

Lammastide – isn't that a green in Cambridge?

Well actually the green in Cambridge is called Lammas Land and a little more of the origins of that in a moment but, the Book of Common Prayer Calendar does designate August 1st as “Lammas Day” so what is that all about and did I hear a suggestion it has something to do with harvest? I thought Harvest Festival was at the end of September – I’m confused!

Ever since the earliest times the scriptures have given recognition and praise for the creative power of God and in both Jewish and Christian history this has been associated with events in the agricultural year. Communities have always been faced with the necessity for food to sustain life and with that has come recognition of the obligation to pray to God for the growing crops, to thank him for his wonderful gifts and hopefully to ask for his guidance in properly stewarding those gifts for the good of all both now and in the future.

The Church over the course of many years has developed four main points of focus throughout the agricultural year some with more ancient roots than others.

From medieval times the importance of the plough in preparing the land has been recognised indeed it was not uncommon for the plough to be kept in church. Food and work were scarce in winter and thus the first day of work after the twelve days of Christmas was celebrated as Plough Monday when the first steps were taken to prepare the ground for the very welcome season of growth. The designation of the First Sunday of Epiphany as ‘Plough Sunday’ was a Victorian development but simply reflects the more ancient tradition.

Assuming successful cultivation of the ground followed by sowing and germination of the seed then all depended upon its successful growth without affliction by mildew or pests. Thus, from roots in Graeco-Roman religion, where an annual procession invoked divine favour to protect crops against mildew, the tradition grew of using processional litanies, often around the parish boundaries, for the blessing of the land. These processions concluded with a mass. The Rogation procession as it was known was suppressed at the Reformation, but it was restored in 1559. The Rogation Days as they are now known (from the Latin *rogare*, ‘to ask’) are the three weekdays before Ascension Day. However, in practice, many churches have observed Rogation on the preceding Sunday.

All being well, harvesting of the ripened wheat would start at the end of July and Lammas or ‘Loaf-mass’ (derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Hlafmaesse*) would be held on 1 August as a thanksgiving for the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. Traditionally, a newly baked loaf from the first of the wheat harvest was presented before God within the mass of that day. While the ceremony ceased at the Reformation, I mentioned at the start of this reflection, reference to Lammas Day continues in the Prayer Book calendar, and the celebration has been revived in some places in more recent years. So then, what about “Lammas Land” and where does that fit into the picture? The answer here lies in the use of some areas of the land after the successful harvest so that after the 6th August the land was subject to “Rights of Common” and could be grazed in common until the time came to plant again in the following year. Just while we are here, you might be interested to know in passing that as well as the area in Newnham currently known as Lammas Land, Christ’s Pieces and the land on which Downing College now stands were also Lammas Land.

Finally then, if all this thanksgiving for the harvest happened at Lammastide where does our Harvest Festival fit into the picture? The explanation is that Harvest Thanksgiving (or Festival) is a more modern addition to the church calendar. Its origins are usually traced to the adaptation in 1843 of Lammas Day by the Revd R. S. Hawker, a parish priest in Cornwall. He chose the first Sunday in October as a Christian response to coincide with the traditional but largely secular ‘harvest home’ celebration in which communities celebrated in perhaps a rather livelier manner more akin to a very well lubricated Harvest Supper! Harvest Festival was first recognized officially in the Church of England in 1862.

Following that rather lengthy introduction, the music I would like to offer you this month is all related to agriculture, corn and bread – I hope you enjoy some, if not all of the pieces.

Joaquín Rodrigo Vidre (1901-1999) was born in Sagunto (Valencia), and completely lost his sight at the age of three after contracting diphtheria. Despite this difficult start in life Rodrigo studied music from the age of eight learning sol-fa rather than conventional stave notation. Showing remarkable tenacity and ability Rodrigo went on to study in Paris where he continued as a composer and virtuoso pianist; later in life he returned to Spain where he held the chair in music at the Complutense University of Madrid. More than anything Rodrigo is recognised for his classical guitar compositions by which he significantly raised the recognition of the guitar as a classical instrument; interestingly however he never mastered the guitar and all his compositions for the instrument were written in braille. Rodrigo's most famous work, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, was composed in 1939 in Paris for the guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza, but in the previous year he had produced "***En los trigales***" (in the Wheatfields) which rather suits my theme. The work is performed here by the talented Irish guitarist, Damien Kelly.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MC_9hE6rTs8

German composer and pianist Robert Schumann lived from 1810 to 1856. He was a brilliant pianist and intended to make a career as a performer. Unfortunately, a hand injury put an end to that idea, so thereafter he focused on composing. After a long and acrimonious legal battle with her father, Schumann married the pianist Clara Wieck in the Gedächtniskirche Schönefeld in Leipzig-Schönefeld, on 12 September 1840. Their marriage supported a remarkable business partnership, with Clara acting as an inspiration, critic, and confidante to her husband. Despite her delicate appearance, she was an extremely strong-willed and energetic woman, who kept up a demanding schedule of concert tours in between producing a family. By 1848 Robert and Clara had three young daughters (they eventually had eight children, seven of whom survived). Robert composed a collection of 43 easy piano pieces for the children, "Album for the Young, of which "***The Happy Farmer***" is one of the more well known. Rather than a piano recording I hope you enjoy this recording by the First John Sousa Memorial Band from Minnesota, the melody is played as a bassoon solo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=famJGgvD0dc>

Staying in the USA we come to a piece by the composer Joseph Curiale (b.1955). Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Curiale attended the University of Bridgeport and earned a Degree in Music Education in 1976, studying jazz arranging with Neil Slater. In 2009, Curiale completed his Master of Music Composition at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; he then completed a PhD in Music Composition at the University of Minnesota in 2015. As a composer Curiale has produced Classical, Jazz, R&B, and Pop all with some success, for example in 1990, he was nominated for a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Music Direction for Sammy Davis, Jr.'s 60th Anniversary Celebration with his arrangement of "You Were There" being sung by Michael Jackson. By contrast in the classical sphere Curiale has guest conducted his work with the Hollywood, Milwaukee, Phoenix, London and Royal Philharmonic orchestras. Thinking of corn in the context of the USA my mind goes to the prairies and thousands of acres of crops so here is "***Prairie Hymn***" by Joseph Curiale performed by the London Symphony Orchestra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt3sciR4g2k>

The Brazilian composer Camargo Guarnieri (1907-1993) was born in Tietê, São Paulo, and registered at birth as Mozart Guarnieri, but when he began a musical career, he decided his first name was too pretentious. After studies at the Conservatório Dramático e Musical de São Paulo, Guarnieri gained a scholarship to Paris where he studied composition with considerable success, his œuvre comprises symphonies, concertos, cantatas, two operas, chamber music, many piano pieces, and over fifty songs. Guarnieri went on to the USA where he conducted his works in New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago before returning to Brazil where he became conductor of the São Paulo Orchestra, member of the Academia Brasileira de Música, and Director of the São Paulo Conservatório. Following our agricultural theme I would like to play you a recording of Guarnieri's piano piece "*Canção Sertaneja*" (Song of the Farmlands) made by the celebrated Brazilian pianist Arnaldo Estrella (1908 – 1980)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrtJH6CXw7s>

I have previously mentioned that on Lammas Day the first of the wheat crop was used to make bread which was offered in thanks of the "loaf mass". Talk of bread lead me to think of the eponymously named American soft rock band from Los Angeles, California. Bread was formed in 1968 by David Gates, Robb Royer and Jimmy Griffin, they had 13 songs chart on the Billboard Hot 100 between 1970 and 1977. The following link will take you to an album of "*Bread's Greatest Hits*", you may, or may not find something you enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ITFN6p24Jw>

In 1886 Richard 'Stoney' Smith changed the way flour was milled, separating the wheatgerm from the flour without losing any of the vitamins or minerals found in the wheatgerm. Smith patented the increasingly popular flour in 1887 and gave it the novel name "'Smiths' Patent Process Germ Flour". The flour was almost instantly popular and in 1890, a national competition was held to replace the rather clumsy existing name. A prize of £25 was offered to the winner who was one Herbert Grime, suggesting the name "Hovis", from the Latin "Hominis Vis" meaning "Strength of Man" and thus was born one of the best- known brands of flour and bread to this day. Those of us of a certain age will remember the iconic 1973 TV advertisement for Hovis bread featuring a 'baker's boy' pushing a trade bike up a very steep hill to deliver bread and then whizzing back down for his reward. The accompanying music, played by a brass band was intended to suggest a Northern location but in fact the film was made on Gold Hill, Shaftsbury since the weather in the North was too unreliable. The advertisement may well have introduced many viewers to the "*Largo from Symphony No 9 (from the New World)*" by Antonin Dvorak but I think many continued to describe it as the "Hovis music"

The first link below will take you to a brief recording of the original advertisement, the second will take serious listeners to an excellent recording of the complete symphony by the Frankfurt Radio Symphony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4-EjJt52ZQ&t=11s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOofzffyDSA>

Judas Maccabaeus (HWV 63) is an oratorio in three acts composed in 1746 by George Frideric Handel based on a libretto written by Thomas Morell. The oratorio was devised as a compliment to the victorious Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland upon his return from the Battle of Culloden (16 April 1746). The work is based on the events described in the 1st Book of Maccabees in which the hero, Judas Maccabeus frees his people from domination. The significant section for this reflection comes almost at the end of Act III when an Israelitish Woman and Man (alto) sing the duet "*O lovely peace*" which includes the lines "Let fleecy flocks the hills adorn, And vallies(sic) smile with wavy corn." Heather Harper (soprano) and Helen Watts (mezzo-soprano) sing here in a, now historic, 1971 recording with the English Chamber Orchestra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtcWstOchJk>

César-Auguste Jean-Guillaume Hubert Franck (1822 –1890) was born in Liege and from an early age showed considerable potential as a virtuoso pianist. Frank's father, with an eye to future income, took him and his brother to Paris where, after period of private study, they both entered the Paris Conservatory having changed their nationality to French as a condition of entry. Difficulties in his father's relationships with leading music critics led to a rapid return to Belgium but again this was fraught with difficulties since the profitable concerts his father anticipated did not materialise. As a consequence of this failure Cesar was transported back to Paris to earn a living as a teacher and accompanist. To cut a rather long and complicated story short, Cesar's life took a turn for the better when he fell in love with his pupil Eugénie-Félicité-Caroline Saillot whose parents were hugely supportive of him despite his own father's opposition to their marriage which could not take place until Cesar achieved the age of 25. Cesar had become an accomplished organist and with the support of his wife's family followed a career as organist in a number of Paris churches eventually becoming Titulaire of Sainte-Clotilde (1858–1872). While at St. Clotilde Cesar formed a relationship with Aristide Cavaillé-Coll who had installed a new organ there and thereafter Cesar performed regularly on new instrument built by Cavaille -Coll. Cesar Frank went on to be one of the most accomplished organists and composers of organ music of his time – his works are a central part of the French organ repertoire to this day. The definition of a musical work entitled "Pastorale" is generally accepted to be "a composition evocative of rural life, characterized by moderate compound duple or quadruple time". I hope you will accept that something thus defined fits with my theme and thus would like to offer in conclusion this month "**Pastorale Op 19**" by Cesar Frank played here by Balint Karosi on the organ of the Church of St Anna, Budapest.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPnLGL2KGzM>

May we, every day, not just at festivals, remember to give thanks to God for the cycle of the agricultural year, for those who labour to produce our bread and for our plentiful supply of food. May we always remember our duty to use this gift in a responsible and sustainable manner and to remember always our brothers and sisters who do not share our blessing and for whom daily bread is a daily struggle.

Keith Day