

# Vile Calumnies – Forgotten Festivals

Nearly all the weekends of summer are enlivened by a festival of some sort – music at Glastonbury or Reading, horse or motor racing at Goodwood and hundreds of other steam, beer and flower festivals, where people get drunk and drive traction engines over orchids. Yet some quite ancient festivals now go almost completely unmarked. Here are just a few that you might feel deserve your support next year.

## **ROTATION SUNDAY**

Originally a religious festival, Rotation Sunday involved turning everything in the church around. Hassocks, pews, the high altar, every fixture and fitting was reversed. Theological historians have sought for years to find a liturgical reason why they did this; the closest they have come is the suggestion by Doctor Johnson that Edwina of Funtington (Cardinal Wolsey's secret mistress) asked the vergers to do it once in 1582 'just to try it, as she thought it might work better that way'. It didn't, and the reformation soon followed.

That was not the end for Rotation Sunday however, in the Puritan fervour that swept England fundamentalist rotators (the Spinners) insisted not only on turning but completely inverting the ecclesiastical contents, and many nasty injuries resulted as people strained themselves hauling the organ up the tower, or stubbed their toes on the big pile of bells lying in the nave. Rotation Sunday only died out after an insecurely lashed font nearly fell on John Wesley during a particularly fervent singing of 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind'. Backwards.

A secular celebration of rotation still continues to this day. In this rite a plaintiff, typically a child's mother, feels aggrieved with some service she has received from the local authority / school / doctors and accordingly go 'up' the council / school / surgery. When she gets there she will 'turn round' to them and let fly with her complaint. They will invariably 'turn round' to her and imply that the blame for her child's nits / falling in a pond / irreversible stupidity lies not with them. This will not be what the protagonist wants to hear, so she will 'turn round' and give them a further piece of her mind, provoking another spin from her adversary. This will continue until one of them gets dizzy and falls over.

N.B. Rotation Sunday should not be confused with ROGATION SUNDAY. This is when everyone goes over to Rogate. And then comes home again about two hours later, because, let's face it, there isn't that much to see in Rogate.

## **LAUNDRY THURSDAY**

Essentially part of the mating ritual, this is when male students get around to washing their duvet cover. Seldom a decision reached autonomously, it nearly always follows a blunt statement by their girlfriend that she is no longer prepared to slip joyfully under bedding that reminds her so forcefully of the many pizzas that have been eaten in it – having the unyielding texture of Cheddar, the lumpiness of Mozzarella and the spicy pungency of Parmesan. (The statement will have been blunt as it will have come after several months of dropped hints, all of which will have been missed.)

Laundry Thursday is two days after the issuing of the ultimatum on SHOVE TUESDAY. The intervening day will have seen our fellow making fervent appeals to his parents for Laundry Money and is thus called CASH WEDNESDAY.

## **SMOTHERING SUNDAY**

Your mother thinks you are 12. Not a bad thing if you are 12, but unfortunately she will still treat you as if you are 12 when you are actually 48. So you run a construction company employing 30 men and turning over millions of pounds a year? No matter, you still need advising to put your cup in the middle of the table in case you knock it off the edge. Professor of theoretical physics? You still need telling to take your jumper off indoors, or you'll miss it when you go out. You're a doctor? Well then, you ought to know that sitting on a wall will give you piles.

Smothering Sunday is an occasion when you must pop over to see the old girl and for a whole day not let your exasperation show. You've got a double first from Oxford in difficult spelling and really hard sums? Never mind, just grit your teeth and say nothing whilst being told how to work the toaster / park the car / put a warm coat on in August. Don't forget, she's got photos of you with your nappy off; dressed as a shepherd; running with an egg in a spoon and sucking your cheeks in to make yourself look like the Midhurst Jim Morrisson. If she ever finds out how to post stuff on the web you are screwed, mate.