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### England, that England?

Like many others over the centuries, two homebound voyagers recently found solace at the *Bishop Blaize*, and thought 'Ah; enduring England!' A week before, in a country once awarded the **George Cross** (but now in the EU) they were many reminders of England, such as wall-plaques galore of motley Saints **George** skewering dragons. Sadly, indigenous traditions were harder to find. The ancient language is now battered by 24-channel TV; traditional *Lampuki* over-fished by Italians; lace-making, but by machine. *Another vanishing heritage...* we sadly mused until, back home, shocking election blurb - "Save England with your vote!" - prompted this overdue recollection:

On 28<sup>th</sup> April the *Blaize* hosted a **St George's Day** feast including, of course, mighty Roast Beef and YP (but with a token wink at Europe in a Rhineland pudding!) Would Shakespeare's birth-same-day yield an evening rich in literature and nationhood?

Yes, but... a Latin (!) grace led on to temperate recitals from Housman, Keats and **Lear** (*Edward*, not *King*, so where was the Bard?). Then, sudden anarchy! From a treasonable quatrain on the Georges Rex, through *The Chemistry of Womanhood*, to rhyming couplets on farmyard behaviour! Literature? *This?* Fie! How much lower? - Scurrilous quotes about cricket! **Heresy!** What in England was going on? Investigations began:

"Your appreciation, please, of English traditions?... say, Morris Dancing?"

"What? Men prancing about together? Not quite, umm, masculine, you know."

"Nonsense! What about the wild dancing Cossacks? Fierce stamping Zulus? The Argyll and Suffering Highlanders?..." [Silence].

"Well then, how about folk songs?" [Silence again]. Alas, *The Minstrel Boy* has eloped with *Sweet Polly Oliver*. Traditions gone, all gone. Poor old England.

Or perhaps not. The Grand Toast of the evening managed to celebrate nationhood, sovereignty, faith, bard, and patron saint, all in one brief economical roar...

"Cry 'God for Harry! England and Saint George!'" ..... Hooray! Up the cup!

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