

## MAY 2012

Dear All,

Ne're cast a clout till May be out. I am sure that you have all heard this warning, and in essence it means do not discard your warm winter clothing until May is out. It is an old English proverb which appears to date back to around the 1700's, and since the early fifteenth century 'clout' has been used to mean variously a bang on the head; a clod of earth; or a fragment of cloth or clothing. In this context, therefore, it is our warm winter clothing that should not be discarded; from the wonderful temperatures in late February to the cold of early April, it is a good warning to heed.

But, when will 'May be out?' and here in lies something of a controversy. Is May the month of May or does it mean something different? I think that I prefer the interpretation that 'May be out' refers to the Hawthorn bush (also known as the May bush and its blossom know as May). Miles of hawthorn bushes (or trees) were planted as part of the Enclosure Act in the late 17 century and the English countryside is full of wonderful hawthorn hedges which come into blossom in late April or early May. Using this analogy 'till May be out' could mean until the May Tree or Hawthorn is in full blossom. Hawthorn has also been seen as symbolising new birth and fertility for centuries, probably because of its flowering in early spring. The exact date for the 'May to be out' however is something of a moveable feast depending on the weather, which fits in well with the opening proverb 'Ne're cast a clout till May be out'. So on the matter of whether we need to wait until this month is out or if we need to look to the hedgerows to decide when to switch to our summer clothes I think to jury is still out.

From a church perspective we will be celebrating Rogation on the 13 May this year at 11.00am at Bretforton (when we will be joined by Bretforton Silver Band). This is the time in the church year that we give thanks for all that God provides for us and pray a blessing on the crops of the coming year, another symbol birth and fertility. The decision to wear summer or winter clothes is yours - but I suggest you bring a coat!!

Richard