

Saturday 17 July

We decided to move reasonably early. [Amerton Railway](#) (which is just the other side of Uttoxeter) have a Gala Day. I enjoyed browsing the bookshop, I did some photography, and we had a train ride. They had a compartment with a wide door and a ramp, and they have a mile circle of track. Several engines in steam, and lots of busy-ness. Good fun! Also a nice cafe and farm shop - [Amerton Farm](#) - we'll be back.

Home to spend the afternoon in the house - too hot outside. Sermon written, Zoom done, Order of Service prepared - all on the church website. Services tomorrow at 10 am in both churches, Zoom at 11.30 (later on youtube), Bianca's baptism in the afternoon, and Evensong at St Matthew's at 6. All welcome.

This evening I am being let off the lead again. The East Coast Main line is closed between Newark and Retford, so trains are being diverted via the Pyewipe curve in Lincoln. It's a curve that forms a triangle between the Lincoln-Newark and Lincoln-Doncaster lines. Many years ago we were on a train leaving Lincoln for Newark. It headed out of town towards Doncaster, then stopped, reversed over the curve and continued on its way (presumably they needed to turn the unit). I danced up and down with glee. A six year old [Hannah Barham-Brown](#) looked at me and, in that tone of voice we know so well, said "Daddy, it's not that exciting."



Monday 19 July

We had a trip to [National Trust - Stowe](#) on Friday. Many years since we last went. Nice new cafe, but I was very glad we have Morgan - it's a lot of walking, and it was very hot.

Congratulations to Geoff and Anne for keeping up with Julie on her wheels. Here are some of the figures in the Temple of British Worthies.

On a day like this, there is something comforting about immersing myself in the past. I've downloaded the Church of England's Covid guidance which was issued on Friday afternoon just before 5 pm (too late for sensible discussion before Sunday). More guidance has been issued today. We'll discuss it at St Matthew's PCC tonight, and St Eds Standing Committee will look at it too (we had our PCC last week). There is a recognition that "hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, face-coverings and good ventilation are also [with vaccines] important factors in lessening the spread of the disease", so we'll need to work out what is the best way forward for our two congregations and the communities we serve.

I am not watching the Prime Minister's Press Conference - my blood pressure will not cope. I cannot believe I am now living in a country with one of the highest Covid rates in the world. Mr Shakespeare's line about "a jewel set in a silver sea" seems a bit hollow at the moment. Queen Elizabeth I said "Men fight wars. Women win them" - which could be why we are where we are.



Tuesday 20 July

I am watching Sky News. They are in Dungeness and have just interviewed migrants who have crossed the Channel. The Home Office Minister talks about "combatting the dinghies", he is pushing up the rhetoric and the hatred. The government is criminalising people who attempt the crossing. We have a "Clandestine Channel Threat Commander".

To me Dungeness is a lighthouse, a steam railway, a place of pleasure and joy. Last time I went was on a railtour from London - there is a freight branch down to the power station as well as the narrow gauge railway. Even better my ride was being paid for by a friend who ran a Transport Consultancy business - and he had decided we were "Premier Dining", it was a wonderful day.

To other people, human beings made (like me) in the image of God, Dungeness is a place where they arrive on a small boat, where they are taken into custody, and - perhaps - one day they will be granted asylum. Men, women and children who have fled war, violence, climate change - who have travelled from Eritrea, Southern Sudan, Iran, so many countries where none of us would wish to live.

Last week we cut the foreign aid budget, money which helps these countries support their own people, in the long term slowing down migration. Nor do we seem to be taking climate change seriously, yet if people cannot support themselves on their own land, of course they will try and find somewhere they can. How many of our businesses, how many of those in government, do very nicely from the profits made as we sell arms to prolong the conflicts that are driving them from their homes.

I know that Kent is under huge pressure, I know criminal gangs are involved and they need to be stopped, I know the answers are not easy, but please can we have some basic humanity in the way we deal with other human beings less fortunate than ourselves.



Thursday 22 July

Getting the pictures together for the magazine and I realise I have not put lovely wedding photos on facebook - despite asking for (and receiving) permission to do so.

Rich and Danica were the first after lockdown, closely followed by Seamus and Emily. It was also a busy few days for Memorial Services, so I had to make sure I had the right face on.

Mark and Camille had been married in Hong Kong and came to us for a Blessing. Her family

could not join us, so we all waved at the camera. David Redfern is now an International Organist - I have told him to raise his fee!

Warren and Hazel both worked for the University Library so had a library themed wedding - the Order of Service had footnotes. Apparently they had a set of catalogue drawers holding the seating plan on catalogue cards. I felt old. My first professional job (in 1984) was cataloguing the Elias Library of Hymnology at a Cambridge College. It was done with punched cards and a typewriter.

Then Seamus and Emily, and a lot of confetti. All good fun - I enjoy weddings. If you'd like to know more about getting married in either of my beautiful churches - or anywhere else in Diocese of Derby - do get in touch. The more the merrier!



Friday 23 July

My laptop is so well used it needs to go to [Code Red Computers](#) for a bit of TLC. It takes a while to ensure that Julie's laptop has all the passwords, documents and everything else I need to keep working. We had a wander round Asbourne, but it is not a wheelchair friendly town - thank you Costa Coffee for being accessible and [Oxfam Ashbourne](#) for flat access and some second hand books.

It is ages since we have been to [National Trust Kedleston Hall](#) - and a short walk reminded me how unfit I currently am. The gardens are looking stunning again, and their second hand book tent was open too. Two second-hand bookshops in one day - o well, spending money for two good cause.

A Golden Wedding on Zoom in the evening - Happy Anniversary Pat and John. They've lived in the same house all the way through - Julie and I are on house number 10 in almost 38 years! I expect we have more books too.



Saturday 24 July

realised that I missed marking the fifth anniversary of our Licensing Service - which was on Thursday 21 July 2016 at St Edmund's. Bishop Alistair did us proud - licensing me to the two parishes as Vicar and Julie as Reader. In the past we had had the stupidity that a Reader cannot officially be licensed to a parish until they have lived there for six months - to make sure they get on with the Vicar. Here we all assumed that she would continue to get on with me, and the PCCs were happy to say they would welcome someone [else] they had never met!

There are quite a lot of photos of the service and refreshments - it is interesting to look through them and spot those who came for a licensing and haven't been seen since!

Fortunately the vast majority of people in the photos are people we now call our friends. I am afraid my wife did not take a particular good photo in any of them - we can have a caption competition.

It gives pause for thought when you spot someone who is no longer with us - and we have lost some lovely people in the last five years. The couple I am greeting below are Fred and Mavis. I think this was the last time they both managed to get to church due to ill health. I regularly took them communion until Mavis died and Fred moved away, and he died just a few weeks ago. Sadly I was in Orkney and couldn't take his funeral. May they both rest in peace and rise in glory.

Talking of people no longer with us - I was licensed the same day as Theresa May became Prime Minister. I wasn't particularly impressed with her, but at least - as a Vicar's daughter - she knew the importance of telling the truth. In my diary I wrote "having had Thatcherism, we now have Mayhem". Little did any of us know what the future had in store.



Sunday 25 July

Watching some of the facebook and twitter scenes of anti-vax/anti-restriction protests, it is frightening to see the amount of hatred that is swirling around at the moment - "as you sow, so shall you reap". A decade of division plus two difficult years. It is difficult not to see the attacks on the NHS as part of an orchestrated campaign to turn people against it, to demoralise the staff, to make it fail, to sell it off for profit, and care even less for those who can't afford healthcare. I hope I'll be proved wrong. We need to stand up for what we love.

I am fortunate. There was no hatred or anger this morning. 48 people gathered at St Edmund's. Everyone wore masks with no comment, everyone sat sensibly without being told to, we sang "Happy Birthday" to a 91 year old and celebrated the news of the birth of a new baby. We made new people feel welcome (I believe) and managed conversations and friendships. We worshipped - that was what mattered. We cared, prayed, and loved.

Then we had a Zoom service. We greeted the new baby - so one of our congregation was four days old, I didn't ask who was the oldest! Sophie controlled the technology from Leeds and we worshipped together. The only problem was that I was on Julie's laptop and when I shared my screen the "share sound box" did not appear. It meant that the music we heard was my microphone picking it up, not the music being played by the computer as it should be. It is even more obvious on the youtube video, so apologies if it detracts from your enjoyment of the service.

Julie and I are going to see [Harry Barham](#) and Sarah this week. We have children for the purpose of sorting out our technology. I shall add "share screen" to the list of things he needs to help me sort.



Thursday 29 July

We're enjoying the North East for a few days. [Harry Barham](#) has sorted out Zoom so it will work properly on Sunday. We've been to the lovely Souter Lighthouse, and stood and looked out at the sea. I feel positive seeing how the RNLI has stood firm against the hatred a small minority have directed at it - to me, they are the Best of British.



Saturday 31 July

The North East was fun. Our Premier Inn was playing host to several families off to a wedding today. I had forgotten how glamorous North East ladies are when dressed for a wedding (and how little material they seem to wear!). It took me back to our Ponteland days (we had some glamorous weddings!).

We also experienced the crowds on the Prom at Whitley Bay. "I do like to be beside the seaside". I must admit I found crowds a bit difficult, although everyone was being sensible and there was plenty of fresh air.

Tomorrow's sermon looks at the crowds who met Jesus. On the church website you can find a sermon from Clive, another from Julie and one from me - I won't ask you to mark them out of 10. There is an Order of Service on the website too, and a link to tomorrow's Zoom service. You'd be welcome to join us - in person at 10 in both churches, on zoom at 11.30, or at St Matthew's at 6. We're also welcoming two families for baptisms - good to be busy!

