Кременецький ліцей Імені У.Самчука

Секція англійської мови

**Spring customs & holidays**

Кременець

2010

***SPRING CUSTOMS & HOLIDAYS***

Facts about March

Gemstone: *Bloodstone*

Flower: *Jonquil*

*Where does the word March originate from?*

The word 'March' comes from the Roman 'Martius'. This was originally the first month of the Roman calendar and was named after Mars, the god of war. March used to be the first month of the year. March was the beginning of our calendar year. We changed to the 'New Style' or 'Gregorian calendar in 1752, and it is only since then when we the year began on 1st January.

***Another name for March***

The Anglo-Saxons called the month Hlyd monath which means Stormy month, or Hraed monath which means Rugged month.

***Traditional games played in March***

All through Lent the traditional games played are marbles and skipping. The games were stopped on the stroke of twelve noon on Good Friday, which in some places was called Marble Day or Long Rope Day.

The game of marbles has been played for hundreds of years and some historians say that it might have been started by rolling eggs. In the past, round stones, hazelnuts, round balls of baked clay and even cherry stones have been used.

***Superstition***

If Easter should fall on Lady Day (March 25) then some disaster will shortly follow:

*'When my Lord falls in my Lady's lap,*

*England beware of some mishap.'*

***Borrowed Days***

The last three days of March were said to be borrowed from April. ‘March said to April,

*I see 3 hoggs (hoggets, sheep) upon a hill;*

*And if you’ll lend me dayes 3*

*I’ll find a way to make them dee (die).*

*The first o’ them wus wind and weet,*

*The second o’ them wus snaw and sleet,*

*The third o’ them wus sic a freeze*

*It froze the birds’ nebs (noses) to the trees.*

*When the 3 days were past and gane*

*The 3 silly hoggs came hirpling (limping) hame.”*

***The Tichborne Dole***

**A Curious Custom Folk Story**

The Tichborne Dole is one of the eccentric British traditions and dates back to the thirteenth century. It takes place in the village of Tichborne near Alresford in Hampshire every year on March 25th the Feast of the Annunciation (Lady’s Day).

Over eight hundred years ago, there lived a kind and generous women called Lady Maybela. It was custom in those days that if the woman had a lot of money, it all belonged to her husband from the day of their marriage. So, although Lady Maybela had been very rich, she had to ask her husband, Sir Roger de Tichborne, for anything she wanted.

Sir Roger was not the nicest of all people. Lady Maybela had to beg for everything she needed. Most of things she had she gave to the poor.

When she was very ill and dying, she asked her husband if he would still be kind to the poor people after she was dead. She wanted him to give bread to the poor once a year. Sir Roger wasn't very happy about this, for he would have to give up some of the flour that he made from the wheat he grew and he didn't like to give anything away for nothing!

Now, remember that Lady Maybela was very ill! Sir Roger took a burning log from the fire. He told his wife that however much of his land she could get round before the flames from the log went out, he would set aside for the growing of wheat and this wheat would be made into flour for the poor.

Lady Maybela called to her maids and they lifted her from her bed into the grounds outside.

Now, everyone knows that March is a very windy month, but as Sir Roger carried the burning log outside to watch Lady Maybela, the winds dropped and the flames from the log burned brightly with an unflickering flame. Lady Maybela tried to stand up but she was too weak, so she began to crawl on her hands and knees. As she disappeared in the distance, the servants held their breath and watched the flames on the log. Sir Roger was getting more and more angry as he saw how far his wife was crawling - he thought he had set her an impossible task. He saw Lady Maybela turn and start to cross across the land - then, still crawling, she turned again, this time to crawl down back to the house. All the time the flame burned brightly.

As Lady Maybela was nearing the house, the log was nearly all burned out, and when at last she reached the place where she had started, the flame suddenly went out. She had crawled over an area of twenty-three acres! These same twenty-three acres are, even today, still known as the 'Crawls'.

Before Lady Maybela died she made Sir Roger promise to give all the flour grown on the 'Crawls' to the poor every 25th March, and just to make sure he kept his promise, she put a curse on the Tichborne family and house. The curse said that anyone in the family not giving flour to the poor on 25th March would find that their house would collapse, their money would be lost and seven sons would be born followed by seven daughters and the name Tichborne would die out.

The flour was given every year until 1796, when Sir Henry Tichborne gave money to the church instead of flour to the poor. He had seven sons, his eldest son had seven daughters and half the family fell down, so a very worried son of Sir Henry, a Sir Edward Doughty-Tichborne, started up the custom again - and things have been all right ever since.

***Lent Lily***

One of the flowers most associated with March is the narcissus (Wild daffodil). Named after the boy in Greek mythology, who was changed into a flower. Narciccus is also known as Lent Lily because it blooms in early spring and the blooms usually dropping before Easter. It is the main daffodil species of Britain.

The daffodil became a popular Welsh symbol in the 19th Century. Lloyd George used it to symbolise Wales at the 1911 Investiture and in official publications.

In England the daffodil inspired amongst others William Wordsworth to write his famous poem "Daffodils."

***Daffodils***

*I WANDER'D lonely as a cloud*

*That floats on high o'er vales and hills,*

*When all at once I saw a crowd,*

*A host, of golden daffodils;*

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*

*Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine*

*And twinkle on the Milky Way,*

*They stretch'd in never-ending line*

*Along the margin of a bay:*

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,*

*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced; but they*

*Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:*

*A poet could not but be gay,*

*In such a jocund company:*

*I gazed—and gazed—but little thought*

*What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie*

*In vacant or in pensive mood,*

*They flash upon that inward eye*

*Which is the bliss of solitude;*

*And then my heart with pleasure fills,*

*And dances with the daffodils.*

By William Wordsworth (1770-1850).

***Weather-lore, beliefs and sayings***

Like most months, March weather lore has many old sayings to guide us:

*'When March comes in like a lion it goes out like a lamb.'*

*'A dry March and a wet May*

*Fill barns and bays with corn and hay.'*

*'As it rains in March so it rains in June.'*

*'March winds and April showers*

*Bring forth May flowers.'*

Facts about April

Gemstone : *Diamond*

Flower : *Sweet Pea*

Where does the word April originate from?No one knows for certain how April got its name, but it may have come from the Latin word 'aperire' which means 'to open'. April is, after all, the month when in the northern hemisphere buds begin to open and things start to grow again after the winter.

Eostre monath or Eastremonath was the Anglo-Saxon name for the month. The name of the Christian Festival of Easter comes from this Anglo-Saxon word.

***April Fools Day***

April begins with a day of fun and jokes - April Fool's Day. No one really knows when this custom began but it has been kept for hundreds of years. The First of April, some do say

*Is set apart for All Fools Day;*

*But why the people call it so,*

*Not I, nor they themselves do know.*

***The Cuckoo***

The arrival of the cuckoo is the signal that spring has come. It arrives some time in mid April. The cuckoo sings from St. Tiburtius' Day (14th April) to St John's Day (24th June). However in Worcestershire there is a saying that the cuckoo is never heard before Tenbury fair (April 21st), or after Pershore fair (June 26th). The difference in dates is because traditionally the bird arrives in different parts of the country during April. Various April dates are called 'Cuckoo Day ' and some places hold 'Cuckoo Fairs'.

Marsden Cuckoo Day in West Yorkshire is an annual traditional festival that celebrates the arrival of spring. According to a local legend, Marsdeners used to try to prolong the cuckoo's stay by building a wall around its nest.

Heathfield Cuckoo Fair in East Sussex is an annual tradition of releasing a cuckoo to mark the beginning of summer. A tale of Heathfield Fair depicts an Old Woman releasing the Cuckoo from her basket, whereupon he "flies up England carrying warmer days with him".

Downton Cuckoo Fair is an annual traditional event held on the greens of the picturesque village of Downton, south of Salisbury, Wiltshire. The fair marks the "opening the gate" to let the cuckoo through.

Here is an old traditional rhyme about the Cuckoo's summer life cycle:

*In April I open my bill*

*In May I sing night and day*

*In June I change my tune*

*In July far far I fly*

*In August away I must*

***St. Tiburtius' Day***

The cuckoo sings from St. Tiburtius' Day (14th April) to St John's Day (24th June).

***Superstition***

If you should hear the cuckoo sing on St. Tiburtius' Day, you should turn over all the money in your pockets, spit and not look at the ground! If you do this and are standing on soft ground when you do it, you will have loads of good luck. However if you are standing on hard ground - the cuckoo's call means bad luck.

***The Swallow***

The swallow makes its reappearance during April. Earlier people were mystified by the disappearance of many birds during the winter and at one time thought that the swallow spent the cold months hidden in the mud at the bottom of ponds. Traditionally April 15th is 'Swallow Day' in England , the date on which returning swallows were seen again.

***Weather-lore, beliefs and sayings***

*April showers bring May flowers.*

*If early April is foggy*

*Rain in June*

*Will make lanes boggy.*

*When April blows its horn*

*'Tis good for hay and corn.*

*April wet - good wheat.*

*Till April's dead, change not a thread.*

*April Traditions and Festivals*

Easter usually comes in the month of April. It is what is called a 'moveable feast' because the date of it is fixed according to the moon. Easter Sunday has to be the first Sunday after the full moon which means that Easter can fall as early as 22 March or as late as 25 April .

***April Fool’s Day***

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***Maundy Thursday / Holy Thursday***

The word ‘Maundy’ comes from the Latin Mandatum meaning an order or command. It refers to Christ’s final command to us via His Apostles, given at the Last Supper.

***Good Friday*** The saddest day of the Christian Year, when Jesus was put to death.

***Daffodil Sunday***

The 1st Sunday in April is called Daffodil Sunday. In Victorian times families picked daffodils from their gardens and took them to local hospitals to give to the sick.

***Easter Day***

The happiest day of the Christian Year, when Jesus rose from the dead.

***Candle Auctions***

On 6 April there used to be Candle Auctions. A candle was lit and a pin stuck in it about two and a half centimetres from the top. Then people would start bidding for a piece of church land to let to the poor for a year. The person bidding when the candle burned down enough to let the pin fall became the owner of the land.

***Primrose Day***

In the late 19 century, 19 April was celebrated as Primrose Day in memory of British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), who died on this day in 1881. People were encouraged to pay tribute to the statesman by wearing primroses as they were supposedly his favourite flower. However, it seems there was a misunderstanding and that the flower was not his favourite after all. Queen Victoria sent a wreath of primroses to Disraeli's funeral with a note stating that they were "his favourite flowers"; people assumed that the 'his' referred to Disraeli, but in fact it referred to Victoria's late husband, Prince Albert.

***St Georges Day - England's National Day***

The 23rd April is St. George’s Day . St. George is the Patron Saint of England and also of Scouting. It is said that St. George once saved a village from great danger. The village were frightened of a fierce dragon who lived close by, so St George killed the dragon.

Facts about May

Gemstone: *Emerald*

Flower: *Lilly of the Valley*

May is named after the Greek goddess, Maia. The month is a time of great celebrations in the northern hemisphere. It is the time when flowers emerge and crops begin to sprout. The Anglo-Saxon name for May was Tri-Milchi, in recognition of the fact that with the lush new grass cows could be milked three times a day. It was first called May in about 1430. Before then it was called Maius, Mayes, or Mai.

***May Day (Garland Day)***

In Britain, as in most parts of Western Europe, May day marked the end of the harsh winter months, welcomed the beginning of Summer, and optimistically looked forward to the bright and productive months. For our ancestors, largely in rural areas, it was a major annual festival and was celebrated through out the country, especially on the first of May with music, dancing and games. Traditional May Day celebrations included dancing around maypoles and the appearance of 'hobby horses' and characters such as 'Robin Hood' and 'Jack in Green'.

In some parts of Britain, May 1st is called Garland Day.

*The first of May is Garland Day*

*So please remember the garland.*

*We don't come here but once a year,*

*So please remember the garland.*

Greenery was collected by primary school children to make garlands. In many English villages children would parade with garlands of flowers, sometimes fastened to sticks or in the shape of a cross, or fixed to hoops. This was done in the hope of collecting money. Sometimes this was known as May Dolling because often placed in the centre of the garland was a small doll.

There are still garland ceremonies today.

At Charlton-on-Otmoor, Oxfordshire, a large wooden cross covered with yew and box leaves stands above the rood screen in the church. On May Day this is taken down and redecorated with fresh greenery and flowers and the children carry small decorated crosses around the village and bring them to a special service. Also in Oxfordshire at Brampton, the Spring Bank Holiday marks the beginning of the traditional Morris Dance Season. In the morning children bring out a selection of garlands which are judged in a competition at lunch time. May dolls are sometimes used in these.

***May Day Superstition***

First thing in the morning on May 1st, young girls used to rush out into the garden to wash their faces in the May dew. Why? There is an old tale that says that May dew has magic properties and that anyone who has washed their face in it will have a beautiful complexion all through the year. This dew was supposed to be able to remove freckles and also spots and pimples.

*Other Superstition for May*

The month of may was considered an unlucky month particularly for getting married.

*'Marry in May and you'll rue the day'*

*Being born in May was thought to produce a sickly child.*

*Never buy a broom in May or wash blankets.*

*Wash a blanket in May.*

*Wash a dear one away.*

*Cats born this month will not be good rodent catchers and even worse, will bring snakes into the home.*

*Unlucky days are 3rd, 6th, 7th, 13th, 15th and 20th.*

***Weather-lore, beliefs and sayings***

*"A wet May makes a big load of hay. A cold May is kindly and fills the barn finely. "*

*“A swarm of bees in May*

*Is worth a load of hay.”*

*"Mist in May, Heat in June*

*Makes harvest come right soon"*

*"If you wash a blanket in May;*

*You will wash one of the family away."*

*"Those who bathe in May*

*Will soon be laid in clay"*

***Oak Apple Day (Pinch-Bum Day)***

This is the day that traditionally people wear oak apples or oak leaves pinned to them to remember that on May 29th King Charles ll returned triumphantly to London after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The reason for the wearing of oak apples or oak leaves was to celebrate the King's narrow escape from capture by Cromwell's soldiers by hiding in an oak tree. Until well into the twentieth century, anyone caught not wearing an oak leaf or oak apple on 29 May could be pinched, kicked, or otherwise abused. Whipping with nettles was a favourite punishment, hence the name 'Nettle Day' in some areas.

***Arbor Tree Day***

Arbor Day, on the last Sunday in May, is the Sunday nearest to Oak Apple Day. In Aston-on-Clun in Shropshire, a large tree standing in the centre of the village is decorated with flags on the last Sunday in May. The flags stay on the tree until the following May. Aston-on-Clun is the only place in the UK that still marks this ancient tradition. People say that in 1786 the local landowner John Marston married on May 29th and, when passing through the village, saw the villagers celebrating Arbor Day. The bride thought that the tree looked so beautiful covered in flags, that she gave money to the village to allow the custom to continue.