

# Facebook Ramblings – 16 to 30 September 2020

## Wednesday 16 September

This lovely photo was tweeted by Westminster Abbey this morning - taken by Liam, one of their security beadies. I have suggested to Caroline Audley that she could be Church Administrator and Security Beadie, but as church keys (who has them/who had them/which one fits which lock/etc etc) are one of the headaches of her job, she didn't look too impressed. I've written before about attending the Abbey for the Memorial Service for the men of HMS Barham. Two other special memories of the place.

Many years ago I had been in London for the day and decided to go to Evensong. I worked my way through the crowds of tourists, found a verger (or was he a beadie) and said "Is Choral Evensong happening shortly?" This chap, who had obviously had a long day, gave me a huge smile and said "Yes, Father, come with me." We went up into the Quire, and he gestured at the stall labelled "Lord Mayor". "You might as well sit there" he said, "he won't be in tonight."

It was a lovely service, but I sat there thinking "I recognise that chap sat opposite." One of those times when you can feel the cogs in the brain going round - and it wasn't such an old brain in those days. Eventually I realised it was Chancellor Kohl of West Germany. At the end of the service I asked my Beadie friend if I was right. "Oh yes, he's quite a regular" I was told.

On another occasion I was in London for a National Church Buildings Conference. Some fascinating speakers, including the Abbey's archaeologist. In the afternoon we went down into the Abbey itself to have a closer look at the Cosmati pavement. Laid down on the orders of Henry III in 1268 it is incredible. Have a read of <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/.../history/cosmati-pavement> to find out more. The tourists were standing behind the rail, we were invited to take our shoes off and stand on the pavement itself.

When the conference was over I stayed on for Evensong - the world felt safe and secure. Here we are in September 2020 when it feels much more fragile - but I am glad to say that Evensong is back being sung every day and "Everyone is welcome at these services, free of charge".



Thursday 17 September

Ages ago I offered a paper on "Women in the Great Eastern Railway Magazine during the First World War" to a Women and Transport conference to be held in Swindon in a couple of week's time. Now of course it's on zoom, which is a shame - I was looking forward to a day in Swindon (that's a line you don't often hear). Details at <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/> - and it's only £6 for what will be a fascinating day.

I am re-using research I did while writing the history of the War through the pages of the Great Eastern Railway Magazine, which was the staff magazine for the Company which ran the trains out of Liverpool Street into East Anglia, and the steamers out of Harwich across the North Sea.

I'll be looking at the effect the War had on women, how many of them came into the workplace. We have pictures of ticket checkers, "very good with the nippers, the ticket nippers that is", or level crossing keepers, of cleaners and porters - and reports of some who died in railway accidents.

The Women's Page gives hints on fashion and practical advice to cook and keep house, while coping with the children and a job. In March 1916 it is noted that the GER Horticultural Society will now accept ladies (employees or wives of employees) into their ranks. "Many of the lighter labours of garden or allotment can be done by the willing hands of wife or daughter" - I hope Sarah J. Brown takes note of this.

Some GER women, especially those who served on the ferries, spent a lot of the War interned by the Germans, others served on the ambulance trains in Continental Europe, or worked in the large Company Hotels which became hospitals.

Many waited for news - we cannot imagine what they went through. Every month the Magazine printed "The Toll for the Brave". In March 1915 it records that Frank Henry Elms, a lifter in the Wagon Department at Temple Mills, lost his life in action on 5 January. "He was a reservist of the Essex Regiment and had been married only three days when called up for active service." Anne Newman did a bit of research (thank you). Frank Henry Elms married Henrietta Frances Weller at the church of St Mary the Virgin in Leyton on 2 August 1914. Presumably he was called up on the 5th. Just let that sink in, married for three days.



## Friday 18 September

It's a weekend with a Wedding - love to Peter and Sophie being married tomorrow. Last year we were at a wedding - the most special one of the year (decade). Happy Wedding anniversary weekend to Harry Barham and Sarah J. Brown. Love to all our friends in the North East as you cope with lockdown again.

This weekend we are celebrating our Patronal Festival at St Matthew's Darley Abbey - his Feast Day is on Monday. Usually we have a morning celebration, then a Festal Evensong with a glass of something afterwards. Not this year, but we will have Communion on Sunday morning at 10. (St Edmund's has Morning Prayer at 10).

Many years ago we had our Patronal Festival in St Edmundsbury Cathedral. It was a year when the Feast of St Edmund fell mid-week, so we transferred it to the Sunday beforehand. The Dean of Ely was invited to be our guest preacher. He arrived about 9.35 for a 10 am service, came into the vestry and said "why have you got an orchestra rehearsing for the service? Is it a special day?" Our Dean looked at him with surprise, "it's St Edmund's Day". "Ah", said the Dean of Ely, "no one told me that." He managed to get the word "Edmund" into his sermon about a dozen times, so we don't think anyone noticed.

I was really efficient, and put this Sunday's service together last Monday. On Monday evening I sat in St Matthew's and wondered why the altar frontal was red (for a saint) rather than green (for Ordinary time, this time of the year). The realisation "Ah, yes, Matthew" was followed by "O damn, that Order of Service I did today, doesn't mention Matthew." You can see (and use) the second version which is on the church website (when I post it, and a St Matthew sermon, at some point tomorrow). Matthew was a tax collector, and this is a carving at the Millennium Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum.

I also prepared the poster for an Open Air service in a couple of weeks at St Edmund's - it's attached below. You will need to book for this one.

We escaped today for a couple of hours to Hardwick Hall. Enjoy the photos.



## Saturday 20 September

Today should have been a most enjoyable day - we had a great wedding. It was even broadcast worldwide by zoom - I have suggested that now David is an international organist he should receive a higher fee! I'm glad we could bring some joy and happiness into the world. Love and **best wishes** to Pete and Sophie.

But while I'm watching the couple being photoed after the service, my phone buzzes. A call from someone asking if there is any chance of a food parcel please, as they have no benefit coming in for another four weeks. It is difficult being upbeat for one, when someone else phones in such despair.

I know the poor have always been with us, but how did we get to be a country where there is such a division between rich and poor? Gareth Bale will get £220,000 a week from Spurs in addition to the £380,000 he will receive from Real Madrid. The Prime Minister is, according to the Times, struggling on his salary. I wonder how much Dido Harding is being paid for heading up the failed track and trace system.

Most of our Care workers earn less than the real living wage of £9.30 an hour. Let's all go outside and give them a clap.

### Sunday 21 September

Thank you everyone for your support after yesterday's post. To reiterate, we collect for the Hope Centre in Derby on the first Sunday of each month. We can receive produce in either church at that morning's service, or it can be left in Primrose's Book Shed at the Vicarage at any time. The items the Hope Centre would really appreciate are large boxes of Weetabix, variety pack sizes of cereals, tinned meat pies, tinned fish, tinned vegetables, tinned fruit, longlife milk and fruit juice, small jars coffee, cooking sauces, pasta sauces and any toiletries. I don't normally have to do food runs myself, but the gentleman who asked yesterday was very grateful today.

It was also good to have it reported that the work Rotary is doing to help find clothes for refugees is being well supported - and to see bags of clothes being passed on in church. Nor will it be long before we (together) start collecting for shoeboxes. it is all being done safely - and good to have something positive in the middle of all the mess.

We had positive worship this morning. At St Matthew's we celebrated our Patronal Festival - Matthew's Feast Day is tomorrow. Usually we have music, cake and alcohol, but not this year. Yet we had 38 people, ranging in age from about 10 to about 90. and people seemed to appreciate the service. You can read my sermon on the front page of the church website - [www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk)

I used this picture of Matthew from the Lindisfarne Gospels, and remembered the Gospels coming north to Durham in 2013. (They live in the British Library and every few years they deign to send them North). 2013 is not a year I remember with any enthusiasm - Gareth's health started failing in the summer and he died on Boxing Day - but when I looked back, I realise that there were a lot of good things that year - <http://www.pontelandstmary.co.uk/archive/2013-events.html>



Perhaps 2020 won't seem as bad in 7 years time.



Monday 21 September

Happy Feast of St Matthew. For those of you who aren't local, St Matthew's Darley Abbey opened 201 years ago - there are lots of lovely photos of our Bicentenary Celebrations last year at <https://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk/st-matthew-s-bicentenary>. So yesterday we celebrated our 201st Patronal Festival - probably the first one in 201 years with no singing, no choir, and no cake.

The church was built by Walter Evans. He owned the mills on the River Derwent, built the village and now he built a church. You can decide whether it was a philanthropic act - he was providing a place of worship so villagers didn't have to walk to St Alkmund's or St Edmund's, and paying for a Vicar to help with their spiritual (and no doubt physical) needs. A year or two later he would build the village a school. Or you might be a little cynical and suggest that building a church was a way he could exercise control over his workers on the Day of Rest as well as the rest of the week. The church tower has a clock with faces on the sides facing the village and the Mill - no excuse now for being late for work.

Walter Evans dedicated the church to St Matthew. He was a tax collector, called by Jesus from the seat of custom. This carving at the National Memorial Arboretum depicts him with his money bags. You can decide how positive a dedication this was - was Walter remembering that the source of his wealth, the source of everything, is God, and he was expressing his gratitude? Was he dedicating himself to use his money wisely - as we say every week at communion "all things come from you, and of your own do we give you." Did he choose Matthew as he's the Evangelist who gives us Jesus' Great Commission - "go into all the world and make disciples of all nations".

Or were his accounting practises not as good as they ought to be? Was he expecting a big tax bill - and decided that dedicating a church to the Patron Saint of Tax Collectors might get him some divine aid. Whatever his motives, mixed as they always are, we're very grateful to him.

Money, wealth, tax - all part of life, and, like all of life, they should be offered to God. That was true for Walter Evans, and remains true for politicians, business leaders, and all of us, 201 years later.



Tuesday 22 September

I have had a soft spot for Southwell Minster in Nottinghamshire ever since I spent a month there on placement from Lincoln Theological College in 1993. Julie and I drove over yesterday on the first day of our holiday. We found that much of Southwell is shut on a Monday, but we had a lovely walk through the town and along the old railway.

The station is now called “The Last Whistle” and the station master’s house (now a B&B) stands on the other side of the road. There is a good write up and a lovely photo at <http://www.nottsheritagegateway.org.uk/places/southwell.htm>. The line ran from the junction at Rolleston (on the Nottingham-Newark line) to Southwell and was opened in 1847, so it is quite an early line. In 1871 it was extended to Mansfield, but apparently that part of the line only lasted for passengers until 1929. After that the Southwell service went back to a loco and carriage running up and down from Rolleston Junction, until it was closed for passengers in 1959 and freight five years later. Now it is a lovely walking route, well surfaced for Julie and Morgan, so we did about 5 miles.

Then we met Helen for lunch. She was one of our lecturers at Derby University and is now Community Engagement Coordinator for the Minster. We were discussing disabled access for some of the outside spaces, and this gave us an opportunity to explore the gardens and parks which surround the Minster. The garden is beside the former Palace of the Archbishop of York, which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and was wrecked during the Civil War. I had forgotten that the Palace’s most famous occupant was Cardinal Wolsey. Here he held his last frantic meetings in 1530 to try and extricate himself from his failure to secure Henry VIII a divorce from Catherine of Aragon.

I said in yesterday’s sermon that I am going to keep myself sane in this time of Covid by doing a distance-learning course entitled “The Reformation in Ten Books” from York University. So, without realising it when I planned my visit, I can put today down as a Study Tour.



### Wednesday 23 September

Our day out yesterday took us to High Peak Bookshop - we were there as it opened and J came home with a box of books. (Now, that is a surprise).

Then further north to Tideswell, and a walk round the Cathedral of the Peak. Interesting that this church was open and unstaffed - sanitiser available and a one way route in place, but that's all. We had the church to ourselves. I'd not been before, and there is plenty to look at. A full blog will follow.

The carving of the baptism is obviously a pre-Covid baptism. Now I am not allowed to touch the baby, so last week I had to make the cross in oil on her forehead using a cotton bud. When it came to the baptism itself, mum held the baby and I poured water on her head using a shell rather than my hand. (My biggest problem was not soaking mum in the process).

The young lady on the outside of the church needs a lesson in how to wear a mask - perhaps the devils either side are ready to take her away for a mask violation.

On to Castleton and a tour of St Edmund's church - that'll make an article for the next church magazine (and will be on the blog in the next few days). Then we went for an explore of the village - I failed to get Morgan down any of the caves, or over Mam Tor, but it was a lovely day.



### Thursday 24 September

As part of my campaign to keep the old brain cell going, I have been doing a 6 week "Stories of Art Online" course from [National Gallery](#). 1250-1400 - as historians are wont to say "not my period".



We're in Italy, dealing with people I have vaguely heard of - Giotto, Duccio, Daddi and d'Arezzo. We're in cities I vaguely know and could just about find on a map - Florence, Siena, that part of North Italy. One of the regrets of my life is that I have never really explored Europe - and now it looks as if I'll struggle even to get to Kent.

I asked why this part of the world developed such amazing art in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries - the answer was peace, trade, money, strong local government, the building of vast Cathedrals. In England we were still recovering from the War between Stephen and Matilda, dealing with the aftermath of King John and Robin Hood - hardly the peace and security we needed to develop art.

Last night we looked at this painting, "The Virgin and Child enthroned" by Margarito d'Arezzo, and looked at the different images and stories. Then we moved on to discuss symbolism. I managed to hold my own because I understand some of the stories and some of the symbols - the keys of Peter, sword of Paul, man of Matthew, lion of Mark, bull of Luke, eagle of John, wheel of Catherine.

Then they threw a curved ball in with this image by Mantegna. I thought Martha, getting on with the cooking when she should have been listening to Jesus. No, she's the Vestal Virgin Tuccia, and we know this by the fact she is holding a sieve. We were told the story that she proved her virginity by carrying water in a sieve from the River Tiber to the Temple. Then we were shown a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I by Quentin Metsys the younger, and she is carrying a sieve to show her virginity.

The next person who comes to the National Gallery with me (or the National Portrait Gallery or indeed any art gallery) can expect to be bombarded with lots of information they really don't need - and I will never look at a sieve in the same way again.





Friday 25 September

Yesterday we headed north to Harlow Carr, the lovely RHS gardens at Harrogate. Morgan means that we can explore further than we could when I was pushing Julie around (not that anyone dares push my wife around). [Pops Barham](#) came too (and found a friend).

We found some red mushrooms, an amazing wasp, and gorgeous flower beds. We did about 6 miles in all, so deserved tea at Betty's.

I'll tell you what we did today at some point - we even got on a boat underground. Tomorrow we might find another garden - since I have a weekend off I don't want to waste it. I will spend a couple of hours getting an Order of Service and a mini-sermon on the website. A reminder too that we have an Open Air service next weekend, but only if enough people sign up for it.

I've had to spend some time today telling two couples that they can now only have 15 at their weddings, and two families they can only have 6 at their baptisms. I hope these restrictions make a difference - and just wish a bit more forward-planning had been done. Everyone with half a brain cell realised that when when we pushed people back to the offices, kids back to school, and students to University, there would be a problem.

I am very worried about those youngsters at Uni. While Hannah settled in well to Durham (I remember a postcard in week 2 which simply said "I'm a princess and I live in a castle") and Harry to Sheffield (with Sarah just across the Pennines), Gareth did not settle well in London. He got through the first term by coming home every two or three weekends and I dread to think what might have happened if he had been trapped in a Hall of Residence struggling to make friends.

If you know anyone at Uni, if you have contact with any students, give them a ring this weekend - and if you are a praying person, some prayers would be useful too.



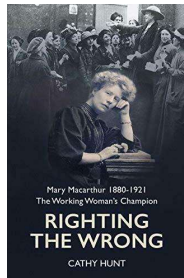
Saturday 26 September

Yesterday we drove to [The Black Country Living Museum](#) in Dudley. It's been 25 years since we last visited, and we had a wonderful day. Understandably the bus, trams and trolley buses aren't running, but we had a chat with a bus driver who was fascinated by Morgan's clever wheels.

We sat on the front row of St James School and recited our times tables and alphabet. The young lady I took to school was a swot, telling the teacher all about the King in 1912, but she's useless at mental arithmetic.

I chatted to the lady beside the Mission caravan and sat in the Methodist chapel (you can find reflections on both of those in the Thoughts for tomorrow on the church website - [www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk)). We learned about Mary Macarthur, the working woman's champion - [Friends of the Women Chainmakers](#) - I now have her biography to read (I need a holiday to read all these books).

We then had a boat ride [Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust](#). I quite expected to have to leave Julie with a book, but their boat George has a lift (so they swapped the boat they had in service for us). I was tempted to give the skipper a tenner to take her into the tunnel while I had a quiet hour with a book, but I'm glad I didn't. It's a great trip. The tunnels were originally built to get the limestone, so you have tiny canal tunnels leading into huge chambers - well worth a visit. Both of these sites give you free admission for a year. We'll be back! The fish and chips were excellent too.





## Sunday 27 September

Final day of holiday - and we headed north. [Brodsworth Hall and Gardens](#) (English Heritage) is less than an hour's drive, just off the A1(M) at junction 37 by Doncaster. We went about 3 years ago and don't remember the gardens as being anything special - today we were amazed. A riot of colour, beautifully tended, grass immaculate, hedges and bushes well trimmed. Just a shame the sun didn't shine.

One of the volunteers told me they have three gardeners who just got on with it in lockdown, they wanted to be ready to open as soon as they could. As soon as the volunteers came back, they got stuck in too. There is a one way system round the garden, and all worked well. They had four musicians giving a concert at 12 (and at 2), with people sat on the lawn. Rather encouraging that everyone just sorted themselves out and sat socially distanced without having to be marshalled into place. Great to hear live music again.

They do a good bacon roll too. That probably undid all the good that a 4 mile walk had done. (I see that [Harry Barham](#) did a 13 mile run at lunchtime - whose son is he?)

Stopped at [Conisbrough Castle](#) on the way home. Good visitors' centre, an ipad Julie could use since even Morgan can't get her to the top of the Keep, a fascinating place to explore. Apparently the church has an Anglo Saxon foundation - I'll need to go back when it's open. Conisbrough is not a tourist town, but I recommend the castle. They also have an interesting selection of chalices in the English Heritage shop - wonder if I can get away with this one on a Sunday morning?



## Monday 28 September

O good. Back at work. By the time [Caroline Audley](#) and I have had a discussion about how we might do Christmas, I'm tempted to go off and be a hermit. There's a nice little cottage at Brodsworth that would make a good hermitage (as long as they supply me with a bacon roll



every lunchtime), or I could hide on a narrow boat at the Black Country Museum (fish and chips daily please).

This coming Sunday (4 October) we'll have services with a Harvest theme in both St Eds and St Matts at 10 am, and will be collecting for the food bank at the Hope Centre. You can also leave stuff in Primrose's Book Shed at the Vicarage.

At 2.30 pm we've got an Open Air service with a Harvest/Autumn and Christian Aid theme planned for St Edmund's churchyard. Please bring something to sit on, and a flask of hot drink/cake/picnic too. We'll sit socially distanced, in our little bubbles, and I won't be allowed to eat your cake. It will only be a short service - half an hour at most - we can't sing together, but I'll try and make it something positive. It would be helpful to know you're coming - drop Caroline in the Office an email - [steds.stmatts@outlook.com](mailto:steds.stmatts@outlook.com) - please. You are welcome whichever parish you live in!



## Tuesday 29 September

Michaelmas - the Feast of Michael and All Angels. Here's a few Michaels I have found on my journey - you can find them all on my blog - [www.northernvicar.co.uk](http://www.northernvicar.co.uk). In the Outer Hebrides I had a marvellous day on the isle of Eriskay. This statue is outside the Catholic church. It was erected in memory of Father Calum MacLellan, who served the island faithfully for many years.

In Felton, off the A1 north of Newcastle, there is a lovely window. When you're looking at a window, often one commemorating the dead of the First World War, if the figure has wings it is Michael, if no wings then it's George.

Outside London, the church in Amersham - at the top of the Metropolitan line - is dedicated to Michael. The statue of St Michael over the West door is by Joseph Cribb (1892 to 1967) who was Eric Gill's first apprentice from 1906-13. It is quite striking.

The priest, poet and writer Malcom Guite writes: "The Archangel Michael is traditionally thought of as the Captain of the Heavenly Host and, following an image from the book of Revelation, is often shown standing on a dragon, an image of Satan subdued and bound by the strength of Heaven. He is also shown with a drawn sword, or a spear and a pair of scales or balances, for he represents truth, discernment and the light and energy of intellect, to cut through tangles and confusion and to set us free to discern and choose."

Just what we need!



### Wednesday 30 September

Today is the day for a party - we re-started Wednesday morning communions (and had a dozen people in church) and my [www.northernvicar.co.uk](http://www.northernvicar.co.uk) blog is 10 years old!

We were living in the North East and I was on the DAC for Newcastle Diocese. The Church of England is its own planning authority and the Diocesan Advisory Committee is the planning committee. We look at everything that affects the fabric of the building - something as major as a new window or a new loo, down to the removal of a couple of pews to make a bit more space.

When the paperwork arrives for meetings, it is always good to know which church we are discussing, and to pay a visit if possible. I started taking photos, and [Northern Reader](#) suggested a blog would be a good way to store them. She was, of course, quite right. Ten years later I have posted 635 times. I've widened the blog from just churches, and still find a good number of people read it. It takes me back to lovely places, and is very useful when I need photos - easy enough to find three Michael photos yesterday.

On 30 September 2010 we visited St Helen's church at Whitley Chapel, just south of Hexham - [Whitley Chapel Parish Hall](#). I chatted to a lass about to get married (Happy anniversary (I hope)) and enjoyed my visit. We then went to Choral Evensong in Hexham Abbey and had a curry at The Duke of Wellington in Riding Mill.

Our life has changed in ten years, the world has changed in ten years. It's not all depressing - now I can go on the parish website, watch part of last's Sunday's service, and send love and prayers to Andrew and the congregation. (With apologies that in the blog I called him Adrian - there is something profound about one's mistakes being realised after a decade!)

