

THE COUNTRY BIZARRE

Edition number 2

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THE COUNTRY BIZARRE

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SNOWMEN:

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SPECIAL LOVE AND THANKS TO:

Irene, Christopher & Lawrie, Bren the Wen, Steve, Tiny, Betty Swanwick, Rowena, Maria, Charlotte, Geoff & Jackie, Gordon, Elaine, Pat O'Donnell, Time Out, Daphne at Cranks, Friends, Thomas Agnew & Sons, Bond Street, for the use of the Lawrence Whistler Goblet photograph, Mrs Collins of Typing & Printing Services, and not forgetting The Red Cross Jumble Sale at Eltham and anyone else that we may have overlooked.

Isn't it marvellous, the diversity of human reactions and temperaments, the tastes and inclings of us all? The reaction to the first issue of The Country Bizarre seems to have gone down quite well, but it left a few people scratching their heads, while some thought it a load of naive drivel. It's very hard, of course, to please everyone, or to get through to you all with what we are feeling, especially when dealing with specific issues such as ecology and preservation. There seems to be a general apathy by the crowd at large to these urgent matters, encouraged no doubt by the flood of articles in the national press which really reached saturation point this summer. However annoying being told that our planet is slowly dying, I'm afraid the problems still remain, and though we don't aim to be an ecology and preservation rag, if certain points can be stressed by us, then stress them we shall.

Well, after many little hustles over the past three months, we have now got things together and have managed to bring issue number two into your hands and minds.

It's good to know that the projects which we spoke of in the first issue will soon become

reality and by the summer the first of our trees will be taking root in some of those desolate parts of town and highway, (so long of course that our illustrious councils don't tie us up in red tape).

The response to number one was really nice, especially the letters of encouragement from such pleasant folk as Nancy Foot, Betty Swanwick, Ilona Kramer, Pat, Ann, Sue and Dee. Thanks a lot. As for any drawings, stories, poetry, et cetera that you would like to contribute for number three, we would love to receive them. By the way, the final date for contributions will have to be around the middle of January because we shall then have to begin looking in every nook and cranny for a cheap printer. You see the guy who has worked on this and the last issue has now decided to quit the profession (whilst he still has a shirt on his back) and go back to the gentle art of writing from whence he came; so please get in touch with us at Bizarre Acres if you are a cheap printer or if you know of one who can help. The biggest bind so far has been distribution, but with the help of many friends we are gradually sorting things out, and with such noble places as Betterbooks, Gandalf's Garden and Magic Phonograph helping us, things are good and getting better. As a matter of interest, The Country Bizarre found its way to such far distant places as Oxford, Aberdeen, Cornwall, Dover, Bristol Felixtowe, Ireland, & Wales. Finally, with the few quid left over from issue number one, we intend to take some kids from a home to the zoo or pantomime early next year. As time goes on we can do more nice things with our bread, so please support us by continuing to buy the magazine,



AN ARTICLE ON FOX HUNTING BY PERCEVAL CROW. FOR SEVERAL YEARS A MEMBER OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS, HE LIVES TWO MILES FROM THE CATTISTOCK HUNT, DORSET.

P.S. Whatever's happened to Watkins ?

Blunders

In our last issue we said in the Pot Pourri article that you should dry the cut flowers in the sun. This, of course, is very wrong. The flowers should be stored between paper in a dark room like an airing cupboard.

The second pumpkin recipe was for Pumpkin Jam, and not another pumpkin pie.

A.A. Milne is a he and not a she.

For Namia Books, in the book review, you should have read Narnia Books.

Sorry about that.....



Of all the offensive practices and moral bigotries that populate this tiny planet, there is one little 'gem' of depravity that warrants closer attention. It is known as Hunting - no more, no less but even so, abounds with an incredible wealth of hypocrisy, paganism and perversity.

In a necessarily brief article, unfortunately it is not possible to argue the case fully, but if there are any hard and fast doubters, I would be willing to answer their questions if they would contact me. However, from a psychological viewpoint let us consider the ethics involved within this sordid spectacle, and the motives which induce certain people to exact amusement from making a disgusting carnival out of the senseless and cruel torment of an innocent creature. It will be obvious to the perceptive that wanton cruelty and suffering inflicted upon any animal for the express purposes of amusement - hence the title of the Hunting Sect, The British Field Sport Society - can be accounted as little more than sadism.

The intelligent will understand that sadistic practices are those inflicted on the weak or defenceless for the delight and entertainment of the beholder. Therefore in such a case as hunting the torture of wildlife for sport can be seen to be the result of a perversion within the minds of the participants.

It is apparent that persons engaging in this form of sport under the disguise of its being a healthy diversion from city life, or a pleasant jaunt in the country, are perpetrating a particularly nasty little abomination whereby all sane and reasonable people should be duly revolted. This is also made evident by the fact that otter-hunters actually wear a genital bone of the slaughtered animal as a fitting memento of the days pleasure.

However, let us not forget that hunting is also supposed to be the result of a need by the farming community to control certain creatures, savagely denounced as vermin by the occupants of Britain's lands and estates. The hypocrisy here arises from the vain assumption by the 'landed' that they have some unanswerable right to destroy any animal they please, and whenever they choose, simply because it just happens to be grazing upon their land; if the 'owning' of land is a reality or merely a ludicrous and oppressive jest.

It appears to me that there is fully enough vegetation and foodstuffs upon this globe to be shared around fairly between all life - as was the original design - and that only the mass greed and wastage of Man has now caused this intolerable situation whereby he deems that only he has a right to eat, and that everything upon the earth was put here for his benefit alone. Such is the case when men pronounce all creatures as vermin to be ruthlessly exterminated, if they have no use for him as food or clothing, or appear to be parasitically acquiring a living off the fruits of the earth. But, just supposing for the sake of argument that there does exist a legitimate purpose and reason for killing wild-life then here the falseness and bigotry is made undeniably obvious in the instance of badger-digging. All authorities, including the Forestry Commission will claim the badger to be a most harmless and inoffensive beast. Indeed the badger has no natural enemies besides Man. The Forestry Commission even go to the trouble of providing small gates along the perimeters of their lands so that badgers may gain access without damaging the fences and this move has proved entirely successful.



However, there are certain brutal cowards existing in rural areas who find great delight in getting dogs to enter badgers setts thereby determining the position of the stricken animal underground. Their next move is to dig downwards until the creature is visible, then with the aid of iron-tongs, to extract the badger by force. After a few pints of ale the badger is taken out into the yard of the tavern where before a jeering audience, its teeth are kicked out. It is then tied to a stake and dogs are immediately set upon it to tear the body to shreds. After this sordid fun, the spectators resume their drinking.

Can any reader justify? A very similar occurrence happens to the otter; a beast which through hunting is now in danger of extinction. Yet the slaughter continues! Also, the terror accorded to such deer as have been required to run for their lives has resulted in many cases of their swimming out to sea whence through extreme fear they never return. Indeed, trawlers have upon many occasions reported seeing deer twenty miles from the shore and still swimming onwards. The fox also; if it does happen to escape the fury of the hounds, dies later in its earth, for upon examination its lungs are burnt to cinders by the excess heat generated by its tremendous run for survival.

In light of these facts I can do naught but condemn all such as find amusement or sport in this squalid spectacle as perverted cowards. I appeal to all those who agree with my sentiment to immediately join the 'League against Cruel Sports', 17/21 Chandos House, Buckingham Gate, London S.W.1. Membership is 10/- per annum, 3/6 for a badge, magazine quarterly to members. They own six sanctuaries in Exmoor, have increasing Parliamentary power and have attempted to pass anti-hunting bills. I must trust to the sense and humanity of readers in the struggle for Truth against this Evil.

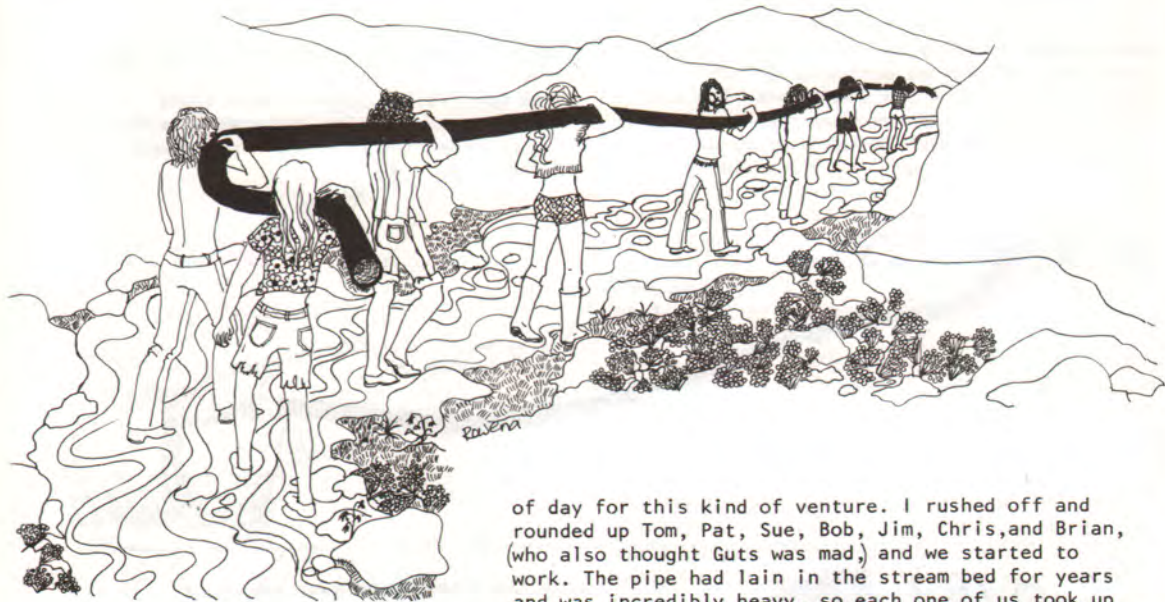
PERCEVAL CROW



CHRISTMAS CARD

Blood breasted robins
Stage-coach men
Red-coated in doublets
And posthorns, whips and livery
In winter finery rode into
Rustic Victorian villages
But that's all gone now in brown photographs.

Gordon.



THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MUNICIPAL BATH AND SHOWER, TREVELAS.

Guts looked at me through his goatee beard and said, "Let's make a shower and bath in the stream".

"Good idea Guts" mumbled I, and prepared to doze off to sleep again. Guts was full of good ideas especially where camping was concerned, but none of them ever worked because usually they bordered on the ridiculous, and so did Guts.

This time however he was sure it would be successful and explained the details.

At the end of the little stream, where it bubbled out over the rocks and pebbles of the beach and down to the sea, was about forty yards of large bore, heavy duty rubber piping, which was all that remained of the tin-panning works of yester-year. All we had to do, he said, was transport the pipe upstream where the water level was much higher, divert the stream water into the pipe, and simply support the other end above head level in order to create a shower. Then, all being well, what was needed for the bath was a dam on the stream, just beyond the shower, and dredge the bottom, in front of it, to create a large pool.

Well it certainly was a nice idea and as we all had nothing to do we agreed to help him. It was a lovely afternoon with a beautiful sea breeze rushing up the valley, just the sort

of day for this kind of venture. I rushed off and rounded up Tom, Pat, Sue, Bob, Jim, Chris, and Brian, (who also thought Guts was mad) and we started to work. The pipe had lain in the stream bed for years and was incredibly heavy, so each one of us took up a position about five yards apart down the length of the pipe and with a good amount of puffing and blowing lifted it up onto our shoulders. This was our first problem; the transportation of the pipe upstream for we were confronted with a very rocky terrain which offered no easy way out. It certainly must have been an odd sight to anyone on the valley sides looking down on us wriggling our way along like an ungainly black caterpillar with long legs and eight heads.

About half an hour later we had done it, myself with a bashed in foot and a couple of others equally smitten by bad footwork on the rocks. The next part of the operation was the diversion of the stream at its upper level into the pipe; because the flow of water was quite strong, we needed to force the water through the pipe as much as possible in order to effect a gush-out the other end. A short search around and Tom came up with an old oil drum of good dimensions which luckily had its seal in the centre of one end. We had to cut out the bottom of the end completely and burn out the residue of oil in the drum before fixing up the pipe to the seal, which was quite easy with the aid of Guts' geological hammers and a box of matches.

It was strange how the little trickle of oil left in the drum burnt for such a long time, but when it had finished we managed, by sheer brute force, to ram the end of the pipe into the seal opening.

Now we were almost there.

While someone was setting the drum in the stream bed, so as to catch the head of water, the others were busy banking up the stream walls around it so as not to lose any water outside. Tom was ready at the other end to let us know if we were successful, and from that general direction came a definite 'whoopie', of triumph proportions. We all leaped like madmen down to where he was stationed and found the pipe alive, throwing out a good head of water. Someone came up with an empty tin-can which, on being perforated at the unopened end, made a good spray when fixed to the pipe. It didn't take long to build a support for the shower out of rocks so as to lift it about head level in order to step beneath it

when washing. Finally, with eight pairs of hands as dredgers, we perfected a large pool directly below the shower and with a dam just beyond, it was a super bath tub.

Well I never washed in the bath myself, nor did I take a shower, but Guts did.



He said it was very bracing and we all be-
leaved him.

Some days later, someone came along while we were exploring and wrecked every-
thing; slashed the pipe and kicked down
the dams.



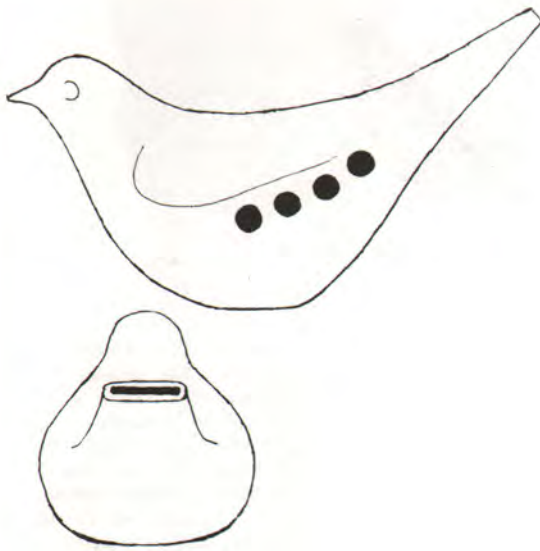
affection, shaped by your own hands;
something made in the image of your own soul -
even so trifling a thing as a wooden spoon.
And be sure of this: when stricken with
grief for some lost paradise - an experience
we all have at times - you will do well to
take a piece of wood or a lump of clay and
fashion something with your hands or with
a knife. Then distress may turn to
satisfaction.'

THE CLAYBIRD, CUCKOO OR OCARINA

One of the aims of this magazine, probably
our first concern, is to arouse peoples'
interest into craftwork of all kinds, i.e.
the making and construction of anything
using your own hands and not giving in to
machine built goods that may be very good
in themselves but have not been made with
love and care that only the personal attention
of the craftsman can give. Its very sad that
so many people today still are at a loss with
finding interesting things to fill their
spare time with, when there is so much one can
do, it can often be hard to find the time to
fit it all in. The value of craftwork is
irrefutable, that is certain, and I would just
like to quote something by D. Paul Jaeger of
Munich who has expressed it in words much
better than me:

'If you have ever made anything with your own
hands (poien, the Greeks called it, and they
knew it to be closely connected with the
divine in us) - even if it was only a wooden
spoon or a toy for your child, you will recall
the sense of achievement and the pleasure of
those moments, and your deep satisfaction
over the object you made. It was something
of yourself, the fruit of your ingenuity and

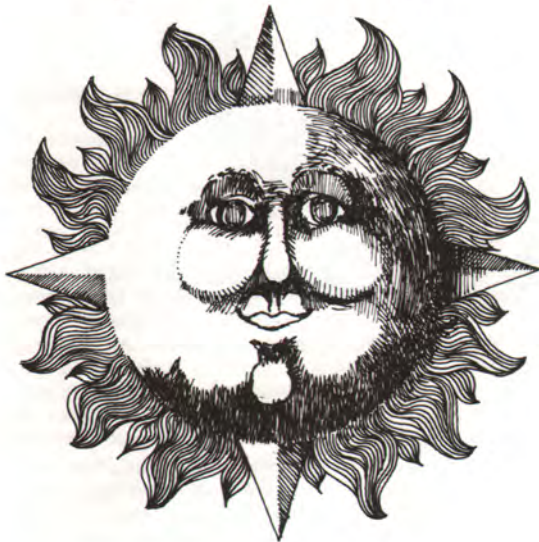
This is something very easy to make and can
give you lots of fun afterwards. It was one
of the first musical instruments ever made, as
long ago even as the stone age. Buy some
potters clay from a craft shop, about 2lbs
will do according to what size you wish to
make your bird. Divide the clay into two
equal quantities with a knife and carefully
mould the shape of a basic bird shape using
a spoon as a moulder. The tail is moulded as
a lipped mouthpiece as shown below which can
be made simply by inserting a thin wedge of
wood in the tail to form the air passage and
is fashioned in such a way that the air passage
comes exactly opposite the lip edge. Now simply
put both parts together and smooth off while the
clay is damp. Actually the mouthpiece is the
hardest piece to make and success depends on
its accuracy. Should you find it easier to
fashion the lip and air passage when both
halves of the bird are put together then by
all means do so. A hole is pierced in the
side of the bird which will produce a higher
note and other holes can be drilled to enable
the scale to be played. (The clay bird must be
baked in a hot oven or kiln before any holes
can be drilled). You can paint the bird
afterwards or just leave it in its clay form
which has a nice feel about.



The modern clay ocarina has developed into a rather cigar shaped looking instrument with little or no resemblance to the original bird shape and has the mouthpiece in the belly and not the tail. It definitely is not so interesting as the original.



Spot Dialing



It seems strange to me that the only few places ever entrusted with the graceful designs of a sundial is always in some unobtrusive corner of a village square or park or the pompous and extravagant grounds

of a private estate. Even when the dial does reach the old urban gardens it is invariably couped up next to the potting shed and always covered by brambles and bird droppings.

Surely this ancient monument to the development of time needs to be preserved and with its lost charms and mystique given a purpose in todays society.

From the comfort of your own garden a really nice sun-clock can be assembled. But if by lousy council planning you have no garden, a ceiling in your home will do just as well. In this case, time is not recorded by a moving shadow but by a moving point of light, and a very bizarre effect it has too.

The idea of using a ceiling for a sundial may seem crazy at first but as you see it coming together above your head you will be pleasantly surprised.

The only equipment needed is very simple and can be all bought from Woolworths for a few shillings (apart from the wrist-watch which you can borrow for a day from somebody if you don't already have one. The rest of the list includes plenty of thin string, a pencil, a pleasing variety of coloured paints, one small paint brush, one small hand mirror, a piece of paper (the same size as the mirror), a coloured chalk and a box of drawing pins and a small tube of glue.

Fix the mirror horizontally onto the bottom part of the window ledge and after making a hole about the size of a sixpenny piece in the paper, paste it to the mirror. If you now cast your eyes to the ceiling you will see (as long as the sun is shining) a small point of light. Now at five, ten or fifteen minute intervals, mark off in pencil the different positions of this spot. The way to do this is to check the time against the sun-dot and at 12.00 for example, you mark off that point, at 12.05 you do it again and so on. Keep this up all the time that sunlight can enter the room. Once the sun has moved round your house and the dot has disappeared, you will have a series of pencil marks stretching across the ceiling.

Now this is the tricky part. From the centre of your window, imagine a vertical line leading to the ceiling; where this imaginary line touches the ceiling draw a small X.

From this fixed position (X) with the aid of drawing pins, fasten a piece of string and allow it to pass through one of the pencil dots until it reaches the far wall, making sure it's well secured and taut. With a second piece of string, using the X as a starting point again, go through the motions once again, this time of course choosing a different dot. Do this again and again until all the dots have been married to the X by the strings.

Now run your block of coloured chalk (a light blue will be best because this will not alter the colour of your paints) along each string and pluck them separately as you would a guitar string. This action transfers the chalk onto the ceiling in nice clean lines. Once this has been done all the strings can

then be taken down.

With extreme care, paint along each chalk line; there's no quick and easy method for doing this so just take things easy and it will turn out nice.

It might be favourite if you chose different colours for different time sections. For example, red for hours, dark blue for half-hours and green for quarters, but that's a matter of personal judgement. It is very important that you paint these lines right across the ceiling to the far walls because in June, when the sun is high, the light spot will be near the window, in August out in the middle of the ceiling and in Winter, with the sun low in the sky, far away towards the opposite wall.

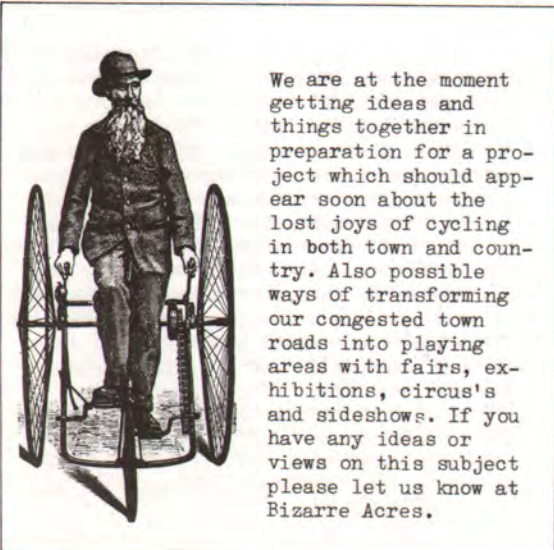
If you still have some excess energy after all that, why not paint in the Zodiac Signs or the different stars that are visible all year round. But most important of all, don't forget to number the painted lines with the required times. These can either cut the lines at the different sections or be placed at the sides in the form of a semi-circle across the ceiling.

You might be lucky and have a room with two windows, one facing East and the other West. If that's the case then you can expect continual sunshine, but if you have only one window, say facing East the sunlight will only be limited to the morning or facing West, the afternoon.

If you've got an unco-operative landlord who wouldn't appreciate a sun-dial on his ceiling, the next best thing is to do everything as is written, but instead of painting the hourly lines directly onto the ceiling, simply paint the strings in the chosen colours and gently tack them in position.

Even if the sun refuses to shine this Winter at least you'll have an incredible ceiling to gaze at.

ANDY



We are at the moment getting ideas and things together in preparation for a project which should appear soon about the lost joys of cycling in both town and country. Also possible ways of transforming our congested town roads into playing areas with fairs, exhibitions, circus's and sideshows. If you have any ideas or views on this subject please let us know at Bizarre Acres.



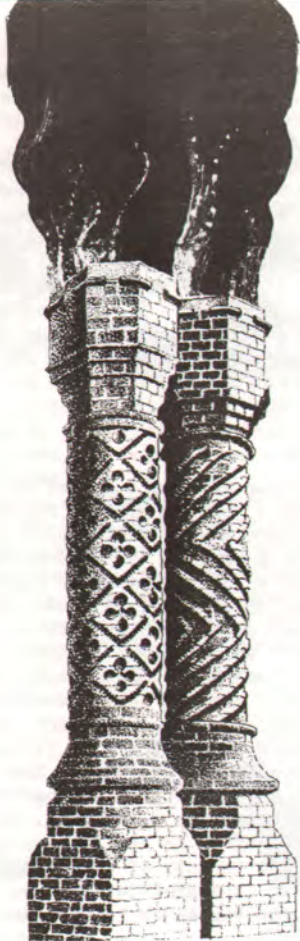
IN PRAISE OF SUPERCONC

It comes hard to hear anything in favour of motorways these days but that grandfather of them all, the M1, has found a friend on his side and a very unusual friend at that. Believe it or believe it not, the kestrel, most noble bird of the skies is increasing because of this London to Birmingham motorway. Although on first reflection there seems no obvious connection between them and the road, when investigated, it was found that the miles and miles of cut grass verges banking the sides of the track are ideal for voles who have increased enormously. The kestrels diet being mainly voles and mice have taken to hunting on these banks and have increased in numbers because of it. The birds appear to be in no danger from cars as they fly high over the bare track and are quick enough to dodge cars up to relatively speeds. Well done M1.



When issue number three has found its way into your hands, the first primroses will be out, and of the wonders of an English spring. It was coincidence then, when I came across a lady the other day, who lives in Ireland, and she grows many varieties of primroses, which surprised me, as I only thought there was one. Apart from the wild primrose, which most people are familiar with, there are many old fashioned sorts such as Garryard, Old fashion Doublee, Jackin the green and Old Hose-in-Hose, (the primrose of Mrs Ewing's story 'Many Meadow'). She also cultivates many other old fashioned cottage perennials such as Ploughmans Mignonette, Hattics Pincushion, Peal of Bells, Boys and Girls, Cherabim & Seraphim, Sweet Rocket, Grim-the-Collier and many others.

Should anyone be interested in obtaining any of these plants, please write to Mrs. C.L. Emmerson, Leeke, Limavady, Co.Derry, Ireland.



GASWORKS NEUROSIS

If anyone went to see Alec Guinness in 'The Horses Mouth' sometime ago, they will remember his superb performance as the eccentric artist who had a passion for covering large areas like walls and shipsides with his painting. Well, the fact is that I have since found out that there are dozens of people who suffer from a similar bent.

It was when I knew this that the idea of painting gasworks grew and grew until I began to suffer from it myself. In bringing to light these dark secrets, I would like to point out some of the obvious advantages of gasworks neurosis.

(a) Gasworks look disgusting, horrible, unctious, dirty and ugly at all times of the day and only people with a warped sense of beauty can appreciate such overwhelming structures. You couldn't possibly make them look any worse so whatever anyone did would be an improvement, and what better than to daub them with bright colours, paper, plastics, slogans, quotations, decorations, coloured lights, streamers, balloons, photographs, neon signs. Trailing ivy, wisteria, etc up the sides would be equally nice.

(b) It would give hundreds of kids, with energy to spare, one hell of a good time armed with one foot paint brushes and gallons of paint etc.

(c) It would give hundreds of adults, with energy to spare, one hell of a good time armed with one foot paint brushes and gallons of paint etc.

(d) It needn't stop at gasworks. From there it would transgress to office blocks, flats, wharfs, pylons, ware-houses, oil refineries, factories, barges, submarines, pavements, tube stations, dustbins, etc.

(e) There could be an annual competition each year for the most entertaining and colourful gasworks in England.

Anyone interested in brightening up Britains' gasworks and thereby curing themselves of this dreaded disease, should write to their local gas council who will take the necessary measures.

Companion Plants

Very recently, though probably well known to folk in bygone years, various people have been experimenting in natural gardening, and have discovered that as with human beings, plants too have their likes and dislikes between themselves. This unusual relationship has a special name - plant symbiosis. While it was well excepted that the various compounds which plants excrete through their roots have a profound influence on the soil, it was less of an obvious fact the breathing out of volatile substances (scents, perfumes) repel or attract other species. The ripe fruit of apples, for instance, breath out a gas called ethylene which causes ill effects on daffodils and carnations should they be near. Similarly, damaged leaves of green vegetables in a garden will have adverse effects on nearby flowers because of ethylene emittance.

An extreme example of plant symbiosis is with violets whose perfume can numb the nerves of some people making it unpleasant to enjoy them. Quite often, people who work the land have noticed how some plants seem to mysteriously fade and wither while others flourish excessively without reason. This is often the plants effecting others sympathetically or detrimentally and is widespread throughout the world's wild and cultivated flora. Obviously this could be used beneficially in horti/agriculture. By planting sympathetic plants together a harmonious relationship is set up in and around the soil, promoting healthy growth and controlling pests and diseases. For

example, the plants in the onion family, garlic, shallots, chives, leeks etc. greatly assist the growth of carrots, controlling carrot-fly, but peas and beans hate them, flourishing better if planted next to turnips and carrots. Of all the flowers who are effected most by onions, the rose is first and foremost. If onions are placed in a rose bed, the perfume of the flowers are greatly enhanced, and in actual fact, in some countries where the roses are grown mainly for their perfume, garlic is grown with them as well. This oddity of mixing flowers with vegetables has yet to be exploited. Another rose companion is parsley who assists the rose in many ways such as reducing aphid attacks; tomatoes and asparagus are also both great friends of parsley.



Talking of tomatoes, it is interesting that the excretion given out from their roots has a dramatic effect in controlling couch grass which is a particularly tiresome weed to control normally.

Sage, mint, and lavender have cabbages as their best friends, probably due to their intense perfume; in fact most aromatic herbs are very good in pest control and should be widely used in any garden. Hyssop for example is an ideal partner for grape vines, increasing the yield and quality of fruit.

Nasturtiums are perhaps the finest fighters of disease, for their secretion is so obnoxious to pests that they shun the plants and the neighbouring area completely. For this very reason, nasturtiums are often planted round the foot of apple trees to prevent attacks from woolly aphid. The lovely foxgloves, too are soil cleansers, stimulating plant growth wherever they are planted. If cut flowers are placed in a jar containing an infusion of foxglove leaves, they will last much longer than normal.

Lettuce and carrots, lettuce and strawberries and countless other companionships can be exploited in a garden so that the whole area is acting as a harmonious whole, each helping the other in growth and health. It also means that such dangerous and awful chemicals like D.D.T. can be avoided. By careful crop planning, all this could be achieved cheaply, quickly and with less labour than is now used to maintain crop standard.

Perhaps when folk realise that there are natural laws that all levels of existence should live by then perhaps the world's problems can be eventually solved.

The End



When you consider the small amount of cash needed to keep a goat in comfort for one week (probably no more than a medium size dog) and, in the case of a nannie, the good-fortune of being rewarded with at least four pints of good wholesome milk a day, it's odd that the humble goat has never been welcome by people with a patch of spare ground in their garden.

Just think, cows milk for one week, at four pints a day will cost at least twenty-eight bob, but to keep a goat in food and warmth for a week would be no more than fifteen shillings. But apart from the costs, the goats milk has many more qualities to that of the cow. For one thing, the goats milk, next to human milk of course, is really nice as a food for infants because it can be easily digested and also it's practically free from the tuberculosis bug which is abundant in cows milk.

Food-wise, the goat is by no means a fussy creature and can be fed a variety of waste produce left over from the vegetable garden. Another nice thing about the goat, especially the nannie, is its placid and docile nature which is great if you have children around.

When you decide to purchase a goat it is always much safer to jog along to a reliable source such as The Great Goodwin Farm of Merrow near Guildford. At the moment, as everything else, the prices of goats continue to leap up and down so much so that it is a bit awkward to give a set figure, but on average, a well bred English goat, about three years old and yielding roughly four pints a day would cost somewhere between three and six pounds, (which isn't bad) the same goat, if dry, can be got for less than three.

But if you want an incredibly good yielder such as the Toggenburgs or Anglo-Nubians you will have difficulty in making a deal with the breeder for under seventy-five pounds, (which just isn't worth the bread).

Although it is an extremely hardy creature, the goat, like the rest of us, cannot stand draughts and is therefore very susceptible to colds, so please bear this in mind when you decide on its shelter. An unused garage or shed would naturally be ideal, but if you have no out-buildings available one will have to be constructed.

Basically the sort of stall needed is just the same as a dog kennel but larger. To this can be added a large window and the sort of door similar to the ones found on a horses stable. Inside this goats pad it is necessary to build a trough and hay-rack plus a strong wooden bench or platform for sleeping, only a couple of inches off the ground which the goat prefers to the cold floor. Always keep this floor covered with a good layer of straw and never allow the stall to turn into a smelly heap.

On the question of foodstuffs, you'll find no problem at all in keeping your goat contented and happy so long as you realize that it eats quite a lot. Now if you live in the countryside this food situation will be very easy to come by, but in town you'll have to be a bit aware.

All sorts of vegetables can be got buck-she (if not dead cheap) by visiting market places or green groceries, asking at cafes and restaurants or just knocking on peoples doors. (I suggest that you take along your goat with you because people may be more willing to help if they see for themselves that you're not down and out looking for free grub).



ANGLO NUBIAN



BRITISH ALPINE

Even from your own home, foodstuffs like boiled potatoes, dried bread, cabbage leaves, pea-pods and so on will help maintain a steady diet. Hay and straw can be a problem for town dwellers because the prices are steep, (3lbs for about one shilling) so if possible it will be best to buy in bulk. At the moment the price for one bale (40 lbs) stands at roughly seven shillings and six pence, but will fluctuate with the seasons. This can always be bought from market harvesters who are the suppliers of shops and stalls in the towns.

Of course if you are in the sticks you might be able to arrange with a land-owner or farmer to give your goats access to his meadowland or paddock. Don't worry if there isn't a farm within easy reach because you can quite simply take your goat for a regular walk along any country lane allowing it to nibble at the trees, hedgerows and grasses; but be carefull because there is some shrubbery which can be dangerous to your animal.

These are the yew tree, foxglove, privet berries, ivy berries, ragwort, deadly and woody nightshade, rhododendrons, buttercups, laburnum, walnut and any variety of bulbs.

Alternatively, red clover, beaked parsley, hogweed, willow herb, red dead nettle, common hemp, chickweed, dandelion and thistle are all plants favoured highly and perfectly safe. As a delicacy, hazel nuts (shelled), rose hips, blackberries, wild strawberries and crab apples (cut in half) can be given.

At this time of year, due to seeding, the grasses and weeds have lost their food value, so much so that some produce will have to be cultivated in your garden. A nice batch of kale and carrots should be grown if possible, along with oats and peas and fed to the animals whilst still green. Small branches and pieces of bark can be dried and stored for the winter months too. And don't forget - all that manure from the stall will do your garden a treat and what's left a neighbour will gladly buy from you for his.

Both Ben and myself hope that these words will persuade you into accepting all the nice qualities of the goat and make it as welcome in your garden as you do spring.



ANDREW YOUNG LOST IN THE SNOW BETWEEN VILLAGES

In a race to the sea
Night stars accompany
The tinkling forest slopes

A glitter of snow and ice
Blue glint of distant silver
Signposting the traveller

Stars a jewelled cluster
In a golden team
As snow petals the face
And shapes the land

Yet this is not a foreign country
This is England
And
Andrew Young is lost
In the snow
Between villages

And
The snow ferns hide
Concealed stars
Snow winking in the twigs
Winter holly for the pudding
And brandy for the warmth
Of your tummy



WINTER



DECEMBER



JANUARY



FEBRUARY

- 1 Stockport Fair,
Cheshire
- 2 Lancaster Festival,
Lancashire
- 3 Winter Flower Arrangements,
Caxton Hall, SW1
- 4 Dances of 4 Centuries -
St. John's Hse, Smith Sq
Westminster, London
- 7 Children's Book Show -
Old Horticultural Hall,
London
- 8 Truro Fair, Cornwall
- 10 50 Years of Postcards -
V. & A. Museum, London
- Proclamation of the
Beast Mart, Boston, Lincs
- 11 Bath Fair, Somersetshire
- 17 Falmouth Festival,
Cornwall
- Grantham Fair,
Lincolnshire
- 19 Closing the Gates Ceremony,
Londonderry
- 25 Merry Christmas
- 26 Greatham Sword Dance &
Play, Greatham Village,
Co. Durham
- 29 Hastings Chess Congress
- 31 Ball Fire Ceremony,
Allendale, Northumberland

- 1 Happy New Year folks
Stockport Fair, Cheshire
- 8 Stamford Festival,
Lincolnshire
- Monmouth Fair,
Monmouthshire
- Hurling the Silver Ball,
St. Ives
- Warwick Fair,
Warwickshire
- 9 Stamford Festival (cont)
- 14 King's Lynn, Norfolk
- Bath Fair, Somersetshire
- Blessing of the Nets,
Norham, Northumberland
- 21 Falmouth Fair, Cornwall
- Penrith Festival,
Cumberland
- 23 Shrove Tuesday
- Olney Pancake Race,
Olney, Buckinghamshire
- Penrith Fair, Cumberland
- 24 Ash Wednesday
- Barnsley Festival,
Yorkshire
- 27 Chesterfield Fair,
Derbyshire
- 28 Winchester Fair,
Hampshire

- 1 International Chess
Congress, Hastings
Stockport Fair,
Cheshire
- 3 Keswick Festival,
Cumberland
- Flint Fair, Flintshire
- 4 Bodmin Fair, Cornwall
- 5 Two Craftsmen
Exhibition, V. & A. Mus.
London
- 6 Chester Festival
Cheshire
- Crewe Fair (and every
monday) Cheshire
- 9 Toy Fair, Harrogate,
Yorkshire
- Masterpieces of Victorian
Photography, Haverford
West, Pembrokeshire
- 10 Blessing the Plough,
Chichester
- Preston Fair, Lancashire
- 12 Denbigh Fair,
Denbighshire
- 22 Aylesbury Festival,
Buckinghamshire
- 24 British International
Toy Fair, Brighton
- 26 Festival of Up-Helly-Aa
Lerwick, Shetland

The silence of winter woods is not the silence of death, as is commonly said, but the silence of suspense. They are not woods where everything has happened, but where anything might happen; and there is this great difference between them and the woods of summer, that the woods of summer are loveliest when you go into them and the woods of winter when you pass them by - the woods of summer as you lie in their heart and watch the wind shake down the sunlight out of their rustling leaves, the woods of winter as you march towards them looking at that dark and turreted wall which they make against the sky.

Somewhere in the heart of these winter woods are all the castles of romance, beyond that dark mist of the close and naked twigs which hides them more securely than all the heavy greenery of summer. It must have been in a winter wood, a wood that never budded nor blossomed, whose black branches grew closer and closer, and whose twigs wove between them a darker and darker mist, that the Princess slept for a hundred years. All round that enchanted wood were single fir-trees, raven black, as fir-trees are in the grey of winter afternoons, like sentinel towers on the edge of mystery, and from its depth rose the peaks of solitary trees, standing like pinnacles of rock against a low, yellow sky which did not change. Within it, at its very heart, was a wood of larches, most mysterious of all the trees, for in winter they are not a wood at all until you touch them, but a grey cloud. Beyond them was a great brown wall of beech leaves, and within that wall the sleeping palace lay, a palace built of wood which through those hundred years of sleep had slowly turned to trees again; but since they, too, slept in that long winter enchantment, they put forth no green leaves, but only dark twigs. Little by little the tall windows drew across themselves a lattice of their own branches, and the wood carving of the rooms turned very slowly into twisted tree stems, and the fading gold upon them to withered leaves. So the stood round the sleeping Princess for a hundred years, black when all the world about it was green, and still black when all the world was white with frost.

A lot of people today despise and dread winter, and with very good reason. For the old and infirm it can be a living nightmare trying to keep warm, of moving about when the snow lays thick or is driving down in blizzards. But what of the others who are by no means ruled by the cold. Winter is as glorious in its bleakness as any spring day, provided that you expect it for what it is. People get angry with the weather and seem to think they can have some curing effect on its nature by their disapproval and grumblings, when they must surely know that their misgivings will in no way change the seasons.

PEARS' SOAP



A SPECIALTY FOR INFANTS

Pears' Soap is for sale throughout the United States and in all parts of the world, and its virtues are based on natural ingredients.

So be it, winter is here again and I am glad. For me it means wrapping up really well and battling against the elements in park and wood, for this season has lots to offer. The life of many things seems to pause during winter, but this is not so. Already the bulbs of Lent lilies, crocuses, snowbells and bluebells are starting to throw out shoots and roots. The moles are burrowing deeper away from ice and snow while on ponds and lakes, water-birds are gathering in large flocks. In December itself, many berries are still to be seen, like the hollyberries, hawberries and hawthorn berries. The brambles of the woods and hedgerows are springing up and the white fluffy seed heads of old mans beard hangs in festoons wherever it has room to climb. With the cold winds from the north, the field fares have flown South in large flocks, along with the redpolls and the beautiful little siskins. The stoats have begun to change into their winter coats. In colder countries the stoats winter coat is quite white, except for its tail, and is then called ermine. In this country however, they normally only reach a half-white, except in very severe conditions. Barn owls often hunt by day in bad winter weather hoping for small mice and birds who have ventured out too far.

Winter is also sleepy evenings crouched by the fire, surrounded with good books and evening things to do; of skies that are both pastel and fierce, heavy and oppressing, of the countryside near home that still manages to stay countryside; of dusks and eerie half-lights, silver mists and frosts, of pink cyclamens in the flower shops along with Christmas Hyacinths and Freesias; and of course Christmas, with its ever remarkable freshness that people seem to pervert into the dreary and commercial.

In the year of the child, it is at Christmastide when childhood's annual miracle unfolds. The breathless waiting for Santa Claus with that constant vision before them of the kind old man in his red and white hooded robe and the goodness he brings. Then there is the tree with its sparkling bounty of lights, candles and fairy decorations; of the presents at the foot of the tree and the anxious longing to open them. Of the child and the Christmas tree, Charles Dickens had this to say - "I have been looking on, this evening, at a merry company of children assembled round that pretty German toy, a Christmas tree. The tree was planted in the middle of a great table, and towered high above their heads. It was brilliantly lighted by a multitude of little tapers; and everywhere sparkled and glittered with bright objects. There were rosy cheeked dolls hiding behind the green leaves; and there were real watches (with movable hands at least, and an endless capacity of being wound up) dangling from innumerable twigs; there were little French-polished tables, chairs, bedsteads, wardrobes, eight day clocks, and various other articles of domestic furniture (wonderfully made in tin at Wolverhampton), perched among the boughs, as if in preparation for some fairy house-keeping; there were jolly, broad faced little men, much more agreeable in appearance than many real men - and no wonder, for their heads took off, and showed to be full of sugar plums; there were fiddles and drums; there were tambourines, books, workboxes, paintboxes, sweetmeat boxes, peep-show boxes, and all kinds of boxes; there were trinkets for the older girls, far brighter than any grown up gold and jewels; there were baskets and pincushions in all devices; there were guns, swords and banners; there were witches standing in enchanted rings of pasteboard, to tell fortunes; there were teetotums, humming-tops, needle cases, pen-wipers, smelling bottles, conversation-cards, bouquet-holders; real fruit, made artificially dazzling with gold leaf, imitation apples, pears and walnuts, crammed with surprises; in

short, as a pretty child, before me, delightfully whispered to another pretty child, her bosom friend, "There was everything, and more". This motley collection of odd objects, clustered on the tree like magic fruit, and flashing back the bright looks directed towards it from every side - some of the diamond eyes admiring it were hardly on a level with the table, and a few were languishing in timid wonder on the bosoms of pretty mothers, aunts, and nurses - made a lively realization of the fancies of childhood; and set me thinking how all the trees grow and all the things that come into existence on the earth, have their wild adornments at that well remembered time".

All this, and much more, is the child's annual miracle, and how all of us long to recover that which was lost on growing up. But Christmastide has many other attributes, none the more beautiful than the singing of carols, and as I wish you a Merry Christmas and happiness for the new year, I leave you with one of those old religious songs, as timeless as winter itself.

*Lullay, Lullay, Thou little tiny Child
By, By, lullay, lullay,
Lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
By, By, Lullay, Lullay.*

*O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day,
This poor Youngling for Whom we sing,
By, By, Lullay, Lullay.*

*Herod the king in his raging,
Charged he hath this day,
His men of might, in his own sight,
All children young to slay.*

*Then woe is me, poor Child, for thee,
And ever mourn and say,
For Thy parting nor say nor sing,
By, By, Lullay, Lullay.*





We have so many nice receipts at Bizarre Acres for the Xmas festivities and such little space to tell you about them that it will be a shame to waste any more words.

AUNT EDWARD'S CHRISTMAS CAKE

Put eight pounds of stone flour into a bowl, and mix a table-spoonful of sea-salt with it; then rub into it a pound and a half of butter, and two pounds of lard. Scoop a hole in the centre, without touching the bottom, and pour in half a pint of fresh sweet brewers' yeast mixed with water. Stir flour into the yeast until it is like batter, sprinkle flour over the top, and set the bowl in a warm place.

When the yeast rises in bubbles through the flour, knead the dough thoroughly as for normal bread, and let it rise until it is light. When it has risen, work in with it six pounds of currants, three pounds of Barbados sugar (dark), some grated nutmeg and eight beaten eggs. Divide it into loaves of various sizes, and put into tins lined with greased paper and bake in a well heated oven.

CHRISTMAS DISH

Take one pound of whole meal sponge biscuit or roll, and a half a pound of macaroons. Cut the roll into slices, and place these and the macaroons lightly at the bottom of a deep dish. Put half a pint of red currant jelly, half a pint of sherry, half a pint of wine (any kind) and two table-spoonfuls of Barbados sugar (light) into a saucepan, and when boiling, pour it over the biscuits. Let it soak for one and a half hours, then pour over it a thick custard.

Ornament with almonds, blanched and quartered, stuck into the custard. This dish is also nice without the custard.

Put a pint of good wheat into a bowl, pour cold water over it and let it soak for twelve hours or more. Cover with a plate, put it in an oven and let it simmer gently till tender, stirring occasionally. After about three hours take it out of the oven and stand it in a cool place.

When you suddenly realize that you'r starving hungry, stir a pint of the boiled wheat into a quart of boiling milk, sweeten the mixture and flavour with grated nutmeg. Slowly bring to the boil and hand around in soup plates.

MOTHER EVE'S PUDDING

Take a sliced apple, twelve ounces of well washed currants, twelve ounces of grated wholemeal bread and twelve ounces of whole meal flour, mix them in a bowl with half the grated rind of a lemon and moisten with four well beaten eggs. Boil, set in a mould and serve with a sweet sauce as follows: Sweeten a quarter of a pint of melted butter with honey, add nutmeg, a large glassfull of sherry, and part of the juice of a lemon. Boil for an hour. Sufficient splendour for five or six people.

CHRISTMAS BUNS

Put one teaspoonful of sea salt into two pounds of wholemeal flour and rub into three quarters of a pound of butter; add a little water and two tablespoons of fresh yeast, and knead into a light paste. Put aside one third of the paste and work into the rest one and a half pounds of currants, two pounds of raisins, four ounces of chopped blanched almonds, half a pound of candied lemon, citron and orange together all finely minced and a quarter ounce each of white pepper, ground ginger and powdered cinnamon.

Shape mixture into balls, roll out the paste which was set aside and wrap round the balls like a coat. Wet the edges and fasten them together to make them lie quite flat. Prick some holes in the top and run a skewer from top to bottom in two or three places.

Flour some thick baking paper, wrap the buns up and bind well with tape. Bake for one and a half hours in a moderate oven. Very nice too.....





"So now is come our joyfull'st feast,
 Let every man be jolly;
 Each room with ivy leaves is drest.
 And every post with holly"

George Withers (1588 - 1667)

The Old Evergreens

Christmas has become such a commercial travesty of the original rustic festivity it once was, yet still the traditional treats like the turkey, the pudding and the wonderful Christmas tree survive. But nothing brings back that nostalgic child-hood glow more than the sight of a cosy room decked with paper-chains, with bunches of fragrant evergreens tucked above the mantelpiece, like the glossy green holly and the paler mistletoe.

But how many really know the origin of these traditional decorations? Christmas is celebrated as the Birth of Christ, but the actual date of his birth is unknown. Eventually the early Christians adopted the ancient pagan mid-winter festival, at the Winter Solstice on 25th December, as the most obvious choice for Christmas.

On this day the sun, after reaching its lowest position on the horizon, begins to rise again, this being worshipped as the re-birth of the Invincible Sun. The early Church adopted this as birth of the Saviour, and took many of the pagan traditions into their celebrations.

The Druids, and earlier peoples, held sacrifices at the solstice, called 'Mid-Winter's Blood', and lit great fires of pine-logs, no doubt the origin of the Yule Log, to ensure the return of the sun. They also built shrines of evergreen boughs so that the spirits of the wood could find refuge till Spring. As an old writer says:- "Sylvan spirits could repair to them unrippd by frost and cold winds until a milder season had renewed their darling abodes".

The Romans, too, gathered evergreens, particularly bay and laurel the symbols of peace and joy, to deck their houses and temples at the Kalends of January, their New Year festival. Instead of sacrifices they made merry and gave presents to each other as a sign of gratitude for what the previous year had given them.

In England, green boughs were brought into the houses and churches to decorate them at Christmas from the earliest times, no doubt for the same reasons as the pagans, to ensure the return of green vegetation, though some maintain it was to commemorate the fact that the earliest churches in England were "wroughte from branches". In the words of Stow - "against the feast of Christmas, every man's house as also their parish churches, were decked with holme (holly), ivy, bays and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green".

Another poet shows that all types of evergreen were used in the past:-

"When rosemary and bays, the poet's crown,
 Are brawl's in frequent cries through all the town,
 Then judge the festival of Christmas near,
 Christmas, the joyous period of the year.
 Now with bright holly all the temples strow,
 With lawrel green and sacred mistletoe".

Traditionally, it is considered unlucky to put up greenery before Christmas Eve or to remove them before Twelfth Night, for to do so meant throwing away wealth and prosperity, or a death in the family. Today it is customary to remove them at Twelfth Night (January 5th) but formerly Candlemas, the ecclesiastical end of the Christmas season, was the correct day for this.

Opinions also differ as to the disposal of the evergreens, some saying they should be ceremonially burnt, others that they should be thrown away to wither.

In any case, it is very unlucky to burn holly while still green, or to bury it in the ground. Often a small bunch is kept till the next year, to ensure against lightning and to bring luck.

Holly is the most attractive Christmas decoration, and with its bright red berries, is a symbol of enduring life. As such it is lucky anywhere, particularly for men. A holly tree growing near the house guards against thunder and lightning, witches, demons and the Evil Eye. Prickly holly is known as male holly and is luckier for men, while smooth holly is called she-holly and is lucky for women. If in First-Footing on New Year Eve, a man should bring she-holly with him and not male holly, very bad luck will ensue.

Holly should never be burnt while still green, or the berries stamped on. A North Country charm for a girl who wishes to see her future husband, consists of gathering nine she-holly leaves at mid-night on a Friday, tying them with nine knots into a three cornered handkerchief, and putting them under her pillow. If the whole operation is conducted in silence, she will dream of her future mate.

Chilblains were said to be cured by thrashing them with a holly branch, "to let the chill out". No doubt this drastic action would help restore the arrested circulation, but not only holly would serve the same purpose.

Ivy also is a popular plant in folk-lore, not surprisingly since it was associated with Bacchus, the God of Wine. Particularly lucky for women, as holly is for men, it should never be omitted from Christmas decorations. If it grows on a house it protects from evil, but should it suddenly wither or fall away, bad luck will follow. A bush of ivy was used as the sign of a tavern or a wine merchant, and a bowl made of ivy-wood was said to be able to separate wine from water if they were placed together in it. Ivy also protected against over-drinking, if one drank vinegar in which ivy-berries had been boiled.

A curious game played on New Years Eve was to put a new leaf of ivy in a basin of water and leave it there till Twelfth Night Eve. If it was still fresh, the coming year would be lucky. Black spots meant illness, and a single black mark meant death within a year. In Scotland if a girl put an ivy-leaf against her heart and repeated these words:-

"Ivy leaf, Ivy leaf, I love you,
In my bosom I put you,
The first man who speaks to me,
My future husband shall be".

-she would meet her future mate.

A corn cure was supposed to consist of soaking ivy leaves in vinegar and putting them on the corns. Left

to soak a day and a night, these would also cure sore eyes. The juice of the leaves, sniffed up the nose, stopped a running cold, while the roots boiled in wine cured jaundice. Wearing a wreath of ivy leaves was said to stop the hair falling out after an illness.

Mistletoe is the third most important evergreen plant associated with Christmas. In classical times it was known as the Golden Bough, and it was the sacred plant of the Druids. The Norsemen called it the Plant of Peace, and hung it outside their houses a sign of welcome. If two enemies happened to meet under a tree bearing mistletoe, they would lay down their swords for a day. In the Norse legends all the living things of the Earth vowed to protect the young Sun God, Baldur, but the evil deity Loki discovered that mistletoe, as the symbol of peace, had been forgotten. He threw a sprig of mistletoe at the god and slew him.

Mistletoe was known as All-Heal in Britain because of its many healing qualities. It was considered an antidote to poisons and a bringer of good luck, but was rarely brought into the Church because of its pagan associations.

It was considered unlucky to cut mistletoe except at Christmas, and in many places it was unlucky to bring it indoors before New Years Eve. The old tradition of kissing under a mistletoe bunch seems only prevalent in Britain, and many legends show that to cut down a tree bearing mistletoe was considered very unfortunate. If a sprig was cut with a new knife on Hallowe'en and then carried sunwise three times round the tree, it would protect the bearer in battle. If put into a cradle, it would guard the baby against being carried off by fairies and replaced by a changeling. Mistletoe tea was claimed to cure many diseases such as St. Vitus Dance, snake-bites and tooth-ache.

Rosemary, bay and yew were formerly more common in the Christmas decorations than they are today. Rosemary, once known as a holy and magic plant is a valuable and charming herb much used today in cooking and beauty preparations. Once its flowers were white, but, says an old legend, during the Flight to Egypt the Virgin Mary rested her cloak on the Rosemary bush, at which its flowers turned blue. It was said that the Rosemary lived for 33 years, the same age as Our Lord and at that age was the same height as he was when he was crucified. On Christmas Eve it is said to bloom at mid-night, like the Glastonbury Thorn.

An old saying is that Rosemary "grows only for the righteous" and it derives its name of 'Ros Marinus' or 'Dew of the Sea' because it grows near the ocean. As a symbol of fidelity in love, and of remembrance it was often included in marriage and funeral services until recent times.

Like the mistletoe, it protects against fairies and witches and could restore love and youth. A sprig of rosemary and a sixpence, placed under the pillow, would produce dreams of one's future mate, if this was done on All Hallow's Eve. Similarly, if a plate of flour is set under a Rosemary Bush, the initials of the loved one will be found traced in the flour in the morning. Another curious belief is that which says that a thief whose feet are bathed in rosemary would steal no more.

Rosemary also cured gout, protected against bad smells and nausea, was good for coughs and colds, weak heart and failing memories. If one combed ones head with a comb of Rosemary wood, it cured giddiness.

Yew was also included in church decorations, as a symbol of continuation of life, but at Easter not at Christmas. Again to cut yew was considered bad, and a sprig of yew could divine the whereabouts of lost goods. A strange Scots tradition says that if a chieftain held a sprig of yew in his left hand he could denounce his enemies to their faces, for they would hear nothing.

The last Christmas plant was bay, a plant sacred to Apollo and Aesculapius, the God of Medicine. This could protect the wearer against lightning and other evils, and promoted pleasant dreams. If it was burnt and made a crackling sound, this was a sign of good luck, but if it burnt silently, this meant no good. A bay tree withering suddenly meant evil news and the death of kings. As was said of Nero -

"'tis thought the king is dead, we will not say,
The bay is in our courts all withered away."

This is a brief record of some of the many legends associated with the Christmas evergreens. Maybe more people would revive the use of some of those no longer in fashion, if they realised the many strange superstitions attached to them.



DECEMBER

Month of mingled gloom and glory, sun and shadow, frost and snow,
Weeping wood and silent garden, firelit room and hearthside glow.
Time of endings and beginnings, bringing to a weary earth,
Wonder of the Christmas message, tidings of a Saviour's birth.
Welcome, welcome grey December, with your gifts of hope and cheer,
Light your lamp at Winter's gate and crown with joy the passing year.

THE YULE LOG

The Yule clog is a great log of wood, sometimes the root of a tree, brought into the house with great ceremony, on Christmas Eve, laid in the fireplace, and lighted with the brand of last year's clog. While it lasted, there was great drinking, singing, and telling of tales. Sometimes it was accompanied by Christmas candles; but in the cottages the only light was from the ruddy blaze of the great wood fire. The Yule clog was to burn all night; if it went out, it was considered a sign of ill-luck. Herrick mentions it in one of his songs:

'Come, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boyes,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your heart's desiring.'

There were several superstitions connected with it among the peasantry. If a squinting person came to the house while it was burning, or a person barefooted, it was considered an ill-omen. The brand remaining from the Yule clog was carefully put away to light the next year's Christmas fire.



Logs to burn, logs to burn,
Logs to save the coal a turn,
Here's a word to make you wise,
When you hear the woodman's cries.
Never heed the usual tale,
That he has good logs for sale,
But read these lines and really learn,
The proper kind of logs to burn.

*Oak logs will warm you well
if they're old and dry,
Larch logs of pinewood smell
but the sparks will fly,
Beech logs for Christmas time
yew logs heat well,
Scotch logs it is a crime
for anyone to sell,
Beech logs will burn too fast
chestnut sears and all,
Hawthorn logs are good to last
if cut in the fall,
Holly logs will burn like wax
you should burn them green,
Elm logs like smouldring flax
no flame is to be seen,
Pear logs, Apple logs
they will scent your room,
Cherry across the logs
smell like flowers in bloom,
But ash logs, all smooth and grey
burn them green or old,
Buy up all that come your way
they're worth their weight in gold.*

Anon.



Oft in the lone church yard at night I've seen
By glimpse of the moonshine chequ'ring through the trees,
The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up
And, lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones
(With nettles skirted, and with moss overgrown)
That tell in homely phrase who lie below.
Sudden he starts! and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels:
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,
Till, out of breath, he overtakes his fellows;
Who gather round, and wonder at the tale,
Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly,
That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand,
O'er some new open'd grave; and (strange to tell)
Evanishes at crowing of the cock.

from old poem "Blair's Grave"



".....and His Name shall be called the Prince of Peace"

Ator, Sator, and Peratoras

"Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and are come to worship him".

"And the wise men came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures, they offered unto him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh".

This passage in Matthew's Gospel describes the arrival of the "Wise Men" (or "astrologers" as the New English Bible translates it) seeking for the Infant Jesus, but nowhere does the Bible say how many wise men there were, or where they came from.

Nevertheless in the Middle Ages the legend of the "Magi", as the original Greek has it, become extremely popular, and suitable details were added to fill out the original story. The Magi became three Kings, to show that the greatest men came vast distances to honour the Birth of Christ, and were supplied with name and description and wealth suitable to their rank - "All came with many rich ornaments belonging to Kings array and also with mules, camels and horses loaded with great treasure and with multitude of people".

Early accounts suggest there were twelve wise men, but eventually they dwindled to the mystical number of three, probably out of belief that the three gifts in Matthew's record had been brought by three people.

Melchior, the smallest of the three, was King of Nubia, South of Egypt, and he gave gold. Balthazar was second and King of Chaldea (part of modern Iraq). He gave frankincense, while the tallest King "a black Ethiope", Jasper, King of Tarshish, gave a gift of myrrh to the infant Jesus, then a child of thirteen days old.

The Magi were learned men, possibly followers of the God of Light, Zoroaster, who originated in Persia where their cult became so powerful that Darius was forced to suppress them in 522BC, but they survived and spread. From the first century A.D., the Magi appeared in Babylonia, but these were chiefly magicians and impostors and not true Magi of Persia, who had a great reputation for wisdom and religious knowledge.

The earliest portrait of the Wise Men, found in the Roman Catacombs show them in Persian dress, and Syrian tradition asserts their names to be of Persian origin. What happened to them after visiting Jesus is

not certain, but remains supposedly those of the Three Kings were discovered by the Empress Helena, mother of the first Christian Emperor of Rome, Constantine. She moved them to Constantinople to the church of St. Sophia, where they stayed until the later Emperor Emanuel allowed Eustorgius, Bishop of Milan, to remove them to Milan. In 1164, the Emperor Fredericus conquered Milan and gave them to Raynaldus, Archbishop of Cologne.

Here they still remain, surviving several wars unscathed. On special request, they are revealed reposing in a velvet reliquary, and encrusted with jewels. In the midst of a mass of gold and gems, the three skulls are just discernable, and the public can see the hollow eyes that once gazed on the Infant Jesus.

In the Middle Ages to touch the skulls was guaranteed to protect the pilgrim against sorcery and sudden death. Rings, garters and bangles were sold bearing the names Melchior, Balthazar and Jasper, and were said to prevent cramps, just as certain bracelets today are supposed to cure rheumatism.

One bishop, noting that the Magi were also known as Apellius, Amerus and Damasus, or Megalath, Galgalath and Sarasis, or Ator, Sator and Peratoras, facetiously remarked that he preferred the last three as having "a more kingly sound".

As for the gifts they bore, gold is obvious but what were frankincense and myrrh? Strangely, they are almost the same thing. Frankincense simply means "free-burning incense" and was derived from the resin of various trees related to the terebinth which grew only in Sheba, or South Arabia. As early as the seventeenth century B.C., an important trade existed between Arabia and Damascus and Gaza. All over the Orient Frankincense was a highly sought after article and in the heathen temples formed a vital ingredient in the incenses which were so important.

Myrrh comes from the oily yellowish resin of the Balsamodendron, a shrub growing only in the Arabian Desert and Africa. Like frankincense it was a valuable commodity, and in Palestine it was extremely expensive, and used very sparingly to perfume clothing and wine, and in the process of embalming. Christ was said to have been given Myrrh on the Cross, mixed with wine to induce Stupefaction, and it was one of the spices used at his funeral.

In Palestine, Frankincense together with Myrrh, and another resin called Galbanum from Syria, and the crushed shell of the Sheheleth, or sea-snail, were the main ingredients used in the incense in Solomon's Temple. In order, they represented Fire, Earth, Air and Water. Later cassia, spikenard, saffron, costus, calamus, and cinnamon were added. These rare spices were vital to the rich incenses so popular in heathen

worship. As the symbol of man's prayer, the incense "rose up to god's abode, thus drawing man nearer to god".

The early Christians dismissed the use of incense as being a pagan custom; strange then that the Magi should have given expensive incense to the Infant Jesus. But in Palestine at the time, this was regarded as the highest honour that could be given, because these precious spices were treasured for use in anointing the body before burial.

Swedenborg explains the reason why the Magi offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus "because Gold signified celestial good, Frankincense spiritual good, and Myrrh natural good, and from these three all worship is derived".

Frankincense also symbolised wisdom, or metaphysical knowledge which purifies the mind and makes it fragrant. Thus it denotes internal truth while myrrh denotes external or sensual truth. St. Gregory described Myrrh as "a symbol of high qualities such as peace or bliss; and in another context truth or logic. For what is designated by the name of Myrrh, Amber or Cassia except the sweetness of virtues?"

A TOAST IN LAMB'S WOOL

The Wassail Bowl was sometimes composed of ale instead of wine; with nutmeg, sugar, toast, ginger, and roasted crabs; in this way the nutbrown beverage is still prepared in some old families, and round the hearths of substantial farmers at Christmas. It is also called Lamb's Wool, and is celebrated by Herrick in his Twelfth Night:

'Next crowne the bowle full
With gentle Lamb's Wool;
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale too;
And thus ye must doe
To make the Wassalle a swinger.'

The custom of drinking out of the same cup gave place to each having his cup. When the steward came to the door with the Wassel, he was to cry three times, Wassel, Wassel, Wassel, and then the chappell (chaplain) was to answer with a song.

From Archaeologia

You might like to look out for issue number 2 of Amazing Grace next time on your travels. A nice, simple, honest little magazine of poetry, ideas and feelings by a group of nice people including Elaine and Malcolm. Price 2/6



YULETIDE SUPERSTITIONS

If one would go to the crossroads between eleven and twelve on Christmas Day, and listen, he would hear what most concerns him in the coming year.

On Christmas Eve thrash the garden with a flail, with only a shirt on, and the grass will grow well next year.

If a shirt be spun, woven and sewed by a pure, chaste maiden on Christmas Day, it will be proof against lead or steel.

If one is born at sermon time on Christmas morning, he will possess the power to see spirits.

The ashes of the Christmas log were supposed to give fertility to the ground, to rid cattle of vermin, to cure toothache and to protect the house from fire and ill-luck.

If a girl knocked loudly at the sty door on Christmas Eve and a great hog grunted in reply, her predestined husband would be an old man; if it was a little pig, that gave promise of a young one.

ANTI-CHRISTMAS TREE THING

On the thirteenth day of Christmas, look around you at the hundreds of discarded trees (still with a few strands of tinsel hanging from the bare twigs) leaning up against dustbins or tossed onto rubbish tips to rot away.

Look around the next time you find yourself in the countryside, at the acres of soft new trees being forced to grow in preparation for next year by business men not giving two hoots about the incredible wastage of lands and forests. And just think is it right that trees should have either their roots boiled or chopped off simply to add a touch of jollity to the home?

Surely it would be just as nice to decorate the trees in your garden or the bushes along the pathway with coloured lights and balls. Even if you do decide to buy a tree this Christmas, please get a healthy one that can be planted back in the soil for the coming year and then dug up again for the next festive season.

If you live in a flat with no grounds, it will still be a good idea to buy a growing tree, because I'm sure somebody will be pleased to plant it for you.



Where have all those super guys gone that were around when Andy and I were kids? I hope you spend a bit more time on them next time and remember that to ask for two bob for the guy is expecting a bit too much!

Well, Andy and I just didn't know what games to tell you in this winter issue, as really, there are so many games and pastimes for this time of year, especially around Christmas, that we could have filled the whole magazine with them; which would have been all very nice of course but we couldn't possibly do it. Instead we aren't going to deal with games at all but with animal tracks, as this is great fun after snow has fallen.

When winter comes, it is often thought that all the animals are fast asleep for all those cold snowy months, when in actual fact it isn't true at all. If any of you have walked over white fields and meadows after snow has fallen overnight, you may have seen the tracks of the animals where they have been busily rushing here and there, perhaps visiting friends or searching around for food.

Dear Kids

First of all I must say that the guys for November 5th were bad again this year, you're not living up to the tradition very well.



Red Deer



Roe Deer



Hedgehog



Grey Squirrel



Red Squirrel



Badger





Stoat



Fox



Otter



Rabbit



Common Hare



Shrew



Mole



Rat



Woodmouse



Now with a bit of practise you can begin to recognise the various animal tracks; of the little doormouse, the squirrel, the badger, the fox and indeed many other animal and bird folk. We have drawn some tracks for you which you should study well so that you can recognise them by sight. You may like to make a collection of all the different tracks you find by making a plaster of Paris cast. The basic equipment needed is listed below.

1. A bottle of clean water
2. A tin of Plaster of Paris
3. A bowl and mixing spoon
4. A quantity of paper clips
5. Some strips of flexible cardboard about 10in by 2in.
6. A pair of tweezers
7. A cleaning rag
8. A tin of Vaseline
9. Some old newspapers

10. A bag or haversack to carry your equipment.

You can get the Plaster of Paris from any hardware shop but make sure it's the quick-drying kind.

Once you have found a track, make certain it is clean by removing any leaves and twigs with the tweezers.

Having thus prepared your track, take one of your cardboard strips, form a circle by securing the ends with a paper clip and adjust the size so that it easily covers the impression. Press into the snow carefully, so that it resembles a wall, round the track.

Next, pour a little water into the mixing bowl, sprinkle in some plaster of Paris and mix into a smooth liquid paste. Pour the mixture carefully into the ring in a steady flow. Never pour directly into the deepest part as this prevents air bubbles occurring in the cast. After pouring the mixture, gently tap the ring to help ensure a clean removal. When set, remove the cast, clean as much as possible and wrap it up in some newspaper to prevent it becoming damaged. Later you can clean it properly under a running tap at home.

To make a positive cast, that is a cast to look like the original track, you get some melted beeswax and run it into a ring round your original track; using cardboard for the ring again and putting it over the top. You then pour some plaster of Paris mixture into the beeswax impression (which has been surrounded by another cardboard ring). It is always nice to paint the cast afterwards, but this we leave to your own discretion. Happy hunting!

P.S. We are still hoping for drawings (black and white) and poetry and stories from you so please send them in. Try to draw or write about anything to do with spring as this is generally what our next issue is about.

THE MAP OF THE STARS IN WINTER



POEM from Irene

Winter is here once again,
 Fires burning,
 Chestnuts turning,
 Snow is falling,
 Children playing,
 Winter is here once again.

BOOKS

from Jean

These are some of the books my children and I have read. There are some rather nice fairy tales for children, also for us older children, by George McDonald who wrote about fifty books in all. Most of his tales and poems are hardly remembered these days, but two of his best books, 'Phantastes' and 'Lilith' were published as long ago as 1858. These two books were aimed for older children, but Puffin Books have published 'The Light Princess', 'At the back of the North Wind', 'The Princess and the Goblin' and 'The Princess and the Gurdie' which are really for those of younger years. They really are very nice books.



If you would like to subscribe to The Country Bizarre for four issues at 7/-, please get in touch with us at: One School Cottages, Cliffe Road, Frindsbury Extra, Near Rochester Kent.

Candlelore

The purity and mystique of the candle throughout the ages of man has centred in many ancient customs and tradition that we thought it worthwhile to mention some of them in this winter issue.

CANDLEMAS

The name is derived from the candles which are then carried in procession on February 2nd each year, and is also known as the purification of the Virgin. The word 'Purification' itself carries in its original meaning the idea of cleansing by fire or light, and hither rather perhaps than to Jesus being the Spiritual Light, we ought to refer the connection of candles with this festival. In Dunstons, 'Concord of Monastic Rules' it is directed that "on purification of the Virgin Mary, the monks shall go in surplices to the church for candles, which shall be consecrated, sprinkled with holy water, and censed by the abbot - let every monk take a candle from the sacrist and light it. Let a procession be made, thirds and Mass be celebrated, and the candles, after the offering, be offered to the priest".

In some ancient illuminated calendars, a woman holding a taper in each hand is presented in the month of February.

In a proclamation dated 26th February in the reign of Henry VIII concerning Rites and ceremonies to be used in due form in the Church of England, we read as follows "On Candelmas Daye, it shall be declared, that the bearynge of candels is done in the memorie of Christe, the spirituall lyghte, whom Simeon dyd prophesye as it is read in the church that daye".

Martin, in his 'Description of the Western Islands', mentions an ancient custom observed on February 2nd; "The mistress and servants of each family take a sheaf of oats and dress it up in the apparel of a woman, put it in a large basket, and lay a wooden club by it, and this they call a Briids Bed; and then the mistress and servants cry three times "Briids come, Briid is welcome". This they do just before going to bed, and when they rise in the morning, they look among the ashes, expecting to see the impression of Briid's club there; which if they do, they reckon it a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year, and the contrary they take as an ill omen.

On a similary vein is the following proverb:

*If Candlemas day be fair and bright
Winter will have another flight
If on Candlemas day it be shower and rain
Winter is gone and will not come again.*

The heavy winds which visit us during February and March are sometimes called Candlemas-eve winds. On a final note then, a rather good account of Candlemas in a poem:

*Then comes the daye wherin the Virgin offered
Christ unto*

*The Father Chiefe, as Moyses law commanded
her to do
The numbers great of Tapers large, both men
and women beare
To church, being halowed there with pomp, and
dreadful words to heare
This done, eche man his candell lights where
cheifest seemest hee
Whose taper greatest may be seene and fortun-
ate to bee,
Whose candell burneth cleare and brighte, a
wondrous force and mighte
Doth in these candells he, which if at any
time they lighte
They sure beleve that neyther storme or tempest
dare abide
Nor thunder in the skies be heard, nor any
Devils spite
Nor feareful spirits that walke by night nor
hurts of frost or haile.*

CANDLE (Corpse) or WINDING SHEET

Corpse candles, says Grose, are very common appearances in the counties of Cardigan, Caermarthen and Pembroke, and also in some other parts of Wales: they are called candles from their resemblance, not to the body of the candle, but the fire, says the honest Welshman, Mr Davis, in a letter to Mr Baxter, "doth as much resemble material candle lights as eggs do eggs: saving that, in their journeys, these candles are sometimes visible and sometimes dissappear, especially if anyone comes near to them. On these occasions they vanish, but presently appear again behind the observer, and hold on their course. If a little candle is seen, of a pale bluish colour, then follows the corpse, either of an abortive, or some infant: if a larger one, then a corpse of one come to age. If there be seen two, three, or more, of different sizes, some big, some small, then shall so many corpses pass together and of such ages or degrees.

If two candles come from different places and be seen to meet, the corpses will do the same; and if any of these candles be seen to turn aside through some by path leading to the church, the following corpse will be found to take exactly the same way."

CANDLE OMENS

*Come, you whose Loves are dead,
And whiles I sing,
Weep and wring,
Every hand, and every head
Bind with cypress and sad yew
Ribands black and candles blue
For him that was of men most true.*

Goldsmith, in his 'Vicar of Wakefield', speaking of the waking dreams of his hero's daughters, says, "The girls had their omens too, they saw rings in the candle".

Willsford tells us, "If the flame of a

candle, lamp, or any other fire does wave, or wind itself, where there is no visible or sensible cause, expect some windy weather, when candles or lamps will not so readily kindle as at other times, it is a sign of wet weather hear at hand. When candles or lamps do sparkle and rise up with little fumes, or their wicks swell, with things on them (like mushrooms) are all signs of ensuring wet weather".

Candle making

With the advent of dark wintry evenings, the electricity usage on lighting rises phenomenally. This means more raw materials needed for the power stations during this period, more poisonous effluence belched out into the atmosphere, more fogs and even more power stations. In the first issue of *The Country Bizarre*, we stressed some economy hints in our Urban Survival leaflet; one of them being to burn candles instead of wasting electricity. The obvious conclusion then, is to show you how to make your own candles, which workes out far cheaper than buying them at extortionate prices in shops. Candle-making is an absorbing pastime and expensive looking candles can be made in various shapes and sizes very easily using the minimum of equipment.

The Method

The equipment needed is a sugar thermometer and moulds. You can use your own ingenuity where moulds are concerned which can be tins, cardboard boxes, squeeze bottles and so on. Plastic tubing is also useful but not preferable as plastic is plastic! For the base of your mould, use a tin lid or something similar and seal the edges with clay or plasticine. The basic ingredient is refined paraffin wax, that can be melted using a double saucepan or bucket over a low heat. The pouring temperature must be 185° to 190°F and should not reach above 200°F. You will also need a wick to suit the diameter of the candle, candle dyes which can be used mixed or seperately and stearic acid, which is an additive that gives bright colours and aids mould release. The wax can be coloured by adding a minute quantity of wax-dye with 10% stearic acid.

Make a small hole in your mould base and thread your wick through it (fig 1). Thread it through the mould and make fast to a stick (fig 2), pull the slack tight and fasten to the base (fig 3). When you have melted the wax, stir in your dye and stearic acid mixture and pour into the mould. (Save some of the wax for topping-up as the cooling wax will contract in the mould) After thirty seconds, cool the mould in a bowl of water, but make sure no water enters the mould. After an hour, a well will appear in the top of the mould. Break the skin and top up with



fig 1

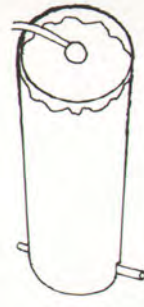


fig 2



fig 3

your spare mixture.

Leave the candle now for three or four hours when it should be set hard and the mould completely cold. Ease the candle from the mould and trim the wick. If the candle has been made properly it should slip easily from the mould; so don't be impatient to remove it as this can ruin your efforts.

To make a candle with several layers of colour, you have to put each layer in the cooling bath after pouring, till the skin appears which when prodded, bends but does not break. Do not let the layers get hard or they will fail to fuse together. On the other hand, if too soft, the hot wax will melt the lower layers. Good effects can be obtained by tilting the mould when pouring in each layer of colour; another effect is to fill your mould with coloured chunks of wax and then top up with clear wax, allowing a minute or two for air bubbles to rise before cooling.

This and a bit more can be obtained from Candle Makers Supplies, 101 Moore Park Road, London, SW6. These people will supply all your needs for this old and interesting craft. A book called 'An introduction to the Art of Candlemaking' is available with a candle making kit (£1. 10s for wax, wicks, dyes, and stearic acid) but can be obtained seperately for 2/6d.

The authors do state however, that the book is intended only as a basic guide and that experimentation in making your own candles is very necessary for individual results.



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Good-bye

URBAN SURVIVAL

Use as little electric power as possible. Electricity comes from generating plants which invariably pollute the biosphere. Use dim lights for lamps not used for reading. Make your room pretty with candles. Use comforters instead of electric blankets. Discard all irrelevant electrical apparatus.

In the wintertime, turn down the heat a little and wear a sweater. A slightly chilly house is bracing anyway.

If you have a fireplace build a fire in it only when you plan to sit in front of it and enjoy it. Fires make too much smoke to be used as background decoration.

Do not accept unnecessary paper bags or redundant packaging such as the little boxes around toothpaste tubes. Bring your own bags to the grocery store. Return wire coat hangers to the cleaners.

Don't buy or use DDT if your garden has water, sun, shade and fertilizer, it shouldn't need pesticides at all. If you must spray, use the right insecticide. Botanicals, natural poisons extracted from plants like nicotine sulfate, rotenone, pyrethrum.

Avoid plastics, they are practically indestructable, especially bad is polyvinyl chloride, the soft milk white plastic in which many household liquids are bottled; when incinerated, it gives off hydrochloric acid, poisoning plant life and God knows what else.

Give away, don't throw away, old clothes, furniture, paper-backs & magazines. There are people and institutions which would be glad to have them.

Buy soft drinks in returnable bottles.

Do not use coloured facial tissue, toilet paper or paper towels. The paper is bio-degradable but the dye is a water pollutant.

Detergents contain phosphates which cause eutrophication of lakes; humanity survived until 1946 without detergents and so can you.

Do not smoke.

If you have decided to ignore the above item at least don't flush filter tips down the toilet. The filters are non-bio-degradable & they screw up plumbing and sewage systems.

Do not waste water. Put a couple of bricks in the toilet tank. The toilet will flush without any loss in efficiency but use less water.

Do not buy things that are made from the fur, feathers or hides of wild animals. Too many species are approaching extinction.

If you live in the country, keep a bucket in the kitchen for the vegetable food scraps. Compost them with leaves or bury them in the garden about six inches deep. Grow your own food.

If you must have more than two children - adopt them. You know all the horror stories, well they're true.

Thanks to Win & IT