

PETER'S ISOLATION FACEBOOK DIARY  
TUESDAY 12 TO SUNDAY 31 MAY 2020

Tuesday 12 May

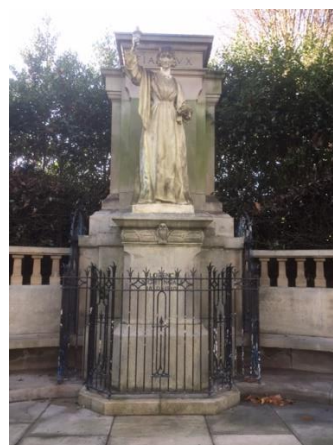
Today is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth Florence Nightingale. She was born in Florence, and they moved back to England the following year. One of her homes was Lea Hirst in Derbyshire and she is well remembered in our City - this is one of the three statues (I like the owl). The memorial, and I'm sorry my photo isn't straight, is in the Cathedral. There are photos, including the unveiling of the statue, on today's post from @DerwentValleyMillsWHS

We all know that Florence served as a nurse in the Battle of the Crimea and ensured that the soldiers were cared for. She fought with politicians and the military to improve conditions. I had forgotten that the British government got Isambard Kingdom Brunel to design a prefab hospital that was shipped out to the Dardanelles. Later in her career she improved nurse training, made nursing a vocation to be proud of, and fought to improve medical care for so many.

We need to listen to our nurses again. On Sunday, Dame Donna Kinnair, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing, responded to the Prime Minister's broadcast:

"Nursing staff across the UK are imploring the public to remember that this pandemic is far from over. Please think about our health and care workers, working under tremendous pressure, and respect the guidance being given. The Prime Minister has said it is important to ensure nurses and key workers have the protective equipment and testing they need. This has to be a priority. Until our members report they are getting all they need, it is hard to see how the lockdown could be relaxed further."

I want to get back to open churches - this was a lovely Choral Evensong earlier in the year when we had choirs of several cathedrals together at Derby. I want to start rebuilding our country and our shattered economy. I want a better country than we had before. I want an NHS that is more valued and better funded - we need more than clapping. As a patient (and a parent) in that NHS on more occasions than I care to remember, I have had to learned to listen to the nurses, to trust them, and to do what they say. I suggest we all need to do the same. Happy Birthday Florence.





Wednesday 13 May

Today Yesterday, as we marked the birthday of Florence Nightingale, I wrote "I had forgotten that the British government got Isambard Kingdom Brunel to design a prefab hospital that was shipped out to the Dardanelles." Time to get my collection of books out and do some research.

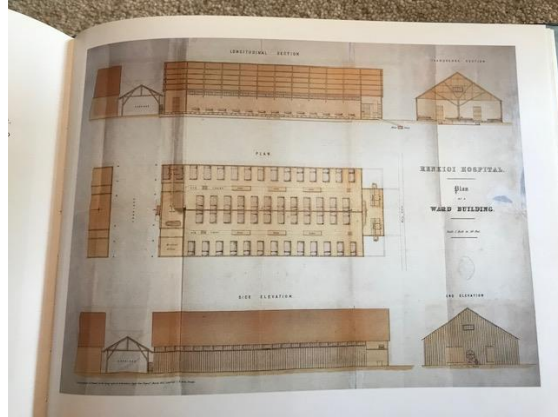
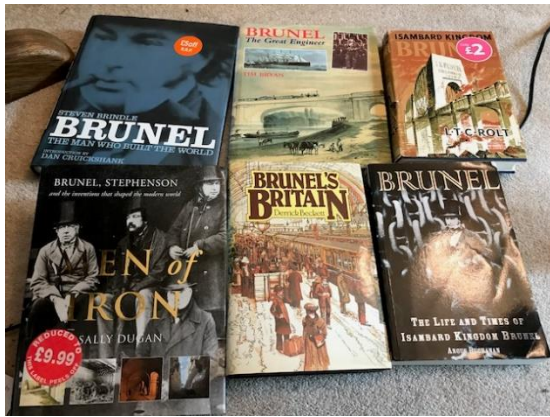
Benjamin Hawes was Permanent Secretary at the War Office. 34,000 soldiers had died in six months in 1854-5, out of a force of 56,000 in the Crimea. Nightingale regarded the government as incompetent, and he was the worst offender, her greatest enemy. Hawes was the brother-in-law of IKB, and he asked if the engineer could design a temporary hospital. Within a few days he had conceived designs for prefabricated timber buildings, every element of which was light enough to be carried by one or two men. Long wards, well drained and ventilated, were to be arranged opening off a long corridor, and the whole layout could be extended if needed. They could be erected by an unskilled workforce on more or less any flattish site.

The first consignment was landed in May, the hospital was built at Renkioi, and by Christmas all 1,000 beds were occupied. By then the war was coming to an end, "but in its short existence the hospital treated over 1,300 patients, of whom just 50 died, a fatality rate of only 4%, compared to a fatality rate of 42% in the vast barrack hospital of Scutari" (Stephen Brindle (2005), *Brunel, the man who built the world*, page 243).

Brunel was someone who could think big and bold, and a master of detail (we could do with him today). He wrote to his manager: "In each vessel is set a certain number of complete buildings, with every detail, including their proportion of water-pipes and drains, closets, lavatories, baths, etc, and a small amount of surplus material and tools ... you will be amazed to find also certain boxes of paper for the water closets - I found that at a cost of a few shillings per day an ample supply could be furnished and the mechanical success of the WCs will be much influenced by this" (Sally Duggan (2003) *Men of Iron*, page 164).

"What are you rambling about today?" asks my wife.

"Toilet paper in the Crimea" I reply.



Thursday 14 May

Yesterday we had toilet paper in the Crimea. Today is the Feast of St Matthias. How do I connect the two?

The story of Matthias is in Acts 1.15-26. There were twelve disciples, but Judas had betrayed Jesus. He needed to be replaced. They had two candidates "Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias". The disciples prayed, chose by lot, "and the lot fell on Matthias". You need people do the work - and I always hope that Justus didn't feel too upset.

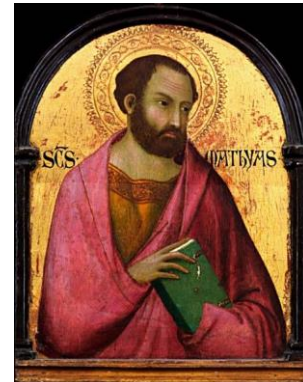
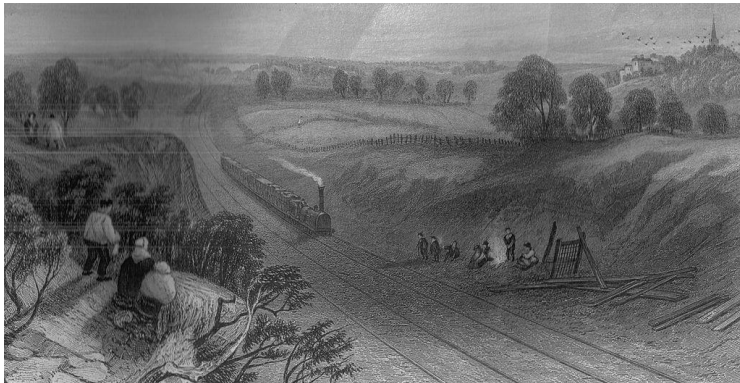
When Brunel had his hospital designed he "sent a message by telegraph to one of his assistants, John Brunton, who was working on a branch line in Dorset, simply requesting him to come to Duke Street [Brunel's office] at 6 a.m. the following morning. Brunton duly attended, and was shown in by the footman to Brunel's office where his chief, without so much as looking up, handed him a letter addressed to Hawes [Secretary of State for War] and ordered him to take it to the War Office at 10. Brunton had the wit and strength of mind to realise what the job would involve and demanded a rank with real authority" ((Stephen Brindle (2005), *Brunel, the man who built the world*, page 242).

You need a man who can take instructions, but also one with experience who can make things happen. John had been born in Birmingham in 1812 (his father had Derbyshire connections - I'll tell you about him tomorrow) and began his engineering career as a pupil at the works of Harvey & Co, Foundry in Cornwall. Later he joined the Stephensons on the construction to the London to Birmingham Railway (picture below at Harrow on the Hill), then the Manchester and Leeds line. Then he worked in Scotland, before coming south to work for the firm of Hutchinson and Ritson, contractors for Brunel.

After his work in the Crimea supervising the building of the hospital he went further east and was involved in the building of the Indian Railway system. People like Brunel were on the boards of these railways, all based in England, and they sent competent people like Brunton to get the work done. In 1857 he was Chief Engineer of the Scinde Railway building between Karachi and Kotri - it took 5 years to build the 108 mile line (slightly faster than HS2). He returned to Britain in 1863, continued as an engineer and wrote his memoirs (there's a copy in Cambridge University Library - I'm going to need a sabbatical to read all these books!). He died in 1899 in Leamington Spa. Julie has commented I'll now want to go and find his grave.



I bet Matthias had no idea where life would take him after the lot fell on him (I love that phrase). I bet Mr Brunton never expected to go to the Crimea when Brunel told him to report to his office. We did not expect May 2020 to be anything like this. We'll cope.



### Friday 15 May

John Brunton, born 1812 in Birmingham (read yesterday's rambling if you've no idea what I'm on about). The interweb (as my wife calls it) tells me his dad was William Brunton, born in Dalkeith in 1777. Williams' dad was a watch and clock maker, and I can imagine young William in the workshop. In 1790 he went to New Lanark to start work in the cotton mills there - Julie was doing some work about Robert Owen a few years ago, and we had a trip to Lanark. Fascinating!

Six year later he travelled south to Birmingham and obtained work at the Soho factory of Boulton and Watt. That made me pause - at the age of 19, travelling from Scotland to Birmingham (in the days before the railway). There were lots of Scots working in England, but it was still a huge undertaking for a lad of 19. Soho House is a fascinating place too, Julie and I went to a good talk there last year. Another place to go re-visit.

In 1808 he moved to the Butterley Works just down the road from Derby. I have walked some of the Cromford Canal, but have never got my head round what a huge engineering concern this was. Anyone recommend a good book? Apparently William's work here meant he was in contact with engineers like Thomas Telford and John Rennie. He kept his links with Birmingham and married Anne Button of Summer Hill in 1810, John was their first child. He became a partner in the Eagle Foundry in Birmingham in 1815. Between 1825 and 1835 he seems to have worked in London, then in Neath in South Wales. He died in Cornwall in 1851, aged 74 - so he never saw his son John make a name for himself in the Crimea and in India.

William was an inventive man. He worked on steam engines for boats, on boilers for works and mines. At this point my lack of knowledge of engineering is obvious, so you'll have to do your own research. He also produced a Steam Horse. The steam in the boiler did not drive the wheels, as people were unsure that there would be enough grip from a steel wheel on a steel rail. It drove two mechanical legs which pushed the loco. He took out a patent in 1813, and the loco's job was to work on the Crich Mineral Railway which connected the lime quarries at the top of the hill with the canal at the bottom, a gradient of 1 in 50. I do have a book on The Crich Mineral Railways (produced by the Tramway Museum in 1976) which contains a drawing. I have been meaning to have an explore of the old lines in this part of the world and

my exhibition on Mail by Tram is still on display at the Museum, just a shame no one can see it!

I have a plan to build a railway round my garden. I have two congregations full of engineers. Surely, between us, we can build a replica Steam Horse.

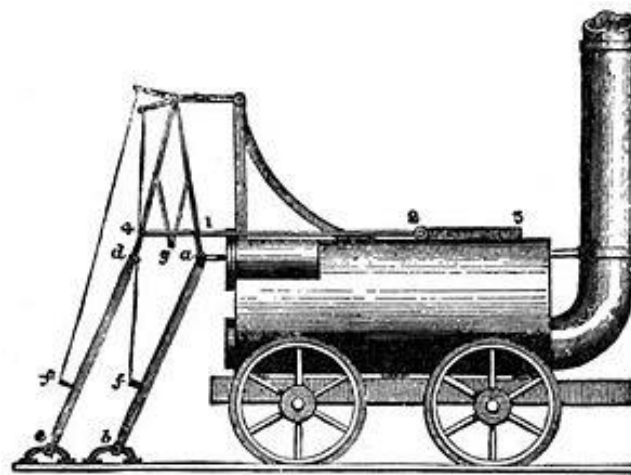
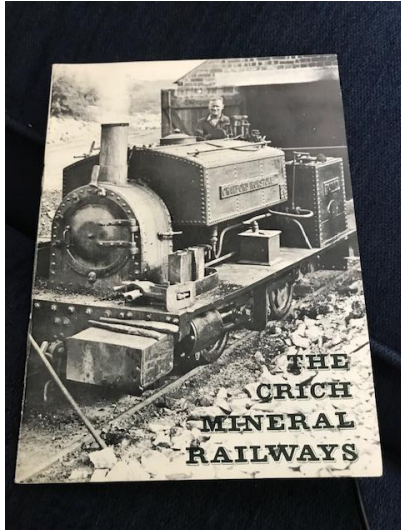


FIG. 1. BRUNTON'S TRAVELLER, 1813.



Saturday 16 May

A dozen years ago we had a series of Lent Addresses in Bury St Edmunds, and I did "God in invention", which gave me a chance to read books like Uglow's *The Lunar Men*, and biographies of fascinating people.

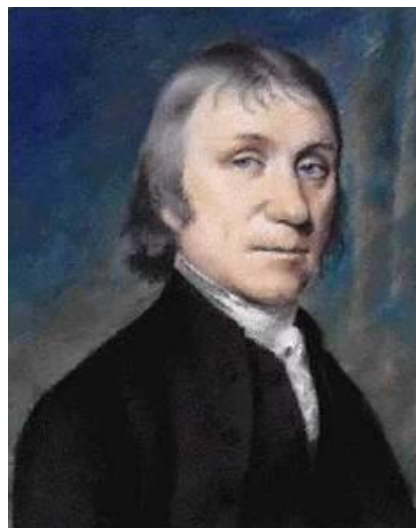
Yesterday I mentioned Boulton and Watt and the engineering life of Birmingham. James Watt was a Scottish Presbyterian. In 1755, at the age of 19, he walked from Glasgow to London in the company of a friend. Jenny Uglow writes: "[They] journeyed south down the Great North Road, carrying their Bibles, refusing, like staunch men of the kirk, to travel on

the sabbath, and tut-tutting at the ceremonies and the chattering of the clergy in York [minster]" (page 29). Ten years later, back in Scotland, he was struggling with the question of how to improve Thomas Newcomen's engine and the answer came to him on a Sabbath day's walk. He had to wait until Monday before he could work on the answer. Ten years after that, working on more improvements, he was struggling with bad workmanship and the limits of technology: "Of all things in life," he lamented, "there is nothing more foolish than inventing" (page 244). It seems to me that all inventors have to have patience and faith, just as much as they have to have vision.

Joseph Priestley, the man who discovered oxygen, was a man who took his religion very seriously. He was a dissenter and for him, to quote Uglow, "exploring electricity, magnetism or chemistry meant uncovering the workings of Providence in nature. Such learning opened men's eyes, allowing them to question authority and cast off the chains of the past" (page 71). Priestley himself once said "I bless God that I was born a dissenter, not manacled by so debasing a system as that of the Church of England, and that I was not educated at Oxford or Cambridge" (page 71).

Later in life he became a Unitarian minister in Leeds – Unitarianism was the most rational and open of all sects, proclaiming only belief in God and arguing for toleration for all. He was one of its leading spokesmen, but Uglow comments "he could not win: scientific friends ridiculed his faith and Christians damned his materialism" (page 169). In 1780 he became a preacher in Birmingham - "in the pulpit he is mild, persuasive and unaffected ... his sermons are full of good reasoning and sound sense" (page 406).

A decade later riots in Birmingham saw his home, his meeting house and much of his scientific work destroyed – the fire wouldn't have spread as far but the Vicar of St Martin's had made sure that the key to the fire engine shed had gone missing. The Church of England has not always been supportive to invention, inquiry and free-thinking – although some of us try.



### Sunday 17 May

25 years of ministry, and a new experience for a Sunday morning - St Edmund's JACK (Sunday School by another name) on zoom. 11 kids, half a dozen parents, Karen and me. I was surprised how well it worked. I did one the other day with the bishop and 50 odd clergy



(normally we get a dozen clergy for our monthly Chapter, it's amazing how they all come out of the woodwork when the bishop joins us!), and one of my standing committee has met by zoom - I got told that I wasn't enough of a Sergeant Major as I tried to chair it.

In our churches we are very good at moaning about the fact we have no children - and, to be honest, in the 30 odd years I've been leading churches, they've always moaned. Yes, we haven't got the huge numbers that we may have had in the past. I remember one old boy in Lackford in Suffolk 25 years ago who said "when I was a child we went to morning service, and then we went to Sunday School in the afternoon." I asked him how his parents got him to go to church twice. "Peter", he replied, "there were seven children in a two bedroom farm cottage. Sunday afternoon was the only time mum and dad got to themselves." Then he paused, "that's probably why there were seven of us."

There is much to celebrate. In one church we did Sunday School on a Wednesday afternoon. In Ponteland we had Penguins - 4 pm on a Sunday afternoon. That was a good time and we had fun - but it was a lot of hard work. The photo is the display we did for the Jubilee in 2012. In St Eds Cathedral we had many young people doing music, but we worked with them in many other ways too. We had a Sunday School and occasionally I managed to escape the service and join them. Most years they would do a pageant or two - once I had a lad dressed as Samuel Morton Peto (famous Suffolk engineer - I'll ramble about him at some point). We also had PYG, the Performing Youth Group, there must be some embarrassing photos somewhere. Several pyggies follow me on facebook - hello to you all.

Here we have Sunday groups in both churches - thanks to Karen and Rachel for organising them. We have a monthly All Age Worship, though the way the rota works, I rarely get to lead them. Thanks to the team, and to Julie, Clive and Melonie, for their work on them. We have a Toddler Group - thanks Caroline. I get to do the Christenings - I was going to baptise five today. Meeting families, meeting babies, getting to know them, seeing them grow - it's one of the best parts of my job.

Here's Blair and Quinn with their rainbow mobile. Remember, we are here - I cannot imagine being "locked down" with my kids, and I am amazed how you cope. Let me know if there's anything we can do to help.



## Monday 18 May

My ramblings went off in an engineering direction last week when I mentioned Isambard Kingdom Brunel. As this Thursday is Ascension Day, we 'll have a change of theme this week - but we can let Isambard move our thoughts heavenward today.

One nice story. On one occasion the Dean of Bristol asked him to examine some defects in the fabric of the Cathedral. Brunel was a very busy man, but he agreed: “to give a couple of hours for a cursory inspection to form some opinion of the subject. ... I can be at the Cathedral at 5 o'clock on Tuesday morning next, having to leave Bristol by train to Exeter at 7.50” (Buchanan (2002), Brunel, page 61).

Can you imagine any Dean (or any other cleric, myself included) agreeing to meet an architect at 5 a.m.?

There is ample evidence in Brunel's diaries and his other writings to tell us that he took his church-going seriously, as seriously as anyone else of his class and status. He did his best to keep his Sunday free of professional commitments and supported his local church and minister financially. His eldest son, also called Isambard, became an ecclesiastical lawyer and Chancellor of the Diocese of Ely.

In a letter of 2 February 1858, Isambard Kingdom Brunel writes to his son Isambard: “Finally, let me impress upon you the advantage of prayer. I am not prepared to say that the prayers of individuals can be separately and individually granted, that would seem to me to be incompatible with the regular movements of the mechanism of the Universe, and it would seem impossible to explain why prayer should now be granted, now refused; but this I can assure you, that I have ever, in my difficulties, prayed fervently, and that – in the end – my prayers have appeared to me to be granted, and I have received great comfort” (Buchanan, page 214).

I like Brunel!



## Tuesday 19 May

Sorry the rambling is late today. It's been a mixture of a day - some lovely people on the phone this morning sensibly finding solutions to problems I hadn't foreseen, balanced by

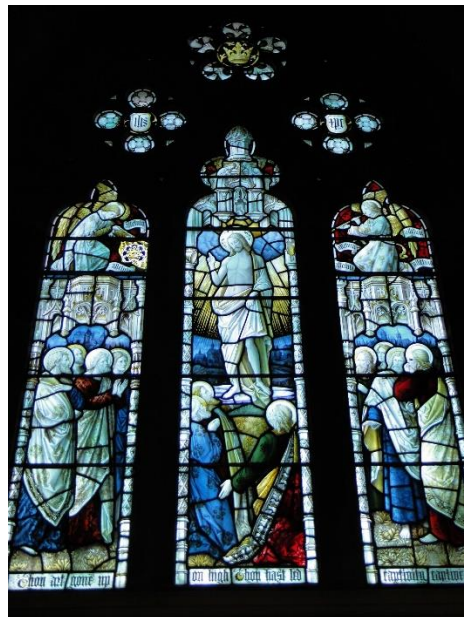
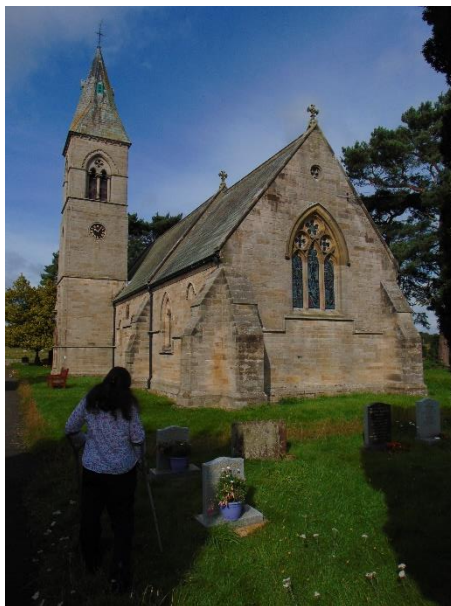


someone else telling me we should be doing something I think is absolutely stupid. There are times it is good to be an Anglican and be able to say "the rules state"!

Then I took the funeral of our friend Peter. Not the celebration of his life we would have liked - I have no doubt that church would have been full if we could have met there - but it was a celebration of life, faith and love. A privilege to lead it, to know what really matters. Once again my thanks to funeral directors and crematorium staff - professional and friendly as always.

It's Ascension Day on Thursday - when the church celebrates the end of Jesus' earthly ministry - Luke 24.50-63: "Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God."

I love this east window - Holy Saviour, Milbourne. It was my other church when we were in Northumberland. A place of worship, laughter and friendship - the privilege of doing this job. It is also a place of sadness - Julie is standing by the graves of Theo (died 2010) and Gareth (died 2013). It has not always been easy to bless God in this place, on other occasions this is one of those places where I've caught glimpses of heaven.



Wednesday 20 May

Today's Ascension image is the base of the font at Rothbury in Northumberland

- <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/.../rothbury-northumberland-a.../>

. 1664 is the date of the bowl, the base is much older - it is probably the base of an Anglo Saxon cross. That means it must be the oldest image of the Ascension we have anywhere in Britain.

I love that link - from disciples on a mountain, to worshippers over a thousand years ago, right through to the 21st century. I don't suppose that those disciples ever thought they would

be carved in stone somewhere north of the Roman Empire, and put on facebook which is read in parts of the world they never knew existed (hello Clare and Joyce in Singapore, and hello everyone in Allestree and Darley Abbey)

If you'd like an Ascension Day service, it's on the front page of the church website - [www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk)



#### Ascension Day, Thursday 21 May

Ascension Day - as someone else put on twitter, the day Jesus starts working from home.

I had a trip to the Crem this morning for the funeral of Ruth. She was a regular at the Wednesday morning service when we first came to Derby, then went into a Nursing Home. For the last couple of years I have been taking her communion every few years - so I have worshipped with her the last two Ascension Days.

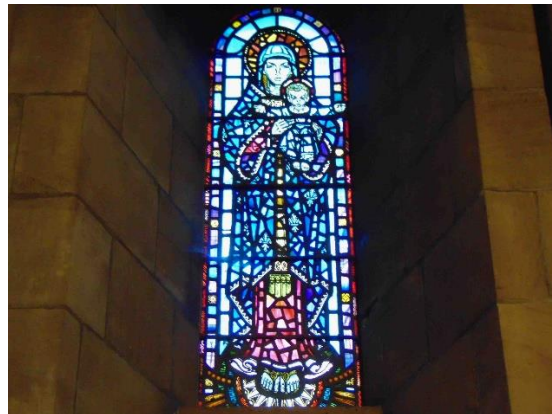
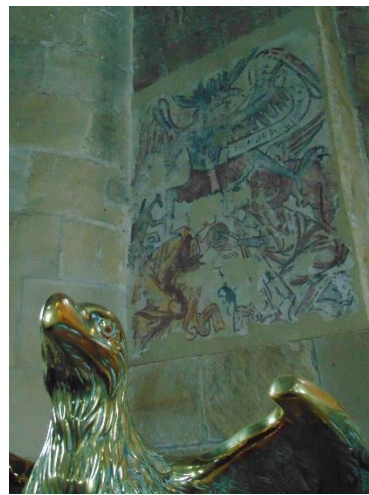
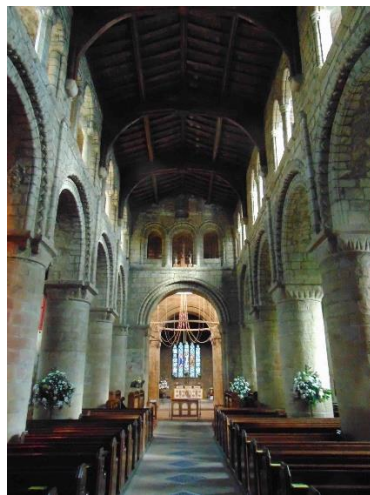
For many years she was involved with her husband John in the musical life of the church in Melbourne. I visited the church last November, and printed out a copy of my blog for her - <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/>. Melbourne is one of those churches which makes you look up. Up to the Norman arches, to the carvings, the glass, the wall painting. It is a holy place where you feel a sense of awe.

It has been suggested that the originally Abbey in Darley Abbey would have been somewhere similar, and it is a bit depressing that that church was so thoroughly destroyed no one is certain where it actually was. Yes I can feel awe on the top of a Derbyshire hill, yes I know God is everywhere, yes Jesus is not confined to a building, yes faith continues even when a building goes - but I still want us to cherish our buildings and the worship, music and friendship which brings them alive.

We came into the Crem to Ed Sheeran's "Supermarket flowers", listened to John Rutter's "The Lord bless you and keep you", and left to Widor's Toccata. Thank you Ruth, rest in peace and rise in glory.



So, I'll sing Hallelujah  
You were an angel in the shape of my mum  
When I fell down you'd be there holding me up  
Spread your wings as you go  
And when God takes you back  
He'll say, "Hallelujah, you're home."





Friday 22 May

Twitter tells me that today is World Sherlock Holmes Day. I thought I would go and see how many Conan Doyle books Julie has got. Unfortunately @northernreader's collection of fiction is in the same room as Hannah's belongings, all the stuff waiting to go to Yorkshire, so I can't get near the Ds. Mystery number 1 is why my daughter needs so much stuff, but the solution is elementary - she is her mother's daughter.

Let's look at the DVD collection instead. We seem to have all 14 Basil Rathbone films. They were released between 1939 and 1946 - 16 hours of watching. 16 DVDs of the series with Jeremy Brett (1984-1994), that's 41 episodes. We have just watched the story called "The Solitary cyclist". Ellis Dale plays the mad Vicar. Mystery number 2 is which cleric he reminds you of.

We have the 2002 film of "The Hound of the Baskervilles", though we don't have the 1959 film with Peter Cushing. We also have two copies of the 2011 film "Game of Shadows", both of them still in their plastic wrappers. Mystery number 3 is why we have two copies. Julie says the answer is "Gareth". If anyone would like to buy a copy I'll sell you the one at £9.99.

We only have one disc of the Benedict Cumberbatch/Martin Freeman version, just three episodes. Apparently there were 15 episodes. Mystery number 4 is why we don't have the whole series. Julie (a vocal critical, not just of books) says that after an episode where he explains suffragettes to a group of women, she gave up.

Which leaves my favourite. Elementary. Sherlock and Joan are based in New York, and solve all sorts of crimes, many of which are rather gruesome. Most DVDs I watch while fiddling on the laptop, this a series where I turn the laptop off and concentrate. The stories are complex and involved, with a positive view of Sherlock's recovery from addiction. They also have Lucy Liu as Joan Watson. Mystery number 5, why does Peter enjoy this series so much?

Have a good Bank Holiday weekend. The weather forecast is not good and I can't go anywhere. Now, what shall I watch?





### Saturday 23 May

I was working this weekend - a baptism and two sets of railway films today (and, yes, that is work - fun work, but work none the less). Just two services tomorrow, but morning and evening mean a day away is not possible. Monday was free, so we would have escaped - probably a Yorkshire day with Hannah.

None of those are happening, so I have a free weekend. I woke up to the news that the Prime Minister's advisor went to Durham during lockdown - so a large part of me says I'm loading the car now, driving north, and I no longer care.

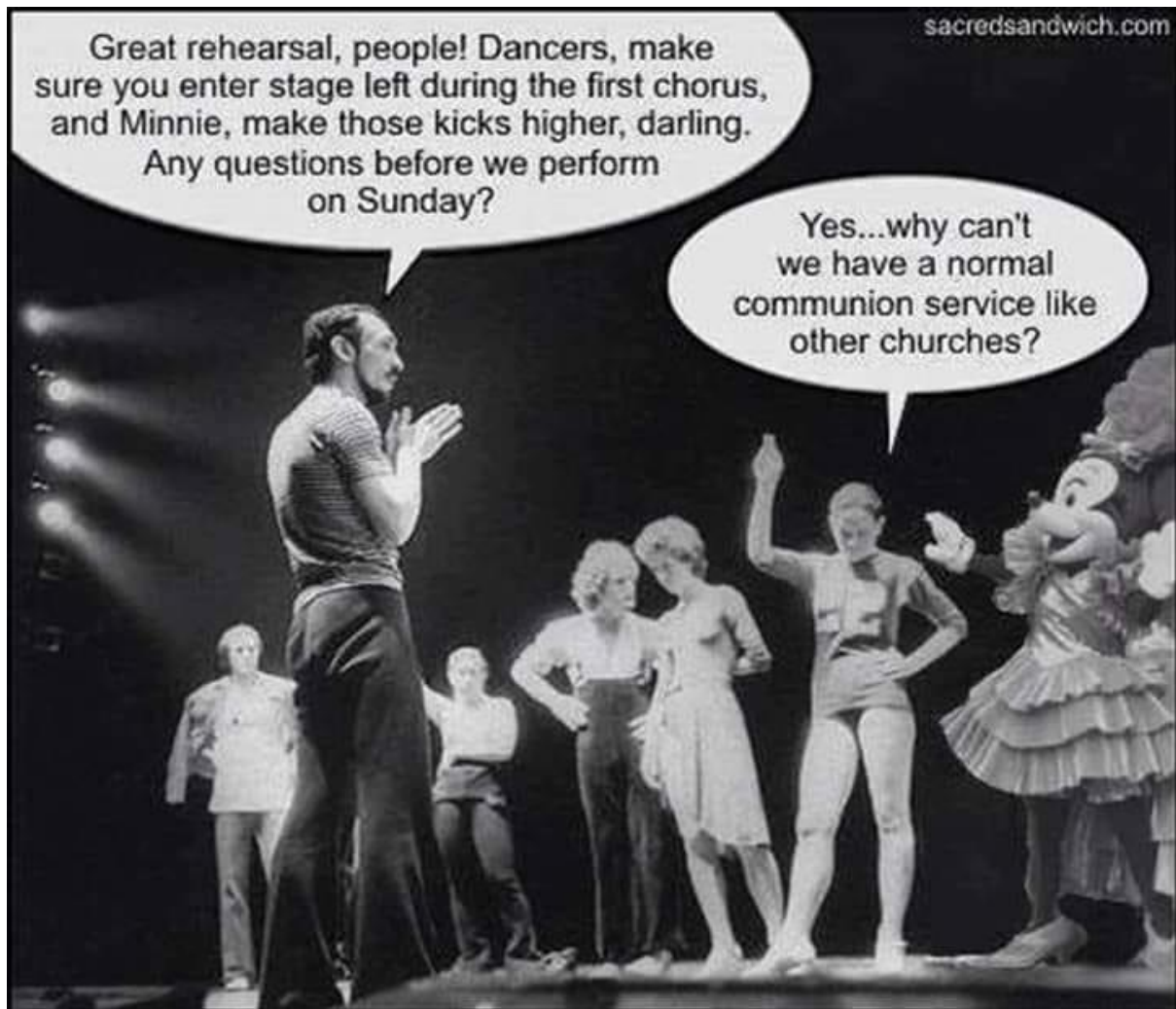
In the last three days I've been told that the rules - specifically the ones that keep church buildings shut - are a result of paranoia. I've been told that I should be leading worship in my garden and inviting everyone in. I am getting fed up of the "social distancing won't be a problem in your church ha ha ha" jokes, and the one about "you're not even working on a Sunday now".

Press reports say that Number 10 are "not even remotely bothered by the story". Part of me wishes I could develop a skin that thick. I wish I could be so confident in myself, my faith, my ministry, my church, my success that I could care so little.

But I'd rather be someone with a church facebook page that can discuss Sherlock Holmes, where one of last year's brides feels happy sending me a friendly text saying "if you ever need anything you know where we are xx", where the undertaker offers to bring some bottles round to the garden for a bank holiday party (I haven't told her I don't drink), where two of my congregation phone to tell me how much they enjoyed the Ascension Day service, and

where I'm swapping daft pictures with one of the church wardens on whatsapp. You'll be glad to know the first Sunday back is sorted (see picture below).

Enjoy the weekend. Stay home, stay safe.



### Sunday 24 May

It is obvious that we must have a trip to County Durham. The Anglo Saxon church at Escomb is well worth the drive. <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2019/11/01/escomb-county-durham-saxon-church/>

650 odd years after a bunch of disciples stood on a mountain top and watched Jesus disappear, the Gospel had spread to the north of the Roman Empire, had survived the end of that Empire, and now was being rooted deep in the midst of the community. This isn't a monastic settlement, like the one Bede was writing in just down the road, this was a church to serve the people, in the midst of their community.

There it has stood. Through Vikings, Prince Bishops, the building of the Stockton-Darlington Railway (terminus nearby at Witton Park), the coal mine and iron works, the decimation of industry in the late 1900s and the building of a circle of 1960s houses around it, and now it



survives through Covid. To quote their guide “In its most simple and basic form the survival and continuity of this little church speaks of God’s eternal presence in the midst of our human frailty and transience.”

Since none of us will drive to Durham today, I encourage you to make a virtual visit. Look up and marvel at the height of the building. Look for the reused stone from the Roman fort at Binchester, The stone next to east window in the north wall proclaims “Bono Rei Publicae Nato”, To the man born for the good of the State - we could do with a few of those at the moment. There's a fascinating display in the porch - this is a Christian site, a heritage site, looked after by the community, open (without charge) to all, just borrow the key from a hook outside one of the houses. This is history and community, this country I love, at its best.

It was a horrible day when I visited. The rain was lashing down. I liked this prayer that was on display, though I don't know its source.

As the rain hides the stars,  
As the autumn mist hides the hills,  
As the clouds veil the blue of the sky,  
So the dark happenings of my lot  
Hide the shining of thy face from me.  
Yet, if I may hold thy hand in darkness,  
It is enough,  
Since I know,  
that though I may stumble in my going  
Thou dost not fall.



Monday 25 May 2020

Since we're (virtually) in County Durham, let's pay a visit to Jarrow. Not the most beautiful part of County Durham, but today is the Feast Day of the Venerable Bede. I'll quote from the book (and website) Exciting Holiness.

Bede was born around the year 670 and was given to the monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Wearmouth when he was about 7 (we'll go there later in the week). He then moved to Jarrow, where he lived as a monk for the rest of his life. Although it seems he never travelled further than York, his monastery - first under Abbot Benet Biscop and then Abbot Ceolfrith - was a centre of learning, and Bede studied extensively. He used all the resources available to write the most complete history of Christian England up to the year 729, as well as commentaries on books of the Bible. He was renowned for his monastic fidelity and his love of teaching, and was fondly remembered by his pupils, including his biographer. He died peacefully in 735.

The church is a short walk from Bede metro station (that sounds an idea - how many Saint stations are there? Can I visit them all when this is over?).

An ancient church, high, peaceful, with Evetts glass and "The Risen Ascended Christ" by Fenwick Lawson - see my blog <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2017/10/25/jarrow-tyne-wear-st-paul-and-jarrow-hall/>

Next door, Jarrow Hall - what was Bede's World. Anglo Saxon farm, village and Bede Museum. The replica house reminds us of what they lived in - and then you look at the churches they built. Wow!

Here is a Bede quote that seems to fit the news today "If history records good things about good people, the thoughtful hearer is encouraged to imitate what is good; or if it records the evil of wicked people, the godly listener or reader is encouraged to avoid all that is sinful and bad, and to do what he knows to be good and pleasing to God."







Tuesday 26 May

While we remain in County Durham, let's go to the church at Monkwearmouth (the place where Bede started his monastic life). St Peter's church is just a few minutes walk from St Peter's metro station (so that's another one to add to my list of "Saint stations". I found out yesterday that the four Barry stations in South Wales are all "Saint stations" - the list is going to be quite long). The benefit of being near a station is that if your eyesight is not good, you don't have to get behind the wheel of a car in order to travel here. Your children will be safer on the metro too.

I visited at the end of 2015 - and remember the lovely welcome (and scones) we were given. The blog is at <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2016/01/01/monkwearmouth-tyne-wear-st-peter/>.

The monastery was founded in 674. I was fascinated by its size, 600 monks in Jarrow/Monkwearmouth, and the fact it had a huge library. The church has a replica of a page from the Codex Amiatinus. To quote Bede "Coelfrith was a man of acute mind, conscientious in everything he did ... He double the number of books in the libraries of both monasteries ...



He added three copies of the new translation of the Bible ... One of these he took with him as a present when he went back to Rome in his old age, and the other two he bequeathed to his monasteries." I can't help thinking I have a wife who has doubled the number of books in her libraries! According to the guidebook, each volume would have measured 515 mm x 340 mm x 230 mm, would have weighed 35-40 kg, and the skins of 515 calves would have been needed to produce the vellum for its 2060 pages. Coelfrith headed south in 716 with his bible for the Pope. He died en route at Langres in France, and the book disappeared. In 1782 it was rediscovered in an Italian monastery at Mount Amiato. I seem to remember that in 2016 local children each drew a page of the book, and a replica was sent to the Vatican - a great project!

There is some lovely glass by Leonard Evetts - in the east window we have Aidan, Bede, Peter, Paulinus and Cuthbert. Real leaders who are remembered (and revered) centuries after they lived.

I also liked Noah's Ark. Keep smiling - one day the storm will pass, the rainbow will appear, and justice will prevail.



Wednesday 27 May

Today was the day of The Great Escape. Julie had a blood test at the hospital in Belper, so she finally left the confines of the house for the first time since 13 March. She was nervous

about going - at one point I offered to take her arm and they could get the blood from that while the rest of her stayed at home.

I did wonder whether all the alarms would go off as she passed through the gate, but all was well. We drove to Belper, found the re-located blood test department, they took what they needed, and we came home.

It got me thinking about phlebotomy. Apparently it comes from the Greek phleps meaning "vein," and tomia, "cutting off" (so I was right about taking her arm). I remember some lovely people when our son Gareth was ill - especially the blood team at West Suffolk Hospital who checked him every week while he was on Warfarin before his heart transplant (we got those appointments down to a fine art). They were so nice to a teenage lad who was facing something so major. So many in other hospitals too - and we tend to forget them, they are just people who pop in, do their job, and go.

I've been a blood donor since I was 18, and for the last few years have been giving platelets every few weeks. Lovely people in the Newcastle donor centre and in the Sheffield one. Thank you.

I've often thought about the amazing transplant team who sorted out the heart for Gareth. Who talked with the donor's family and got their consent, who harvested the heart and transported it to Great Ormond Street, who sorted out the ambulance which got us from bed in Bury to theatre in London in less than two hours. I have rarely thought about those who made sure there was sufficient blood available for his operation (and he needed 0 negative). Thank you blood-people and blood donors everywhere.

If you can donate - please do. <https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/how-you-can-help/donate/>

When we drove home from GOSH after his transplant Gareth phoned Classic FM to request "The Great Escape".

I wondered about leaving Julie at Belper Hospital and making my own escape .... but thought I'd better not.



Thursday 28 May

I mentioned the other week that I had purchased Rook, Carlton & Cannon The history of Addenbrooke's Hospital Cambridge (CUP 1991) and I am working my through it. I have to admit that some of the details of 19th century operations make me very glad I live in the 21st century, and that some of the politics, in-fighting and incompetence of the 19th century look very similar to that of the 21st.

John Addenbrooke was born near Dudley in 1680, joined Catherine Hall (now St Catherine's College) in 1697, and became a Fellow in 1704. Apparently William Stukeley the antiquarian was a Cambridge and a medical contemporary. From 1711 Addenbrooke seems to have practised medicine in London, and he died in 1719, at the age of 39. There is a memorial plaque to him in the Chapel of St Catherine's College (I'll go and pay my respects when this is over). Sadly there are no pictures of him.

Addenbrooke left £4,500 in his will for the foundation of a hospital, but the lawyers got involved, and it wasn't until 1766 that the hospital took its first patients. You could only be admitted if you came with the recommendation of one of the subscribers and it you fitted the medical categories. When you realise how hard it was to get in, and what the other options were (death or the workhouse) you give thanks for the NHS.

On page 135 there is a fascinating section on how the coming of the railways changed the hospital. "The Secretary was ordered to write to the Directors of the Eastern Counties Railway informing them that on Wednesday next a Dahlia Show, partly in aid of hospital funds, would be held in Cambridge and suggesting that the Company might run an excursion train to increase the attendance at the show, as the numerous accidents during the construction of the their line had put the Hospital to a very great expense." I feel some research for the Great Eastern Journal is called for.

In 1896 "the Cambridge Branch of the British Women's Temperance Association was granted permission for their 'small hand coffee cart' to stand in the corridor of the Out-patients Department 'in charge of a very respectable young man'" (page 162).

I remember the 24 hour coffee bar at Guy's Hospital (sticky buns at 2 in the morning), the canteen at GOSH (extra sprouts for Christmas lunch), the Time Out restaurant at West Suffolk (superb food, picture below), and a selection of lovely volunteers in hospitals across the country. Thank you.



### Friday 29 May

So last night our country clapped once again in support of our NHS and Key Workers. Today Julie gets a letter telling her that her NHS Orthotics service, formerly provided by Derbyshire Community Health Services, will now be provided by a company called Blatchfords. Another piece of privatisation I didn't vote for. How much longer before we no longer have an NHS left to clap for?



Today's Church Times has a major article 'Lockdown could change the church permanently'. It includes this paragraph "Being prevented from 'going to church' might liberate us from our habitual routines to 'become church' all over again - or, perhaps, for the very first time. Such rejuvenation may help to release us, at last, from the prison of our church building, which, for many, have become shrines to the past which not only soak up energy and resources, but also perpetuate concepts of a division and hierarchy harmful to a mature understanding of who we are."

Blake and Natalie, Seamus and Emily, David and Karen didn't know they had booked a prison to get married in this weekend. The 120 people who would have come to St Matthew's for our Joint Service on Sunday morning don't think they are coming to a shrine to the past - and, yes, we are managing to break down the division caused by the A38 dividing two parishes.

Many people will find different ways to worship this weekend, but I do believe that all of them want to come and meet their friends in their church as soon as they can, and they know too that it is not "their" church, we care for it for our communities and for generations to come. I believe we make people welcome and draw them deeper into the love of Christ.

The folk who are in the Church Hall today preparing for the Pre-school to reopen on Monday are very grateful to a church which rents them a lovely hall, and is working with them to enable them to reopen. Many of the families of our pre-school come to these churches to worship during the course of a year. I wish they would come more, I wish they would find a deeper faith, and I'm sure we can do more to help and support them - in the church building and outside it - but don't you dare tell me that the ministry to which I was ordained almost 25 years ago is just "habitual routine". It isn't for me, and it isn't for the vast majority of people I work and worship with.

Have a picture of a rose in my garden. I shall now go outside, with a bowl of ice cream, and calm down!



Saturday 30 May 2020

A summer Saturday sat in the garden. I can't remember the last time we both sat in the garden for a complete day just reading books. I am thoroughly enjoying A Single Thread by Tracy

Chevalier, a wonderful novel with a story based on the broderers at Winchester Cathedral. Julie has written a review on her blog - <https://northernreader.wordpress.com/> - and you might get a review from me later in the week. It isn't a Cathedral I have blogged, the last time I went was in 2006 for the Dean's installation. I'll tell you that story sometime.

As I said yesterday, we had three weddings in the diary for this weekend. Tomorrow afternoon I was marrying David and Karen. David is one of our organists at St Edmund's. He won't mind me saying that he is not a "normal church organist" - not many of them have a Compton cinema organist of their own. David has two - one in Belper, and one in our church hall. He has recorded a short video for us of appropriate music ("I'm [not] getting married in the morning"), but doesn't seem to have included Berlioz's "March to the Scaffold". You can watch the video on the front page of the church website - <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/>. We send our love to them both, and to the other couples, and our thanks to all our musicians.

You can also download a Pentecost service order, some thoughts from Clive, two church magazines, and (if you go onto the "Worship > Worship while out buildings are closed") page (and scroll down to the bottom) you can watch a video from me for the youngsters at school.

Or you can sit in the garden and look at the gardening you ought to do. Enjoy!



### Sunday 31 May 2020

Never before has Pentecost started with a phone call from my hairdresser. Can she book my next appointment for Monday 6 July? Perhaps we can have a sweepstake on the weight of beard she will remove in five weeks time!

I follow lots of people with disabilities on twitter, as well as lots of medics. It seems incredible to me that an announcement about people with medical conditions coming out of lockdown is made on a Saturday evening. There seems to be little scientific or medical consensus, little information, and a huge amount of politics. We were told we'd be fortunate if we kept the death toll below 20,000 - the official figure today puts it at 38,489 (and the reality is much higher). But we'll open car showrooms and horse racing tomorrow. I am not planning to buy a new car or follow the racing, so I will wait a bit longer if you don't mind (and if you do mind - tough).

Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. I have to believe that the power of God is

greater than the power of evil - but, whether I look at this country or what's going on in America, that is not easy to believe.

I have spent several hours in the garden. I've done some work on the bed which has the Edmund roses. Edmund may have died at the hand of pagan Danes in 869, but his legacy says something about the power of God being greater than the power of evil.

I put straw under the strawberries, and the smell takes me back to my teenage years helping out on the farm across the road. Mervyn and Enid (farmer and wife) were pillars of our local chapel - and I've worshipped there on quite a few Pentecosts. If we had 30 in the congregation it was a good day, but that little chapel is still going - and their website shows the Spirit is at work even though the building is closed.

Today we would have worshipped this morning, married David and Karen at 2, and been on the road north by 4. A Premier Inn was booked near Falkirk, and we had the ferry booked to Orkney tomorrow afternoon. But if we had gone on holiday today, I wouldn't have been here when my strawberries are ready for eating - which won't be long now.

