

Tony Thinking Aloud lxiii

So, we come to Midsummer Week! Monday was the longest day – although not the brightest! The summer solstice is the same day – someone said to me ... Now for the countdown to Christmas!

Why is June 24th considered Midsummer Day? In terms of weather, farmers recognised these days around the solstice as the middle of summer. Crops were underway, looking promising, harvest anticipated. At some point the Christian Church appointed June 24th as the day to mark the birth of John the Baptist.

It is a Quarter Day ! I can remember Grandma finding some pound notes which had been carefully saved to send one of the family to the Council Offices to pay the rates! Although Quarter Days are not so significant today, they are connected with the Christian Calendar, March 25th is Lady Day and September 29th Michaelmas Day, and Christmas Day. John the Baptist was born about six months before Jesus so June 24th is appropriate to keep his feast.

John the Baptist was of course John Taylor's Patron Saint. The T symbol in his coat of arms is a Tau Cross the symbol of John the Baptist. For many years the anniversary of the consecration of Barton Parish Church was kept on this day (as the year but not the actual day is known). Folk may remember the big celebrations for the 450th and 475th anniversaries in recent years. No doubt the wheelbarrows too!

Why this interest in dates? They give stability to life – our birthdays are significant focus days in our lives. Anniversaries, a time to remember and reflect.

As we know the Lockdown – the Pandemic – has changed our lives and the way in which we felt alongside others. We are all in it together.

Now another date, Freedom Day is coming we are hopefully told. The God who has been with us in the pandemic will remain with us. I feel it has genuinely made many thoughtful and hopeful, we have never experienced anything like this before!

Midsummer Day is a turning part of the year as we look forward hopefully to the harvest and the future. Freedom Day should help us look forward in a positive way too alongside everyone else.