

The Sage of Ascott

I have subscribed to *The Wychwood* from the beginning. Over these years reports from Ascott have been few and far between. I have to tell you the village does exist - we are not like *Brigadoon* which comes to life once a year when Morris men dance their way through the mist jangling their bells.

Primeval Rites?

It could be said Ascott is still in the dark ages when it comes to the old religion and customs. Only a few doors from where I live there is a family which to my mind are pagan sun-worshippers. Every week-end weather permitting during the summer they dance naked around their garden drinking Pimms and eating burnt offerings from the barbeque which were once perfectly good sausages or pork chops which would have been far better prepared on the gas or electric cooker in the house. I have never been asked to join in their orgies, and nor do I want to. There are parts of my body I no longer wish to see. It is the young I feel sorry for. They are being led astray by adults who are performing primeval rites. What sins, I ask, are taking place in these idyllic Cotswold villages? The problem in Ascott began many years ago. The mother of the family concerned is now in her 80s. At one time she was an active member of the church congregation and a keen member of the choir. Her voice could be heard above the rest during the canticles. It all happened one Easter

over forty years ago and I am afraid to say I am partly to blame for the rift.

Tall Stories of Hats and Cats

The lady concerned always prided herself on having the largest hat for Easter day. On this particular Easter Sunday I sat in a pew in front of where she sat with her family. When we stood for the first hymn, the large brim of the hat she was wearing caught under the toupee (or wig) I had on my head. It flicked it off. It was very

embarrassing for me, but worse was to come. The toupee landed on the collection plate. When this was presented to the Vicar he thought it was a dead cat. How were we to know he was allergic to cats He immediately started

to itch and scratch so much so the service had to be abandoned.

The woman with the large hat has not been seen in church since. For a short while after this, her whole family started worshipping the moon. This was all right during the summer but on a bitter cold frosty night stood outside naked and worshipping the moon, it would test the faith of anyone, so the practice did not last.

How I long for those lazy summer days again when one could take afternoon tea on the lawn, without being confronted with the sight of steaming sweating flesh.

Fred Russell

