Facebook Ramblings
December 1 to 15

Tuesday 1 December

Last year while in Norfolk we had a lovely Christmas visit to Blickling Estate NT. We had gone for the Bookshop, not realising that the house and garden were open and decorated for Christmas. My photos do not do it justice - have a look at their website https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blickling-estate/features/christmas-at-blickling-2020

David Redfern, one of our St Ed's organists, has been to the Astoria Centre, Barnsley, and has recorded some Christmas music on their Compton Theatre organ. In the midst of all the gloom, enjoy - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9g5Lh5GDtA&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2jsnLoktvluBPgeTRdLxaBUU59QPHPU__k4LdyzgP8OKwgjIKf5_sK85E

Note to self, I need a trip to Barnsley next year (that's a sentence I've never written before).

Wednesday 2 December

I seem to have spent the whole day on the laptop. A Zoom service is ready for Sunday at 11.30 am, and a sermon with pictures produced as well. The link will be on the church website www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk tomorrow - come and join us. I've also produced the Orders for the services in the churches - please be aware that, as we are in Tier 3, the rules are that we must not mingle in church, face coverings need to be worn, and we cannot sing. We are a High Risk area, so Zoom is safer.

Last year we were on holiday - and I'd give anything for a holiday now. What made it an even better holiday was that we were on holiday in a railway station! Station Cottage in Acle in Norfolk - http://www.holidayrailway.co.uk/ - luxurious, well-equipped, and trains outside the window. Convenient for Norwich, and Norfolk is a lovely county.

The trains did not disturb us. The last one came through to Yarmouth about 2315. But one night we were in bed about 0100 and I heard a train outside. Obviously it was necessary to get out of bed to see what it was. It was unnecessary to take the duvet with me.

Thursday 3 December

Two years ago Pops Barham is with Julie Barham and Peter Barham. These two have been married for 35 years today [now 37 years]. They have been through more in those 35 years than anyone should have to handle in a lifetime, and yet somehow, are still utterly inseparable, vaguely sane, and incapable of sitting still for a nice photo together without getting the giggles or pulling silly faces.

Literally whatever me or my delightful siblings have thrown at them (and between us, we have covered most things you could imagine), they not only put up with us, but have never ever given up on any of us even for a second, however bloody stupid or difficult we have been. Everything I know about love, I learnt from these guys. I am beyond lucky to have them as parents, and (although they'll never admit it), they are beyond lucky to have each other. Happy Anniversary, you wonderful pair. Now, about my overdraft...

Diocese of Derby - We have just heard the awful news of a serious fire at Mackworth All Saints. Please pray for all those who are fighting the blaze, the vicar Jacqueline Stober, PCC, congregation and the local community.

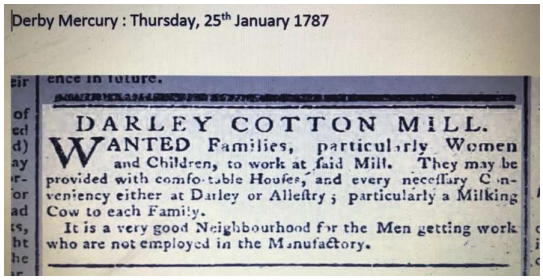
Friday 4 December

The news from Mackworth church, destroyed by fire yesterday, is depressing. Generations of history, a holy place. Let's hope that it reminds everybody that these buildings mean a lot - it's easy to say "we've got too many churches we need to close some", but reality is difficult. Like all our heritage, if churches are to survive they have got to be supported. It is easy to say "it's lovely", but that has got to be transferred to hard cash and a huge amount of hard work. Not just cash and work to rebuild, but then cash and work to maintain and keep going. Many heritage attractions know how much easier it is to get the money to do capital projects than it is for running costs. And we need people to step up and take responsibility - one of my churches only has one churchwarden instead of the two we should have.

Fascinating history this afternoon with a talk Legacy Makers and Helen Louise Bates about the millworkers of Darley Abbey. They group have used lockdown to do a lot of research, and produced a mass of data linking together Baptism Registers, Wedding Registers, Burial Registers and the Censuses of 1851, 1861 and 1871. It was great to be able to follow individuals - where were they baptised, when did they come to Darley Abbey, what jobs were

they doing, where did they live, how many in a house, at what age were the children working, how old were they when they die, etc. etc. etc. When the talk goes onto their website I'll post the link - well worth watching.

We thought about the reasons why people moved, the counties they came from, the routes along which families moved, and how the factory system developed. It was a story about people - the mention of one family where, on census night, she was in Darley Abbey where she worked at the Cotton Mill, her husband was on a narrow boat in the basin at Camden Town - presumably he had a load of fabric from the Boar's Head Mill en route to shops in London.


Derby Mercury : Thursday, 25th January 1787

DARLEY COTTON MILL.

WANTED Families, particularly Women and Children, to work at said Mill. They may be provided with comfortable Houses, and every necessary Conveniency either at Darley or Allestry; particularly a Milking Cow to each Family.

It is a very good Neighbourhood for the Men getting work who are not employed in the Manufactory.

Saturday 5 December

One of the most important news stories last week was the announcement by the Office of Rail and Road of the station statistics for 2019-20. Apparently a chap called Jay Symonds is the "Responsible statistician" for the document. I don't think my grade in O level maths qualifies me for his job.

Covid affected the last fortnight of the statistics, but it is good to remember a world pre-disease. Waterloo was the most used station with 86.9 million entries and exits. Derby had 4.2 million.

The least used is Berney Arms in Norfolk, with 42. In its defence the line through it - from Yarmouth to Reedham - was closed for 11 months, but 42 was such a wonderful total that Anglia TV went for a news report. Enjoy watching it:
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=126525259116089&external_log_id=5a3c1693-488c-41f9-bce5-3a107deb47a9&q=anglia%20tv%20news

Julie and I went to Berney Arms when we were students. We walked from the station down the path to the windmill. I left my rucksack with the lady on the desk - in those days she would have worked for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, the forerunners of English Heritage. We climbed to the top of the Mill and had a good explore. By the time we got down there was a note on my rucksack "Gone to lunch. Please lock mill when you leave". Cambridge University Railway Club used to have an evening meal at the pub once a year, and got friends at British Rail to put a "Stop order" on the last train back from Yarmouth so they could get home. Those jollifications came to an end when legislation changed and you cannot stop a train at a station with no lights after darkness has fallen.

One of my tasks for 2021 will be to visit Berney Arms again – Rob Newman is daft enough to come with me.

After I've done the services tomorrow (remember we're on Zoom at 11.30) I will tell you about the three Least Used Stations which are visitable from Derby. Julie is so excited. If you are bored this evening, you might like to guess where we'll go.

Sunday 6 December

Two physical services this morning - 30 people at each. St Matthew's looked lovely with all the candles lit. Then more people on Zoom - one of the congregation found my sermon really interesting. You can watch the Zoom service on youtube - the links is on www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk. Play it to your children or grandchildren and see if it has the same effect.

If that fails, the rest of this Facebook Ramble may put you to sleep. Yesterday I told you about the station usage statistics from the Office of Rail and Road and suggested a trip to Berney Arms in Norfolk. Three stations are nearer Derby.

Least used station number 2 is Elton & Orston in Nottinghamshire, with a total of 68 entries and exits during the year. It is between Nottingham and Grantham and has two trains a day – 0625 departure to Nottingham and 1710 arrival from Nottingham. So it looks like I need an evening trip. Get off at 1710, walk the couple of miles back to Aslockton (where Thomas Cranmer was born), drink in a pub, and train home. Perhaps we can get a group together for an evening out and slew the statistics.

Least used station 4 is Havenhouse, on the same line, Nottingham-Grantham-Skegness – 84 entries and exits a year. Four trains a day, two in each direction. I could arrive at 1617 and leave at 1751 – but what does one do at Havenhouse for an hour and three quarters? If you look at a map, there is literally nothing there. Perhaps I'll have a trip to Skeggie, then walk to Havenhouse for the train ride home.

Least used station 6 is Polesworth, which is on the West Coast Main line between Nuneaton and Tamworth. It has 96 passengers a year which is amazing because it only has one train a day – the 0639 from Nuneaton calls at Polesworth at 0650 and gets to Tamworth five minutes later. There is no train in the other direction as the station footbridge was removed in 2005, so you cannot get to the other platform! The world is mad. Perhaps I'll get up early and have a morning jaunt. Derby to Nuneaton, Nuneaton to Tamworth via Polesworth, Tamworth back to Derby. No, that won't work. You can't get to Nuneaton by 0639.

I have the answer. Next term Julie is doing a course on George Eliot, and there is a display about her in Nuneaton Museum. I will suggest a romantic night in the Premier Inn in Nuneaton. Then I'll get up early and catch the train to Polesworth. There's a bus back from Polesworth to Nuneaton, then we'll have breakfast and go to the museum. What more can a girl ask?

Monday 7 December

When I was a lad, Mr Crick had the Post Office in Barton. It was across the road from home, and I remember going there by myself from quite a young age. Mr Crick never got the hang of decimalisation in 1971 and retired soon afterwards. Then the Post Office moved to Conkers Store, the other side of the village.

As Vicar of Cockfield, one of my first parishes, the Post Office was four doors down from the house. I called in most days. You purchased stamps, you got your Family Allowance, you sorted so much official paperwork there - and they sold chocolate. The postmaster was named Ralph, I can't remember his wife's name. They arrived about the same time as we did. A few weeks later we were having a chat outside the shop. A delivery driver stopped and asked for directions. When neither the Postman or the Vicar could help him, he drove off in disgust.

Within a few months both of us had learned our way round out patch and got to know a lot of people. I learned that the postmaster and the lass who delivered the mail, did a huge amount of social work round the village, as (I believe) did the Vicar. I had four villages, Sharon (the current Vicar) has six.

I have just checked the village website and the Post Office is still open. "Along with your usual grocery needs, we specialise in Suffolk ham, Lavenham's fresh bread, Rattlesden's eggs, Maynard's apple juice, Len Smith's honey and our very own Ralph's sandwiches, quiche and preserves." Add it to the list of places to visit once Covid is over. (I want to go to Balamory as well).

Today I went to Belper Post Office. I think the last time I went to a PO was in July. I went to Belper as I need a new driving licence. That needs a photo and they can't do it in Allestree or Duffield. The queue was long, but they had all the counters open and it was moving fast. Sue was charming, efficient, and assures me she got a good photo of me - I'll see when the new licence comes back.

Tuesday 8 December

The Church Office was a hive of activity today (as it usually is, I hasten to add). I designed the Christmas card, with photos by Rob Newman and Lizzie Maher. The printer had done its work (and it didn't jam on the card we used - that's a Christmas miracle for a start). Caroline Audley had put 400 cards in envelopes - memo for next year, self-sealing envelopes - and she got the labels printed. As she printed, I stuck, and then I sorted.

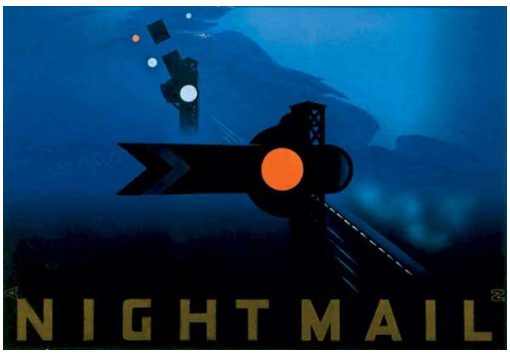
When I grow up, I want to be a postman. I want to work on the TPO, sorting my letters as we sped through the dark.

> "This is the night mail, crossing the border,
> Bringing the cheque and the postal order"

to quote the words of W.H. Auden, which I was, of course, reciting while I worked. Caroline Audley had no idea what I was on about, so you can watch it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmciuKsBOi0

Sadly the Travelling Post Offices no longer exist, but I can imagine. Northern Reader says she doesn't mind me imagining, but if I make her watch the film again she will scream.

The last TPO came through Derby on the night of 10 January 2004. I found three photos on the web taken by Patrick Barrett. He didn't reply to an email and, whenever I've given my "Mail by Rail" talk I have asked if anyone knows him. If you do, please help me make contact.



Wednesday 9 December

For the first time in months, I went into Sainsbury's in Chaddesden. I never enjoy supermarket shopping and the use of deliveries, local shops and our nearby farm shop is one of the nice things for me about the pandemic. There have been comments made about how our Society has divided into those of us who stay at home and order on line, and those who have to go to work, working long hours, often for dreadful money, to make the deliveries.

I was picking up a webcam, another technological gizmo to add to the laptops and everything else we have. For me, all this technology has opened all sorts of horizons in lockdown. I've even learned how to get youtube to play on the television, so I am currently watching a driver's eye view of the new Elizabeth Line, Crossrail under London. An amazing piece of construction, and I'm riding on a Derby-built train - just a shame the whole project is £4bn over budget and opening is now delayed until 2022 (four years late). We should say that the Bombardier trains were finished on time - let's have a photo of one of them! I want a proper ride rather than just a virtual one.

A report on Channel 4 news about destitution in Britain was heart-breaking. Families who, at the beginning of this year were in work, found Covid meant losing jobs. Furlough payments were not always available, Universal Credit does not reach everyone who needs it - and it takes five weeks for the first payment to be made. If you have little savings - and we had little savings when our kids were small - and don't have family who can help, then those five weeks can knock you so deep into debt that you will never recover. Destitution is a reality -

and I should read the full report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation - https://www.jrf.org.uk/

I have always been a Vicar in rich places, and I really don't have any experience of working with people on the margins. We work in our churches to support people in our communities. We work in our churches to support people in other communities in all sorts of different ways, and I am so grateful to so many who do so. I know that many of our congregations (and my children) spend their day jobs working in and with communities outside our "posh bits", and part of my job is to give you the space, strength and encouragement to keep going. I try and challenge those in authority and leadership, though it is difficult to see how things can change - truth and justice seem so far away.

As I finish this rather depressing Rambling, Hannah Barham-Brown is putting the world to rights on BBC Radio Leeds. She'll get it sorted!

Thursday 10 December

All the Church Christmas cards are delivered (or with the people to deliver them). The link to Sunday's Zoom service is on www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk. The oranges for an afternoon Zoom Christingle are sorted too - get in touch if you want to be part of it and haven't told us.

I realise that I have not mentioned Darley and Elizabeth on our facebook pages yet. They are two young ladies who were upset when St Matthew's had a fire. They decided they wanted to walk and raise money for their village church. With the encouragement of their families (who've given us permission to post this photo), they have done 32 miles in the last 9 days. To quote Helen, "They have been out and about in Darley Abbey, Allestree, Tissington and Parwich so far. In all sorts of weather too!" Brilliant!!

They have a target of 80 miles in December, and are raising money through a Go Fund Me site - more details, and you can donate, at https://gf.me/u/za62wn

There's time for an afternoon walk for Julie and I. National Trust Kedleston Hall have had their elves clearing all the leaves off the path, but we couldn't get to the Splash Pool due to tree work. At one point I needed a sleep!

I bet Darley and Elizabeth never lie down and rest. More photos will come - I promise. Thank you.

LONG
WALK

Tree cutting

Friday 11 December

This is usually a busy weekend. St Matthew's have a Christmas Fair. The choir are wheeled out (well, Julie is wheeled, everyone else walks) and I get to sing tenor as we work through the Green Carols for Choirs.

Most years Derventio Choir sing at St John's Christmas Tree Festival, and I realise how much weight I have put on since I last got my dinner jacket out. (Probably a good things we aren't singing tomorrow!).

Last year I escaped on Sunday afternoon to Pipes In The Peaks, my first visit. A car showroom is transformed into a concert hall, and it was a smashing afternoon. It is the home of the ex-Regal/ABC Derby Compton Cinema Organ, with lots of additional bangs and whistles. Marvellous!

Watching the Covid news, I make no apologies for keeping what we are doing to a minimum. I know we need to get the economy moving again, I cannot imagine what it must be like to be a business owner watching everything you have worked for just disappear. I know we want to get back out there, but - please - not yet.

Yesterday our GP surgery texted "due to staff sickness the current demand for appointments is far exceeding the capacity that we have available." I don't know how much of that sickness is Covid-related, but I don't wish to add to their workload.

#

Saturday 12 December

It may not have been a particularly busy day, but I have filmed Amy, Colin, Louis and Horatio lighting the Advent Wreath for tomorrow's Zoom service, and the Cunliffe family lighting it for Christmas Morning (you'll need to be patient for that). Geoff arrived to do some organ practice while we were filming, so found himself being filmed as well. We now have an organ voluntary on Zoom tomorrow. The link is on the church website - www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk

I've also taken my broomstick nativity figures across to St Matthew's. They usually come out on Christmas Eve for the three Crib Services. We can't have those services this year - you cannot socially distance 200 people a time in either of our churches. We will do something on Zoom - get in touch if you'd like to be involved. So I could simply leave my figures in the garage, or take them to St Matthew's where a church warden says he can display them in the Fellowship Room to be seen by passers-by.

When I arrived at Ponteland, I found we had large numbers on Christmas Eve and I needed something visual. John Myers my lovely churchwarden had fun making them, and we repaint them every now and again. When I left I arranged for them to come south too.

Perhaps I shouldn't have put that on facebook - there will be a bunch from the Northumbrian Kingdom demand their repatriation, or sending gunboats to patrol the River Tees to make sure I don't pinch anything else.

While we're talking gunboats - wouldn't it be marvellous if the people worrying about the fate of fish in the Channel were also concerned about the fate of human beings. I would like to live in a country where we use the Navy to rescue those fleeing war and violence, and where we live at peace with our neighbours. May God forgive us.

Sunday 13 December

As I said to my congregation this morning, I never thought that, as a priest, I would look at my diary for the week before Christmas and the only thing I have to do on any evening is remember to put the bin out on Tuesday.

This morning the reading was the crowds coming out to listen to John the Baptist. I looked round the 30 socially distanced people in church and tried to remember what a crowd looks like.

Then another 25/30 on Zoom. I can't get used to it. It is lovely seeing everyone, but I don't enjoy preaching to a computer and getting no response from anyone because they're all muted. My dad always said that the definition of "a preacher not to be missed" was "if you throw your hymn book at them, aim to kill". Preaching is not supposed to be a one way process, but now it's what we do - so we'll do it as well as we can. The service will shortly be on youtube (via the church website www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk). You can judge for yourself.

Then nine screens for a Christingle. Some of us had made them, others made them as I talked through it. No worries this year that the kids would set fire to each other - and I have suggested to the youngsters that their challenge is now to hide the orange somewhere in their bedroom until Mum finds it in May when it's all mouldy.

Excellent article in this week's "Radio Times" by the Reverend Richard Coles. He writes about the difficulty of this Christmas and says some very wise things.
"It occurs to me that at Christmas we gather around in the darkness to look at the flickering light of people around a crib. There's something about watching telly - gathering in the darkness to look at flickering light - that might be quite powerful at Christmas. Gather around your tablet or your phone, light up its screen and connect to those you love because that's the most important thing: connecting with people who love and affirm us."

Monday 14 December

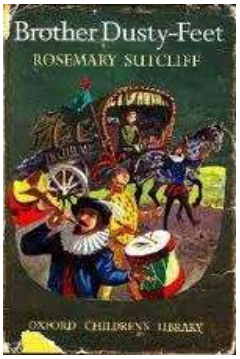
Let's ignore Covid, Brexit and all the things that depress me (it's quite a long list). Today wasn't all depressing - I found a key safe in St Edmund's I didn't know existed, and I managed to extract the key code as well. (It must be time to retire - but there are probably more mysteries I haven't discovered yet, I've only been here 4 years).

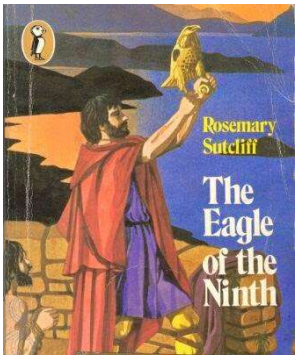
Today would be the 100th Birthday of Rosemary Sutcliff (she died in 1992). One of the first stories I remember was "Brother Dusty-feet", indeed my copy looked like this first edition. Hugh joins a bunch of strolling-players in the time of Elizabeth I.

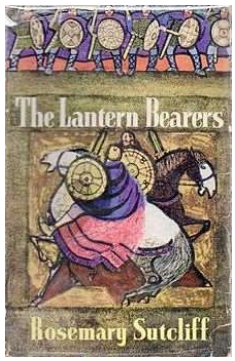
I then went on to "Eagle of the Ninth", which I reviewed last year on Julie Barham blog - https://northernreader.wordpress.com/2019/10/29/eagle-of-the-ninth-by-rosemary-sutcliff-a-guest-post-and-a-slightly-foxed-edition/. It sparked my love of Hadrian's Wall and the Roman Empire. "The Lantern Bearers", the fourth in her Roman series, is a beautiful book.

I have just looked her up, and I am staggered how much she has written. Julie assures me she has several of them so I can make a start - but I might need to retire properly before I find time to read them all.

I moan about the number of books my wife has piled on every flat surface in our house (including the floor). That is very unfair to the talented people who wrote those books. Thank you Rosemary Sutcliff (and so many others).







Tuesday 15 December

It was the sort of day when a walk in the Peaks would have been lovely. But work called.

A Christmas video seems a good idea, so I set Matt to work. St Edmund's has a rather nice nativity set which we had restored a year or two ago. I could go back through the PCC Minutes and see if I can find the details of the set, but life is too short. if any of my PCC members know the details of their age and maker, please pass them on. I have pointed to Matt that purple is the Advent colour, so we should have changed the altar frontal to white - he says he'll see what he can do with technology!

My broomstick figures are now on display in the Fellowship Room at St Matthew's. I'm told my clever churchwardens have even rigged up lights. If Derby Cathedral can do amazing things with lights and lasers, so can we - have a look at their facebook page.

Meanwhile, David Redfern has produced a video of "Sleigh Ride" at the Astoria Centre in Barnsley - you can watch it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1WLJWoLgnc&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0C2VSD_CULCpZTKjBYFIkstJhhdwOLdFvK-CKsTiyfmLf2-mSQdDXE2vk