



YOUNG ARCHER

Valentine's Day

By Diana Cormack

Will you be sending a Valentine card this year? Over twenty million people usually do, giving the Royal Mail something to smile about, though when these cards gained popularity during the Victorian era they were delivered in secret by hand. They were also made by hand and hugely elaborate creations replaced the custom of gentlemen buying expensive Valentine's Day presents for ladies. But their external beauty did not always guarantee a sentimental loving message inside. They could be very personal, really rude or extremely cruel and were always anonymous.

The first Valentine card is believed to have been sent in 1415 by the Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. That seems rather fitting as one of the stories about a Saint Valentine tells how he was in jail, having been condemned by the Romans for his Christian beliefs. On the eve of his death he wrote a note to the jailer's daughter thanking her for her kindness to him, signing it simply as "Your Valentine." He is also said to have cured the girl of blindness, but that has nothing to do with the saying "Love is blind"!

Secret marriages

However "love and marriage" does have a connection with a second Saint Valentine story. He was a priest who disagreed with the Roman emperor's orders banning soldiers from marrying, so that they could be solely devoted to fighting with no family ties. Believing that God intended men and women to share their

love and reproduce, Valentine married couples in secret. On being discovered, Valentine refused to say he was wrong and was thrown into prison, where he died.

Lupercalia

Some say that these two Valentines were the same person. Whatever the true story, it seems that a Christian named Valentine was martyred by the Romans at some time around 14 February during the third century AD. This was fortuitous for the Christians, who had a habit of adapting ancient customs for their own use. It happened that the spring festival of fertility (Lupercalia) took place about the same time and the festivities included young Roman men and women drawing lots to find a partner.

It is an old belief that birds choose their mates on 14 February. Hopefully, present day lovebirds will continue the custom of sending cards. It's much more romantic than an e-mail!

Haiku writing

Some of you will have read or written poems which started in Japan. They are usually something about nature and they have to be done in a certain way. You cannot use the title word in your poem and it must have three lines with five, seven then five syllables or beats.

Wind

Trees swaying calmly
Leaves are gliding through
the air
Landing quietly.

By Russell aged 9

Blowing through the trees
Leaves are dancing and swaying
I need my jacket.

By Ayaka aged 10

The breeze rocks and rolls
It brings music to my ears
Singing through the trees.

By Chelsea aged 9

It rustles through leaves
Whispery noises from the
trees

It moves like magic.

By Katrina aged 9

Lightning

Lights up the dark sky
Sounding like a flashing whip
Zig zag in the air.

By Milo aged 9

Monkeys

Nibbling at nuts
Now-you-see-me-now-you-
don't

Silence, I am gone.

By Alice aged 10

Snake

The slithering thing
Rattles across the desert
Shakes the sand away.

By Alexander aged 9

Cats

Wonderful and cute
Looks sweet purring like a bomb
Pounces like lions.

By Tony aged 9

Rugby

Swishing through the mud
Flying through the air once
kicked.

Now I've scored a try!

By Freddie aged 9

Hamster

Tiny and furry
Bottom wiggling around
Running in his ball.

By Eleni aged 9

Butterfly

Fluttering along
As gracefully as can be
Lovely patterned wings.

By Bianca aged 10

If you have written a poem you are proud of, why not send it to YOUNG ARCHER at PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA? Put your name, age and address and we will print the best ones on this page.

Monkey Business

By Erini Rodis

Welcome to the Year of the Monkey, a highly auspicious year according to Chinese astrology.

"The monkey is clever, energetic and innovative by nature, a fast learner with good memory. Should adopt the rules related to the career and learn more to communicate with others."

Like Western astrology, the twelve animal signs each occur every twelve years with distinct

characteristics, and aspects are further influenced by the elements.

The Chinese believe that Monkey and Dragon children are intelligent, highly advanced individuals.

Couples are advised to marry the year before with the intention of timing the birth of their

children.

China's baby booms are proof that such advice is taken very seriously indeed – in fact William Man of the Mandarin alone tells me that six of his friends from Beijing are already expecting babies! (Other aspiring parents of Monkey children should get cracking...)

How Are You, Wrigley's Woody?

By Daphne Chamberlain

"If I'd had a house and garden I would have kept him – and called him Woody, because he found us in Coldfall Wood." The speaker (an East Finchley resident) and her own Labrador/collie cross were very nearly adopted by a lost dog who made a big impression on them.

Woody, later known as Wrigley's, is a young black-and-tan mongrel. When he attached himself to the pair, he seemed well fed and well looked after, although limping slightly and without identification. Reluctantly, his new friends handed him over to Colindale police station, who transferred him to Battersea Dogs' Home. That happened on 27 and 28 November, and his owner claimed him on 22 December.

A long time

Surely three weeks is a long time to wait before claiming your dog? "It is longer than usual," said a Battersea spokesperson, "but we don't want to be judgmental. It's possible that the owner didn't know about us."

Web site

For anyone who may be a bit hazy about their procedures, Battersea's website gives a wealth of information. They accept strays (cats as well as dogs) 24 hours

a day, though owners giving up their pets are asked to bring them at set times. Anyone finding a stray dog can keep it in their own home, but should tell Battersea for their records, and must inform the police. Alternatively, the finder can take the stray to Battersea, or (dogs only) ask the Council animal warden or the police to take charge of them. After seven days the animals become Battersea's property, and can be re-homed (with compulsory microchip identification).

Woody – or Wrigley's, as Battersea named him – went home for Christmas. "When I heard that, I was so delighted I nearly cried," said his finder.



For more information see the Battersea Dogs Home's website: www.dogshome.org or tel. 020 7622 3626 / 0901 477 8477. Barnet Animal Warden: can be contacted on 020 8359 2000 (Environmental Health).

Basic Pancake Batter Recipe

Shrove Tuesday, this 24 February, is remembered traditionally by the eating of pancakes. THE ARCHER's own chef has provided this recipe and some inventive ideas to ring the changes.

4 oz/ 100g plain flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1 beaten egg

½ pint / 300 ml of milk
½ oz/ 15g melted butter
Butter for frying

(These ingredients make eight small or six larger pancakes.)

Method

- 1 Sieve the flour and salt into a mixing bowl.
- 2 Make a well in the centre of the flour. Using a wooden spoon, gradually blend in the beaten egg and half the milk.
- 3 Beat well. (If time permits, leave to stand in a cool place for 20/30 minutes). Then stir in the remaining milk and melted butter.
- 4 Melt just enough butter in the frying pan to coat it.
- 5 Pour in three or four tablespoons of the batter and quickly tilt the pan to coat it thinly. Cook for about one minute.
- 6 Toss or turn the pancake and fry on the other side until both sides are a golden brown in colour.

Quick fillers or toppers

- * Stuff pancakes with rashers of grilled back bacon and serve topped with pineapple rings, decorated with a few sprigs of watercress.
- * Stuff and roll pancakes with hot creamed sweetcorn (tinned). Serve with grilled or fried chicken joints.
- * Heat some shrimps in a little white sauce to fill or top pancakes, along with a wedge of lemon.
- * Mix a small can of sweetened chestnut puree with milk and a tablespoon of rum.
- * Mash together bananas and a little sugar, top with your favourite jam and a layer of whipped cream.
- * Any fruity canned pie filling.