***Easter***

Easter is the English name of the ecclesiastical festival commemorating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches expect their members to receive Holy Communion at Easter. The Roman Catholic Church has many other special ceremonies pertaining to Easter. British Nonconformists formally repudiated the keeping of Ester in the 17th century, but now commonly observe it.

Some pagan customs associated with the vernal equinox were adopted by the Christian Church. Easter eggs have their origin in the fact that eggs were forbidden during Lent and restored at Easter; the notion that they symbolise resurrection is comparatively modern.

Easter is the time when certain old traditions are observed, whether it is celebrated as the start of spring or a religious festival. In England it is a time for the giving and receiving of presents which traditionally take the form of an Easter egg, for the Easter Bonnet Parade and hot cross buns. Nowadays Easter eggs are usually made of chocolate, but the old custom of dyeing or painting egg-shells is still maintained in some country districts. The Easter egg is by far the most popular emblem of Easter, but fluffy little chicks, baby rabbits and spring-time flowers like daffodils, dangling catkins and the arum lily are also used to signify the Nature’s reawakening.

**Easter Eggs**

There are many ways of tinting and decorating the eggs, some simple and some requiring a high degree of skill. They can be dipped into a prepared dye or, more usually, boiled in it, or they may be boiled inside a covering of onion peel. In the household accounts of Edward I for 1290, there is an entry of eighteen pence spent upon ‘four hundred and a half of eggs’, which were to be covered with leaf-gold, or else ‘stained’ by boiling, and then distributed to members of the Royal household. Ordinary commercial dyes are often used today for colouring , but originally only natural ones, obtained from flowers, leaves, mosses, bark, wood-chips, or other sources, were employed. In England, gorse-blossom was commonly used for yellow, cochineal for scarlet, and logwood chips for a rich purple. Spinach leaves gave a fine green, and so did the petal of the purple anemone called the Pasque flower.

An egg that is boiled really hard will last for years; some very fine specimens, originally decorated for the poet’s children, are still preserved in the Wordsworth Museum at Grasmere.

**Egg-Rolling**

Egg-rolling is a traditional Easter pastime which still flourishes in northern England, Scotland, Ulster, the Isle of Man, and Switzerland. It takes place on Easter Sunday or Monday, and consists of rolling coloured, hard-boiled eggs down a slope until they are cracked and broken after which they are eaten by their owners.

**Hot Cross Buns**

Eating hot cross buns at breakfast on Good Friday morning is a custom which still flourishes in most English households. Hot cross buns have a long ancestry, running backwards into pre-Christian times. Small cakes made of wheaten flour and marked with a cross were eaten in spring by the pagan Greeks and Romans, particularly at the festival of Diana which was celebrated at the Vernal Equinox. The early Saxon also seem to have eaten similar cakes round about the same March date.

**London’s Easter Parade**

London greets the spring with a truly spectacular Easter Parade in Battersea Park on Easter Sunday each year. It is sponsored by the London Tourist Board and is usually planned around a central theme related to the history and attractions of London. At the rear of the parade is usually the very beautiful Jersey float, created from thousands of lovely spring blooms and bearing the Easter Princess and her attendants.