

October

My favourite month. Autumn is my favourite season, as I have [photographed](#) before. Gold and bronze and amber month, with fruit continuing. Pumpkins have gained in popularity in England in the last few years. The Halloween lantern used to be carved from a large turnip or manglewurzel; now pumpkins can be bought from every supermarket and some farmers are growing them, selling them to the public, and even organising carving events for the children.



What I can't find out is when this North American vegetable (or is it a fruit, like the tomato) came to Europe. Was it at about the same time as the potato? The story of Cinderella is very, very, old. The best known version was first written down by Charles Perrault in 1697. But was the pumpkin, and hence the pumpkin coach known in Europe at that time. Or did it come later.



Autumn colour in the churchyard of Minster Abbey in Kent, a ancient foundation established in 664 by St Sexburga the Queen of Kent. She retired here for a while after her son King Egbert reached majority and she was no longer needed as Regent. Later she joined her better known sister St Etheldreda at her Abbey in Ely. Her career of political and religious importance was an influential factor in the establishment of the monastic life for women in Saxon England. Women were held in greater respect under the Saxon Kings than the Norman-French regime. The horse chestnut was full of conkers, but they cannot be seen clearly on the tree.



Then when we stopped at in nearby Queenborough (named after a much later Queen, Phillipa of Hainault, wife of Edward III) I tried to do an artistic still life.



And as

fast as I was trying to pose the conkers, and make them smile pretty for the camera, my husband behind me was dodging spiked cases falling from the tree above, warning me that the conkers were making a counter-attack and to beware. Helen Hunt Jackson was writing about New England in the fall, not South East England in the autumn, but she knew the same problem.

“chestnuts fall from satin burrs Without a sound of warning”

October's Bright Blue Weather

SUNS and skies and clouds of June,
And flowers of June together,
Ye cannot rival for one hour
October's bright blue
weather;



When loud the bumblebee makes haste,
Belated, thriftless vagrant,
And goldenrod is dying fast,
And lanes with grapes are fragrant;

When gentians roll their fingers tight
To save them for the morning,
And chestnuts fall from satin burrs
Without a sound of warning;

When on the ground red apples lie
In piles like jewels shining,
And redder still on old stone walls
Are leaves of woodbine twining;

When all the lovely wayside things
Their white-winged seeds are sowing,

And in the fields still green and fair,
Late aftermaths are growing;

When springs run low, and on the brooks,
In idle golden freighting,
Bright leaves sink noiseless in the hush
Of woods, for winter waiting;

When comrades seek sweet country haunts,
By twos and twos together,
And count like misers, hour by hour,
October's bright blue weather.

O sun and skies and flowers of June,
Count all your boasts together,
Love loveth best of all the year

Above, bronze chrysanthemums from my own garden

October's bright blue weather.

Photographs E Weatherwax England 2016