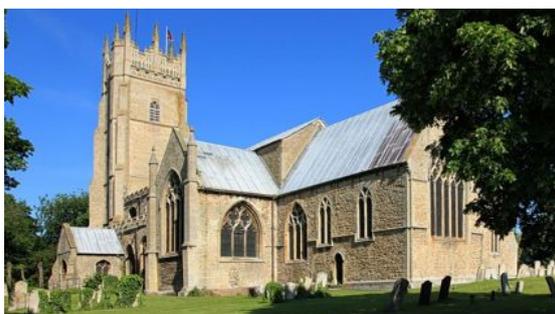


Services at the Parish Church

As part of the national and global effort to slow the spread of Coronavirus, our Prime Minister and Archbishops have advised that churches should be kept locked. See below for other ways in which we can worship together...

Praying & staying together

in the face of
Coronavirus



Despite the suspension of services, it is still possible to pray and worship together. Rather to my astonishment (I visited a lady not long ago whose parting words to me were 'I can't believe we've got a technophobic vicar'...!), we now have a YouTube channel, and links to St Andrew's Church services will be posted on our website (www.standrews-soham.org.uk) and Facebook page at www.facebook.com/StAndrewsSoham. From Palm Sunday 5 April until Easter Sunday 12 April, links will go up daily so as many of us as possible can share in the movement of Holy Week.

I am very conscious that not everyone has access to the internet. We had hoped to leave out service sheets for those who need them, but now that the church has to be kept locked, we very much regret that that will no longer be possible. We will all do what we can to stay in touch with one another, I know, and I am grateful for your kind and encouraging messages to me. Thank you!

These are challenging times, but as St Paul writes, 'we are the body of Christ', and nothing can separate us from Christ's love. In Him we trust.

Eleanor

Your Copy of Lodestar



We aim to continue to produce Lodestar throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, but only in electronic form. The recent Prime Ministerial injunction to us all to stay at home means that delivery of paper copies will simply not be possible.

If you know of people who have access to the internet and are wondering what's happened to their copy, please do explain to them what is happening and why, and let them know they'll find the latest editions on our church website:

www.standrews-soham.org.uk/news/

Best Laid Plans

We are sorry to announce that our VE Day 75, Equiano and Anglo Saxon-themed events have had to be postponed, because of Coronavirus. Our current thinking is that we shall run the VE Day exhibition and events over the same week in May next year, calling them 'VE Day 75+1'. The Equiano performances should happen this autumn. Similarly, although the worst of COVID-19 may be behind us by July, we have decided to delay our Anglo Saxon-themed event until summer 2021, as we would need to pay deposits now to people we'd lined up to demonstrate Anglo Saxon crafts etc., and we can't afford the financial risk. Please keep knitting those monks! We'll certainly need them next year. In case you've not yet got a pattern, or have lost the one you had, here it is again now:

You will need brown double knitting wool for body and hood and flesh-coloured wool for head; size 11 (3.00mm) or 10 (3.25mm) knitting needles; a small amount of stuffing for head

BODY

Cast on 48 stitches

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Knit row | 16. Purl row |
| 2. Purl row | 17. Knit row |
| 3. K2TOG, K10 stitches*, repeat to end | 18. P2TOG, P5 repeat to end |
| 4. Purl row | 19. Knit row |
| 5. Knit row | 20. Purl row |
| 6. P2TOG, P9*, repeat to end | 21. K2TOG, K4* repeat to end (20 stitches) |
| 7. Knit row | 22. Purl row |
| 8. Purl row | 23. Knit row |
| 9. K2TOG, K8*, repeat to end | 24. Purl row |
| 10. Purl row | 25. Knit row |
| 11. Knit row | 26. Purl row |
| 12. P2TOG, P7*, repeat to end | 27. Knit row |
| 13. Knit row | |
| 14. Purl row | |
| 15. K2TOG, K6*, repeat to end | |

Head – change colour to create face

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 28. Purl row | 33. Knit row |
| 29. Knit row | 34. Purl row |
| 30. Purl row | K2TOG repeat until end |
| 31. Knit row | 36. Purl row |
| 32. Purl row | 37. Knit row |
| | 38. P2TOG repeat until end |

Using a darning needle, thread end of yarn through the stitches and tighten to create top of head. Around the neck, take a small amount of stuffing and place in top of head, then sew through neck and pull tightly together.

Hood

With brown yarn cast on 20 stitches. Stocking stitch 12 rows and cast off. Fold in half and sew up cast on edge, sew to body to make the hood, covering the head.



News from the Foodbank



Soham Foodbank would be grateful for donations. They ask us to leave them in Soham Co-op (instead of in church).

They are now using the Scout Hut on the Recreation Ground as their distribution point.

The main Trussel Trust Ely Foodbank website says (on 20 March 2020):

“Our Centres are open as normal, although we are running a scaled down version of how we usually work.

We understand that Vouchers will be harder to come across, and those in NEED of our help should phone into 01353 468626 giving their contact details etc.

We cannot meet the needs of those who wish to top up their own shopping habits and our priority will be to those who have lost their jobs, are unwell or are isolated by location.

We are doing the best we can, demand is extremely high, and each day brings new pressures.

Keep donating if you are able but please keep to our main food items as space is at a premium for other items. See the website for more info.

Thank you for patience if you need us.

Thank you for generous spirits when you don't.”

Lent Lunch

Thank you to all who came to Churches Together's Lent Lunch on 13 March, especially to all who helped out. We raised £65 for Christian Aid and heard from Howard Laver about the work of our local Foodbank.



St Andrew's 200 Club

Winners for the 200 club for March are: Pam Cole £5; Mary Howe £10

PARISH REGISTERS

Baptism

1 March Harry Joseph Smith

Funerals

5 March Frances (Frankie) Barber
11 March Richard Clark
25 March Audrey Fisk
26 March Jean Beeton

World War II Diaries



Although we are postponing our VE Day 75 celebrations until May 2021, we are including extracts from the war diaries of Private Jack Clark in this and next month's Lodestar. Private John W. Clark 5832529 was a member of the 5th Battalion Suffolk Regiment. He was born in Downfields and was an electrician by trade. His wife Ruby was a regular member of the St Andrew's Church congregation.

Having lost my original notes with my kit at capitulation, attempting to rewrite from memory.

1941, Oct 25th Embarked on "Reno-Del-Pacifico" at Liverpool

Oct 30th Find ourselves at sea, destination unknown.

Nov 2nd U.S.A. naval escort takes over from British escort, huge escort aircraft carrier etc. - incidentally my first glimpse of a carrier.

Nov 9th Arrive Halifax, Nova Scotia. Uneventful voyage, except for a slight attack of seasickness.

Nov 10th Transfer to U.S.S. Wakefield (late Manhattan). Believe first English troops to set foot on Canadian soil, or to be transported on American ships, so make history.

Nov 17th Arrive Trinidad - no shore leave - everyone quite annoyed. Resume voyage. Amusing to watch flying fish flying up in front of boat.

Nov 24th Cross the equator. Father Neptune holds court - amusing to watch - punishment rather severe, so kept well to rear of crowd.

Dec 9th Arrive Cape Town. As ship approach harbour one sees Table Mountain and Lion's Head getting clearer. As one gets nearer, town itself can be seen at foot of mountain, a really magnificent view. Four days shore leave - have a grand time, people extraordinary good. Fruit, chocolates, cigarettes in abundance on which spent practically whole of money. Purchased petrol lighter also toilet requisites. "Alhambra" one of finest cinemas ever been in to - its oriental scenery very good. Hope to visit Cape Town on return. Yanks delighted to be in war "poor fools". Learn "Prince-or-Wates" and "Repulse" sunk - as "Prince of Wales" was here three weeks ago, people quite upset. Sent home cablegram.

Dec 13th Leave Cape Town behind, everyone looks at vanishing town and wishes themselves back. Used to monotony of the sea again. Cigarettes cheap - Camel, Chesterfield, Luck Strike six cents per packet of twenty, cheaper brands three cents for twenty. Yanks quite friendly, food excellent, specialities pumpkin pie, flapjacks and syrup and beetroot and onion salads.

Dec 28th Arrive Bombay, the city of a thousand smells. Disembark and entrain for Ahmednagar, what a place, what a dump, it stinks, it's lousy, it's hot, it's dusty, otherwise it's not too bad. Everyone ought to visit an Indian bazaar - can purchase damn near anything. Cigarettes cheap, Players three annas a packet of ten, Woodbines two annas for ten. Sent cablegram home.

World War II Diaries (cont.)

Return to Bombay; re-embark on "Wakefield", pleasant surprise as expected cattle boat. Think of India, think of smells, crickets, kite hawks... Still it's interesting to have visited India. Cabled home.

Jan 19th Learn Singapore our destination. Passing through Sundae Straits Japanese plane lets go couple of bombs at convoy, both land harmlessly in sea. Ships now streak flat out for destination.

Jan 29th Arrive Singapore, uneventful voyage. Believe we travelled about 25,000 miles to get here. Disembark same day, go up into camp for two days, move up to edge of swamp another two days, then move again. Under shellfire for first time, knees knocked somewhat hard. Japanese invade other side of island. Relieve D Company on peninsular. Two to three days move again, first signs things not going well, roads congested with troops and transport heading back for Singapore. Japanese bombers do just as they please, no fighters to interrupt them. Our Company goes up into the front line -supposed to be a Reserve Company - wander about for a day under mortar fire, piece of shrapnel passes between my legs just nicking calf on right leg. Jumped into the air a mile. Arrive in position, stop approximately two days.

Feb 15th Move off at dawn to relieve a Company of Cambs. on hill close to Bukit Timah road - hell on hill - half Cambs. down, half our Company up - stuck on hill, it's murder - snipers and mortars - take heavy toll. Evacuate position, move into position around petrol dump, tanks now start blasting us, every man for himself is the order. H. Knights and myself make a break for it, get into a clip trench in the line of the first Cambs decided to remain. 4.30p.m. order cease fire - we have capitulated - never seen so many fellows with tears in their eyes before. Pick up G. Sneeseby on way in, wounded. Japanese take everything, except clothes, off us. In the prison camp (a tennis court) find thirteen of B. Company and 507 1st Cambs. Army biscuits and dirty ditch water our menu. Spent four days under these conditions with latrines dug in comer of court.

1942, Feb 19th March to Changi barracks where Division imprisoned. Rejoin own Unit, down as missing. Pleased to see so many of the boys. Find WW and Dave O.K. Japanese order us to wire ourselves in.

Feb 25th Had to line roads today to be inspected by Japanese 6.O.C. Have today written my diary, or as much as I can remember, dates the greatest problem. My opinion why we were forced to capitulate: 1. Fifth Column activities 2. Lack of aircraft - they dive bombed and machine gunned as they pleased. 3. No tanks, which definitely finished us off. 4. Their method of warfare suited the country and was definitely superior to ours. 5. Lack of organisation and leaders. 6. Our Division like lambs to the slaughter. Everything against us, heat and many physically unfit through long voyage, and the fact we had been trained for exactly the opposite type of warfare.

Jack's analysis of the Fall of Singapore is borne out by military historians. Churchill called it "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history." 5000 British Empire troops (mostly Australians) were killed or injured and 85000 (British, Indian, Australian and local) captured.

The next issue will cover his time as a Prisoner of War and the end of the war.

A View from the Vicarage



‘On a hill far away...’

Outside the town of Šiauliai in Northern Lithuania is a hill, covered in crosses. Since 1831, Kryziu Kalnas has symbolised the triumph of faith over faithlessness, hope over despair. During the Soviet era, it was bulldozed twice, yet Lithuanian Christians refused to be defeated. They brought new crosses and dodged KGB patrols: the Hill of Crosses rose again. A postcard I treasure from Šiauliai has ‘Devastated yet resurrected’ printed on the back of it: over 200,000 crosses stand there today.



Lithuania is just one country where, for decades, the gathering of God’s people for worship was either dangerous or forbidden. Under Communist rule, the magnificent Church of St Casimir in Vilnius, Lithuania’s capital city, was

turned into a ‘Museum of Atheism’. Christianity was preserved, taught and practised in private homes, not in public buildings. Grandparents in particular were cherished as role-models in the struggle of faithful living. Traditional Lithuanian folk songs convey a spirit of steadfast dignity in suffering through aching strains of lament. (*Photo by DAVID ILIFF. License: CC BY-SA 3.0*)

The relative hardship of the next few months here in Soham will, please God, be nothing like that; neither for our Christian community, nor for our community more widely. Yet many of us are already facing challenges: practical, medical, financial and emotional challenges; and – for some of us – challenges to our faith. As my neighbour said to me yesterday: ‘It does make you think, all this, doesn’t it?’ Easter Sunday is the pinnacle of the Christian year – it’s far and away my favourite Christian festival – but services this year will come to us via YouTube, television or – as a friend of mine teasingly refers to my radio – ‘the wireless’. The Easter Liturgy is designed to be prayed and celebrated together: not together over cyberspace, but together face-to-face. It’s true that this year it won’t be the same.

But we need to make the best of it. I love this quote from the late Rt. Revd. David Jenkins, a former Bishop of Durham: ‘For a Christian to say that there is no alternative is a form of practical atheism, because it denies the hope that is always there if you believe there is a God’. Easter is the season of hope par excellence, and as your vicar, I promise we’ll give it all we’ve got, despite the present restrictions. If you decide to tune in to a service, how about finding something to do as you listen? That might make it easier (for children especially) to stay the course. Decorating hard-boiled eggs is an Easter tradition in Lithuania, as in much of Eastern Europe. Could you give it a go, and see where the conversation/thinking leads? Solidarity; resilience; new life and hope: it’s what it’s all about. As our/(my) familiarity with technology advances, we’ll soon be providing links to hymns. Why not sing along? I dare you!

With every blessing for Easter when we get there, *Eleanor*

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Vicar of Soham

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