

The Stories Behind October – from our youth to our golden years.



October has always seemed to me to be a month of change. The leaves turn gold and copper, the mornings become cooler, and the evenings draw in. But October has changed in other ways too. For those of us in our golden years, it can be a month filled with memories of traditions that were once simply part of everyday life.

The name October comes from the Latin *octo*, meaning eight. In the old Roman calendar, it was the eighth month of the year. Today, of course, it is the tenth, but the name remains—a small reminder that traditions can survive even when the world around them changes.

Think back to Octobers of our childhood. There were harvest festivals at school, conkers collected from beneath horse chestnut trees, piles of leaves to kick through and the excitement of knowing that winter was on its way. October was also the time to start thinking about Bonfire Night.

All the effort we used to put into our ‘Guy’ scrounging bits and pieces for his body and clothing and collecting wood for our bonfire for weeks and weeks before, then hoping it wouldn’t rain when the big day came. Remember the jumping jacks 🤸 how they used to chase poor unsuspecting people around, the joy of the bonfire, the fireworks, the smell of smoke in the cold air and if you were really lucky, a jacket potato cooked in the embers. Traditions have changed, it’s more about Halloween now, but the memories remain remarkably vivid.

And perhaps that is one of the interesting things about growing older. We have lived through enormous changes, yet the simplest memories can remain the strongest.

This is where mindfulness can quietly enter our autumn lives. Mindfulness doesn't have to mean sitting cross-legged in silence or following a complicated practice. It can simply mean **being present for what is happening now.**

Next time you walk through fallen leaves, listen to the sound beneath your feet. Notice the colours in the trees. Feel the coolness of the air on your face. Smell the woodsmoke or the damp earth after rain. Instead of thinking only, ***“I remember when October used to be...”***, perhaps ask yourself, ***“What is October giving me today?”***

We can hold both things together: the memories of the past and an appreciation of the present. Perhaps the greatest gift of our later years is that we have accumulated so many stories. A pocketful of conkers, a homemade Guy, a few pennies collected from neighbours, a harvest festival, a bonfire glowing against the November sky—these small memories form part of who we are.

But mindfulness reminds us that we don't have to live only in those memories. There are still new leaves to notice, new conversations to enjoy, new places to discover and new traditions to create.

So this October, perhaps we can celebrate both the **October we remember** and the **October we are living now.**

Take a moment. Look around. Listen. Breathe.

The seasons are changing, as they always have....

And so are we.