

PETER'S ISOLATION FACEBOOK DIARY
EASTER SUNDAY 12 TO ST GEORGE'S DAY, THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2020

Easter Sunday 12 April

I went out this morning, determined to get a photo of the Easter Candle alight outside St Edmund's. In the absence of a flower arranger (I have a Vicar's wife who doesn't make tea or do flowers) I took a pot of tulips. I had found some matches. All was going to be good.

The candle kept falling over, it took six matches to get it to light, the only human being I saw jogged past me and ignored me, my church was locked and I am not able to lead my people in worship. For me, a Service of Holy Communion only really makes sense when I share it with others - this year I can't even take Home Communion to people who really need the strength of the sacrament. I'm not going to stand in my garden and do it myself. (I'm not criticising my fellow clergy who are celebrating, I'm glad they are, but it doesn't feel right for me).

I got some photos eventually, but they are not the best, especially when compared to the superb one Geoff took at St Matthew's - have a look at <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/>

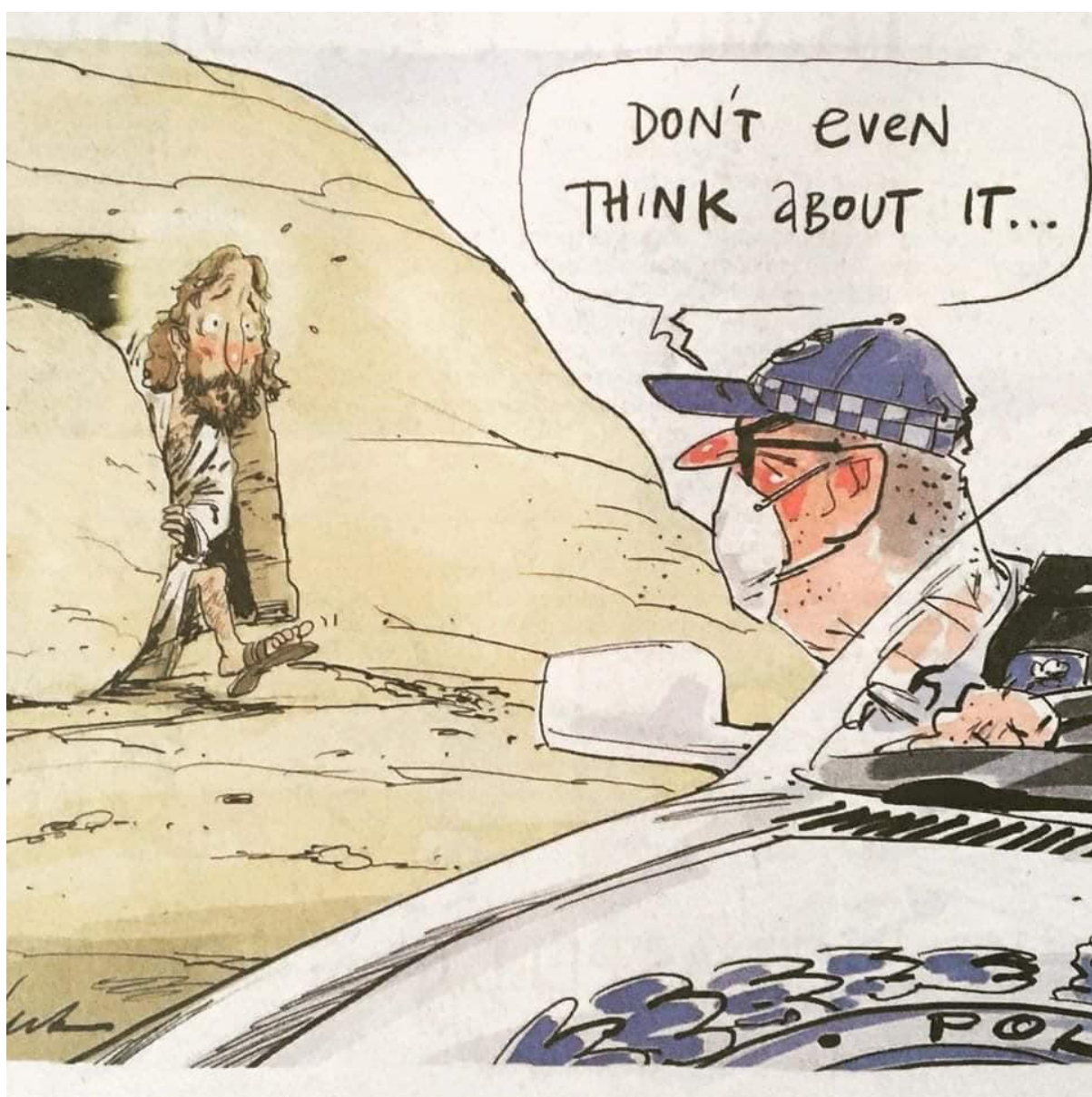
I had some fun with the candle beside the Allestree Yew - a tree which predates the church. I managed not to burn the tree down - it's bad enough being the first Vicar here in a thousand years whose churches are shut this Easter, imagine going down in history as the Vicar who destroyed the Allestree Yew.

The tree calmed me down. All my predecessors will have walked past it. Some of them will have coped with war and violence, some of them will have coped with plague, all of them will have coped with illness and death. They worship "on another shore and in a greater light" to quote the annual Carol Service.

My first email today was from Sainsbury's telling me to "make the most of Easter at home". My first tweet was my friend Ruth photographing the sunrise. There are still some steam trains on facebook. My daughter has sent me a wonderful cartoon.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia,
 He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!

Happy Easter one and all



Easter Monday, 13 April

Yesterday I had to hang my head in shame. Chris, my predecessor as Vicar, sent me a photo of a steam engine, and I had to ask where it was taken. The Midland Railway Centre, 9 miles away.

I haven't been to the Midland Railway Centre since a St Eds and Ipswich Clergy Conference 20 years ago at the Swanwick Conference Centre, almost next door. I don't like Clergy Conferences. One of the speakers was a Clown Priest. I was not in the mood for a clown priest, so decided to bunk off. I got to the railway and joined the other clergymen who had also bunked off. After a happy couple of hours our steam engine broke down. They found a diesel and hauled us back - rather later than planned. We walked back to the Conference Centre, having missed lunch. The Bishop thought it was hilarious. 20 years later I can remember the steam train, but not the conference. There is a message in there somewhere.

When all this is over, more time for trains. I can list at least a dozen preserved lines and museums close enough for a day trip that I haven't visited since we moved here. To say nothing of the lovely line a couple of miles away (the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway) which has a lovely selection of diesels, and my favourite (Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway). You can see that the latter has an excellent Julie-lift. This was a very wet day back in February. These lines need our help to survive, and survive they must - we're all having lots of days out later in the year!





Easter Tuesday, 14 April

A late post today as I've been to Sheffield. I've been a blood donor for years and started giving platelets while I was in Newcastle. When I moved to Derby I found the nearest platelet centre is Nottingham, but there is one in Sheffield and that was where Harry and Sarah lived - so I have a monthly trip to Sheffield.

The M1 is lovely when there's no traffic - it's like those old films of the joy of motoring. The staff at the centre were their normal lovely, efficient selves, with a few extra precautions. In the words of Tony Hancock - "almost an armful".

Walking through Sheffield was very depressing. I'd not been in the middle of a City since all this started. The economic reverberations of all this are going to be horrendous.

In a week or so I'll get an email telling me where my platelets have gone - they had a trip to Blackburn last time (gorgeous Cathedral - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2014/06/15/blackburn-cathedral/>). So let's have a positive note to end on. If you can give blood, I'm sure they'd love to hear from you.



My platelets went to Crewe!

Easter Wednesday, 15 April

Good morning World. Just had a lovely email thanking me for sending an Easter Card to a lady in Wales. In case you think I'm encouraging someone from Derby who has escaped to her second home, I'm not - she's a former resident who now lives there, gets a church magazine posted every month, so got at Easter Card too. I look up her postcode on the Ordnance Survey app on my phone, and the memories come flooding back.

Deepest Pembrokeshire - not far from where we had a family holiday as teenagers. It was a long drive from Cambridge to St David's in the days before dual carriageways, but I remember the Cathedral, local castles, and ice cream at Solva.

20 years later, Julie and I took the kids on the train when we lived in Bury. We got the through train from Paddington to Fishguard Harbour - it started off at 125 mph, but on the branch from Clarbeston Road to the terminus the average speed was about 25. Then I loaded three children, one wife and our luggage onto the connecting bus to St David's. A holiday cottage we'd found in the Church Times - next to the fire station (kids were annoyed they never saw the engine in action).

We explored the Cathedral from top to bottom, went to a service and an organ recital there, enjoyed the Bank Holiday Carnival - I remember the Dean was one of the judges for the 'Carnival Queen' competition (I wanted his job). We had cliff walks, explored Pembrokeshire, and used the buses a lot. I've just done a google, Richards Bros buses - and they're on facebook [Richards Bros](#)

At the end of the week, we needed to get back to Fishguard Harbour for the once a day train to Paddington. One bus just missed it, so we had to catch the one 2 hours earlier. The bus driver recognised us as we climbed aboard - one wife, three kids, even more luggage than at the start of the week. "You've got a long wait for your train" he said. "Yes," I said, "be nice if public transport connected." "Tell you what. When we get to the town centre, get off, leave your luggage, have a coffee, let the kids stretch their legs, then I'll pick you up when I've done the town circuit, and run you to the station for your train".

That's what we did - watching all our worldly goods disappear on a tour of Fishguard. An hour later, the bus (and our luggage) was back, and off to the station we all went. There are lovely people in this world.

20 years Julie has a disabled persons' railcard and a free bus pass. Dare I suggest a public transport trip to St David's when all this is over?



Easter Thursday, 16 April

If I wrote the post I want to write - something about how marvellous it is to give people a badge - my post would fall foul of the CE Media guidelines ... so forgive me if it's another of Peter and Julie's holiday memories. I keep waiting to be head hunted by someone wanting a cuddly Vicar who can do programmes about travelling on Britain's railways.

Today is the Feast Day of St Magnus of Orkney (actually Patronal Festivals get shunted when they fall in Easter Week, but we won't worry about that) - so have a look at my blogs about his Cathedral in Kirkwall - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2017/08/24/kirkwall-orkney-st-magnus-cathedral-the-general-tour/>

I walked round my garden earlier listening to Ramblings on BBC Sounds - Clare Balding visiting the island of Hoy back in 2007. We've had a couple of day trips to Hoy, where they have an excellent Heritage Centre - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2017/08/06/hoy-orkney-the-kirk/> - but I've never done any walking on the island.

Clare met one of the island's oldest residents who was talking about how, when his daughter Lucy was born, Peter Maxwell Davis wrote a lullaby for her. I remember I had sat and listened to it in the Heritage Centre, and would love the opportunity to sing it. [Derventio Choir](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-INb7KmF28) and [Alexander Binns](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-INb7KmF28), listen to it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-INb7KmF28> - it may be a bit out of our skill range. Lucy was the first baby born in the community for Rackwick for 32 years.

The island also has a WW2 Heritage Centre which was fascinating. They had a photo of Yehudi Menuhin who made a visit to entertain the troops and played the Bach Double Violin Concerto with one of the ratings who was also a talented violinist. I talked about Hoy one Remembrance Sunday evening, and finished the service with the slow movement of the Bach Double - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf1X7ppZiIQ>. No one moved until it was finished.

I hope these ramblings have helped give you the strength you need to get through today. I'll know, I'll produce a badge "I have read Peter's blog", and if you've worked your way through all the links I'll make it gold.



Easter Friday, 17 April

Friday is my day off. Today I would have put on clerical suit and polished the shoes, as today I was due to marry Stuart and Sarah at 12.30. If you want to destroy the Vicar's day off, plan your wedding in the middle of the day! I don't care, I like weddings - and the nice thing about

this job is that I can move my day off (and if I don't, that's my stupid fault). They've moved their wedding to Friday 2 October - so we'll celebrate then.

Some wedding couples pass through - you see them once or twice before, and don't see them again. That's fair enough, we're here to support them when they need us. Some wedding couples become friends - you see them around the town, for Family Services, at Christmas, you're asked to baptise the children, they get involved in the church, they pop up regularly on facebook.

Next year we already have 17 weddings in the diary across the two churches. 5 of those have been postponed from this year, so 2021 is going to be busy. Baptisms, weddings and funerals are a privilege - and I believe it's one of the things the church is here for. Some will tell me I'm wasting my time, some will tell me we don't need these lovely church buildings to welcome them in to, some will tell me I'm failing if I don't manage to convert them. I beg to differ (see, I can be polite).

Thank you to the friends who are enjoying my facebook ramblings. Several hundred people seem to read these. I recognise some of the names, and love the comments I get. Yesterday one clever friend, Dr Elaine, reminded me I need to read the poetry of George Mackay Brown (she's right). Another clever friend, Dr Helen, posted a photo of herself and a cuddly puffin. A wonderful musician friend, Andrea, said she sang "Lullaby for Lucy" in St Magnus Cathedral in the presence of Lucy herself - OK Andrea, you win! If you haven't discovered the music of Voces 8 yet, search for them.

And several friends want a badge. In line with government policy, I don't actually propose to give you a badge. I will sell you a badge, when they've been made.

Just for Dr Helen - here's a real puffin on the Farne Islands.



Easter Saturday, 18 April

Today is #worldheritageday. In the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site we are being encouraged to do craft with waterwheels. My crafting skills are zero - though my cooking skills are coming on (be impressed with the Madeira cake "have some Madeira, m'dear"). Today's rambling is a couple of Orkney waterwheels instead of a craft.

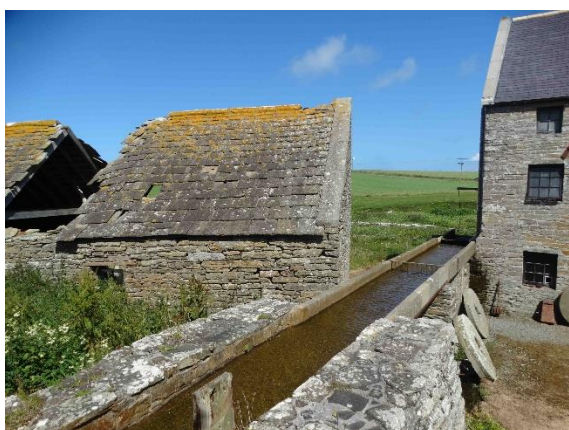
On the north side of Orkney Mainland you can follow the Historic Scotland signs to Dounby Click mill. Drive up a narrow road, leave Julie in the laybye with a good book, and walk across a damp field. You find the simplest of mills, a horizontal wheel in a stream. This isn't an old mill, it only dates to 1822, but it is on an ancient site, and the oldest mill technology there is. One stream, driving one set of millstones, but enough for a few families. It's a beautiful spot, and you can imagine the people who have come here over the centuries.

A few miles away is the Barony Bere Mill - bere is an ancient form of barley. This is a living, breathing mill - <https://baronymill.com/> - and I got a great welcome when I visited three years ago. They are selling their flour on line, I have just purchased a bag, and will let you know how I get on. If it goes well, I will move North, renovate that cottage next door, and become a miller's apprentice (or open a tea room).

In the bible, millstones got a mention in Deuteronomy 24 "No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge." Just one of the regulations to ensure that the poor are not made poorer, that people are able to survive. This morning Facebook has offered me several adverts on how I can make money from my property investments in the current crisis, and how I can reduce my tax.

In order to calm down, listen to "The Watermill" by Ronald Binge, who was born in Derby and was a composer at St Andrew's church which once stood on London Road. Have a look at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwl9cf9uUFQ>





Sunday 19 April

I am sorry to announce that I will not be opening a tea room on Orkney. I lay in bed with my morning tea and decided I would leap out (trying not to take the duvet with me) and go and make some scones. I found my trusted Souter Lighthouse NT cookbook, and I need 16oz of SR flour. I only have 8oz left - I'll make half the amount of scones. So I add half the butter, half the fruit, half the sugar, then put two eggs in (no, idiot, half the ingredients, one egg). You can't take an egg out when you've added it - let's just say that my scones are now some variety of biscuits.

We should have had the first of our Annual Parochial Church Meetings today. St Matthew's get in first - election of churchwardens tick, election of officers tick, financial statements tick, review of the year, etc etc.

Last year we celebrated our Bicentenary in Darley Abbey - there's lots of lovely photos at <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/st-matthew-s-bicentenary>

. We certainly brought the community together - let's hope some of that community spirit is helping now.

But you would think I could have taken lessons off the scone and cake bakers last year. Time for morning coffee and a scon-iscuit (it won't taste too bad if I dunk it first).

Monday 20 April

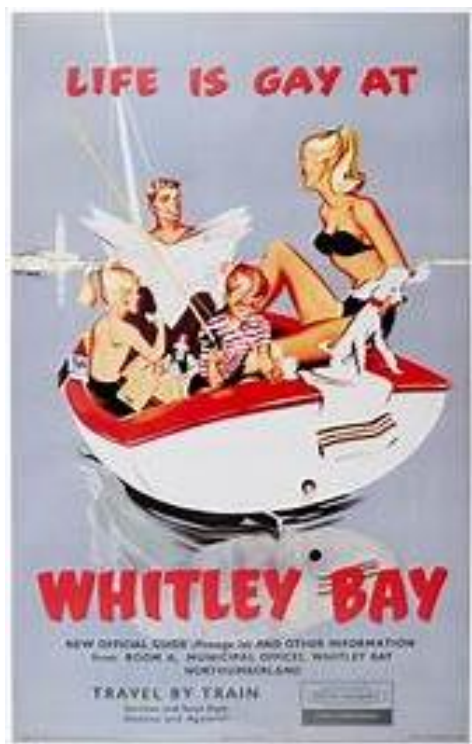
If life had been normal, we would now be on the A1. A few exotic days off had been booked at the Premier Inn in Whitley Bay, just north of Newcastle. (To give Premier Inn their due, although we had booked early and booked the non-refundable deal, they offered a full refund and made it easy to get our money back - thank you).

We would have had our first row of the holiday. "Julie, you do not need to take that many books. We're only away for five days, and you are planning to visit Barter Books in Alnwick, Cogito Books in Hexham and Waterstone's in Morpeth, Hexham and Newcastle." (Like most rows, I would have lost).

The Whitley Bay Premier Inn is part of the extensive re-development of the coastal resort. The work that has been done on the 1908 Spanish City is amazing - have a look at <https://spanishcity.co.uk/about-us/history/>. Enjoy the railway poster too.

Outside they have worked on the Prom - and the wheelchair users in the family had great fun. Your ramblings the next few days will be a virtual holiday. I am following the advice of this Viking.

(Several years ago there was a superb Viking exhibition at National Museum of Scotland. A whole display about why Vikings did not wear horned helmets. In the exhibition shop they were selling plastic Viking hats with horns!) Keep smiling.



"I can't go out because of the virus" sounds weak, whiny and boring.

Try instead:

"I've sworn an oath of solitude until the pestilence is purged from the lands"

Sounds more Valiant and Heroic, people might even think you are carrying a sword.



Tuesday 21 April

If we were on holiday this week, we would probably have started in Hexham. Julie would have gone to Cogito Books and been happy there for an hour or so. I would have wandered into the Abbey to say "Hello" to Flavinus. His memorial was erected in the first century AD in one of the nearby Roman camps (probably Corbridge), and reused as building stone for the Abbey in the 17th. Have a look at <https://www.hexhamabbey.org.uk/top-10-th.../flavinus-tombstone>

To the Spirits of the Departed,
Here Lies Flavinus
A Horse Rider of the Cavalry Regiment of Petriana
Standard Bearer of the Troop of Candidus
Aged 25, of 7 Years' Service

I love the way that a Roman cavalryman was remembered, and you can imagine the party they had in the Officers' Mess that night.

I took a funeral this morning for a lady called Doris. Just a few of us at the Crematorium. This good lady had run a pub in Wansford for many years, and Ernie Wise lived nearby - apparently he (and Eric) liked her steak and mushroom pies. We left the chapel to "Bring me sunshine", which made the day a bit better.

The Church of England has produced a series of useful resources

- <https://www.churchofengland.org/.../funeral-and-bereavement-r...>

- including a "simple reflection at home on the day of a funeral you can't attend" which anyone can print off. None of this is easy, but [#stayathome](#) is vital.





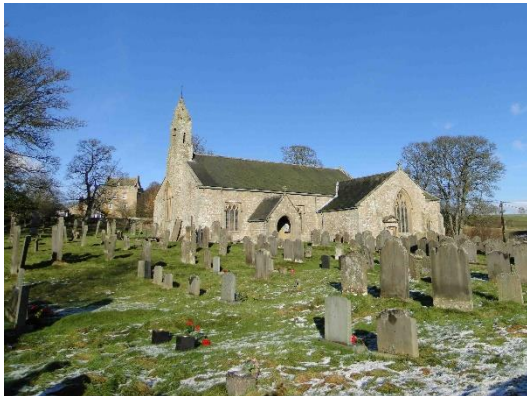
Wednesday 22 April

Let's moved north to the village of Elsdon for Roman tombstone number 2. Elsdon is right up in the Northumberland countryside - I've blogged the church three times, once going for a meeting in the snow (that was fun) - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/.../elsdon-northumberland-st-.../>

In the church is the memorial to Rufinus, a Roman soldier. It says he was "of the First Cohort of Vardulli ... prefect of the First Cohort Augusta of Lusitanians, also of the First Cohort of Breuci, sub-curator of the Flaminian Way and Doles, sub-curator of Public Works, Julia Lucilla, of senatorial rank, (set this up) to her well-deserving husband: he lived 48 years." More info at <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1288> if you're interested.

Apparently (history speak for "it would be a good story if it's true") he was commanding officer of the fort at High Rochester, and it is worth driving on there. If you think Elsdon is remote, wait till you get to the Roman fort of Bremenium (it's also on the blog). We are a long day's march north of Hadrian's Wall. There are no gift shops or tourists here. Just stones and memories - imagine being in command of this fort, out by yourself, in front of the northern frontier of the Empire.

A mile south, along the line of the Dere Street, the Roman road south to the Wall (23 miles away), are the remains of a tomb. It would be nice to think it was that of Rufinus, buried outside the fort he commanded. In 2012 dad and I walked there, and we sat and listened to the skylarks. I'd like to think Rufinus did the same - while his Julia (like my Julie) sat in the fort with a book. (Note to my Julie - "well-deserving husband" would be a good phrase when you sort out my headstone! x)



Thursday 23 April

Happy St George's Day. Let's go to another remote church - St Aidan's in Thockrington - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2013/09/15/thockrington-st-aidan/>

In the churchyard lie Lord and Lady Beveridge. William Henry Beveridge, born 5 March 1879. Educated at Balliol, joined the Board of Trade in 1908 and drafted the legislation for the creation of the first Labour Exchange network. He was in the Ministry of Munitions in WW1, director of the LSE from 1919 to 1937, then became Master of University College, Oxford.

In May 1941 he became chairman of a Government committee to survey existing social insurance and allied services and to make recommendations. This was an opportunity to influence post-war social policy and lay the basis for a better society. The Beveridge Report, completed in November 1942, recommended that the government should find ways of fighting the five 'Giant Evils' of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness.

It proposed that all people of working age should pay a weekly NI contribution and in return benefits would be paid to people who were sick, unemployed, retired or widowed. The Welfare State - and you only have to watch old railway films of the 1930s and 40s (or look at the USA today) to realise the impact his policies have made.

He married Janet in 1942 and they made their home in Northumberland, later moving to Co. Durham. They had family in Thockrington, and Janet was taken ill on a visit here in 1959. She was buried in the churchyard. William died in 1963 and is buried beside her. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Can we find similar political skill and will to rebuild our country now? I don't want to go back to normal - I want to go on to something better.

