

# particular news

Issue number three

Summer 2004

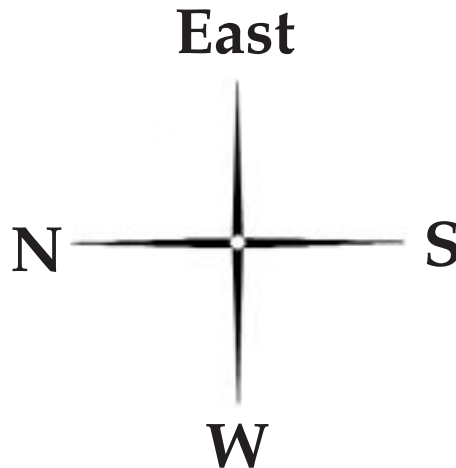
*But look, the morn in russet mantle clad  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward  
hill.*

Horatio from Hamlet 1.1, Shakespeare

Above all 'east' invokes the dawn, the breaking of a new day, the return of the sun. In this guise it is the most charismatic of the cardinal points, yet somehow it carries less baggage than the others. At the dawn of the new millennium, those wanting to see the first rays of the sun fall on England went to Lowestoft, but it hardly rivals Land's End as a destination.

Perhaps our mainly urban lives and changing ways, with lessening experience of the dawn, have diminished our interest, yet it is at the high points of the year, when dawn is captured by 'The Stones' themselves, that Stonehenge attracts its serious followers. And it is through England that the Prime Meridian passes: Greenwich is bisected by the imaginary line of zero longitude where east and west begin their separate journeys across the globe.

East is now defined at right angles to the true north-south line but it is from the east that we 'orientate' ourselves. The Latin *oriens* means the rising sun. East, the word, seems to grow out of Old High German *ostar* meaning to the east, dawn in Greek is *eos* and further east still *usas* in Sanskrit means dawn. Most of the building blocks of our history and culture arrived from the east, from the mainland of Europe and out of Asia.



Our churches are built east/west, their altar to the rising sun. Christian bodies are laid with heads towards the east, archaeologists read ancient burials from their orientation.

In the USA much is 'explained' by the stereotypes of 'he's an Eastener' or 'she's from the West Coast', in England the east and west have no such opposition except within cities, notably London where the East End carries layers of connotations only now being challenged by decades of erosion of dockland jobs and the imposition of major development.

There are at least 27 settlements called East End, from Hampshire to Yorkshire, and our forbears distinguished hundreds of places by the points of the compass, from East-the-Water in Devon to Ascot (meaning eastern cottage) in Berkshire to East Curthwaite in Cumberland.

Physically the east suggests less rainfall, less humidity, lower wind speeds. The continental influence in sending us cold winds seemingly

from the heart of the landmass gives the flatnesses of Holderness, Lincolnshire and East Anglia a reputation for searching winds, withering in their treatment of field workers, rude in their penetration of badly fitting windows, dangerous to windmills and the devil to cycle against.

Graham Swift, in *Waterland*, recalls:

*"some say that the Wash, that gaping wound in the backbone of Britain, is not formed by the effects of tides and rivers and geology, but it is simply the first bite the East Wind takes out of the defenceless shoreline with its ice-whetted incisors."*

In 'The Compleat Angler' Izaak Walton either created or repeated the observation:

*"When the wind is in the east 'tis good for neither man nor beast"*

he would also have known the adage 'fish bite the least with wind in the east'. Easy to turn your back on, but people who have grown up on the eastern side of the country find the dry air difficult to live without – under 25" of rainfall in a year is technically semi-arid despite the Fenland drains and the Norfolk Broads.

Does anyone still get up to 'Never Eat Shredded Wheat' a breakfast time mnemonic to remember, clockwise, the points of the compass? What do the other cardinal points evoke?

# Mere today ... gone tomorrow ... ?

Glyn Goodwin

- sums up the inevitable ecological tendency for shallow water bodies to be colonised and filled in by plants - all ponds would be land if they could... Still water in small pools comes in many different guises, many of our making: canal reservoirs, claypits, corrie lakes, fish ponds, gravel pits, lagoons, marl lakes, meres, mire pools, moats, pingos, slacks, subsidence flashes, tarns... can you tell us anything of natural, cultural interest about one near you?

Mere is the old Anglo Saxon word which predates pond, but 'maere' meaning boundary in Old English often translates to mere also. In Norfolk eleven parishes converge on a series of meres at Rymer Point.

Ponds could be bottomless, at least "according to legend." And a bottomless pool might mean a dragon - Knucker Hole near Lyminster in Sussex and its dragon have been meticulously researched by Jacqueline Simpson, who writes "at one time there were several such ... all known as 'Knucker Holes' or 'Nickery Holes'." The name derives from the Anglo Saxon word 'nicor' meaning 'water monster'.

A mermaid was said to have stolen a church bell fallen from Marden church in Herefordshire. On the guidance of a wise man the bell was pulled out in silence by white heifers and the mermaid lay asleep inside. But she was awoken by cries of surprise and pulled the bell back into the water. Still the bell can be heard from the depths echoing the bells in the church. In 1848 a rectangular bronze bell of a Celtic type was found in ancient mud.

The Sussex Downs are often regarded as the traditional home of the dew pond. In the early decades of the 20th century, no holiday-maker could say they had "done" Sussex until they had visited two of the finest specimens, on Chanctonbury

Ring and Ditchling Beacon. But they are also to be found on the chalk of the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wolds, the



limestone around Flamborough Head in Yorkshire and in the White Peak of Derbyshire in defiance of local hydrology.

Many of these large, shallow ponds were probably first built in the 17th or 18th centuries, and lined with puddled clay to make them water-tight.

A few are much older, perhaps; prehistoric pastoralists may have constructed downland ponds on natural deposits of flinty clay around the tops of southern downland. Refurbished over the centuries, such ponds may lie in particularly auspicious spots. The name seems to have been invented by Victorian gentlemen with a strong, if romantic, interest in country matters. Shepherds called them sheep-ponds.

There is an art to making dew ponds, and as late as the 1930s small teams of professional men would still travel huge distances mending and re-lining or digging new dew ponds above the spring-lines on the chalk and limestone uplands where sheep and cattle needed water.

Today, few dew ponds hold any water, and most survive only as ghostly,

weedy depressions. Their demise was probably hastened by a run of dry summers in the years following the first world war, which left their clay linings exposed and vulnerable to cracking, as well as a decline in sheep grazing. When sheep were plentiful, their treading of the exposed edge of the pond could prevent cracks from developing.

In those early decades of the 20th century, farmers' concerns about parasitic disease in livestock became a prompt for the reinforcement of dewponds with concrete.



This must have seemed the height of rational farming, but in fact, the modern material turned out to be highly liable to crack, and today, all five concrete dew ponds on the Caburn block of downs east of Lewes, Sussex are dry.

Many of the Derbyshire dewponds were lined with concrete but stand empty now, a loss to the linnets and finches, rabbits, hares, foxes and badgers which drank from them.

Conservation groups on the South Downs have restored a few ponds by installing plastic linings, giving new life to these much needed small mirrors of the sky. Free of predatory fish, revitalised dew ponds can be havens for newts and frogs and water beetles, and provide watering holes for many more wild creatures. The well-filled dew pond at South Hill Barn above Cuckmere Haven near Seaford, for instance, is alive with dragon - and damselflies on warm sunny days.

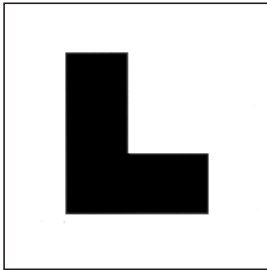
Even derelict ponds can have their uses. At Cissbury Ring in West Sussex, the muddy remains of a former dew pond plays host to rare fairy shrimps, which, according to the National Trust "can lie dormant for years until the pond fills with water."

Mark Reddy

Brian Grimwood



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### Can You Help?

#### Street streams ...

The streams running down either side of Wendron Street, Church Street and Coinage Hall Street in Helston (Cornwall) are called Kennels. What do other towns call their roadside streams?

#### Cottage names ...

Thatched cottages in Hampshire have a distinctive rounded quality to their roofs that gives them the name Hampshire Buns. Do other places have particular cottage styles, and if so what are they called?

**L is for Legends and Lore ...** It is said that ...

Crusaders magically returned to their wives at Wroxall Abbey (Warwickshire), Wolverley (Worcs), Thrybergh (Yorkshire), Mottram (Cheshire) ...

**King Arthur** ... was given Excalibur from Dozmare pool near Bodmin (Cornwall) ... had an argument with Guinevere at Sewingshields (Northumberland) ... has cups and saucers near Tintagel (Cornwall) ... conjured a butterfly from a bishop's hands in Winchester (Hants) ... recieved his fatal wounds at Slaughter Bridge near Camelford (Cornwall) ... was transformed into a raven ... and remains in a magical sleep in Richmond (Yorkshire) ... and Dunstanburgh (Northumberland) ... and Sewingshields ...

Seven Saracens settled on Biddulph Moor (Staffs) ... A newlywed bride perished in a trunk at Marwell Hall (Hants), Minster Lovel (Gloucestershire), Bramshill House (Hants), Bawdrip (Somerset) and Malsanger (Hants) ...

**Robin Hood** ... was born in Loxley (Staffs) and has a Ringstone near Halifax (Yorkshire), a bower at Southleigh (Wilts), Butts near Church Stretton (Shropshire), Picking Rods on the Ludworth Intakes (Derbyshire), a well near Doncaster (Yorkshire), a stable near Papplewick (Notts), a bay near Whitby (Yorkshire) and a bog in the grounds of Chillingham Castle (Northumberland) ...

The pedlar of Swaffham (Norfolk) got good news at London Bridge ... Halifax (Yorks) has Holy hair ... Keynsham has St Keyna's fossilised snakes ... Hoxne (Suffolk) has a cursed bridge ...

**The Devil** ... flung a nightcap from the Needles to near Corfe Castle (Dorset) ... threw stones to "ding down" Alborough (Yorkshire) ... played quoits near Stanton Harcourt (Oxfordshire) ... tried to drown the churches of the Weald near Brighton ... has a frying pan near Cadgwith (Cornwall), a punchbowl near Hindhead (Surrey), a limekiln on Lundy, a Cheesewring near Lynton (Devon), a pulpit on Offa's Dyke in Gloucestershire, a highway across Bagshot Heath (Surrey), and a house on Chrome Hill (Derbyshire) where he tried to hang himself ...

St Neot's relics were stolen from Cornwall and taken to Huntingdonshire ... A dragon was killed by Piers Shonkes at Brent Pelham (Herefordshire) ... Eden Hall (Cumberland) has a goblet stolen from the fairies ... A giant climbed the Hoo Ash at Whitwick (Leicestershire) to call "Ho!" and get his giant brother's attention ...

What are the legends of your place?



### As easy as A B C ...

An extract from a new ABC of Stroud in Gloucestershire handset and printed by Dennis Gould at the Woodblock Letterpress to mark the town's 700th anniversary in 2004.

The ABC is printed on hand-made paper which has leaves pressed into it.





## Diverse Celebrations - Summer 2004



**Well Dressing** in Derbyshire & neighbouring counties, *May through to September.*

- River Festival**, River Parrett, Langport, Somerset *23rd May.*
- Cuckoo Fair**, Laughton, Sussex. *Last Bank Holiday in May, 29-31 May.*
- Blessing of the Fleet, Fish Quay Festival**, North Shields. *30th May.*
- Duck Feast**, Charlton Cat Inn, Wiltshire. The 18th century 'thresher poet' Stephen Duck is commemorated each year, *1st June.*
- Pinner Fair**, Middlesex. *Wednesday following the Spring Bank Holiday, 2nd June.*
- Blessing the Sea**, Hastings, Sussex. *2nd June.*
- Appleby Horse Fair**, Cumbria, *3-9 June.*
- Scuttlebrook Wake**, Chipping Campden, Gloucs. *5th June.*
- Trinity Week: Rothwell Charter Fair**, Rothwell, Northants. 6-day fair, which celebrates its 800th anniversary in 2004, *5-12 June.* Also taking place around Trinity are the **Southwold Trinity Fair**, Suffolk, *3-6 June* and **Penzance Corpus Christi Fair**, Cornwall, *9-12 June.*
- Golowan**, Penzance, Cornwall. *17-27 June.*
- Filly Loo**, Ashmore, Dorset, *18 June.*
- Mersey River Festival** *18-21 June.*
- Newcastle Town Moor Fair**, Newcastle upon Tyne. *18-27 June.*
- Architecture Week** *18-27 June.*
- Bawming the Thorn**, Appleton Thorn, Cheshire. *Saturday nearest Midsummer's Day, 19 June.*
- Seer Green Cherry Pie Fair & Village Day**. *19th June.*
- Midsummer Bonfires**, Cornwall. *Lit on the eve of longest day.*
- The Longest Day 21st June : Summer Solstice**, Stonehenge, Wilts, **Dragon Procession**, Burford, Oxon.
- Midsummer Fair**, Cambridge, *23-28 June.*
- Midsummer's Day 24th June - St John's Day.**
- World Worm Charming Championships**, Willaston School, nr Nantwich, Cheshire. *25th Anniversary, 25-27 June.*
- Glastonbury Festival** - Pilton, Somerset. *25-27 June.*
- Shifnal Old Club and Carnival**, Shifnal, Shropshire. *26 June.*
- St Peter's Day 29th June: Rushbearing**, St Columba's Church, Warcop, Cumbria, *St Peter's Day, unless a Sunday then 28th June.*
- Hat Fair**, Winchester, Hants. *30th Anniversary, 2-4 July.*
- Banbury Hobby Horse Festival** Banbury, Oxon. *2-4 July.*

- Rushbearing**, St Mary's Church, Ambleside, Cumbria; St Theobold's Church, Great Musgrave, Cumbria. *3rd July.*
- Admiralty Court**, Rochester, Kent. *3-4 July.*
- Midsummer Cushions**, Helpston, Cambs. Celebrating the Birthday of poet, John Clare. *7th July, with festival to Clare's Birthday (13th July).*
- Black Cherry Fair**, Chertsey, Surrey. Held since 1440. *10 July.*
- Thames Barge Sailing Match**. *10th July*
- Rushbearing**, Grasmere, Cumbria. *Always the Saturday before the last day of school summer term, 10th July.*
- Wem Sweet Pea Show**, The New Town Hall, Wem, Shropshire. *17-18 July .*
- Swan Upping**, on the River Thames from Sunbury, Surrey to Abingdon Bridge, Oxon. *19-23 July.*
- WOMAD (World of Music and Dance)** *23-25 July.*
- Whitstable Oyster Festival and Blessing of the Waters** - Whitstable, Kent. *31st July - 8 August.*
- St Wilfrid's Feast Procession**, Ripon, N. Yorks, *31st July.*
- Lammas 1st August.**
- Gooseberry Contest**, Egton Bridge, N.Yorks. *3rd August.*
- Brigg Horse Fair**, Brigg, N.Lincs. *5th August.*
- Hampshire Water Festival**, Winchester, *14 August.*
- Scarecrow Festival**, Kettlewell, Yorks. *14-22 August.*
- Priddy Sheep Fair**, Somerset. *18th August.*
- Saddleworth Rushcart**, W Yorks. *21-22 August.*
- Burning the Bartle**, West Witton, Wensleydale, Yorkshire. On the Saturday nearest St Bartholomew's Day, *21st August.*
- St Philibert's Day 22nd August** : Traditional beginning of the Kent cobnut season.
- St Bartholomew's Day 24th August : Lee Gap Fair**, West Ardsley, near Wakefield, Yorkshire.
- August Bank Holiday Weekend 28-30 August : Notting Hill Carnival**, London; **Marldon Apple Pie Fair**, Devon. Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend; **Plum Day**, Pershore, Bank Holiday Monday.
- Opening of the Oyster Fisheries**, Colchester, Essex. *3rd September.*
- Faversham International Hop Festival**, Faversham, Kent. *3-5 September.*
- New Forest Pony drift**. *Between August and October.*

For more information on these events, and others throughout the year, along with contacts and web-links, visit the Calendar Customs pages at [www.england-in-particular.info](http://www.england-in-particular.info)

**Always check that an event is still taking place before travelling.**

Common Ground campaigns on local distinctiveness and is compiling a book about the rich range of things that make England such a complex place. The book *England in Particular* is to be published by Hodder & Stoughton in 2005. In the mean time look at the web-site [www.england-in-particular.info](http://www.england-in-particular.info) and please: send us your local stories, legends, recipes, persistent family names, dialect words, customs old, new or reinvented, examples of good old and new buildings and farming practice anything you feel makes the place.

Particular News and [www.england-in-particular.info](http://www.england-in-particular.info) are produced by  
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*Common Ground is recognised for playing a unique role in the arts and environmental fields, distinguished by the linking of nature with culture, focussing upon the positive investment people can make in their own localities, championing popular involvement, and by inspiring celebration as a starting point for action to improve the quality of our everyday places. We offer ideas, information and inspiration through publications and projects such as Apple Day, Field Days, Parish Maps, local Flora Britannica, Community Orchards and the campaign for Local Distinctiveness. We are grateful for the support of Defra: Environmental Action Fund, the Tedworth Trust, the Headley Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Lyndhurst Settlement.* Charity no. 326335.

