

RECTORY NEWS

FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF CARSHALTON OLD RECTORY

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The CORA Committee wish
you a very merry Christmas
and happy New Year

CASE STUDY

Despite many promises to the contrary, we are now shut out of discussions around the sale of the Old Rectory - sharing information on the bidding process would break Council rules. Everything is classed as confidential - despite the fact that the house is such an important building in Carshalton.

Our fears for the Old Rectory are not fanciful. There are plenty of examples of neglected listed buildings in the private sector. In Swaffham, Norfolk, is the listed 18th century Old Grammar School that has fallen into serious disrepair after changing hands several times since 2022. That was the year that planning permission was given for a wide ranging scheme which was seen as an opportunity to restore the historic site; it had been empty for several years.

Time passed but no work began. The buildings were boarded up and subject to vandalism. Locals feared the site would 'go on fire' as there had already been an attempt at arson. By March this year there was a new owner and local people were hopeful that something would happen but nothing did. By September, Swaffham Town Council was told that there had been three further owners since March and that the interior of the buildings had been badly damaged. The Council threatened to take

enforcement action but as the site had changed hands so many times, tracking down the owners may well prove difficult.

This sorry tale highlights how vulnerable historic listed buildings are when developers take them on. Developing such buildings is expensive and onerous but the bottom line for a developer is to make a profit and the bigger the better. Land-banking by a developer is also a worry, particularly if a development proves difficult: the fate of the Fox and Hounds in Carshalton High Street comes to mind. Though a property might be important to the local community, what we might want just doesn't come into the equation.

Will the same happen to the Old Rectory? It is certainly what CORA fear and why we have tried so hard to persuade Sutton Council keep the house. If it belongs to the Council we can hold them to account but once in private ownership, protecting the house becomes almost impossible. It's one of the reasons the old Carshalton District Council bought the Old Rectory in 1944 and the reason Sutton should not sell it - but cherish this rare and important historic building.

Source: Private Eye/Nooks and Corners 25th October to 7th November 2024

FROST FAIR

The Frost Fair is on Saturday 7th December by Carshalton Ponds and CORA will be there outside the Old Rectory. We are hoping for a frosty day to add to the atmosphere of this pre-Christmas event - so do come along between 1 and 6pm and say hello to the CORA team.

THE LORD OF MISRULE

In the feaste of Christmas, there was in the kinges house, wheresoever hee was lodged, a Lord of Misrule, or Maister of merry disports, and the like had yee in the house of every noble man, of honor, or good worshippe, were he spirituall or temporall. Amongst which the Mayor of London, and eyther of the shiriffes had their severall Lordes of Misrule, ever contending without quarrell or offence, who should make the rarest pastimes to delight the Beholders. These Lordes beginning their rule on Ahollon Eue [Halloween], continued the same till the morrow after the feast of the Purification, commonlie called Candlemas day: In all which space there were fine and subtile disguisings, Maskes and Mummeries, with playing at Cardes for Counters, Nayles and pointes in every house, more for pastimes then for gaine. Against the feast of Christmas every man's house, as also the parish churches, were decked with holm, ivy, bays, and whatsoever the season of the year afforded to be green. The conduits and standards in the streets were likewise garnished.'



*John Stow's Survey of London,
published in 1603*

Celebrating mid-winter is not new. During the Roman festival of Saturnalia roles were reversed, citizens served their slaves and misbehaviour was tolerated. As the Roman world became Christian, some of this merry-making and the inversion of roles carried on. In the 15th century Church, role reversal took place during the feast days associated with children - St Nicholas on 6th December and Holy Innocents on 28th December. Known as 'boy bishops', choirboys were elected by their peers to take up the duties of the bishop or abbot.

The Lords of Misrule appear in the late medieval and early Tudor period. They were chosen to lead Christmas festivities in the royal household and the houses of great noblemen, at the Inns of Court and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Usually associated with the twelve days of Christmas, the Lord of Misrule presided over the entertainments of masques, processions, plays and feasts with a mock court and with the revellers paying him homage. Under his rule, the existing order was overturned and all was joyful chaos. By the beginning of the 17th century, a world upside-down was famously celebrated in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night - but the fun and anarchy of the Twelfth Night celebrations and the Lord of Misrule was to come to an end with the English Civil War. Under the Puritan Protectorate, the custom of the Lord of Misrule was banned - and was not revived after the Restoration.

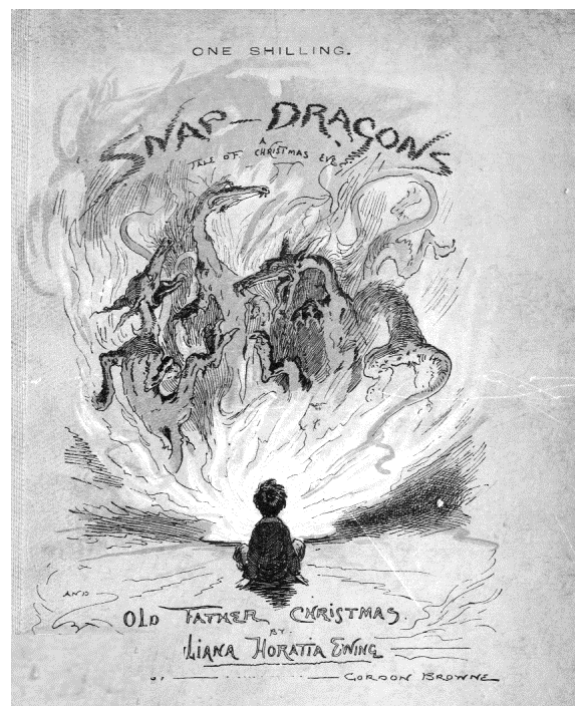


Snapdragon

How about reviving a 16th century winter game usually played on Christmas Eve? In Snapdragon, a wide shallow bowl of heated brandy was placed in the middle of a table. Raisins were added and then the brandy set alight. The idea was to snatch a raisin - the snapdragon - out of the flaming bowl and pop it into your mouth. Lights were extinguished to maximise the eerie effect of the blue flames. An 18th century article in the 'Tatler' magazine said the aim of the game was to 'see each other look like a demon, as we burnt ourselves, and snatched out the fruit'.

By the mid-19th century, snapdragon was well established as a Christmas parlour game. It's mentioned in various publications including Charles Dickens' 'Pickwick Papers'; Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking-Glass' and Anthony Trollope's 'Orley Farm'. It's clear from Charles Keene's illustration that children played the game too. 'Snap Dragons' c.1870, a cautionary tale for children by Juliana Horatia Ewing, has dragons appearing from the bowl after a disobedient boy sees one raisin left and adds more brandy to the dying flames. Mmm... in our risk averse age I doubt you'll see this Christmas tradition revived. Happy Christmas!

Sue Horne



Sources: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapdragon_\(game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapdragon_(game))
<https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/ewing/snapdragons/snap-dragons.html>