

Annual Inspection of the Gibson Tomb

11 am, 12th August



Gather in Churchyard by 10:30 am
to witness Sutton's oldest living tradition
Refreshments & Exhibition
in Church following the ceremony.



— FRIENDS OF —
**ST NICHOLAS
CHURCHYARD**



FRIENDS OF
**ST NICHOLAS
CHURCHYARD**

A giant toad lives in the vault



When Sutton was small...[the story circulated]...that a giant toad lived in the vault.

A History of Sutton AD 675. Robert P Smith 1960



FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCHYARD

Ghosts can be conjured from the tomb



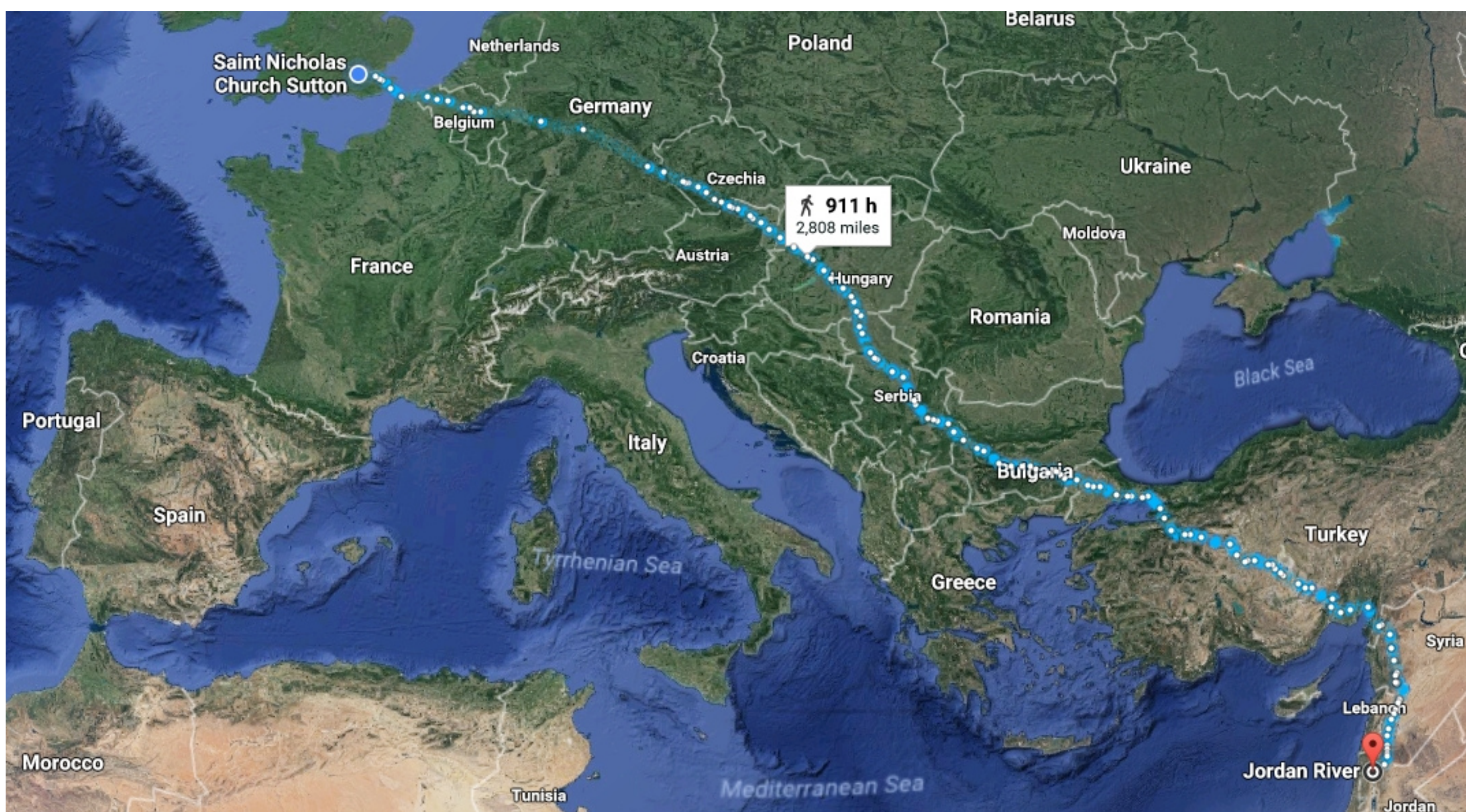
Within living memory local children believed that if you walk seven times round the tomb, a ghost will appear from the urn on the roof.

London Lore. Peter Stroud 2010



FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCHYARD

The key has been thrown
into the river Jordan



A singular tradition has some way gained credence with the illiterate respecting this vault, viz,. that when the last member of the family has been interred within its walls, it is to be locked up, and the key taken to Palestine and thrown in the river Jordan.

Church's Directory of Sutton 1880





FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCHYARD

The family were scared of grave robbers.

Vicar Checks On Tomb As Directed In 1793 Fund

*Merchant's Daughter Feared Grave Robbers
And Provided For Perpetual Inspection*

SUTTON, England, Aug. 12 (AP)—Note to the Gibson family (wherever you are): The vicar checked your bodies today. They're okay—all seven of them.

The annual inspection of the Gibson tomb was made on schedule, as it has been every Aug. 12 since 1793.

James Gibson, a wealthy London merchant, had the massive tomb set up in the St. Nicholas churchyard in 1777.

Days Of Grave Robbing

Those were the days of the grave robbing "resurrection men," who dug up cadavers and sold them to medical schools. Gibson's daughter Elizabeth was afraid of this. She had heavy iron railings set up around the tomb and sealed the entrance with a thick door. The door has two massive locks.

When she died in 1793, she left a trust fund to pay for an inspection of the tomb "every Aug. 12 forever."

Annual Inspection

So today the Rev. W. A. Rhodes went out to the tomb accompanied by his son, Christopher, 11, who

carried the keys on a crimson cushion.

With two curious women as spectators, the vicar unlocked the door, went inside and inspected the seven coffins.

He found everything in order. It is generally believed the Gibson family died out long ago but nobody knows for sure.



Resurrection Men by
Thomas Rowlandson (1756 -1827)

Associated Press article printed in the Toledo
Blade August 12th 1949





FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCHYARD

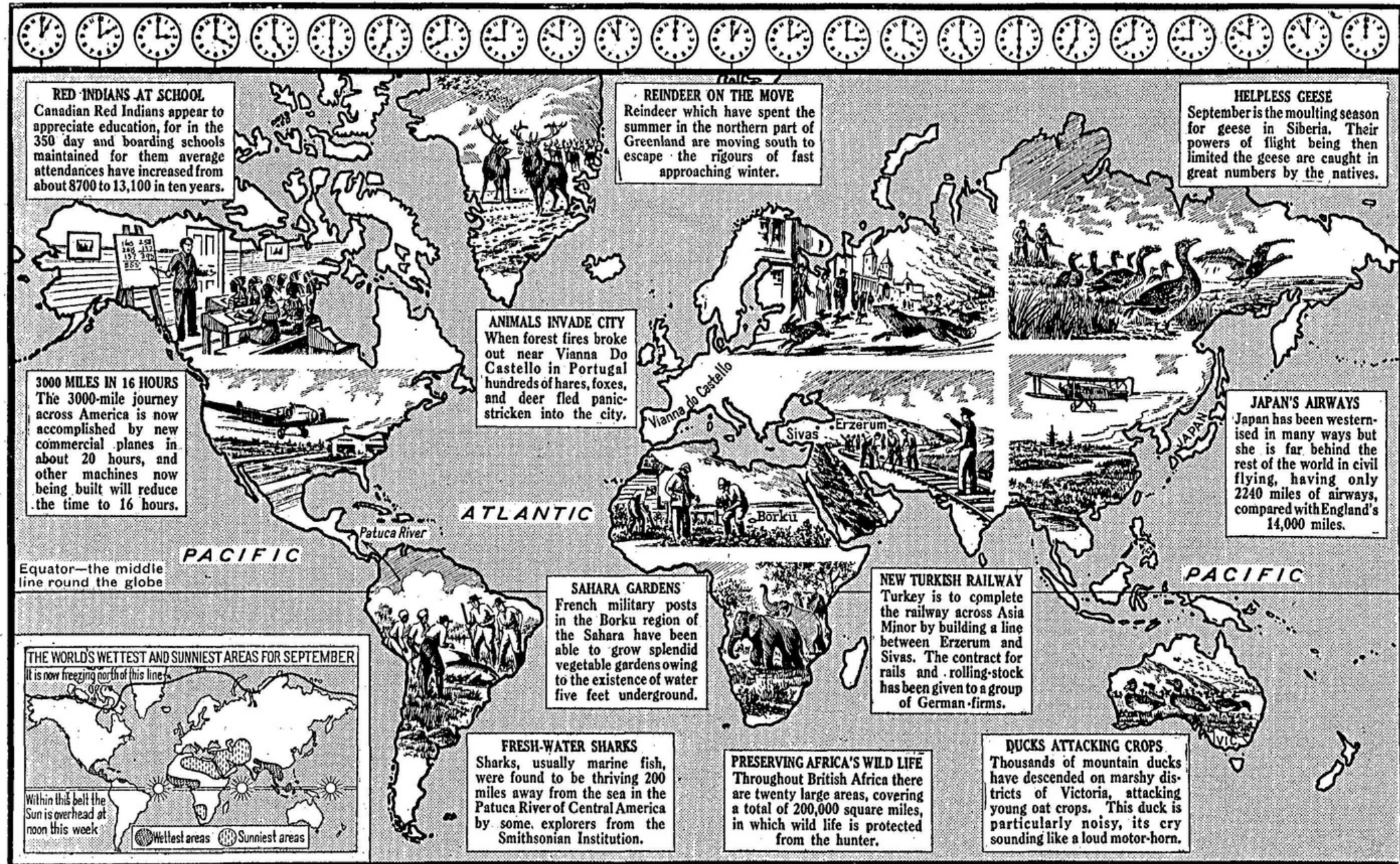
The family were scared of grave robbers.

September 16, 1933

The Children's Newspaper

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PICTURE-NEWS AND TIME MAP SHOWING EVENTS ALL OVER THE WORLD



ELIZABETH GIBSON IS SAFE

The Watchers of 140 Years

As in the same month for the past 140 years, August witnessed a curious ceremony in the churchyard of St Nicholas Church at Sutton in Surrey.

After a service in the church a small procession made its way to a large 18th-century family tomb. The priest opened the iron gate and the churchwardens entered to inspect the five coffins of the Gibson family inside. A prayer was offered, and the tomb was locked up for another year.

At the time of the death of Miss Elizabeth Gibson, one of the family buried there, the practice of body-snatching made people afraid that thieves would steal their bodies to sell them to hospitals for experiments. Miss Gibson determined that her family tomb should not be rifled, and left £500 in her will to provide for regular visits to it.

Although in these days there is little fear of body-stealing the ceremony has been paid for and so will continue.

THE GOOD WORK GOES ON

Unemployed miners and cotton spinners of Hindley, near Wigan, have transformed several acres of waste ground into a beautiful garden.

Slag heaps are now paths, and tin cans have been changed into flower-beds, while a derelict cotton mill has become a clubhouse for these hard-working scene-shifters.

The rules the men have laid down for themselves forbid betting or bad language in the club. There will be no drunkenness either, for nothing stronger than ginger-beer is sold at the bar.

And an unwritten rule is that there is always something in the emptiest-looking pocket for a fellow member whose fortune, through illness or other causes, has fallen below even unemployment level.

NO SERVANT—AND WHY

A German Home Today

We asked the other day after the health of a German lady, and were told: "She is run down. It is simply weariness. She has dismissed the maids, and is really not strong enough to do all the work."

"Is she so poor, then?"

"No. But she cannot bear the restraint that Germans must put upon themselves nowadays, even in their own homes, for fear of spies. If you have a servant you must always be whispering, and shutting doors, and locking desks, because the most innocent phrase may be twisted into something hostile to the Government, and then—"

"And then?"

One day the master won't come home to dinner.

THE NAZI AT THE KEYHOLE

Opening Mails

An amazing impertinence affecting neighbouring nations is being perpetrated in Germany by the secret police of Herr Hitler.

They are opening the foreign mail passing through Aachen, contrary to all international custom.

Aachen is one of the main clearing houses for mail passing between France and Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

FREE TEA

Dr Wu Lien-Teh is the health adviser to the Chinese railways, and he thinks that free tea should be provided for the passengers on long-distance journeys.

Special drinking fountains are to be provided on many Chinese trains, as the result of his advice, the fountains supplying hot China tea in every compartment.

DOES YOUR KINEMA USE THE SAFETY FILM?

LET THE BIRDS FLY

A Chance To Help

Our many right-minded readers who abhor the idea of keeping any winged creature in a cage will be glad to know that there is a way in which all can help to stop the cruel trade in wild birds.

By the time the new Bird Protection Bill reaches its third reading in the autumn it is hoped that a great petition may be presented to Parliament. The Bird-Lovers League and the R.S.P.C.A. have had petition forms printed, and an appeal is made to all friends of birds to collect signatures.

Some M.P.s have told a friend of the C.N. that they are being bombarded by members of cage-bird clubs and by bird-fanciers and dealers, who urge them not to pass the Bill, declaring it is a crazy whim and not the voice of the general public.

If only everyone knew how our wild birds are being caught in thousands and tightly packed in small cages; how nine out of every ten die within a few days of being caught; and how many are blinded to make them more useful as decoys, this pitiless trade would have been stopped long ago, even by this hard-hearted Parliament.

A GREAT DAY FOR BIRDS

A great day for birds will be October 4, the feast of St Francis.

Could he be present on that day at the Borghese Gardens in Rome, where several thousands of small birds will be liberated, he would have the biggest congregation he ever preached to.

A bird-loving society at Rome has been collecting the birds which have been used as decoys during the shooting season, and has chosen this appropriate date to free them, for the influence of the gentle St Francis in Italy has survived these 700 years.

THE CRIER AND THE BUYER

And Nothing To Sell

Long, long ago the farmers of Lancashire chose the village of Great Harwood as a convenient centre for their horse fair, and year after year they have gone to Great Harwood to buy and sell their horses.

This year the fair was held as usual, and as usual the town crier, in frock coat, silk hat, and white waistcoat, begged "all persons assembled here today to keep the peace," ending his speech with "God bless his Majesty the King, the Chairman of the Urban District Council, the crier and the buyer, and all gradely and decent folk beside."

When the fair was declared open there were plenty of gradely folk, but they soon discovered that something was missing: there was not a horse to be seen. No one wanted to buy a farm horse—which was lucky, for no one had one to sell.

Will our great-grandchildren never know the beauty of two fine horses and a man at the plough outlined on the horizon?

A NEW ELECTRIC CLOCK

A clock with faces 60 feet in diameter has just been put up in Paris, on the Eiffel Tower.

It has no hands. Instead, the dials are fitted with rows of electric lamps arranged along radii drawn from the centre to the circumference at the position of every five minutes. Thus at five past nine a row of lamps from the centre of the clock to the figure One would represent the long hand, and another row from the centre to the figure Nine would represent the hour hand, thus indicating the time of nine-five.

The dials are made up of enormous circles of green and red lights, and with new arrangements shortly to be introduced the seconds will be indicated as well as the hours and minutes.

The Children's Newspaper, 1933





FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCHYARD



Dorothy Mason, Lady Brownlow (1665-1699/1700)
Sir Godfrey Kneller (Lübeck 1646/9 - London 1723)
Belton House, Lincolnshire



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A Medieval Sacred Basin

This beautiful stone basin was found in the churchyard. It is a 'piscina', and it was used to rinse the vessels that held sacred wine and bread during Mass.

The piscina had removed from the church during the reformation in the 16th century.

Piscinas have a special drain that goes directly into the earth below, so that any fragments of the wine and bread (believed to become the blood and bread of Jesus Christ during Mass) would not be wasted but would become one again with the world.

