

## Tuesday 16 March

On the evening of Sunday 15 March 2020 I had the pleasure of preaching at Derby Cathedral Evensong. On Monday 16 March they started closing everything. I had a walk up to St Edmund's, which was looking beautiful, but we cancelled Tuesday's PCC, Wednesday's Communion service, etc. etc. I was angry as the church was closing down, limiting numbers and being cautious - but the Government were letting Cheltenham go ahead. I ended up in the middle telling a family they could only have a few people in church for a funeral, when the rules said they could still have a hundred in the pub.

A year later, I am still angry. I'll let the House of Bishops articulate my anger today. The Archbishop of York has put this on twitter:

*Today's announcement that the UK is increasing its nuclear capacity is very worrying. It is in breach of our commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and only helps those who profit from them. The best way to build global security is to invest in international aid.*

The Bishop of Durham has tweeted:

*Please restore Overseas Development Aid budget to 0.7% - funded by decreasing nuclear Arsenal not increasing it. This is a better way to uphold world peace.*



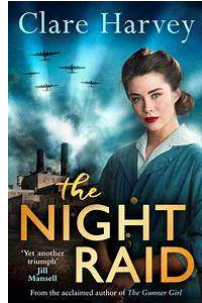
## Wednesday 17 March

Took an hour off today to watch an Inspire Nottingham talk about "The Night Raid" by Clare Harvey. It tells the story of world-renowned war artist Dame Laura Knight who was commissioned to paint propaganda portraits of factory girls and sent to the ordnance factories in her hometown of Nottingham.

I knew a little about Dame Laura, mainly thanks to a superb exhibition held Laingartgallery in Newcastle a few years ago. I didn't know (or I had forgotten) that she was born in Long Eaton in 1877. During both Wars she painted as official War Artist, and her portrait of Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring is very well known. I also love her circus and her ballet paintings - you can look those up.

Clare told us how she (i.e. Clare the author) had moved to Nottingham and got to know her city by walking and exploring. A reviewer described her book as "a love letter to a city". It isn't a city I know well, although it has a gorgeous railway station, and I have visited the tram depot and the Castle (in that order of priority!).

I remember I used the images from the Newcastle Laura Knight exhibition in a sermon the following Sunday and suggested my congregation visited it - several of them did and we had lovely chats about it. Here I am, almost a decade later, sharing my interests and discoveries on facebook. I've been Rambling for almost a year now, and it is lovely when people tell me you enjoy them.



#### Thursday 18 March

A recording session this morning for Walter Evans school, then a trip to Belper with a memorial tablet, then a New Testament in Art course, then a Lent Group. In between I've started knocking together the list of services which will take us from Easter to the end of June - we'll aim to do 10 am services in both churches and we'll keep zooming at 11.30. We keep juggling weddings (we have 20 in the diary for 2021). We got notification today that the Government are changing all the rules for registration from the beginning of May, so Caroline Audley and I have some instruction videos to watch. Nothing like giving us plenty of notice of what looks to be a huge change, and as for asking the advice of those of us who actually do the job, forget it!

We're also wondering how to make the National Day of Memorial next Tuesday - I must admit it only really crossed my consciousness today. We'll try and have both churches open at some point during the day, will toll a bell, and might have a reflection on Zoom in the evening. Don't forget that we're at the end of a phone, or a message, if you ever need to chat and just need to unload.

Tomorrow (Friday) is the Feast of St Joseph, and we have Evensong at 7.30 pm on Zoom. The link is on the front page of the church website - [www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk](http://www.stedsandstmatts.co.uk) There's some nice music to listen to and three paintings. I have even got a cat.



### Friday 19 March

It was lovely to have 22 screens, about 40 people, for Book of Common Prayer Evensong for the Feast of St Joseph. Thanks everyone. We have decided we will do another one next Tuesday for the Day of Reflection - 7.30 pm, Zoom link on the website. Both churches will be open that day between 11.30 and 12.30, and St Matthew's between 3 and 4 as well.

I showed you the cat yesterday. Here is the whole painting, La Madonna del Gatto (The Madonna of the Cat) by Federico Barocci. He lived in Urbino near Venice (his dates are 1535 to 1612) and the National Gallery describes him as one of the greatest Italian painters of his time. We have Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist and Jesus. It's painted with gorgeous colours – watching the cat, who's watching them. I said there was no deep theology required, this is a loving family, with a lovable cat.

After the service I looked through facebook and found some lovely photos of the Northern Lights by the Italian Chapel on Orkney. They were taken by Samuel Ramsay who says he doesn't mind them being shared. Thank you. They are lovely. I still live in hope that we will get there this summer.



### Saturday 20 March

I started Rambling on St Cuthbert's Day 2020. I said we were printing Prayer leaflets to go into the April magazines because we had been told the churches would be shut from Sunday.

And here we are on St Cuthbert's Day 2021. I won't try to make sense of the fact we still have closed churches - though we now know how to Zoom, and will be doing so at 11.30 - all welcome, link on the church website.

On 20 June 2011, Gareth and I joined the Farne Churches Together Midsummer service at the Chapel of St Cuthbert on Inner Farne. We drove north to Seahouses and sailed across to the island with about 30 people on the boat. Cuthbert died here in a monastic cell on this day in 687. The Benedictines re-established worship here in 1246, and the chapel was built about 1370. It was restored in 1850, and we were privileged to join members of local churches for worship. We enjoyed a walk to see the puffins, but we weren't so excited by the terns. It was a summer evening I will never forget.





### Sunday 21 March

Having done the morning service, which is now on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KzqA2oe4Lg&t=4s>, we settled down to fill in the census. I have to say I was impressed at how simple it was.

I searched for my 2011 Diary to remind me what I did on Census Day last time - and found it had been an interesting Sunday. Julie and I had been in London for a few days as our friend Michael Hampel was installed as Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral.

We had got back to King's Cross at 5.30 on Saturday afternoon for our train back to Newcastle and found utter chaos. The station was packed as there had been major protests in London about Government spending cuts, and an ominous notice said "Signal problems north of York." It became obvious that there was no way Julie and I were going to get home, and the Station Manager offered us a hotel room for the night. Then he said "We've booked you in the Premier Inn in Southwark, but we can't find the credit card to pay for it, so here's £114 in cash" and handed me an envelope. He got us a taxi and off we went. I spent a happy hour on the phone finding people who would take my Sunday services, then we settled down for an unexpected night in the Capital.

The following morning we had leisurely cooked breakfast - no doubt I was singing "Easy like Sunday morning" - then got a taxi back to King's Cross and the 1045 back north. We didn't

depart on time, then were informed that the 1110 to Leeds was cancelled and Leeds passengers would have to join us. Then we left.

The guard had told passengers from the cancelled train that if they were going to Grantham, Newark or Retford, they would have to change at Peterborough, and Leeds passengers change at Doncaster. A couple sat near us were going to Grantham, but made no move at Peterborough. I said to them "you need to change here", but she told me she didn't, this train was stopping at Grantham. I said it wasn't. She told me to shut up.

My diary notes "The next part of the journey was enlivened by her loud complaints to the guard after he announced 'next stop Doncaster', her insistence that her husband was to stop the train as it went through Grantham, her annoyance when we sped through at 125 mph, and the delight that the rest of us felt that she'd have to go to Doncaster and then head south." Being a charitable, loving human being, I also noted that "I only hope she failed to listen to instructions at Doncaster and got on a non-stop train back to London."

I wonder if she filled her census form in today and thought "ten years ago I should have listened to that nice young man who told me to change at Peterborough". Or perhaps she is still riding the rails, wondering why nothing stops at Grantham!



Monday 22 March

I escaped today! There is life outside Derby, indeed, there is life outside Derbyshire! I have been to Yorkshire - which is always a pleasure. It would have been even more pleasurable if I had been anywhere else than the Sheffield donor centre NHS Blood and Transplant which is next to the Cathedral. However they were lovely (as always), my platelets flowed (the machine didn't bleep once), I got my Club biscuit, and (as they count a platelet donation as 3) today took me to 250. I would have celebrated with coffee and cake at Waterstones if life had been normal.

Even better, I have booked for my next session at 8.05 am on Monday 3 May. This means I have something exciting to do on a Bank Holiday in May. There is an early train from Belper which gets me in to Sheffield for 8, so I can give platelets, then the rest of the day can be an escape. I could ride the tram, take a Northern Rail train somewhere exciting - there is a very nice cafe on the platform at Worksop. A man can dream!

Or I can just go to Sheffield, give an armful of platelets, and be home before Julie has woken up! All together now, "A pint, that's almost an armful."



## Tuesday 23 March

I have struggled with today as a Day of Reflection. For me it is not the first anniversary of lockdown. The last day I went out was Sunday 16 March 2020. Grief, pain, memory and reflection is on one side of my emotions, and anger is on the other.

We only had a handful of people in churches at midday, but we tolled our bells. I hope the sound rang out across our communities.

We had 20 screens for Evensong - Wood in D is gorgeous, that helped to calm me down. I produced a photographic reflection on the year with David Redfern playing "Whiter Shade of Pale" (who else gets Charles Wood and Procol Harum into the same service?). We had some technical issues at Zoom HQ, so it may be a few days before we can get that Reflection onto youtube - I'll let you know when it's ready.



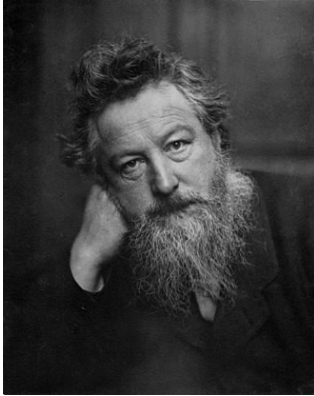
## Wednesday 24 March

Today is the birthday of William Morris. British textile designer, poet, novelist, translator and socialist activist. He was born in Walthamstow in 1834, and his birthplace is now an excellent museum which we visited a few years ago. After university he developed close friendships with Pre-Raphaelite artists Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and with Neo-Gothic architect Philip Webb. Webb and Morris designed Red House in Kent where Morris lived from 1859 to 1865, before moving to Bloomsbury, central London. In 1861, Morris founded the Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. decorative arts firm with Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Webb, and others, which became highly fashionable and much in demand. The firm profoundly influenced interior decoration throughout the Victorian period, with Morris designing tapestries, wallpaper, fabrics, furniture, and stained glass windows. In 1875, he assumed total control of the company, which was renamed Morris & Co. He died in 1896.

There is lots of his work, and that of his company, in churches across the country. One of the best is St Martin's church in Brampton in Cumbria. Have a look at the blog - <http://www.northernvicar.co.uk/2016/05/19/brampton-cumbria-st-martin/> - and enjoy these lovely windows.



Tomorrow is the Feast of the Annunciation - when we celebrate Gabriel coming to Mary. Evensong on Zoom at 7.30 - all welcome, link on the church website.



#### Thursday 25 March

The Feast of the Annunciation. At least when Gabriel spoke to Mary he (if Gabriel is a 'he') didn't have to go via a computer. I'd managed to get the link wrong, and then the internet kept cutting out. We've had no real problems in the last ten weeks on Sunday mornings - and I haven't got teenagers upstairs playing computer games (my, slightly-older, teenagers are Up North playing computer games), so I can't blame them. Our final hymn ended "And with grace we'll persevere", so thanks for trying.

If you want a superb lecture, watch The Churches Conservation Trust lecture by Father Jeremy Haselock entitled "Most highly favoured lady, the Annunciation in the art of our Medieval churches". It can be watched at The Churches Conservation Trust. Well worth an hour of your time.

#### Friday 26 March

Two years ago we spent today at Naidex "Europe's most established independent living community." It was held at the NEC in Birmingham, and I found it fascinating being in a minority. Northern Reader and Hannah Barham-Brown were trying out equipment, having a wheelchair driving test (they passed) and chatting to friends and colleagues.

Having driven to Birmingham, Hannah took the train to London for a couple of days of meetings. While she was there I got a phone call. "Dad, you know I drove to you and left the car at yours'. I forgot. I've got a single ticket back to Leeds." In other words, would you mind driving my car back to Leeds for me and getting the train home. Any excuse for a train ride - apparently I got a single on the 2003 from Leeds to Derby for a fiver (the taxi back from Midland station was more expensive).

Soon we will be able to ride the railways again. Next week we can meet in the garden - anyone bringing cake is welcome. Tomorrow you can collect palm crosses from either church porch between 10 and 2, and everything is sorted for Palm Sunday. On Zoom at 11.30 am Clive will tell you all about Queen Victoria's trip to Derby. She arrived at Derby Midland too.



### Saturday 27 March

We got palm crosses in both church porches today - thanks Michele, David, et al. We got the church clocks to show what will be the right time tomorrow - thanks Matt and Alex at one end, and I guess Geoff at the other. I managed a five mile walk, and have done the powerpoints for six 7.30 pm Complines next week.

We also got the Reflection video onto youtube -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94rYceIfP4U> - thank you David Redfern and Matt (again).

We have also been to a Literature Cambridge Online Zoom lecture on "Playing for time in Hamlet". Northern Reader wishes she had read English rather than Law for her first degree, and I have found myself contemplating skulls and graves and the passage of time. We watched the David Tennant version of the play earlier this week. We also have Maxine Peake, Kenneth Branagh and a production from the Globe. There might be a limit to the number of Hamlets a man can cope with.

That is probably enough of a facebook post. "The rest is silence."  
(Hamlet, Act 5 Scene 2)

### Sunday 28 March

It has been a "Peter at his most useless" day. Having put a cartoon on facebook to remind you all to put your clock forward, I put our Grandmother clock back. Northern Reader realised my mistake as she watched her mobile change from 0100 to 0200 as the clock struck twelve. She was kind enough not to wake me and tell me I am an idiot, but - as you can imagine - her morning greeting was to point out my error.

This afternoon I have put a bookshelf together. I was going to send you a photo of our Slightly Foxed magazines all beautifully shelved, to say nothing of the complete set of their gorgeous books, but I managed to put the back on the shelf so the shiny side faces the wall, and the side with the labels on is behind the books. Having tacked it on with about 20 tacks, I am leaving it as it is. I will ask my daughter-in-law to fix it sometime - Shy Bairns is rather more useful than I am when it comes to anything technical.



I managed to lead a pretty good Palm Sunday service, so I'm not completely useless. You can now find it on youtube - <https://youtu.be/nluFkbXOioc>

If you need me - and I can't think why anyone would - I'll be lying on the sofa reading a book. At least I should be able to get that right!

### Monday 29 March

On Friday I made rhubarb cake. On Saturday I made apple pie. On Sunday I made banana cake. It is probably a good thing I have walked six miles today. I needed to do a visit to a lady who lives three miles away, so I didn't take the car. I also had the weird experience of ringing a doorbell (when did I last do that?) and sitting in a garden talking to a woman who is not my wife - I look forward to marrying her to someone else!

Tonight I will go back to the new reality - Compline on Zoom at 7.30 pm (the link is on the church website). It's a short service, about half an hour, with some nice music, readings, prayers, and a painting to think about. All welcome. (Also 7.30 every evening this week).

At the Vicarage, the magnolia is starting to flower. If you wish to see the magnolia tree, and help me eat cake, you'll be very welcome. I assure you that my cake is better than my DIY.



### Tuesday 30 March

Two years ago Julie and I were doing the fifth term of our MA in Public History and Heritage. We both needed some of the books on tourism and heritage that weren't in the library at Derby, so we had a day out in Buxton. The campus is the 18th century dome, and was a splendid place to spend a day.

Today would have been my dad Jeffrey's 86th birthday. He struggled with secondary school where he was always told "you're not as clever as your brother" and when he left he went to Teacher Training College. He studied for a degree with the Open University when I was a young teenager, and I remember him getting up early to listen to obscure television programmes. I'm sure there were times when he was working in his study and I was working on the dining room table.

A few years later he went to the Department of Education in Cambridge to do a Diploma for a year, and then stayed on to do a PhD. I have checked the Cambridge University Library catalogue and his thesis "Teaching Mathematics to Deaf Children" is on the shelf (you mean, no one has borrowed it? I'm shocked!). He was a graduate of Selwyn College Cambridge - the first time that a father had followed his son (and his daughter-in-law) through the college.

We are currently doing Compline every evening of Holy Week, and there was one year in Ponteland that I had arranged for him to come as "guest preacher" for Holy Week. He had booked a room at the local Premier Inn, and had booked breakfast too. Then it snowed and he decided not to travel north. His booking was non-refundable. Julie and I had some romantic nights (and cooked breakfasts) - we could not let it go to waste!

He loved his libraries, his Romans, his garden, and was always happy in a tea shop. Here he is in Corbridge in 2010.



### Wednesday 31 March

I visited Abbeydale & Stanley House Nursing Homes today - first time for over a year. A chair broke under me - if anyone comments I've put weight on in the last year, I shall take you off my Prayer List. Good to be back - even if I had to stick something down by throat and up my nostrils before they let me in! The Care sector has done incredible work in the last year, and that needs to be recognised. Thank you.

Later I sat in the garden at home to sort out a funeral. Those who work in the funeral industry have done incredible work too. I have regular contact with undertakers, many of whom look rather shattered at the moment - it has been a long winter. The staff at the Crematorium have done so well with all the limits on numbers, plus the added work of live-streaming, as well as



keeping everywhere incredibly clean. I've not had much contact with Coroners, Registrars and everyone else involved - but the last year has taken its toll.

It was nice to be able sit outside and talk, and when your garden is as lovely as ours' it is a real pleasure. Thanks to Debbie who did three hours hard gardening this morning - she was enjoying being back. The weather this weekend does not look brilliant for sitting out and enjoying, but summer will soon be here. Enjoy the magnolia.

