



Happy Birthday, Will!

By Daphne Chamberlain

“One man in his time plays many parts... He has his exits and his entrances... “ We used to think that this great Englishman had his exit and his entrance on the same day - 23 April, St George’s Day, but now historians are not so sure.

He certainly died on 23 April – in 1616, “his fifty-third year”, which means he was born on or before that date in 1564. He was baptised on 26 April, and baptism was usually three days after birth. Usually, but not always, though I still like to think that in his case it was. (Mind you, I could be biased, as the 23rd was my father’s birthday.)

Fellow astrology fans must agree he was a typical Taurean – good-humoured, drawn to the arts, and fond of the good things of life. To anyone raising a sceptical eyebrow, I’d say we actually know a great deal about Shakespeare – and nobody else wrote those plays!

The memory be green

As you might expect, Stratford is the place to be to celebrate his birthday. Every year, on the closest weekend

to the 23rd, there are parades, street entertainments, dancing, marathons and half-marathons, concerts, civic receptions, special performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and floral tributes on his grave.

Check it out

According to the Internet, this year Michael Rosen will lead workshops for schools, while their elders will enjoy “bawdy ballads, not suitable for children”. Tim Pigott-Smith – a former pupil at Will’s old school, the King Edward VI Grammar School – will propose a toast to the theatre. You can check this out at www.englishhistory.info/Shakespeare/shakespeares-birthday.html.

Taken nationally though, we still don’t rival the Scots with their Burns Night, which is a shame. Will loved a party.

Archaeological Find on Stanley Field

By David Hobbs

It appears that East Finchley could have been the site of a major prehistoric settlement and temple complex. According to local archaeologist, Charles Dawson, initial surveys indicate that there are substantial remains; possibly of a pre-Roman sacred site that Mr Dawson believes could cast a light on the earliest settlements in East Finchley.

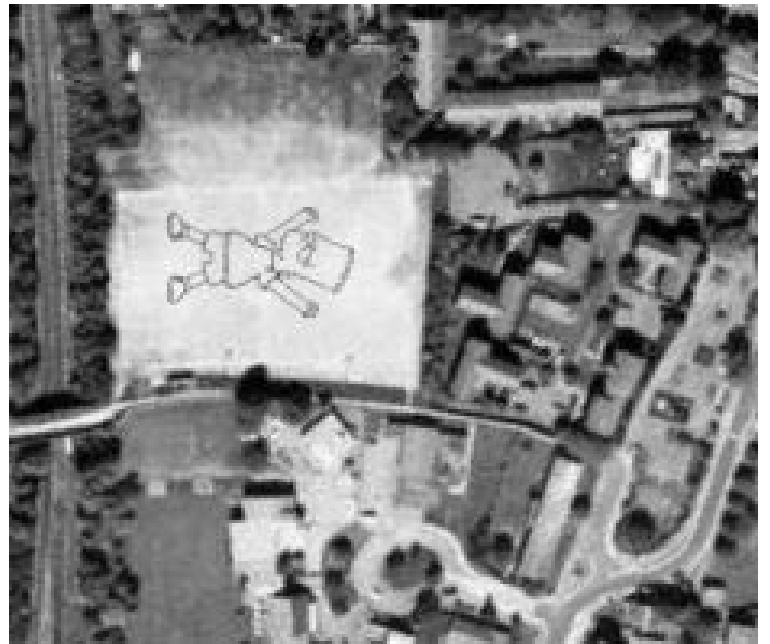
Mr Dawson hopes that he has finally found a complete settlement of one of Northern Europe’s most mysterious tribes, the Bjartf Sjimpif. They were almost unique amongst pre-Roman groups in developing a written language not dissimilar to early English although in Sjimpif both j and f are silent.

Ironic

What attracted Mr Dawson to the possibility of East Finchley being the site of a Bjartf Sjimpif settlement was an aerial photograph of Stanley Field, which appears to show the outline of the tribe’s major deity, Bjartf. This, he claims is typical of the tribe’s most important settlements.

Confident

Although he has yet to carry out a proper geophysical survey using ground-penetrating radar, Mr Dawson is confident that a proper



The aerial view of Stanley Fields showing the magnetic resonance scan of the artifact - the Northern Line runs up the left hand side and Prospect ring can be seen at the bottom. Photo by Prof. Brainstorm

archaeological survey will confirm his suspicions. Asked about the possible significance

of the site, Mr Dawson told *THE ARCHER* that “this could be as significant as Piltdown”.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Every Day has its Dog

In the world of the prawn and avocado sandwich there’s been no cooler team to support than Manchester United. Only they can combine history, sentimentality and comedy with a mind-numbing ability to win anything and everything on a regular basis. But not this year, because this year the bubble is bursting.

They are unlikely to win the Premiership, they are out of the Champions League and have only the FA Cup to look forward to. This might equal success for most clubs, but for the mighty Man U this is major league failure. As the tears fall and Fergie cries into his bank account I can’t avoid having a quiet snigger and thinking about history.

What comes around goes around and no one is on top forever, a lesson Liverpool learnt in the nineties. Once they were a sure fire bet to win most things, and for most of the eighties they did. Then it went avocado pear shaped as Fergie and his boys took over as top dogs. For true Liverpool fans nothing the team does will be good enough unless they get at least two trophies a year, but unlike us poor saps who support Spurs they haven’t got used to losing...yet.

So now it’s Arsenal’s turn to rule what is left of the roost. They may not have the prawn cocktail power of Man U and can’t use tragedy and sentimentality as an excuse, but, and I hate saying this, they played darned good football.

As the old saying doesn’t go, every day has its dog and this year is Fergie’s. Last time Man U had a dog day they went from European Cup winners to relegation in about five years and spent the next 20 crawling back to the top. Last time it began with a great manager retiring, this time it’s starting before Fergie goes off to spend more time with his money, but the message is the same, no one ever stays at the top forever.

Let’s Celebrate St George’s Day – the Patron Saint of Archers

By Daphne Chamberlain

George is also the patron saint of England, of course, – and of Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Georgia, cavalrymen, horses, saddlers, farmers, Boy Scouts and butchers. His day is 23 April.

“St George’s Day is the horses’ holiday”, say the Finns, while the Russians believe that “there is no spring without George”. His day must have been welcomed by Estonian children, traditionally forbidden to sit on the ground before then. In eastern European countries, and part of Germany, 23 April was the start of spring, and in the Baltic the beginning of the economic year.

He had his hour of glory here in 1415, when 23 April was designated a great Feast Day, to be observed like Christmas Day. That was the year of the archers, who won the battle of Agincourt for Henry V. “Cry God for Harry, England and St George!” as Shakespeare put it.

The red cross

George had only just become England’s patron saint, taking over from Edward the Confessor. Richard I, though, had put his Crusaders under George’s protection over 200 years before, adopting the martyr’s red cross on a white background for their uniform.

George’s Feast Day, which had begun in a simple form in 1222, went out of existence in 1778, becoming merely a devotional day for English Catholics. This may be one reason why there are no traditions and customs associated with it here, although, in recent years, the St George’s Day Society has been bringing it back into prominence.

Who was George, anyway?

He is thought to have been a Roman cavalryman, martyred in 303AD for protesting against the persecution of the Christians. The dragon can’t be traced, but George became popular throughout Europe and Asia for defending the poor and helpless, and for protecting animals. So he seems a top man to have on your side.

Labrador and Newfoundland mark 23 April with provincial holidays, and the Isle of Man holds a parade. Let’s wear a red rose or two in East Finchley for the patron saint of archers!

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