

PETER'S ISOLATION FACEBOOK DIARY

FRIDAY 1 TO MONDAY 11 MAY 2020

Friday 1 May

Happy May Day. I know (following yesterday's Rambling) that in Oxford they sing hymns, jump in the river, and frolic in the meadows - at Cambridge we were too busy revising to do any frolicking.

Today's frolicking in the Barham household was going to be a trip to the Garrick Theatre in Lichfield [Lichfield Garrick](#) to see a show about Morecambe and Wise. We were looking forward to it. Having discovered the theatre a couple of years ago when we went to their Christmas Show, we have been back on many occasions. The last Christmas show included some Elvis impersonators who were also road menders from Leyton in East London - "We three Kings of Orient Tar" - and a spy from Minsk (work it out yourself). We've also enjoyed Spamalot, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Jane Eyre earlier this year (hope they don't mind I've nicked some photos).

Closer to home, Derby Theatre [Derby Theatre](#) has excellent access when you're in a wheelchair. Macbeth was brilliant earlier this year. We went across to [New Vic Theatre](#) in Newcastle-under-Lyme for "Round the Horne", and we had tickets booked at all of these, and at the RSC, for the summer. We will be back!

Sheffield Lyceum [Sheffield Theatres](#) phoned recently to say that Six, a musical about the wives of Henry VIII, has been rescheduled to February next year. We had booked for Wednesday, which will be Ash Wednesday. As I have to work that evening, they changed our evening. Trouble is, I have to wait until next February to see which wife survives.



Saturday 2 May

I had today planned. I was going to the AGM of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society which is held at the Severn Valley Railway at Kidderminster.

Many years ago I was at the Welsh Highland Railway and picked up a leaflet which said "Come and join us". I expected it to be for the Welsh line, and found it was for an Indian one, the Darjeeling line. A few weeks later I used this as an example of faith, and an old lady in the congregation said "I'd like that leaflet, my parents owned a tea plantation in Darjeeling." For several years, she was the Darjeeling Himalayan Mountain Railway Society's member in Suffolk, and she passed me the magazine when she'd read it.

A couple of years ago one of our modules for the MA in Public History and Heritage was Conflict in Global Heritage. So a railway which is a World Heritage Site, running through an area where there is political conflict, and where climate change is causing far more monsoon floods - that ticked all the boxes for my seminar.

They had a display at a Model Railway Show near Leeds, one excuse for an afternoon out. They emailed me all the photos I needed. They replied to my emails, and helped me structure my thoughts. The AGM was fascinating, the people were friendly, and the lunch was terrific. Later in the year there was an invitation to a railway day in Oxfordshire - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/.../25/darjeeling-via-oxford/> - that was a fun day too!

I won't get to Kidderminster today. I may never get to Darjeeling. But there are nice people out there, and lots of exciting things to look forward to. In the words of Louis Armstrong "it's a wonderful world"!



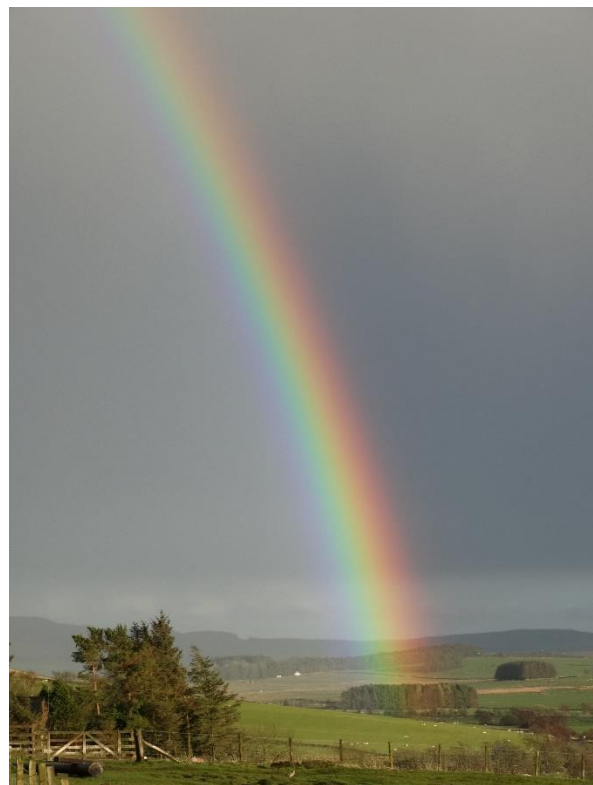
Sunday 3 May

Four years ago we were still in Northumberland. I had announced we were moving to Derby and we were rather in limbo. A few more weeks of work, thinking we ought to start sorting/chucking before we moved (at least I thought that, my wife has never been known to sort or chuck anything (which is why she remains married to me)). My diary comments that I wasn't sleeping well.

Four years on, no plans to move, still working (even if I had a lie in this Sunday morning), and doing some sorting (Julie is reading books, getting them off the floor and onto shelves; as I'm chief cook and bottle washer I am sorting the kitchen). Still not sleeping very well.

Four years ago we went to see our friends Gareth Hateley and Barbara who live just over the Borders. Julie met Gareth at the Freshers' Disco (which makes it sound as if he was hanging around disreputably) - she has reminded me I was too miserable to go to the Freshers' Disco. It was a lovely day, excellent lunch and health-giving walk/roll - just what we needed. Four years on, Gareth and Barb are now grandparents, and we had a long phone chat the other week. (There will be another trip over the Borders when this is over).

As we drove home the skies darkened and there were stunning rainbows over the Northumberland countryside. Enjoy these photos. Remember that there is colour and hope in the darkness, and friends at the end of the phone.



Monday 4 May

Happy Star Wars Day everyone (May the Fourth be with you). There was one year when we had Cathedral confirmation on this date, but whichever Bishop it was couldn't be persuaded to use this phrase (shame). Today should be a Bank Holiday, but the phone went at 0915. I'm on BBC Radio Derby at 0920 tomorrow talking about church bells. I've worked all morning, sorted my expenses (mileage down, phone bills up), and caught up with the emails. I have had a scone for lunch - be impressed, I will open that tea shop!

Last Early May Bank Holiday, Hannah was working in the morning. Julie and I drove north, met her at the end of work, and the girls went shopping. I went on the [Middleton Railway, Leeds](#). It wasn't the most beautiful of afternoons, some fierce showers. On one occasion the heavens opened just as the train arrived, and 100 people headed straight for the tea room. The volunteers behind the counter coped magnificently - shout out for our heritage volunteers!

You can read the full story of my afternoon out on my blog
- <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/.../middleson-leeds-railway-p.../>
. Steam trains and stunning bluebells. It was great!

The sun has now come out, so I might go and garden round my bluebells. Half a bank holiday today (and a bit more on Friday). Sounds OK. Special love to those of you who are working long hours and coping with kids.



Tuesday 5 May

Back to clocks this morning. BBC Radio Derby have just interviewed me on the fact that St Matthew's clock in Darley Abbey is silent. It's hand-wound, so we stopped it when lockdown started, and will restart it when we can. St Edmund's clock in Allestree is electric-wound, so that has continued (with a little human attention the weekend we moved to British Summer Time, thank you Alex and Matt).

Both clocks were made by [Smith of Derby](#) - they have a website where you can read lots of fascinating things. I came across their van when I visited a Cambridge church last year - which is a story I will save for the VE celebrations later this week. I must admit I have never photoed St Edmund's one - sorry.

When they built the tower at St Matthew's, they gave it two clock faces - one facing the Mill, the other facing the Village. I wonder whether time-keeping in the mill improved, or whether workers were furious that the Owner was controlling their lives in yet another way. The hammer strikes the bell every hour, so that's 156 bongs a day (1 o'clock twice, plus 2 o'clock twice ... plus 12 twice). It is good to know it is missed, and I promise it will restart as soon as it is sensible for it to be wound.

Training at Lincoln, our life was regulated by the Cathedral bell. Evensong in College Chapel started when the bell chimed - on one occasion we sat there, and it was 5.34 before the Warden broke the silence and said "I think we assume the Cathedral clock has stopped". In Bury St Edmunds I lay awake through many a long night listening to the Cathedral clock chime (usually followed by our grandmother clock).

The clock at St Matthew's was stopped by Geoff. Being a scientist/engineer he stopped it at 12. If he had been a poet he would have stopped it at 2.50.

“Stands the clock at ten to three?

And is there honey still for tea?”

— Rupert Brooke, The Old Vicarage, Grantchester

Thanks to Geoff and Chris for today's photos.





Wednesday 6 May

As we come to the 75th anniversary of VE Day, I looked back to see what I did five years ago. In Ponteland (as in many places) we were busy commemorating WW1. We had started with a full church for a Faure Requiem in August 2014, then were commemorating every village death on its centenary. In April we had remembered the Mortimer brothers, the sons of the big house at Milbourne, both of whom had probably been in Holy Saviour church while home on leave at Easter 1915. By the end of June they had both died in the trenches. They are commemorated in this window.

In April 2015 I had a phone call from Ponteland Town Council. "We've just realised that the 70th anniversary of VE day is coming up, and we haven't planned anything. Can you help?" Yes, of course. A quick bit of research told us that in 1945 the children of Richard Coates CE School had planted a tree, so we got the school involved. They produced an audio visual of images of War and Celebration and then various older people in the congregation shared their memories of VE Day. Several people remembered all the lights being on after six dark years of War, while Vera (I think it was Vera (it probably was)) remembered the soldiers she had danced with that night. Then two young people led our act of commemoration - the names of the 24 men from Ponteland who died were read, along with a sentence or two about each person. Flowers were laid on the memorial.

That evening a beacon was lit on the church tower. It was chucking down with rain. On Saturday the bell ringers rang a peal in celebration of peace and freedom. 5,040 changes, one extent of Kent Treble Bob and two extents each of Cambridge Surprise, St. Clements College Bob and Plain Bob Minor were rung in 2 hours 30 minutes. The Vicarage is next door to the church - I seem to remember we left home after an hour or so! We can't leave home this year, but we can still commemorate.



Thursday 7 May

In 1977 dad (Jeffrey Barham) wrote "Cambridgeshire at War", so I'll use his words today. In April 1945 Cambridge's plans for the celebration of VE Day were published in the papers, "although a considerable number of people questioned whether it was right for Cambridgeshire to celebrate at all, while so many men from the county were still prisoners of war in Japanese hands" (page 59). When I was a priest in Suffolk I took funerals of several people who had been, or had husbands who had been, fighting in the Far East - 60 years on many of them were still bitter that they were 'the forgotten army'.

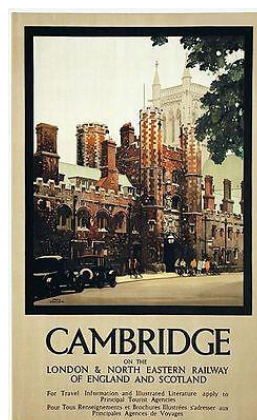
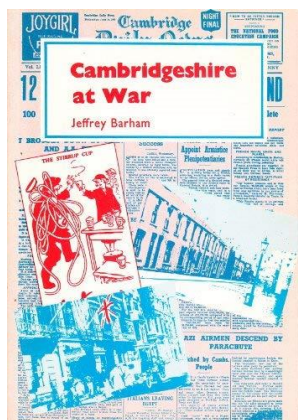
"On May 8, 1945 (V.E. Day), unofficial celebrations began early. At 3 p.m. those who were not by their radio sets at home heard the voice of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, over loudspeakers in the Market Square - 'The German War is at an end. Long live the cause of freedom. God save the King.' The Mayor read the official proclamation an hour later and throughout the evening many people joined in the hymns that were being sung - stopping only to listen to a speech by the King, broadcast at 9 p.m."

"The highlight of the celebrations was a huge bonfire on Midsummer Common, upon which effigies of the German leaders were burnt. The production of fireworks had been halted by the war, but nevertheless many scientifically-minded undergraduates were able to provide bangs and flashes with home-made fireworks. Many of the surrounding villages organised their own celebratory bonfires and during the night the Fire Brigade were called out several times."

"War came to an end just in time for St John's College choir to begin again the old custom of singing from the chapel tower on Ascension Day. On May 13, the first Sunday after V.E. Day, a Service of Thanksgiving was held in Great St Mary's. As expected, the church was packed and the service relayed to the crowd on Market Square."

In August they celebrated V.J. Day. A 'Cambridge Employer' wrote to the Cambridge Evening News complaining about another day wasted, at his expense, on Victory celebrations, and "the customary bonfire was almost a non-event, as there seemed to be no scrap timber left over anywhere from V.E. Day. However a Mr Marshall managed to acquire some and the Mayor was able to light the kindling at 9 p.m."

Well done Mr Marshall - and thanks, dad, for your research. Copies of "Cambridgeshire at War" are available at abebooks.



Friday 8 May - St Edmund's Allestree post

Commemoration before Celebration. Most villages have more names on their Memorial from World War 1, but St Edmund's is different. Lots of Second World War names (I hadn't realised how many). My wonderful friend Anne is researching them for me. Here they are:

William Charles Broster

P/JX 228923, HMS Arbutus, Royal Navy

Died 5th February 1942, age 30.

Logie Watson Brown

64305, 500 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve, Pilot Officer

Died 25th October 1941, age 21.

Edwin G Burton

I can not verify any info about this person at the present time.

Robert A Case

Captain, 198237 5th Battalion Sherwood Foresters, SBS & SAS

Died 31st July 1945

Eric Fancis Cotton

Corporal, 2318194, Royal Corps of Signals

Died 17th January 1944, age 37.

Thomas Frederick Fisher

Private, 4914742, 7th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment

Died between 10th May and 27th May 1940, age 20.

George Muir Gee

Sergeant Pilot, 655012, RAF

Died 14th January 1942, age 26.

Ronald John Grundy

Leading Aircraftman, 130816, RAF, Volunteer Reserve

Died 19th January 1946, age 39.

John George Gutch

Ordinary Seaman, PJ/X 560298, HMS Quorn, Royal Navy

Died 3rd August 1944, age 39.

Rayner A Hargraves

Sapper, 14729710, 6th Airborne Div. Postal Unit, Royal Engineers

Died 18th September 1945, age 29.

Ewart Holmes

Private, 14568230, 2nd Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers

Died 16th May 1941, age 31.

Frank Little

Sergeant Wireless Op/Air Gunner, 751534, 40 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve

Died 30th August 1940, age 30

Reginald C Morris

I can not verify any info about this person at the present time.

Cyril Pountain

I can not verify any info about this person at the present time.

Donald John Samuel

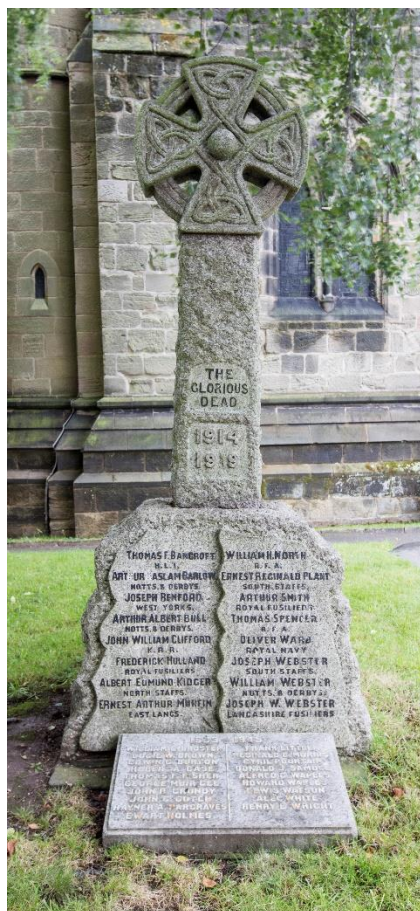
Ordinary Seaman, C/JX 239964, HMS Picotee, Royal Navy

Died 12th August 1941, age 34.

Alfred George Waples
Pilot Officer, 175414, 68 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve
Died 22nd July 1944, age 28.
Howard Waples, DFC
Flight Lieutenant, 67021, 21 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve
Died 23 July 1941, age 23.
Lewis Watson
I can not verify any info about this person at the present time.
Alec White
Sergeant Flight Engineer, 1489085, 51 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve
Died 28th April 1944. Age 21
Harry Emerson Wright
Flying Officer Pilot, 124194, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
Died 10th February 1943, age 29

Huge thanks to Anne - we're keeping her busy during lockdown - and if anyone has any more information, we'd love to hear from you.

They are not just names, they are people - fathers, sons, brothers. Three of them were still alive on VE Day (which makes me pause). Thank you men (and women) of Allestree. Remember them, and celebrate our freedom. Send me some happy photos of your celebrations - we need happy photos!



Friday 8 May - St Matthew's Darley Abbey post

Commemoration before Celebration. Yesterday we went into St Matthew's to re-start the clock and raise the flag. Peter Taylor has done the research on the village's war dead - thank you. Here are the four names on the Memorial from World War II:

Gunner George Dickenson

Born at 5 Mile Ash Lane, Darley Abbey

Killed in France in 1944, aged 30

Lance Corporal Robert Leslie Litchfield

Born in Darley Abbey

Killed in Italy in 1945, aged 24

Sergeant Robert John Cockshott

Married at St Matthew's

Killed in a raid over Germany in 1943, aged 22

Sergeant Cyril Henry Hollingsworth

Lived in Darley Abbey

Killed in a raid over Holland in 1943, aged 22

And we have two Commonwealth War Graves in the churchyard:

Marine Alec William Dean

Lived at Mill House, Folly Road, Darley Abbey

Died during training in Portsmouth in 1947, aged 20

Sub Lieutenant Derek Stuart Fletcher

Lived in Kedleston Road, Derby

Killed in an air crash in Scotland in 1944, aged 21

They are not just names, they are people - fathers, sons, brothers. Thank you men (and women) of Darley Abbey.

Remember them, and celebrate our freedom. Send me some happy photos of your celebrations - we need happy photos!



Saturday 9 May

Yesterday evening we sat down to a (rather large) Toad in the Hole and raised a glass to commemorate VE Day. I tried to wear grandad's waistcoat.

Grandad was Leonard Hoskison, and he served in the Royal Corp of Signals during the Second World War. He had started work at [Cambridge University Library](#) in 1933 - one of his first jobs was to help move the boxes of books from the old library behind the Senate House through to the new building on West Road. He also helped print all the labels on a massive press, not much different to that William Caxton would have known, and he took over the printing when the Printer went to War.

When grandad joined up he went into the Royal Corps of Signals as a teleprinter operator. I know nothing about his war service and I can't find a photo - all I have is the memories his wife Joan wrote (in 'Cambridgeshire at War', Jeffrey Barham, 1977).

"My husband used to write home long letters, including for the children, serial stories which were read over and over again. When he came home on leave, I was upset to find that the army dentist had taken out some of his front teeth and that he was also loosing his hair. The rough army uniform, the heavy pack, rifle and boots seemed so strange and ungainly on this gentle, peace-loving man."

"When the war ended, it was very difficult to wait patiently for almost two years before my husband was at last 'demobbed'. He had been in Belgium for several years and life seemed very strange and wonderful when he became part of the family again."

Family tradition says grandad made this waistcoat while in Brussels. He posted it to granny, who was not amused when this parcel arrived, a rather dirty, smelly piece of clothing. Only when she had washed it, did she realise quite how special it was.

Did you notice that comment - two years before he was de-mobbed. Two years (and we're getting impatient after a few weeks in lockdown)!?.Grandad went back to his job at the UL, then moved on to [Department of Zoology, Cambridge](#). My teenage memories included helping him dust the whale skeleton at [Museum of Zoology, Cambridge](#) and printing labels on the department's press. This is now in [Cambridge Museum of Technology](#) - I want to go and see it when all this is over.

Thanks grandad.





Sunday 10 May

These are my other grandparents, Albert and Frances Barham. Grandad died in 1965 when I was two, granny in about 1978. I know that during the War grandad was in a reserved occupation, and I believe he worked for Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. The hospital dates back to 1766, and has served the people of Cambridge ever since - I am very grateful for it. Grandad was one of those presented to the Queen when the new building was opened in 1962, so I assume he was a senior manager by then (though I doubt he'd have used that term). I have just purchased the history of the hospital from a book - more will be revealed. I wonder what it was like during the War, and whether (a couple of days after VE Day) he was looking forward with excitement to what a new National Health Service might mean.

I think he was also an ARP Warden - but my knowledge of "air raid precautions" is coloured by Warden Hodges in "Dad's Army". I don't think Cambridge suffered many bombing attacks, although when I went to school there was a row of terraced houses by Mill Road bridge where the centre houses were a lighter colour brick than those on the end. Mum told me that was where a bomb had exploded.

I think he was churchwarden at St Andrew's church in Chesterton - certainly that's where dad said he went as a child. He also said that he and his big brother Derrick would regularly test the church's stirrup pumps. The churchyard wall was a favourite place for American GIs to say "good night" to their girlfriends, and the virtue of many a good English girl was saved by my uncle, my dad, and a blast of cold water from the stirrup pump. It's a lovely church, have a look at the blog - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2018/03/01/chesterton-cambridge-st-andrew/>.

No doubt a good churchwarden would be in church on a Sunday Evening. It's a shame our political leaders don't realise that's the best use of a Sunday evening - Sunday is made for prayer, not politics. If we've got to "be alert" (whatever that might mean in the context of a virus) I suggest we start with Ephesians 6.18

"Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints."



Monday 11 May

Like many people, I am wondering whether moving to Scotland is possible. Let me take you to Fortingall, a village north of Perth - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2017/07/20/fortingall-perthshire-kirk/>

I have visited Fortingall twice. On Monday 5 July 1982 I caught the Post Bus from outside the Village Post Office at 0950 up Glen Lyon. Post Buses were a very sensible way of providing public transport to some very remote rural areas. There's some lovely film on youtube, and several European countries still run them. Needless to say, there are none left in Britain. The post van still drives up the valley, but it doesn't take passengers any more.

I took Julie to Fortingall in July 2017, en route to our holiday on Orkney. (We were going to Orkney at the end of this month, that's now been re-booked for 2021). The Kirk is lovely, and outside it has a yew tree. As Vicar of the oldest yew in Derby (in Allestree) I know about yews. Fortingall's is thought to be 5,000 years old (rather older than ours').

There is a legend that Pontius Pilate was born in Fortingall, following a visit by his father to the Caledonians as an emissary from the Emperor Augustus. There is no evidence of any Roman contact with this part of Scotland until AD 80, but it makes you wonder how a legend starts. Monks were at work in this area from the late 600s. The church survived the reformation, and in 1585 the parishes of Glenlyon, Kinloch Ranoch and Fortingall were combined – they covered an area of 300 square miles (and Allestree and Darley Abbey moan that they are combined when the churches are only a mile apart!).

The sacrifices of those who died in war are commemorated here. The Daily Record, 19 August 1940, reported

Grenade Tragedy at Kenmore

A North Perthshire landowner and a ship's captain were killed by the accidental bursting of a hand grenade at the week-end. The two-fold tragedy occurred during practical exercises in

grenade throwing by the Home Guard company at Kenmore, Aberfeldy. Two other members of the company along with Black Watch sergeant instructor were slightly wounded by flying shrapnel.

The two members of the Home Guard who died were: Major F.D. Mirrielees of Garth, the Company Commander, and Captain Donald McNiven, Kenmore, Aberfeldy. Major Mirrielees, who was about 60 years of age, served through the Great War. Captain McNiven was so severely injured that he died in Perth Royal Infirmary soon after admission. He was about 38 years of age and was captain of an L.M.S. Railway Company's pleasure steamer on Loch Tay.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.

