

Facebook Ramblings – July 2021

Thursday 1 July

A jaunt to Sheffield to give an armful of platelets, then a train ride. The slow train through the Hope Valley - a beautiful run. I go off at Marple and learned that Agatha Christie stayed in the Hall, hence the name of one of her detectives.

I walked along the beautiful canal - we took a boat along here in about 1983 - to the station at the end of the branch line at Rose Hill Marple. That is the nice thing about doing all of British Rail, you have to go to places you would not normally visit.

Into Manchester Piccadilly, time for a leisurely coffee, then back on the slow train through the Valley. One of the stations (I think it was Edale) has a footbridge made in my parish (or just outside it) - the Handyside foundry was down by the Seven Stars. I feel a pilgrimage coming on.

In the words of Flanders and Swann "On the slow train, from Sheffield Midland to Rose Hill Marple."



Friday 2 July

We went to St John the Baptist church in Smalley this afternoon for their Flower Festival. Lovely! They had gone for "A Day to remember" and had displays for everything from "A

Royal Garden Party" to "Golden Wedding" to "Glastonbury". They are open again (for the final time) tomorrow afternoon.

There was also a thought-provoking one entitled "9/11" - my photo isn't brilliant. It's a day I won't forget. Bury St Edmunds Town Council had installed a phone point on a park bench in the Abbey Gardens - it was the world's first internet bench. As the young, dynamic face of the Cathedral clergy I was deputised to talk about it on local TV, and I went to the Garden to plug by laptop in and make sure it all worked. While sitting there I watched the pictures of the towers which are engraved on our memories.

Lovely to be in a church building for a celebration. Lovely to see a church with a well kept and much loved building. Lovely to see the way the community was involved. A glimpse of the Kingdom. Thank you.



Saturday 3 July

You know the old joke "How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?"
"Change ?????!!!"

For years Evensong at St Matthew's has been at 6.15, at St Edmund's it was 6.30.

I am a Vicar who is easily confused.

We are re-starting Evening Services tomorrow. We will now be doing 1st and 3rd Sundays at St Matthew's, 2nd and 4th Sundays at St Edmund's. In order to make life easier, I put my foot down with a firm hand and told both churches Evening Services will be at 6 pm.

Shame I wrote 6.30 on the Noticesheet this week (my clever wife noticed it, but not until we'd printed them all).

I have chosen some beautiful music, so come for 45 minutes of peace and reflection, at St Matthew's Darley Abbey starting at Six of the clock.



Sunday 4 July

We make an interesting double act. I head to St Matthew's for 10, Northern Reader heads to St Edmund's. I dash back to St Edmund's to chair the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, and Julie goes home to start the Zoom.

The APCM went smoothly - thank you for good, supportive comments, much appreciated. Thank you for so much hard work. Then I go home. Julie has started the Zoom, but hands it over to me. She goes and logs on in the Garden Room, leaving the laptop in my Study to me.

I had videoed my sermon, so once that started I escaped from the screen to go and make a mug of tea. I stand in the kitchen, hearing my sermon from the Study, and hearing my sermon five seconds later from the Dining Room. Talk about voices in my head! It's all on youtube now - if you want to see us at work (link from the church website)

Remembering double acts - bring back the Two Ronnies. When we used to watch them as teenagers, mum would sit there and tut. Indeed my brother and I used to have a Tut Index, how much would mum tut at their sketches and innuendo.

There was one joke about "On next week's show we have Miss Zaza, the exotic dancer, who

does a dance covered only in three coins. She's coming on the show because she's down to her last penny." The Tut Index went off the scale.



Monday 5 July

Happy Birthday NHS. I'd be more positive about the award of the George Cross if it didn't feel like another pointless gesture. To quote my favourite (medical) doctor [Hannah Barham-Brown](#)

"The more I think about the George Cross, the crosser I get. Most NHS staff, having risked their lives, will never so much as see it. It has been awarded to an 'organisation', a wonderful concept, but practically? We have staff using foodbanks. Over 800 have died. A 1% pay rise."

I was born at home, but no doubt the NHS were involved. My little brother came early and was in an incubator for the first few days of his life - he was born in Mill Road Maternity Hospital in Cambridge, which had been the workhouse!

I avoided hospital for all of my youth - and I don't think I went to the doctor very often. Dr Simpson was the man who looked after the whole of Barton. I married Julie at the beginning of December 1983, and a year later drove my moped into a parked car. I was taken to A&E at Addenbrookes', and Julie phoned my parents. They walked in, and mum's first words were "Well he never came to hospital before he got married."

Thank you NHS.

Tuesday 6 July

In sharing the pleasure of our Orkney holiday with you, I didn't give you any photos of The Kelpies. They are the largest equine sculptures in the world. Located between Falkirk and Grangemouth, they are situated beside the M9 motorway - and we had driven past them. They are beside the Forth & Clyde Canal, built as part of the restoration work on that waterway.

To quote their website "Standing at 100ft tall and weighing more than 300 tonnes each, the magical Kelpies are a man-made wonder and a feat of engineering. The works of art, created by artist Andy Scott, have become iconic in the landscape after being modelled on real-life icons of times gone by - Clydesdale horses Duke and Baron. The Kelpies represent the lineage of the heavy horse of Scottish industry and economy, pulling the wagons."

There were created as a space for the communities in the Falkirk area to come together, and it is a beautiful country park that surrounds them. We had a good walk, took lots of photos, and sat and ate ice cream.

Wonderful to see what can be done by good investment, investment made with imagination and vision. There are visionary plans for Derby and Sandiacre Canal, as well as work being done on the Chesterfield Canal Trust and by the Friends of the Cromford Canal. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29.18)



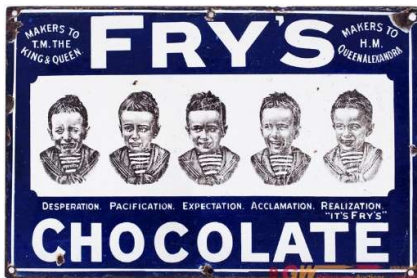
Wednesday 7 July

Today is apparently World Chocolate Day. I have mixed feelings about that - I used to suffer from migraines, and they were always worse after excessive chocolate consumption. In the days I was a Country Parson, and running the kids to and fro, I was often filling up the car with petrol - and buying a choccie bar. It wasn't always a good idea.

My other migraine trigger was a holiday - and I remember several days in holiday cottages trying to hide in the dark. There was one year when Boxing Day was a Sunday - my brain said "holiday, migraine", my diary said "Communion service". I stood behind the altar trying to ignore the hammering in my head, as the church circled me in a vision. Not good! I've not had one for ages, but if I eat too much chocolate, I know it is not too far away.

Back in 1999 there was the suggestion of giving every house in the village a Millennium Candle. They cost 20 p, and the Church Council decided we couldn't possibly afford that expenditure. Julie and I prepared a Harvest Festival based on chocolate (how it was produced, how it was transported, the ethics of production) and handed out tubes of Smarties. "Fill them with 20 p's and bring them back". We raised enough to buy Millennium Candles for the village.

My train travels have included Halifax, where Quality Streets were being made when I rode through, York and Bournville (though I have never got off the train to go to Cadbury World). Where else do I need to go? There is a wonderful British Transport Film which shows the loading of chocolate onto wagons at the Fry's factory in Keynsham, not far from Bath. I've just done a google to try and find out which film and there is "The Chocolate Quarter Retirement Complex" in the old factory buildings. That would be a good postal address! Now to watch some British Transport Films to see which one it is - there's nothing else to watch this evening!



Thursday 8 July

In trying to cover all Britain's railway track, there are some bits that are more difficult than others. In the middle of Sheffield's tram network there is a triangle. Two sides of the triangle have a regular service, the third side is only done by the first couple of trams (and the last couple of trams) that start and finish at the depot. Which is how I happened to be stood at Cricket Inn Road tram stop at 0525 this morning.

Having done about 20 yards of difficult track, I got off the tram at Sheffield station to catch the 0610 train to Retford. Most Sheffield-Retford trains travel on to Lincoln and call at the low level platforms. The 0610 diverts at Thrumpton West Junction and runs up and round to the high level platform. Ten minutes later it runs back. The only other train that does that is at 2251. More new track coloured in.

Workshop station is gorgeous, and has a very nice cafe. I had the pleasure of a cooked breakfast - worth getting up early for.

Back to Sheffield, tram back to the car (doing the easy two sides of the triangle), and home. In the Office by 10 am. Bit tired now!



Friday 9 July

I would have appreciated spending my day off this week asleep in the sun in my garden. Madam wanted a trip to Stratford upon Avon. I had a choice, do I say "but darling I'm tired and would rather spend the day in my garden"? If I do I will be told, in no uncertain terms, that any idiot husband who catches a Sheffield Tram at 0525 is not allowed to complain he is tired.

We had a lovely day in Stratford. Much busier than last time we made a visit, even though so much remains closed and there are no crowds of tourists. I enjoyed a latte and tea cake while J did the market. I sat in the sun and read "History Today" which she was happy in Waterstone's (actually, I could have read "War and Peace" while she was happy in Waterstone's). We walked beside the Avon - beautiful.

I also spent a while in the O2 shop sorting out a new mobile phone - my current one is not holding power, and I need a new one. Now I have it home I have got to work out how to get all the information off the old one and onto the new. Lydia from O2 assures me it is easy, that all I will need to do is follow the instructions. Such faith in one so young!

I have decided that 8.30 on a Friday evening is not the best time to sort that out, so it's on the list for tomorrow (along with Graham and Hannah's wedding, writing a sermon and finishing the zoom service). If you are of the praying persuasion, please pray for me - I'll let you know how I get on.

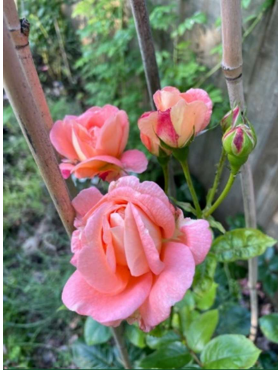
If you want somewhere to escape this weekend, the lovely church of St Peter's Alstonefield (just north of Ashbourne) is open for Refreshments and Cream Teas on Saturday afternoon, and Sunday from 10 to 4.

Saturday 10 July

One sermon written (two services at 10 tomorrow plus Choral Evensong at St Edmund's at 6), one Zoom service produced (11.30 tomorrow morning, then on youtube), one wedding taken (I'll post some photos of all the recent weddings when I've got the OK of the couples), and the phone is now up and running. Lydia from O2 in Stratford was quite correct. I followed the instructions, put the old phone next to the new one, and left them to it. All the data was transferred across, and everything works. I really didn't believe it would - nice when technology surprises you in a positive way. (And I'll also be grateful for all the prayers and positive thoughts you sent my way).

In the garden a new fence has been erected along the boundary. Which means we have a pile of logs and some fence panels that need to go. If anyone wants the wood, wants the fence (Joanne Peace, Thea Bonham-Kelly know anyone?), please get in touch. It also means I have an extra 3 feet of garden to do something with! Julie wants more strawberries.

The Edmund roses are looking superb. We had hoped to have had a Vicarage Tea Party tomorrow so you could have come and admired them, but that's had to be postponed. It will happen as soon as it seems safe - though the way the figures are going, I am not confident that will be any time soon. Remember "Hill Street Blues" - "Let's be careful out there."



Monday 12 July

Yesterday's Zoom service is now on line, so you can watch it on youtube (via the church website). We marked "Sea Sunday", which was a good excuse for more Orkney photos! Sorry the video didn't get posted yesterday. Mark and Camille's Wedding kept me busy in the afternoon (photo posted with permission), then Choral Evensong (I am glad to report that I can remember how to sing the responses), then a couple of hours in the garden with a book (and some lilies). I think I made the best decision.



Tuesday 13 July

We have just had St Edmund's Parochial Church Council - nice to meet in person rather than on Zoom. Lots of good news - including a very generous response to Christian Aid week in both our parishes. A level of support which, in my humble opinion, shows how wrong the government has been in its cuts to the foreign aid budget made today.

The Bishop of Worcester (the CE's Lead Bishop for International Development) commented: "I am very disappointed that Parliament has not seen fit to honour this country's laudable promise, enshrined in law, to devote 0.7 percent of Gross National Income to aid. As Andrew Mitchell commented this morning, it is not right that the world's poorest should be the only ones to suffer from a reduction in spending following the pandemic."

Christian Aid have tweeted "We will continue to oppose these cuts to overseas aid. We stand with the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Now more than ever, the UK should be leading the way in tackling crises such as climate change, Covid, and conflict that are affecting so many of the world's poorest communities."

We also discussed what we think about the changes to the Covid rules. I passed on the message I got from the diocese this morning: A spokesperson for the Church of England said: "We note the Health Secretary's statement in the House of Commons this afternoon and the Prime Minister's press conference this evening confirming plans to move towards the next stage of the Government's roadmap on July 19 while urging caution in response to rising cases of Covid-19 propelled by the Delta variant. The prospect of the lifting of legal restrictions will be both a relief and a cause of anxiety and we are aware that there is likely still to be significant guidance in place. We have already been considering our current guidance to churches and are awaiting updated Government guidance for places of worship. We will also be seeking further clarification through the Government's Places of Worship Taskforce, which meets later this week, on a range of areas affecting public worship and places of worship."

We all agreed that it would be nice if the Government (and Church) showed a little more urgency in issuing their guidance. We had a long, sensible discussion and unanimously agreed that, as far as Sunday mornings are concerned, we would all prefer face coverings to continue to be worn, social distancing to continue and, much as we want to sing hymns, we won't do so for the next few weeks.

Obviously we'll read the full guidance, have a discussion at St Matthew's too, and see how we go forward there too. Such fun. Have some roses to help us calm down.



Wednesday 14 July

This evening we have sworn our Churchwardens in - thank you Michele, David and Peter (we still need one more at St Eds). It was done on zoom in about 30 minutes - much more efficient than all meeting in a church somewhere, but you don't get church cake afterwards when it's on zoom. It was also an opportunity to say thank you to Nadine our Diocesan Registrar (the legal brains of the Diocese). When Julie and I came to these parishes she oversaw the legal side of it all, and made us both feel very welcome. Registrars are very useful people - when marriages paperwork needs preparing, churchyards have problems, and buildings need sorting.

Churchwardens are very useful people too. I had seven churches as a Curate, as each church has two Wardens, that was 14 of them. I have fond memories of them all. Bill and Amy, who on several occasions fielded our children to stop us getting stressed. Major Robbie - I never had any problems with him, but I remember one cleric saying he was the sort of churchwarden who would not offer you a seat if you had offended him! Cyril, well into his 80s when I knew him, but he and his wife always had a cooked lunch, and would find a portion for the curate if he happened to arrive at 12.30 pm. Nancy who died on my watch - myself and the undertaker walked through the village leading the cortege down the main road to her church, her churchwardens staff on top of the coffin.

Four churches as a Vicar - we had the lady of the manor as one Warden, a farmer as another, all my wardens were village figures who were respected and did huge amounts for their communities. They were the sort of villages where the farmers would send their workers round to repair the roof, sort out the repairs - no faculty required.

Then Cathedral Wardens. They are a breed apart, not included in the annual Diocesan swearing in as they have a different legal standing. One year we did the swearing service in the Cathedral, and our two Wardens sat their with arms crossed as every other warden stood to swear undying allegiance to the Archdeacon.

Then Northern Churchwardens and now Midlands Churchwardens. 26 years of churchwardens - thanks folks. Any resemblance to the image below is purely coincidental.



Thursday 15 July

It is with deep regret that we have decided to cancel our Eco Afternoon at St Matthew's on Sunday 25 July. We had a good programme planned, but there is so much concern about the virus that we do not feel it is wise to encourage people to come together for an event like this.

We wanted it to be an afternoon that people will enjoy, that will bring us back into church and churchyard with joy and peace - but that does not seem to be possible at the moment.

I found this cartoon when we were on Orkney. I don't know where it came from, and I hope I am not infringing anyone's copyright. It made me smile, and we all need that at the moment.



“The skulls of your enemies are much more environmentally friendly than plastic cups. Just sayin’.”