

# Facebook Ramblings – March 2021

Monday 1 March

Happy St David's Day. I recommend a short Voices of the Valley - The Fron Male Voice Choir concert at <https://youtu.be/GfGcFyJ6AK4>. Julie's cousin Roger Williams is a quiet, retiring member of the choir, as is his son.

David sounds to have rather an austere man - although the little city that bears his name is rather gorgeous. It must be 20 years since we had a wonderful holiday there. We stayed in an old cottage next door to the fire station. The kids were sad that they never saw the fire engine leaving its home. We also went to the Carnival - and I remember that the Dean was one of those judging the fancy dress!

We got to Wales twice last year. A very wet day out on the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway in February (with Roger and his lovely wife Julie), and then again in August. That was a nicer day, until heavens opened as the engine ran round at Castle. I think the photo sums up the joy of being a volunteer.

Wales is lovely, in sun and in rain.



## Tuesday 2 March

Today is the Feast of St Chad. Born in Northumbria, the youngest of four sons, all of whom became both priests and monks. They entered the monastery on the isle of Lindisfarne and were taught by St Aidan. Chad's brother Cedd had founded the abbey at Lastingham and, on his brother's death, Chad was elected abbot. Lastingham is a gorgeous church in the North York Moors National Park. Wonderful Saxon crypt. I haven't been there years - the list gets longer.

During the power-struggle between Celtic and Roman Christianity, Chad became Bishop of York, then stepped back with the arrival in Britain of Theodore. Later he became Bishop of Mercia. This was centred on Repton, another gorgeous church with crypt, and he moved his Seat to Lichfield - home of a lovely Cathedral. Chad died of the plague in 672.

The last St Chad's church we went in was the lovely tin tabernacle at Blist's Hill Museum at Ironbridge. A nearer one to Derby is the one in Longford. We took the choirs there for Evensong back in September 2018, and there are some lovely carvings and tombs inside. Have a look at the blog - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2018/11/17/longford-derbyshire-st-chad/>



## Wednesday 3 March

It has been an interesting day. As a school governor I had to do compulsory "Prevent" training - the Government's scheme to help us understand signs of radicalisation. Not a huge problem in our local primary school, but it was an interesting insight into our country and our Society. There was a comment on the dangers of religious groups closing in on themselves, not being willing or able to connect with their communities except on terms of "us and them". Easy to point the finger at others, but it is an increasing danger in the Church of England as well.

I spent the afternoon sorting paperwork with the interrogation of Nicola Sturgeon on in the background. I have not followed the whole process, but I couldn't have sat on the receiving end of such a hostile questioning for so long and not lost my temper. Nor could I have been so articulate - so wonderful to see a politician who answers intelligently. I do find myself wondering whether a man would be treated in the same way. I'm angry that while "breaking the ministerial code" causes so much anger in Scotland, in Westminster no one seems to care. Justice, truth and honour are important Christian values.

I calmed down with two pictures. The cat who got on top of an Arriva train at Euston last night, and took 2 and a half hours to be persuaded to come down. In the meantime a whole train load of passengers had to be transferred to a different unit! I hope Network Rail don't mind me borrowing their photo. Selwyn says he doesn't need to join a train and rest close to the 25,000 volt wire - he is perfectly happy on top of the clean washing on the radiator.



#### Thursday 4 March

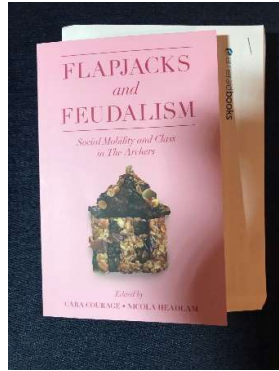
In this house every day is World Book Day. Julie has had another haul of parcels, so I idly wondered if there was anything in them for me. You can read this one, she said, and gave me a book "Flapjacks and Feudalism, Social Mobility and Class in The Archers" edited by Cara Courage and Nicola Headlam.

I started listening to the Archers at a very young age. In those days it was on at 6.45 pm, so if I sat quietly I could stay up until 7. (Dad never missed an episode). I have a memory of the Ambridge Mail Val Robbery, but checking <https://www.bbc.co.uk/.../3b5ce0d9-17a9-3cc0-bae9...> that was in 1967, so I was only five.

I remember one episode when I was a teenage - apparently it was in 1977. Shula Archer had a boyfriend called Simon Parker, a local journalist. He said he wanted to make love in a cornfield. She replied "you had better get the blanket from the car then." Tum ti, tum ti, tiddle tiddle pom. My mother was shocked!

I listened for many years. On one occasion I drove across Lincolnshire for an evening meeting of the Rural Theology Association. I arrived about 7, and sat in my car listening to the Archers. Over the next fifteen minutes quite a few other cars arrived, but it wasn't until The Archers was over that anyone got out of their cars. But with family and work, I stopped following it several years ago.

Looking at the contents page of the book, I am very behind the times. If Shula did her O levels in 1973, she must be five years older than me. I have just looked her up, and she's training to be an Anglican Vicar! That's my conference paper written: "From the cornfield to the Vestry, the loves of Shula Archer". I'd better go and do some research.



### Friday 5 March

St Piran's Day - one of the Patron Saints of Cornwall, a fifth century monk, probably of Irish origin. That's roughly all we know - one of those figures from the depths of the past, and I wonder what he would make of being a facebook post.

Cornwall is not a county I know very well. A couple of railway trips when we were at University. A week's holiday in 1988 with a one year old Hannah. We stayed at Engine Cottage, a National Trust cottage on the Cotehele estate, just across the Tamar. The house next door was called Mispickel, which seemed a lovely name for our sweet daughter. Later in the week we learned it was the Cornish for "arsenic".

Three years later we had a holiday at Bar Lodge, another NT cottage on the Helston peninsula. Julie was pregnant with Harry, and the cottage was at the end of a long and bumpy track. There was a phone nearby if you needed to contact the Coastguard - I did wonder if we could summon a helicopter if needed. One of my regrets is that my brother and I had the offer of a trip down a tin mine - Dave went, I didn't. I wish I had! St Piran is the patron saint of tin miners.

23 years later, or thereabouts, we had a holiday in Lostwithiel. You can read about a lovely day in Truro on the blog, and a visit to Lanhydrock. There's a railway window in Truro Cathedral. We also had a ride on the Launceston Railway, where the accessible coach was a bit close to the coal!

One day I'll go back. In the meantime, there's always Demelza (see above).



### Saturday 6 March

We had a day off yesterday and a lovely walk round Kedleston. Snowdrops and daffodils are rather lovely. It was a working morning today, and then I did an afternoon on "Bede the Historian" from University of York. There's a lot on my blog about him - you can read about Jarrow and Monkwearmouth. We were reminded that the man with an incredible mind never went further north than Lindisfarne (which he visited once), or further south than York (which he visited once). That might help us put our current situation into perspective!

I've always enjoyed Bede's World at Jarrow - now known as Jarrow Hall. It's got a good museum and an Anglo Saxon Village. We went with the kids 25 years ago, and have been back every few years. It has struggled to survive over the last few years, and I do hope it manages to pick itself up and get good support when we reopen. I was trying to find a picture of a hanging sculpture of the head of Bede that hang in the front room of the museum. I searched for "Bede head" and got lots of pictures of beds!

Tomorrow we have a Zoom service at 11.30 am. The details are on the church website [www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk). No Bede, but we do have "The Law of the Parish Church", three hymns and a rather nice anthem. If you can't make it at 11.30, watch us on youtube later.



### Sunday 7 March

Thank you to those who joined us at 11.30 and the twelve who have already watched the youtube video. I have also recorded three videos for local schools. I made a comment that I would appreciate £2.5 million so I could refurbish my media centre. I am very glad a Vicar on twitter has offered to do it for half the price!

I had a decent walk round the garden this afternoon, listening to a podcast about Aelred of Rievaulx. He was a Cistercian monk, abbot here from 1147 until his death in 1167, and English Heritage have a new display about him. I had forgotten he was born in Hexham, where his father was of priest of St Andrew's. I used this photo of the Saxon chalice from the Abbey when we closed last year, commenting that this was not the first plague it had seen. Perhaps Aelred handled this very chalice.

A few years ago they had a major flood down the stream that passes through the Abbey, and the Visitors' Centre was severely damaged. I remember reading something from the local Vicar who had called in and found the Custodian filling in the insurance claim. He suggested that they could try and claim for the whole Abbey, to see if they could get it rebuilt. Another lovely place I want to go back to.



### Monday 8 March

On this #internationalwomensday2021 I realise that Hannah Barham-Brown is writing far better than me. They don't come more inspiring than my wife, my daughter and my daughter-in-law.

My mum was an incredible teacher - to me, my brother, and to generations of children who enjoyed music because of her work. I remember Miss Mason and Miss Thynne from my Primary and Sunday School days. As a product of a boys' grammar school we didn't have a lot of female teachers, but Miss B. Hind (we thought that was hilarious) tried to teach me physics and Flossie was our English teacher (I can't remember her real name). I'm not much good at physics, but Flossie can be proud of her English teaching. There weren't a lot of female lecturers in my Cambridge days, but Morna Hooker on St Paul was eye-opening. Many of the women I was with at University with have gone on to do wonderful work (and I don't mean that to sound patronising).

I started work in the City of London in the mid-80s. Most of the partners of the solicitors firm I joined were males of a certain age, and it was still the sort of place that would book a stripper for a leaving do. But I knew the tide was changing, and I have watched the careers of several of my contemporaries with pride. Most of my fellow London Law Librarians were female. I enjoyed working with them, going to lunch with them - but Julie would not let me go away for the residential Law Librarians' Conference.

I started training in the Church of England before women could be ordained, and shared their joy when that vote was passed. Julie was press officer for the Lincoln Movement for the Ordination of Women - I remember she had two press statements written, just in case the vote went the other way. I have benefitted so much from the ministry of so many - with specially fond memories of Marion Mingins at St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

In the medical world our lives have been enhanced by so many women who have cared for us over the years. Just one name - Dr Scott, the paediatrician at West Suffolk. She was coming up to retirement when Gareth became her patient, and she took no nonsense from a teenager. When he was waiting for his transplant she told him "you will come and see me every week. My clinic always runs late, and I am not having you sitting here catching things. I will phone you when I finish with my last patient, and your dad will bring you here immediately." Dad was very happy to do as he was told, and Gareth trusted her as he faced the biggest challenge of his life.

I am not always as good as I ought to be in my dealings with women. Sometimes I say things

I shouldn't, sometimes I mansplain, sometimes I am sure Caroline Audley (my church administrator) wants to strangle me. I know there are times when Julie Barham wonders why she married me, Hannah Barham-Brown tells me off, and Sarah J. Brown says "Thank you Peter". Thank you for making me a better person, and for making a better world.



### Tuesday 9 March

Never a dull moment. Quiet start to the day, then a car load of food to the Food Bank, then a meeting to do the risk assessment for the reopening of St Edmund's. We hope to have both church buildings open on Easter Sunday, and a Zoom service too. A lot to sort, and - most importantly - if you want to come to an in-church service, you will need to book. With the social distancing required we can only fit 40 people in St Edmund's church - which is only a third of our 2019 attendance of 120. More details nearer the time.

Six miles round Kedleston, then we sat by the daffodils to feed pom-bears to Julie. I felt a little guilty spending £11.70 at the National Trust refreshment van, which is a lot more than those who use the food bank can afford. It is not right that there are some people in our city for whom a sausage roll, latte, two biscuits and a packet of pom-bears is an unaffordable luxury.

Home for some emails and phone calls. Then two hours on Wilfrid and the life of Northumbria in the eighth century. We went down into the lovely crypts at Hexham and Ripon. Then a late-evening Zoom to discuss how we can forward the green agenda at St Matthew's. Ideas, enthusiasm, people going off to do jobs, and back together in four weeks. Facebook done. Then "time for bed said Zebedee".





### Wednesday 10 March

I have spent today at a conference - the Big Update from the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance. Over a hundred of us on Zoom - I did smile when the programme for the day assured us that "Lunch is not provided".

It was good to hear from Caroline Dinenage, the new Heritage Minister, that "the work of places of worship and the people who run them has been astounding" during the time of Covid, and to hear reassuring words about the importance of faith, refuge, community activity, charity, and places to bring people together.

I have decided though that Norway is the place to be. We had a talk on the "Strategy for Church Heritage in the Church in Norway". We were shown lovely pictures of gorgeous churches in stunning scenery. This is Urnes Stave Church, one of the oldest. The Church is about to be separated from the State - a process that many think will happen in England in the next decade or two.

Interesting that the separation document notes that "church heritage should continue to belong to the community and be appreciated as a central source of enjoyment, and understanding of Norwegian history of ideas and society". It also states that every "church building and churchyard should remain open, accessible and in active use." It says that the funding will be available to make it possible, and the State might have to help the Municipalities with the money required. Our speaker was not convinced that would work - they too have the problem of the costs of running rural churches.

I've always wanted to visit the fjords (happy memories of Slartibartfast - I wonder how many of my readers will get that). I want to ride the iron ore line to Narvik. I want to see the Viking ships (much enjoyed Janina Ramirez's programme a couple of weeks ago). Now I want to visit churches too.



## Thursday 11 March

My mum Jane would have been 86 today - Happy Birthday Mum! Born in Cambridge, she trained as a teacher at Bretton Hall Training College in Yorkshire, then return to Cambridge, married dad, and worked as a music teacher while coping with me and my brother Dave. She used to cycle to four different village schools, teaching violin, recorder, and a variety of instruments. I remember that when there was a sugar shortage in the late 1970s she was known as a regular in four village shops, and had no problem getting what she needed. I also remember the first time she went to the news Tescos at Bar Hill near Cambridge. "It's like Heathrow Airport" she told me, "the doors open automatically as you walk up to them." She died in 2010, which seems a very long time ago.

This Sunday is Mothering Sunday - Hannah Barham-Brown and Harry Barham please note - and we have a Zoom service at 11.30 am. Log-in details are on the church website, you'll be very welcome.

Normally we would hand out flowers - bunches of daffodils. You can't do that by Zoom, but my lovely flower teams have thought laterally. Posies are being made, and will be available from the porches of both our churches between 10 and 2 on Saturday. We will leave them there so you can simply collect them - and we want them collected. There is no charge, they come with love from the two churches.

Walk down to church, collect a bunch (or two) for your mum, your gran, your partner, a lady on your street who may well not be able to see her family - and if you simply want some for yourself, perhaps because this will be a very painful weekend as (once again) we're not allowed to meet, that is absolutely fine by us! If a man wants some, you are welcome too. Please let others know they are there.

What we don't want is piles of flowers left over because no one has collected them. I have always worked on the theory "don't buy your wife flowers, she'll wonder what you've been up to", so if I hand Julie lots of daffodils on Saturday evening, she will be suspicious!





**Sunday 14  
March  
Mothering  
Sunday**

Service on Zoom  
at 11.30 am, and  
then on Youtube  
in the afternoon.  
Find it at  
[www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk)

Mothering Sunday flowers can be  
collected from the Church Porch between  
10 am and 2 pm on Saturday 13 March.  
Please take them, for mum, for gran,  
for a neighbour, for yourself -  
there is no charge, they come with love  
from the churches.

## Friday 12 March

I am confused. 6 pm today my diary says "Zoom St Joseph". 7.30 pm next Friday my diary says "Zoom St Joseph".

Deeper research tells me that tonight is a lecture from Selwyn entitled "Before Google Earth: Prof J.K.S. St Joseph and the development of aerial photography". Next Friday is the Feast of St Joseph, and we have Evensong on Zoom at 7.30 pm.

Before we deal with Joseph, let's do Mothering Sunday. Zoom service at 11.30 am - link on the website. I wanted some images, and found the powerpoint I did for Mothering Sunday 2016 in Ponteland. Confused I may be, but the librarian in me is quite proud of my filing system.

There are flowers available between 10 and 2 tomorrow from both church porches. As I said yesterday, there is no charge - they come with our love. Please collect some, and tell your friends they are there and available. We don't want any left over.

I'm organised for Zoom excitement all weekend. The development of aerial photography tonight, and a lecture on Thomas Brassey the railway engineer tomorrow. So what excitement can I find for Julie on Sunday?



### Saturday 13 March

I was worried we would be left with lots of uncollected Mothering Sunday flowers. Silly me! We ran out in both churches - my apologies if you turned up and found they had gone. Thanks everyone.

I attended a lecture this afternoon on Thomas Brassey. Born in Cheshire in 1805 he became a Civil Engineer. By 1847 he had built about one-third of the railways in Britain, and by time of his death in 1870 he had built one in every twenty miles of railway in the world. This included three-quarters of the lines in France, major lines in many other European countries, and in Canada, Australia, South America and India. It was fascinating to learn more about him. There is a memorial to him in Chester Cathedral, and mention was made of their railway plans for this summer.

When the lecture was over I idly wondered about his family. We had been told he died with a fortune of several million pound in the bank, so I wondered who had spent it. His wife had not been mentioned in the lecture. According to Wikipedia Brassey married Maria Harrison in 1831. Maria "gave Thomas considerable support and encouragement throughout his career. She encouraged him to bid for the contract for Dutton Viaduct and, when that was unsuccessful, to apply for the next available contract. Thomas' work led to frequent moves of

home in their early years ... on each occasion Maria supervised the packing of their possessions and the removal. [She] had been taught to speak French, while Thomas himself was unable to do so. Therefore, when the opportunity arose to apply for the French contracts, Maria was willing to act as interpreter and encouraged Thomas to bid for them. This resulted in moves to Vernon in Normandy, then to Rouen, on to Paris and back again to Rouen. ... Maria acted as interpreter for all his French undertakings." Thomas died in 1870, and I can find lots of photos of him. I can find no mention of the date of Maria's death, or an image of her. I feel (another) research project coming on!

This evening we will join one of the virtual vigils for Sarah Everard. At the start of the week we were celebrating International Women's Day, by the end of it we share the pain of another life lost - and we are determined to work for a world where Society is equal, everyone matters, and all are safe. #EnoughIsEnough



### Mothering Sunday, 14 March

Not an easy weekend. We lit a candle last night, and lit it again this morning. I commented this morning that I am a middle aged man who has always lived in nice safe places. I have never thought about the level of fear my daughter and her friends have to cope with. On the occasions I have had to dial 999, help has always arrived. I read a comment yesterday from a young lady angry that when she phoned after a sexual assault on the tube, at 7 pm in the evening, she was told to fill in a form on line. The cuts that the police have seen over the last decade are appalling. If we want protection and safety it has to be resourced.

Whenever I have had dealings with the police, I have always found them professional and courteous. I have watched them defuse difficult situations and, on occasions, deal with horrible people. They have listened to me, heard my frustrations, and cared for me. I am sorry that others have not found it to be like that, and I do think questions need to be asked about last night's policing. I hope sensible people can sit down, see what went wrong, rebuild broken trust, and build a Society where we all feel safe.

I would also suggest to our politicians that this is not the week to proceed with legislation that increases police power, the power of the Home Secretary and the power of government. Calmness is a mark of good leadership, and I recommend it (not that I'm always good at it).

I notice that at 9 pm this evening on BBC1 we have "Bloodlands" - a police officer who is also a cold-blooded killer. Radio Times comments on "the wintry sense of long-buried evil". ITV gives us "Grace", "a dark story that starts with the disappearance of a Brighton property

developer and turns into undiluted nightmare fuel." Forgive me for sounding like a Vicar, but I don't want to fill my Sunday evening with evil.

If you haven't watched this morning's service, it's now on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylGqyHUoND0&t=4s> and will do you more good than BBC or ITV.

### Monday 15 March

A morning looking ahead. Checking we've got the right details for all the forthcoming weddings, and there are 19 this year. Memorial Services and the burial of ashes - right dates, right space, getting dates in people's diaries, trying to ensure that we don't have clashes. Also lovely to get an enquiry about a Baptism - I think we can start planning them from July onwards. At the very least we can get things in the diary and if things have to change, we will cope.

I decided my exercise this afternoon would be a walk to the Post Office and I listened to an English Heritage podcast on Boscobel House in Shropshire (it's episode 100 on the EH website). Boscobel is the place where Charles hid in the oak tree, and they are redoing the property with garden, farm and a lot to visit. Haven't been for years - another place to add to the list. They mentioned the fact that the house was owned by the Evans family of Darley Abbey - there's some research to do.

Then a session from Nottingham Libraries, a talk by Angus Donald, part of their History and Imagination Festival this week - <https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/heritage/history-and-imagination-week-virtual-events/>. I've not read any of his books, but a series about Robin Hood, a series of Chronicles "Holcroft Blood" set in the C17, and a new series about Berserkers set in Charlemagne's wars against the Saxons and Danes in the Eighth century. More reading to do!

Lovely to be stopped by a mum in the play area earlier, who told me that they watch my Walter Evans school videos over breakfast. Julie says that no one should have to watch me over breakfast - cruel and unnatural punishment.