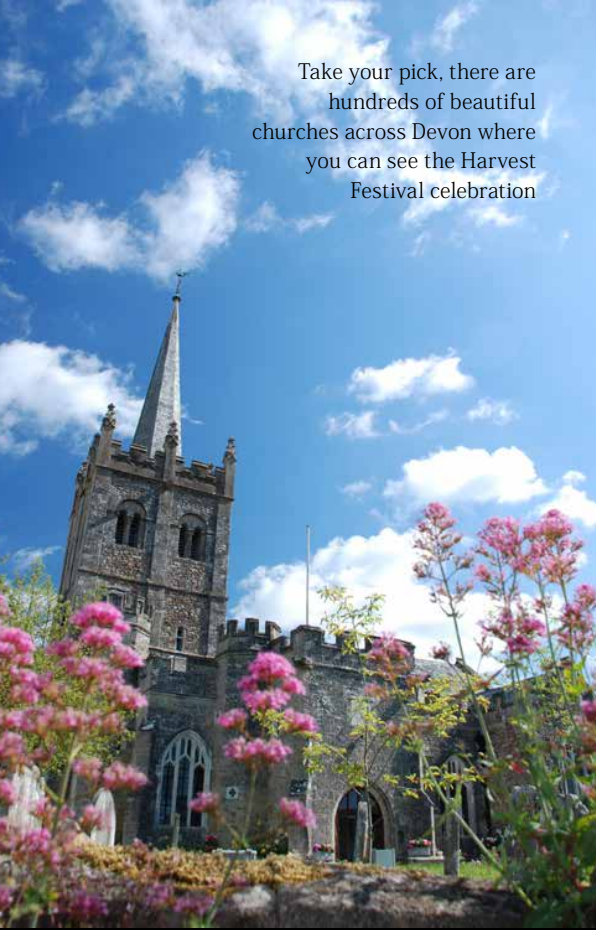


Take your pick, there are hundreds of beautiful churches across Devon where you can see the Harvest Festival celebration



Harvest Festival

An age old celebration and probably our oldest annual event



In days past, Harvest Festival was a significant celebration, not least because of the importance of a successful harvest for people dependent upon the land.

The approach of autumn sees nature take a rest and before the relatively recent mechanisation of farming, the ebb and flow of the seasons would really have dominated lives.

A poor harvest could mean a winter and early spring spent in constant hunger or even starvation - a successful harvest really was something worth celebrating.

The origins of what we now know as Harvest Festival are much earlier than Christianity, descending back to pagan times.

Churches across the land have witnessed this annual event in an unbroken chain for literally centuries, and to my mind Harvest Festival is a celebration that is very much part of England's fabric.

When you consider how many churches sit directly on top of sites of Saxon worship (many of which were in use by





pagans beforehand), it really is mind boggling to consider the antiquity of these sites and the generations who've witnessed this annual celebration in one form or another!

For me, Harvest Festival can be beautiful - sunlight streaming through stained glass, ripe harvest fruit and lacy flowers set amongst the beauty of an ancient church, there's a timeless quality to this scene that's incredibly pure and evocative. It's easy to miss Harvest Festival at your local church, which is a great pity. I know there are many people that have great appreciation for our churches, which are incredible vessels of history,

architecture and craftsmanship, as well as our traditions and culture.

If you represent your local church, Devonshire magazine is happy to help you promote Harvest Festival and indeed the Flower Festivals that many Churches host in the summer months.

We'd also like to hear from keen photographers as we'd like to present images from our churches in future issues. Nigel Jones (Editor)

Incidentally, if you can name all the churches (left hand page), then the reward of a bottle of wine awaits you!



Southleigh Church



Where's the church you may ask?

It's not a Devonshire church, it's St Eata's Church at Atcham Bridge, which is situated on the old A5 road. Whilst visiting the delightful city of Shrewsbury (which will appear in a future issue), we decided to pop into the church, many of the stones used in its construction come from the nearby Roman site at Wroxeter.





Haerfest meaning "Autumn" in Old English, autumn being the time for gathering and storing crops

