

## 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...

## New Tricks

A few months ago, I began a sermon with a cartoon from Gary Larson's 'The Far Side': a bloodhound crosses a tightrope on a unicycle in a circus tent, juggling and spinning hoola hoops as he goes. The caption: 'High above the hushed crowd, Rex tried to remain focused. Still, he couldn't shake one nagging thought: he was an old dog, and this was a new trick'. (Put the first few words of that into Google, and there it will be).

I often think of Rex, and never more so, perhaps, than in these last few weeks. Hopefully you all know that whilst the church has to remain closed for all services, services and Bible stories are available via the St Andrew's Church Soham YouTube channel. All this is very new to me, a fact to which this photo of my make-shift recording studio will testify:



Nothing can replace the experience of being together physically as a church community, but two members of the congregation tell me they still

put on their Sunday best for church in their sitting rooms. Others who can't come to services under normal circumstances are able to join in online. Most uplifting of all for me was a photo I received from a local mum: any tightrope anywhere seems worth braving for this ...



We continue united in friendship and prayer. *Eleanor*

## ‘As a seed growing secretly ...’

St Andrew’s School’s Wednesday assemblies this term will focus on parables. Instead of me going into school - impossible, of course, under lockdown - weekly recordings are being uploaded to YouTube. One week (don’t ask me which!) will see the re-telling of one of the shortest parables. My Bible entitles it ‘The Parable of the Growing Seed’, and it takes up just three verses: Mark 4: 26-29. In a prayer I value, John Kingsnorth builds on the theme: ‘Your kingdom, O God, is among us as a seed growing secretly...’. Go to <https://standrewscobourg.ca/2015/06/prayer-for-the-life-and-witness-of-the-church/> and you’ll find the whole thing.



The shift from parable/prayer to conservation cleaning might seem a quantum leap, but maybe, like me, you’ll believe there’s a connection... As reported in previous *Lodestars*, two generous financial donations have enabled us to commission a specialist contractor to remove the carpet from everywhere except the children’s corner in church, and to repair and clean the tiles and floorboards in the chancel and nave. Work began

in February and, after lengthy negotiations with the Diocese, our insurers and the very gracious contractor himself, was permitted to continue, so long as particular conditions were kept to.

9 weeks in, the job is almost done: encouraging news, I hope, in and of itself. Equally encouraging might be this extract from an email I received from



the contractor; it arrived along with the images: ‘I am enjoying the church very much, its stillness enables a good focusing on the work at hand. There are many superb objects, monuments and carved details, and two dimensional works, which I notice each day - lunchbreak distractions ...’

How marvellous that it’s not just the bats and the pigeons who are appreciating the building in these days... *Eleanor*

## News from Wicken Fen

The National Trust is encouraging people to stay at home, exercise locally and observe social distancing, but that doesn't mean that we have stopped our efforts to help people connect with nature, wherever they are. If you don't already do so, we'd highly recommend following the national and local National Trust social media feeds; they're full of rich content including family activities to do at home, podcasts, inspiring images of beautiful places and much more. Wicken Fen's feeds can be found here:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WickenFenNT>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WickenFenNT>

or search for *wickenfennt* on Instagram

Rangers are still carrying out essential work on the reserve, maintaining and repairing fences and looking after our livestock. It's a busy time for our herds as foals and calves are born, and all the animals enjoy grazing on the new growth of spring fen foliage. Unlike domestic animals, it's vital that the livestock living on the reserve feed on the plants that grow on the Fen, they don't need any other food and it's vital for their wellbeing that people don't try to feed them carrots, apples or any other food.



You can see a photo of the first foal born at Wicken Fen this year, Louis, left. Our rangers check all the livestock daily, so we'll be able to share more news about our foals and calves over the coming months. Louis's path into the world was straightforward, but the second foal born, Jelly Roll, was born in a ditch, and ranger Carol had to put her waders on and rescue him. He then proceeded to roll back into the ditch twice – Carol spent a lot of time in the ditch that day!

Rangers are also keeping an eye out for returning migrants such as warblers and cuckoos, and as this article is being written the first two swallows have been seen near the Sedge Fen. You'll probably be noticing nature from your windows at home, whether it's seeing blossom on the trees or hearing birdsong. If you'd like to know more about the birds you can see from home: how to recognise them visually or by listening to their song, you'll find lots of useful and interesting information here: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/our-guide-to-birdsong-and-bird-spotting>

## St Andrew's 200 Club

Winners for the 200 club for April are: £5 Lynne Webb, £10 Rita Clark

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# PARISH REGISTERS

## Funerals

7 April	Mary Musk
8 April	Jack Watson
9 April	Rosemary Garfitt
14 April	Betty Clark
15 April	Rob Thomson
15 April	Colin Fordham
20 April	Leslie Barrett
28 April	Joan Gilbey

# World War II Diaries



*Although our VE Day 75 celebrations are being postponed, a service to mark VE Day this year will be available on the St Andrew's Church YouTube channel by 11am on Friday 8 May. Here, we conclude our series of extracts from Jack Clark's war diaries: Private John W. Clark 5832529 was born in Downfields and became a member of the 5th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. We pick up the diaries when Jack is a Prisoner of War.*

**1942 Feb 26th** Everyone hungry as hell - only two small meals a day, one at 9 a.m. the other at 7 p.m. Have hardly enough strength to walk about. Wonder how all at home are as have received no news since departure. Hope my letters etc. were received at home. Future looks rather black but I'm thankful to be alive, so now its patience and hope for the best.

**March 4th** Spent two days down Singapore (Tarron Park) wiring, place infested with flies and mosquitoes - stinks with the dead. Pleased back at Changi, fed-up already with rice.

**March 8th Sunday** - Mum's birthday. Sorry cannot write. Keep thinking of all at home all the time. Wonder how old Bill and Albert are getting along. Moved out from barracks to edge of swamp today - expect to be tortured by mosquitoes tonight.

**March 13th** In Singapore again on a week's working party. Would like to know what the family thinks to my being a POW - hope they soon know.

**March 15th** List of belongings have managed to retain, or gain. Wrist watch, lighter, glasses, purse, wallet, pay book and pipe. Wardrobe consists of 1 pair shorts, 1 shirt, odd boots, one 7 and one 9, no shaving tackle, one tooth brush, one towel, found a rusty plate, one mug (tin with wire handle) short black motoring coat, torn blanket, two respirator haversacks (do not require a kit bag anyway. Run out of cigarettes and tobacco three days ago, so am in a cheerful frame of mind, also cheerful looking especially as I have not shaved for about three weeks and need a hair cut rather badly. Getting rather a high living now, rice three times a day with no milk or sugar - not very appetizing. Living under canvas in the tropics unbearable - dampness, mosquitoes, flies and ants main cause. Out here it rains for about twenty minutes, five days out of the seven. Unlike India, the vegetation seems to be green practically the whole year round which consists mainly of rubber trees, coconut trees, few banana trees and pineapple plants. Town itself all contrasts and nationalities. Island connected to mainland by causeway, also paddy fields and mangrove swamps.

**April 14th** Twenty-nine today, went sick this morning, had temperature of 106, eyes and headache feel terrible.

**May 20th** Suddenly came to, to find myself in hospital, learn I've been in roughly a month. Shown myself in a mirror today, wondered for a bit who I was looking at, cheeks sunk in and look as though haven't shaved for a month either.

**May 31st** Managed to get on my feet this morning - was weighed, went 8 stone. Head and memory improving.

# World War II Diaries (cont.)

*Jack spent over three years as a prisoner. Rations were meagre, consisting mostly of rice and sometimes vegetables. They sometimes received extra food in Red Cross parcels but nevertheless suffered greatly from hunger and health problems caused by malnutrition.*

**Aug. 16th 1942** South African boat with foodstuffs arrived for us. Rumoured we shall receive mail from home shortly. Aug. 20th Received my share of Red Cross boat's cargo - 1 lb grapefruit marmalade, 4 oz sweets, 13 ozs soup compound, also enough maize meal for 2 ozs per day per man per month. Jam worked out at 18 ozs a man - add into cookhouse.

**Nov 16th 1942** Bugs, thousands of them, reckon they take our bodies for a sports field and during the day its ants and sand flies. Looks as though shall spend Xmas in captivity anyway. Daily menu breakfast, browned rice and tea, Tiffin boiled rice veg stew, dinner boiled rice veg stew rissole, supper, tea.

*Prisoners worked hard during the day and were subject to brutal punishments but in the evenings they might enjoy entertainment or educational activities.*

**July 1st 1944** Entertainment consists of Road Shows which appear in different courtyards nightly, lectures practically every night and an occasional orchestral concert on a Sunday evening.

*Jack met up sometimes with others that he knew*

**April 7th** Good Friday, without any buns. Len Gilbey and I work on same garden area. It's good to be able to talk about our home town and the folks we know.

*They received news from home in the form of family letters but these were often months old and arrived in a haphazard order.*

**Aug 13th 1944** Received two cards and a letter. Cards written in January and March. Learn received my second card. Mail now getting quite up to date, know they were all well five months ago. Letter July 1943 from Freda, says wants me back to be Best Man.

*News seems to have reached them about the end of the war in Europe:*

**May 8th 1945 (VE Day)** Suppose the lights are shining again, suppose my old crowd be one or two short.

*The summer of 1945 was a mix of hope and despair, rumours of Japanese defeat eventually proved correct in August but Jack was in very poor health by then and it was late September when he sailed for home with another month at sea.*

**August 6th** Often lay and picture my arrival home, hope everyone will be there to greet me, what a reunion. Guess we'll feed and chatter all night. It's silly I know but it passes many an hour away when one cannot sleep. Suppose one will find fresh personalities in all spheres of life and great changes in people I know, and what a lot of reading and questions one will have to ask, to catch up with the times. It will be like being born again only this time one will be able to appreciate things. Gosh, what a lot we've to look forward to.

**Oct 21st** Speed up the boat, Soham here I come.

**Oct 22nd** 1am Landsend, 3pm Anglesey and Liverpool. Weather cold. 7pm anchored out in the Mersey, do not leave ship until tomorrow afternoon.

**Oct 23rd** Dock, royal greeting, reception committees, etc.

**Oct 24th** Arrive home. FINIS.

# A View from the Vicarage



## ... Literally!

What you see, they say, depends on where you stand.



Look out of one of the front bedroom windows at the vicarage, and you'll see the gravelled approach to this end of The Oaks; my neighbours' cars; the shrubs put in by the developer; the border of sunken bricks that Belle finds easier on the paws than the stones ...

Look out the back, and the view is very different. Birds everywhere! Last summer, I spotted a sparrowhawk under the feeders, pecking at what was left of a pigeon. I dug a pond, hoping for frogspawn, but this year – again – it seems little more than an Olympic-sized birdbath: if the frogs don't appreciate it, the starlings certainly do! Blackbirds, robins and wrens are nesting in the ivy that covers the garden fence; every now and then I catch sight of a black-cap.



I think how lucky we are to live here in Soham, with so much wildlife here on our doorsteps. At this time, especially, I feel especially fortunate. The natural world does what it always does, oblivious to our human turmoil. Matthew's Jesus tells us 'Consider the lilies' (Matthew 6: 28); Gerard Manley Hopkins put it this way:

### God's Grandeur

**The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.**

**And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.**

I hope you can tap into some peace in these days, however and wherever you find it.

With my prayers, and with thanks for yours for me, *Eleanor*

The Revd. Eleanor Whalley,  
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