods of the harvest in the four corners of the field. Many of these Celtic festivals were Christianised and Lammass became the festival of Our Lady in the Harvest. Today the festive spirit endures as August remains a time when families holiday and children can forget their troubles as School and Autumn Term lies safely hidden in the long grass of some distant fields.

Milo has had his share of summer's troubles. Seeds and shards of brittle wild grasses have pierced his paws. Milo is not great with Vets, so I try to avoid the trauma of visits as much for my sake as his. As early interventions are often best and as Milo limps to great effect at the slightest discomfort, I have found myself more than once on the idyll of my summer walks kneeling on parched, stony, uneven ground whilst struggling to hold Milo still enough to let me pull the offending blades from his paws. Gamely, Milo now sees this as a possible opportunity for a sort of tug of war. From a distance it must appear as if we're some strange Lammastide double-act playing an ancient hay-making-game as once played out in these fields about the village in the long ago of the rustic past of dogs and men.

The part fields have played in our rustic past is very much also part of the Recusant past hereabouts in South Oxfordshire. Our first Speaker to the Society's Bar this autumn will be Dr Caroline Bowden from QMUC in London. She will speak on "Thames Valley Recusants and the English Convents 1600- 1800" at 7.30 on 27th September. On October 25th Mark Lewis will speak to the Society on "William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement". Finally, on 13th December – a week later than usual – the Society Christmas Party will include a Flanagan and Alan Tribute Act and sing-along.

All the society meetings include a licensed bar and a supper which can be purchased at the door for £5.00. The Society continues to welcome newcomers to the village and all our meetings have a welcome table where visitors can meet society members in the course of the evening. I have been here in Benson almost four years and I can recall how I made my way to my first Bensington Society meeting with some trepidation. I am very glad I did for through the Society I have made many new friends here in Benson.

The Society's outings conclude this autumn with a visit on 19th September to the Battle of Britain Bunker in Hillingdon and on 14th October a visit to the Post Office and Railway Museum. Details of the outings and how to book can be found on the Web Page www.bensington-society.com where there is a host of information about the society as well as links to the History Group and other related organisations. Additionally, there are links to the latest on the Neighbourhood Plan. For those interested in local history there are details in various books about Benson. These can be obtained from Derry's Den or at the Library.

I know I'm firmly in the cycle of seasons when Richard brings me home 10 pounds of plums to make into jam or jelly. The year's rounds come faster and ever faster around, and their melting moments seem to melt away almost as soon as they have arrived. Time plays her tricks upon us even when we believe she has no tricks left to play. In our uncertain times it is in this shared experience of life's time, that we can best hope to find hope, for better times to come. So, full of dreams and not of griefs, I'll make the season's jellies and jams and leave you with the consoling words of Edith Nesbit:

I want to pull the honey-bud that twines
About the blackberries and gold-leaf sloes;
To part the boughs where the rare water shines,
Tread the soft bank whereby the bulrush grows—
I want to be no more myself, but be
Made one with all the beauty that I see.

I want to wander over pastures still,
Where sheared white sheep and mild-eyed cattle graze;
To climb the thymy, clover-covered hill,
To look down on the valley's hot blue haze;
And on the short brown turf for hours to lie
Gazing straight up into the clear, deep sky