



YOUNG ARCHER

A pair of Valentines

By Diana Cormack

My grandmother always told me that Valentine's Day was the day on which the birds chose their mates and flew off to build a nest together. Apparently birds usually do pair off around the middle of February and this has been mentioned in the work of some well-known writers over hundreds of years. Often it is also linked with St Valentine's Day because, according to legend, a man called Valentine was killed by the Romans around 14 February some time during the third century AD.

That was such a long time ago that no one really knows the truth and so there are two stories about Valentine. One says that he was a priest who was jailed for disobeying the emperor's orders not to marry Roman soldiers to their girl friends. The emperor thought that unmarried soldiers could devote themselves better to fighting battles, but Valentine did not agree and carried on marrying couples in secret. When he was discovered, Valentine refused to say he was wrong and was thrown into prison, where he died.

Another story also features a prison where a man called Valentine had been put because he

would not give up his Christian beliefs. The jailer's daughter was very kind to Valentine and, the night before he was put to death, he wrote her a letter of thanks signed simply as "Your Valentine".

It is true that Valentine was made a saint and, when the Christians came to Britain, they found a Roman fertility feast was celebrated around the time of St Valentine's Day. The festivities included young men and women drawing lots to find a partner, so the Christians merged the two events. This produced a special day when people could show their feelings for each other, which we still celebrate as Valentine's Day.

Clever Clogs Corner

Can you match these people with their partners?

- 1) Ant and _____
- 2) Batman and _____
- 3) Bonnie and _____
- 4) Cinderella and _____
- 5) Hansel and _____
- 6) Jack and _____
- 7) Morecambe and _____
- 8) Peter Pan and _____
- 9) Robin Hood and _____
- 10) Romeo and _____

Answers: 1) Dec, 2) Robin, 3) Clyde, 4) Prince Charming, 5) Gretel, 6) Jill, 7) Wise, 8) Wendy, 9) Maid Marion, 10) Juliet

East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sundays at 11.00 am and 6.30 pm

For more information
please contact the Church Office
Tel: 8883 1544 (Minister: Simon Dyke)

Visitors always welcome

All Saints' Church, Durham Road, East Finchley Church of England

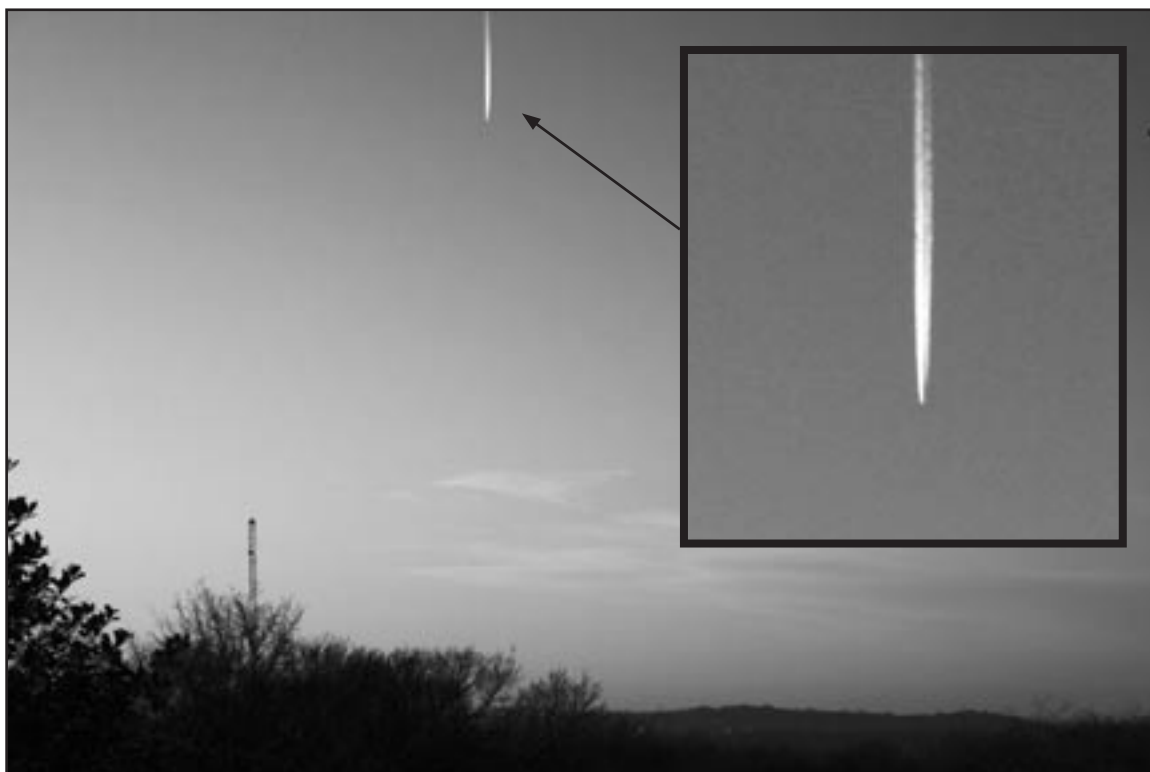
Sunday masses at 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.
Weekday masses at 10.00 a.m.
Prayer requests are gladly accepted.

The Parish has a flourishing social life.
Contact the Vicar, Fr Christopher Hardy,
on 020 8883 9315.

All Saints' also has a strong musical tradition and an enthusiastic choir of both adults and children.

Experienced singers are always welcome.
Contact Geoffrey Hanson on 020 8444 9214.

<http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>



Sky watchers in north London were lucky to catch a stunning view of a comet passing overhead in late January. Comet McNaught was captured by Archer photographer Craig Johnson as he walked near Kenwood House at the top of The Bishops Avenue. Astronomers said it was the brightest comet for 30 years. Discovered just last year by Australian Robert McNaught, the comet was in the middle of a close encounter with the sun which left it trailing a very visible stream of debris.

Long live the Youth Theatre

By Francis Atkinson

I have the honour of being part of Finchley Youth Theatre, a wonderful part of our community. So much goes on there for young people. There are opportunities to do dance and drama or learn video and technical skills, regardless of age, race, gender or disability. I will be writing more about what is happening there in future editions of *THE ARCHER*.

One of the big performances there recently was *Romeo and Juliet* in which I played Capulet. It was hard work but we pulled it off thanks to the group's teamwork, especially Juliet and Romeo who worked very hard to learn their lines.

Hopefully many other performances will be coming soon for me to tell you about as there are several groups working on many different things. If you are interested, the theatre is at 142 High Road and you can pop in and ask about joining. The telephone number is 020 8883 9957.

FYT picture by Alison Roberts



Mardi Gras traditions

By Betti Blatman

Mardi Gras is French for fat Tuesday and falls on Shrove Tuesday, which this year is 20 February. It is a day of celebration and partying before the rigours of Lent's 40 days of fasting and sacrifice. Mardi Gras is celebrated in many countries but most famously in the American city of New Orleans.

The Mardi Gras customs of today have evolved over several hundred years. The observance of Mardi Gras before Ash Wednesday and the Christian Lenten period dates back to the middle of the second century in Rome when the Fast of the 40 days of Lent was preceded by a feast of several days.

In New Orleans, the Mardi Gras season of festivities begins on Twelfth Night at the end of Christmas. Rituals include outrageous costumes, parades, parties and general merriment. Parades are the main theme of Mardi Gras in New Orleans and they go on for nearly three weeks up to Mardi Gras Day.

Join in the fun

Mardi Gras parades in Louisiana are interactive. Parade members not only wave, but they toss 'throws' to the crowds who are participants, not spectators and stampede to catch as much of this loot as they can. The throws

consist of beads, plastic cups, doubloons and trinkets, so the crowd soon becomes festooned with colourful beads and other items. Parades are intensely rich, colourful and friendly experiences.

The official colours for New Orleans Mardi Gras are purple, green, and gold. They first appeared on a carnival flag in New Orleans in 1872 and a meaning was assigned to each colour. Purple represents justice, green represents faith and gold represents power. Costumes and masks are a long-time tradition on Mardi Gras Day. People spend all year making elaborate costumes that glorify heroes, ridicule public figures, or poke fun at customs, traditions or current events. It is parody, satire, and spoof.

Masking is permitted only on Mardi Gras Day and masks must be removed at dark. Mardi Gras ends at the stroke of midnight on Mardi Gras night.

Did you know?

The Germans have found a novel way of getting rid of unsold Christmas trees: they are feeding them to elephants! Trees left on traders' hands are being sent to German zoos where they are making a tasty change to the elephants' otherwise boring winter diet. Apparently they like the resin and are able to consume about five trees each for lunch.

Thousands of unused Christmas trees (used ones could be contaminated with chemicals) are also being fed to camels, deer and sheep. A zoo spokesman said that the trees contain essential oils that could aid digestion.