

Why visit Sherborne in the autumn?

For those of you who aren't familiar with the picturesque historic town of Sherborne, it is definitely one of Dorset's best kept secrets. Sitting on the border of West Dorset and South Somerset, you could easily miss it if you are one of those people who believe the only route into the West Country is via the A303. This is because Sherborne is actually on the old London Road, the A30 and the building which was formerly The Angel Inn situated at Greenhill bears testament to the formerly busy nature of the road with the inscription "*Licensed to let post horses*" still visible on the front.



I think this is one of the reasons I love Sherborne. Everywhere you look there is a reminder of the Town's rich history and there's always something new to discover. I should know the Town pretty well by now having lived here for a brief two year period from 1988 to 1990 before being pulled back to its welcoming embrace in 2000 when its excellent educational credentials - catering for both state and fee-paying families - confirmed it as my home of choice for the next 17 years.

I could now write about the gothic presence of fantastic Sherborne Abbey which goes back much further than its magnificent perpendicular arches and famous fan-vaulting suggest. Tradition has it that King Alfred the Great was schooled here, and certainly his brothers King Ethelbald and King Ethelbert were buried (AD 860 and 865) in the Abbey. Or I could divert your attention to the two castles on the outskirts of the Town, one of which was

commissioned by Sir Walter Raleigh, a big star of his day in the 16th century and with magnificent grounds later crafted by Capability Brown; the other called The Old Castle, built in the 12th century, is now an impressive ruin.



No autumn review of Sherborne would be complete without a visit to the New Castle which has a special “Autumn Colours Weekend” where the beautiful gardens and grounds can be appreciated in all their autumn splendour - my spaniel Luna loves going round the grounds at all times of the year, although she has to stay on her lead and be well-behaved!



And that neatly brings me to why I started this blog: I wanted to write about why Sherborne is a great town to visit in the autumn. With many of its buildings constructed out of the warm hamstone that radiates special warmth when bathed in the rays of a late autumn sun, you could be forgiven for thinking that once the summer is over, all is very sleepy and yet Sherborne certainly doesn't sit back on its laurels at this time of year. In the month of October alone and dispelling any thoughts of sleep, there is Pack Monday - traditionally heralded with the arrival of the Teddy Rowe's Band, comprising a group of young people who paraded the streets making as much discordant noise as possible on horns, bugles, whistles, tin trays, saucepans.

The origin and name of this custom originated from Teddy Rowe, the master mason employed in the 15th century to build the great fan vault in the nave of the Abbey Church. When the work was completed, the workmen packed their tools and paraded in triumph around the town, hence why the fair is called 'Pack Monday'.



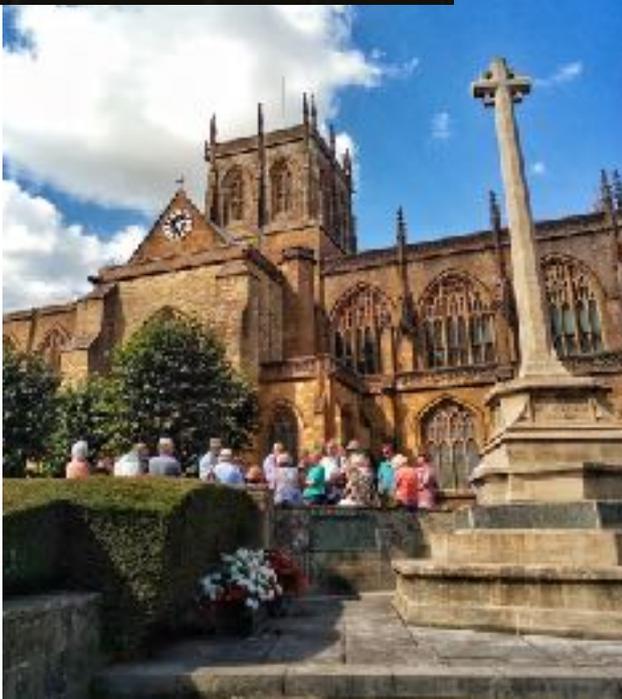
The Sherborne Literary Festival is also fast becoming a regular event in Sherborne's autumnal calendar and this year talks included the historian and author of 'Dunkirk', Joshua Levine. Levine was the Historical Advisor on *Dunkirk*, Christopher Nolan's epic adventure movie set during the Dunkirk evacuation of May/June 1940. With other appearances from speakers as varied as Falkland's veteran Simon Weston through to poetry and music from Roger McGough and LiTTLe MACHiNe, the Festival offered a diverse and entertaining line-up.

Towards the end of October is Sherborne's annual International Film Festival - always a great opportunity to catch up with a variety of different recently released

foreign films that I don't get to see at the local cinema.

Also if the weather stays bright and sunny, I am going on one of Sherborne's Blue Badge Guide's walks entitled *Off the Beaten Track in Sherborne*. Cindy is Sherborne's Blue Badge Guide and as well as being a mine of information on Sherborne, is always happy to take as few or as many people around her beloved town, regaling them with interesting snippets and juicy gossip about the goings on of a bygone Sherborne that comes alive with her delicious commentary.

And so that's just October! In November there's plenty to look



forward to as well with various Bonfire Celebrations held at The Castle (always a true extravaganza for all the family) and at local schools like St Anthony's Leweston, plus of course November begins to see the build up to Christmas in Sherborne - but that will have to be a topic for another blog.