



From the Curate, a café somewhere in Guildford

As we move from the Twelve Days of Christmas into Epiphanytide, we find ourselves once again caught in the middle of, and holding together, two great mysteries of our faith: the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem, and the birth of our salvation on Calvary. The Church, in her gentle wisdom, invites us not only to enjoy the warmth, beauty, and expectation of Advent, but to recognise how deeply it echoes the penitence and preparation of Lent. These are the two great fasts that frame the life of Jesus on earth — one leading to a stable, the other to a cross — and together they tell one seamless story of God's love.

Advent may seem soft compared with Lent — filled with candles, carols, and the scent of pine — but beneath its tenderness lies the same truth: God comes to us in vulnerability. He comes small, silent, and hidden, long before he comes triumphant. Christ's first breath in the manger and his last breath on the cross are not opposites, but bookends of the same divine self-giving. Christmas morning already carries within it the seed of Good Friday. The wood of the crib gestures toward the wood of the cross; the swaddling cloths prefigure the linen of the tomb; the virgin womb of Our Lady, betrothed to Joseph, is a glimpse of the tomb connected with another Joseph. In the birth, the unquenchable light of the Resurrection is already stirring.

Here is a poem I've written which hopefully speaks of Advent as an echo of the truth of the Cross and the life of the Resurrection:

*There is a truth that is found in silence.
The lover's hand, a sleeping baby's breath;
The Triune God, whose three-way parlance,
Became goo goo gaga, to have victory over death.*

*This victory came, on a day, where once upon a time,
Upon a fatal throne was hung,
The God whose love makes the stars chime,
The God who is eternal three, left dying all alone,
And the lively wind, sweeping the sea, let out an awful moan.*

*And on that day the silence reigned,
But in it there was Truth.
The Truth, the way, the life, the light,
The King, the mana, the Nazarite.*

*The hand of God set the Truth free,
And the world cried, Hurrah!
Hip Hip Hooray! It's Jubilee!
This Love fulfils the law!
The captives, they have all been freed,
Creation is restored!*

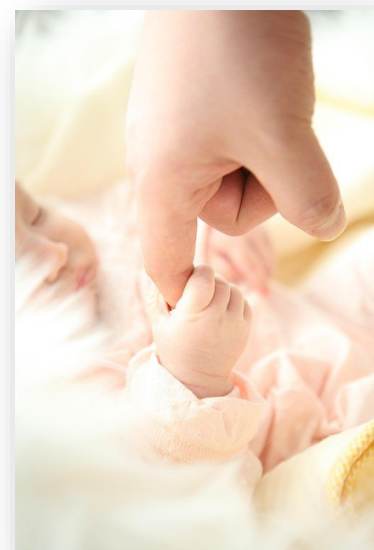


Image by jun yang, Pixabay

This is the hope we carry from Advent into Christmas and beyond: that the God who came among us in the quiet of night is the same God who broke open the silence of death with resurrection joy. May the time we spent in this holy season draw us again into wonder, gratitude, and renewed faith in the Love that makes all things new in that cosmic, cruciform birth. **Fr Ali**

Th 1
Fr 2
Sa 3

Su 4 Christmas II 08:30 Holy Communion, 10:00 Mass

Mo 5

Tu 6 Epiphany 10:00 Epiphany Mass

We 7 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel,

Th 8 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel

Fr 9 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel, 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel

Sa 10

Su 11 Epiphany 08:30 Holy Communion, 10:00 Mass & Junior Church

Mo 12

Tu 13 08:00 Meditation Group; 10:00 Mattins, The Quire,
19:30 150th Anniversary Lecture by Dr Ferguson, Parish Centre

We 14 10:00 Mattins, The Quire

Th 15 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel

Fr 16 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel, 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel

Sa 17

Su 18 Epiphany II 08:30 Holy Communion, 10:00 Mass & Junior Church

Mo 19

Tu 20 10:00 Mattins, The Quire,
19:00 Beer & Banter social at Wetherspoons

We 21 10:00 Mattins, The Quire

Th 22 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel

Fr 23 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel, 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel

Sa 24

Su 25 Epiphany III 08:30 Holy Communion, 10:00 School Sunday Mass with Blessing of Pets

Mo 26

Tu 27 10:00 Mattins, The Quire.

We 28 10:00 Mattins, The Quire

Th 29 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel

Fr 30 10:00 Mattins, The Lady Chapel, 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel,

12:00 Monthly Lunch in the Parish Centre

Sa 31



Meditation

by **Jana Phillips**

Meditation is a type of silent prayer, sometimes referred to as a prayer of the heart. Most often we pray using words. That activates our thinking mind, reminding us to hold God and a particular concept, a person or a nation, or sometimes a wish within our awareness.

Meditation is a different type of prayer, not negating our usual prayer at all but supplementing it. It aims to still the thinking mind and reach deeper, gradually opening the heart. It could be seen as making space for God to enter. The phrase “*letting go and letting God*,” is a good illustration of this principle, as is the contrast between “*Human beings and human doings*.” One could argue that stilling the mind with its wishes, prejudices and preferences and opening the heart to God is the true meaning of “*Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven*”.

Meditation appears in all the great religions. In Christianity it traces its roots to the Desert Mothers and Fathers. The Bible contains many references to the importance of stilling the mind. Here are just a few :

- * *Peace be with you (John 20:19)*
- * *Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10)*
- * *Peace I leave with you: my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27)*
- * *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)*

Why meditate? Practised regularly, meditation brings a sense of peace into our life. In practical terms, this means a reduction in stress, better physical and mental health and greater efficiency in our actions.

How to meditate? St Augustine said sitting is the best position, being halfway between standing up and lying down. Lying down, you are going to be too relaxed and may fall asleep, standing up, you are doing something. So sitting down is this balance between action and contemplation, between being and doing.

Breath, words or mantra? In secular meditation the focus is on the breath. When your mind wanders, notice where your mind has gone and then gently but intentionally return to the breath.

In Christian meditation a “Mantra” is often used. This is a religious or prayer phrase that is simply repeated to help maintain your focus during meditation. An example of this is the word “*Maranatha*”, the Aramaic word for “Come Lord,” and this reflects our desire to make room in the heart for God to enter.

Meditation is most effective when practiced with a group, so St Nicolas’ now hosts a new a monthly Meditation group, where Suzette Jones and I explore both guided and silent meditation. **We meet at 8am in the church every second Tuesday of the month**, the next meeting is on **13 January, then 10 February, 10 March etc.** All are welcome and no previous experience is needed.

If you would like to find out more about how to meditate, the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) have an excellent short animated film on their website,

<https://wccm.org/meditation-resources/the-practice/a-new-animation-film-to-help-you-to-meditate/>



**Meditation
to start the day right!
Suitable for all.**

8am on the second Tuesday of every month.
All welcome, with or without experience. We will be trying different forms of meditation with time for questions after each one.

St Nicolas Church
Bury Street Guildford GU2 4AW
01483 564526 jana.phillips@saintrnics.com

Mission Enabler update

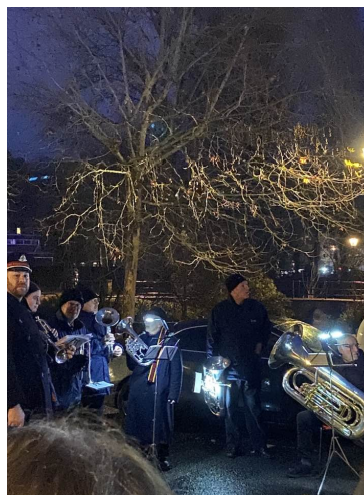
I don't know about you, but I was very ready to welcome Christmas! The cold and grey days have left me longing for the sight of Christmas lights and cheer! Thankfully we had lots of Christmas activities to lift our spirits. We started early on 21st November at **Fizz and Friends**, our women's group, where we had great fun making Christmas Wreaths and having a good catch up ahead of the festive season. I was very impressed by everyone's efforts. **New dates to be announced for next year soon.**



For children's activities, we had **Messy Church on 6th December, at Guildford URC**. We are usually a little short of volunteers for these events, so if you feel able to help please get in touch with me.

On **Tuesday 16th December, we held our Toasties Tuesday Christmas party at St Nics**, a Nerf Party this year. Toastie Tuesday is for junior school aged children.

We also had our **Pizzas@8 Christmas Party at Guildford URC on 19th December**. This was for school years 7-13 and also a Nerf Party!



Our travelling nativity, **The Road to Christmas, was back on 21st December at 4pm**. We first did this last year, where we met at Guildford URC and followed Mary, Joseph and a real donkey as they travelled to 'Bethlehem' (St Nics), singing our favourite Christmas Carols and meeting other important nativity characters on the way. We finished with mulled wine and mince pies at St Nics. This year we were joined by the Salvation Amy band.

Finally, our **2 Christingle services on Christmas Eve at St Nics** were a great success. We tried not to eat the sweets before attaching them to our oranges as we celebrated Jesus, the light of the world.

In the New Year we are hoping to start a **creche to run alongside our Junior Church** as we have a large number of under 4s who we feel would benefit from a group aimed at their age. If this is something you feel you may be able to help with, please do have a chat with me.



Wishing you a wonderful New Year!

Nicky Geraghty missionenabler@saintnics.com

www.saintnics.com





The Headteacher, Christina (Stina) Witkowski & Dina Pandis write:

We've been focusing on Anti-Bullying Week, exploring the theme of power for good. Reception children have been learning about talking to a trusted adult and showing respect for differences, reminding us that we're all different.

We've introduced Bubble Time across the school this half term, a new way for children to share any worries or thoughts. Each child can place their name in a box to choose a trusted adult to talk to, helping them learn that it's okay to talk about worries or concerns and that trusted adults are there to listen and help.



As part of our learning around Remembrance, the children reflected on the importance of peace this week. They've created beautiful poppies and talked about what they symbolise. Reception painted plastic bottle poppies for our garden, while Year 1 sewed felt poppies. Year 2 filled poppy shapes with things that make them feel peaceful, using noun phrases to describe these!

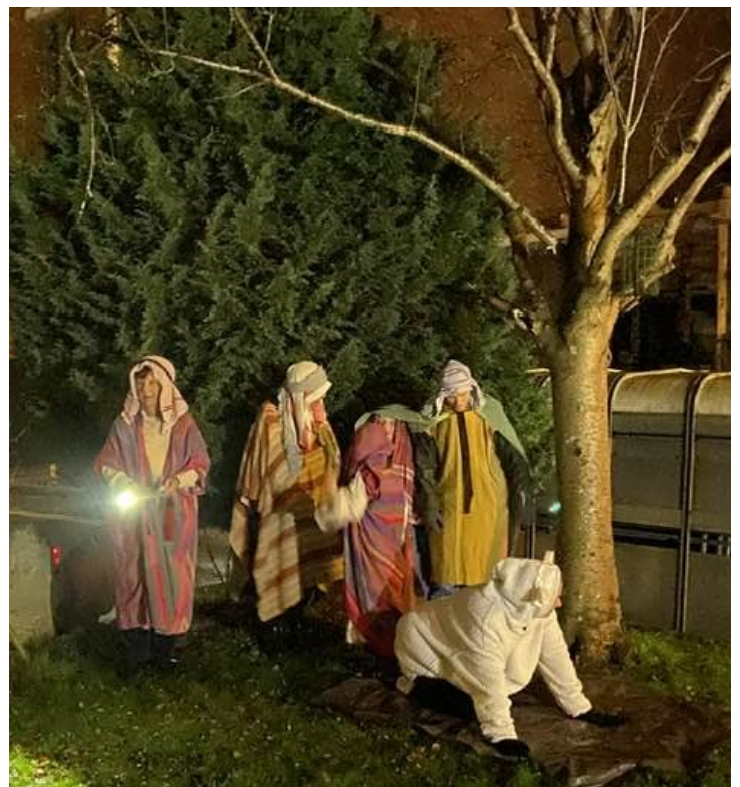
Year 2 had a visit from the Fire Service last week. The children learned how to stay safe, what to do in an emergency, and even practised making a 999 call – important life skills taught in a fun and engaging way.

Today we were delighted to welcome Alex, from our link school in Uganda. He spoke to the children about life and learning in his school and shared some wonderful stories and photos. It was a fantastic opportunity for the children to think about global friendships and how schools can help each other.



Start of Term Tuesday 6 January 2026

The Road to Christmas 2025





The Good Grief Club



We usually meet at The Cosy Club at Tunsgate on the last Wednesday of every month from 2pm. Open to men and women. **Please look out for information in Pews** or speak to **Helen Trussler** or **Jean Taylor** for more details.



On **Sunday 7 December** we were joined by Bishop Andrew who admitted 1 member of our church family, baptised 2 and confirmed 10 into the communion of the Church of England.



**ST NICOLAS
GUILDFORD**
Celebrating 150th Anniversary
of the Consecration of the current church
building.

2026 Calendar

St. Nicolas Parish Church
Bury St, Guildford, GU2 4AW
www.saintnics.com

Thanks to all who supported our church and bought a copy of the St Nicolas' anniversary calendar; a few are still left. We also have our own St Nicolas' Gin, specially blended by the Wessex Distillery. It is available to buy from the Parish office, at all anniversary events & by the glass on Sundays.



It was good to have The Mayor, Councillor Howard Smith, officially open the **St Nicolas Church Cards For Good Causes pop-up shop**.

Andy Anderson reports, "after a slow start in October the shop had a great last four weeks and finished up beating last year's takings by 2%, a fantastic result. It was the first time we have beaten the previous year's takings since Covid. Many thanks to everyone, we couldn't have done it without you."





The St Nicolas' 150th anniversary historical delights by Catherine Ferguson

In 2026 we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the current St Nicolas' church. The actual day was 20 April 1876, but we plan to have a whole year of celebrations, kicking off with the 'Launch Mass' on Sunday 11 January 2026. This is followed two days later, on Tuesday 13th, by the first in a series of talks which will span the year, focussing on the history of our church and its parish.

I'm giving that first lecture in January and have entitled it '**The long history of St Nicolas: three churches and one parish**', because the history of worship by St Nicolas' folk extends much further than 150 years. By the north door we have a list of rectors starting with Richard de Wauncey c. 1300. But Wauncey was not the first rector. Only last month I found a medieval legal document from 1263 with the name of 'Robert, parson of the church of the blessed Nicholas of Guildford'. This is not surprising, for the Norman pillar unearthed in the foundations for our present church which survived into the photographic era, suggested the first church on this site pre-dated 1300.

We can look on the faces of Arnold Brocas (d. 1395), William More (d. 1600), Caleb Lovejoy (d. 1674) and William Skipsey Sanders (d. 1901) as they look back at us across the centuries. Come to the lecture on the 13 January 2026 at 7:30pm in the Parish Centre and learn more about their world and your church. Later in the year I shall be giving lectures on the **Loseley Chapel (and its occupants)**; and on **Art and the Arts and Crafts Movement in St Nicolas**'.

And there is more to come. On 10 March we have Canon Jeremy Haselock, former Precentor and Vice-Dean of Norwich Cathedral, talking about the **theology of the Oxford Movement and its influence on church architecture**.

On 7 May at 7:30 pm, Dr Michael Shapland, Senior Archaeologist at University College London and consultant archaeologist at Chichester Cathedral, will talk about the long and deep history of our parish, especially **St Catherine's Hill and Chapel**. He will tell us more about the holy healing well nearby, and the extraordinary discovery of the medieval hermit's cell revealed by the landslide in 2019. And what about the dragon which lived in our parish?



On 8 September at 7:30pm, Charles O'Brien, Architectural Research Director at Historic England and the editor of the 2022 Surrey volume of Pevsner's buildings of England, will focus on the **architects and designers of the 1876 building**. In the book, he called our font 'inspired stuff'!

Then in November, Canon Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite will bring to us his wealth of knowledge on the **history of church music** and choral foundations – and pipe organs.

Further delights lie ahead of us (and the St Nicolas' gin) but I just wanted to concentrate on the historical element for now so you can put the dates in your diaries.



Not St Nicolas' On The Web

Winchester cathedral Sunday 26 October Trinity XIX

Ian Macpherson continues his appreciation of streamed services



Winchester cathedral, as we know it, was started in 1079 and basically completed with the "Penpendicular" Nave in the 15th century. The nave is particularly long, which means that even sizeable congregations hardly seem a crowd. Winchester has a particular significance for St Nicolas', for Guildford Diocese where St Nicolas' is was carved out of the Mediaeval Winchester Diocese in 2016.

This 'watch' was of the 11:00 Sung Eucharist on Sunday 26th October, Trinity XIX. A convenient time as it enables one to watch the St Nicolas' 10:00 and then quickly switch with little loss of view. Late October provided perhaps the last of the ordinary Eucharists before the cycle of prayer becomes involved with Remembrance and then the run-up to Christmas. It also co-incides with the school half-term, which meant in this case that the regular choir was on holiday. The service was therefore sung by the choir of our namesake, St Nicolas', Harpenden. The choir was some 30 strong, including a number of children, and, to my ear, did an excellent job of traditional church music. A pleasure, and perhaps an ambition for us?

The congregation filled maybe a third of the seats in the sizeable nave, and made a good sound with the traditional hymns. But true excellence was shown by the Webifers; the unseen hands that called up the right images and the right sound. There were several very sharp and movable cameras and faultless microphone sound; a very model of its kind. Perhaps as a result, the watchership for each live and recorded service seemed to be well over 500 viewers and Evensong well over 400.

But how to connect? Simply logging into the cathedral website brings up a well designed and informative set of pages, but no reference to watching "Live". The answer is firstly to log into Youtube and then into Winchester Cathedral, where a series of more recent historic videos and the "waiting" present one should appear. This slightly complex and off-putting initial approach for "newbies" does seem to be fairly general in the CofE and deserves a bit of a re-think. *[Winchester have improved this as now a link appears on the Home page, ed.]*

This, the main Sunday Service, was held in the Nave, spread up the steps leading to the Choir with a background of the awe-inspiring stone Choir Screen. The choir was spread out up steps in a vee shape behind the Nave Altar in front of the Choir Screen. The altar party itself consisted of a (lady) President and two (lady) deacons; while spread around the outside of of this plateau were a number of other clergy and functionaries, including the preacher (beginning with an interesting hiatus - both he and the Webifers had a service order for another Sunday, involving some instant adjustments), and a crucifer and lucifer processionalists being the most obvious. Usual vestments but no signs of incense, nor bells. Apart from this omission(?), the general format of the service fairly closely followed what we see in our St Nicolas' each Sunday. The striking difference for viewers would be the Welcomes; the service opened with, from the Pulpit; "Thank you for joining us; if you are on-line it's great to have you with us"; a similar sort of reference at the time of communion: "we pray for those on-line", and an expanded showing of the prayers for those on-line (some valuable ancient prayers), and another welcome at the "Sending-out".

Would I view again - yes - this is one of the best, other than our St.Nics' so far. Could it be improved? Well, maybe. Oldies might hesitate, for there no-one kneels, and no kneelers, everyone sits for prayers -

stands for Reception (Sorry. Laud!). And the Collection was slunk off sideways, I rather suspect that many donors would rather like to see their Offertory noticeably presented at the Altar?

Would I web-view again? Yes.

Chichester Cathedral Service 16 November Trinity XXII



Chichester Cathedral as we know it was started shortly after the Norman Conquest [c1091 to 1305] replacing an earlier Saxon structure of c675 at Selsey. The present building is partly a replacement of 1861+ by Gilbert Scott following a substantial collapse. It is among the smaller of Cathedrals.

This 'watch' was of the 11:00 Sung Eucharist on Sunday 16th November, Trinity XXII. A busy Sunday, as Matins was sung earlier, and Evensong was to be sung at 3:00pm. Worthy

of note is that BBC Radio 3 made its regular outside broadcast of Evensong from Chichester the preceding Wednesday. The last time this reporter visited Chichester was many years ago, actually to hear the then choir make a similar outside broadcast! His memory is of multitudes of microphones and connecting cables, and the Outside Broadcast Producer taking over choir practice

The choir on this occasion was of men and boys, quite small in number, about 7 of each. It was situated in the regular choir stalls on the East side of a grand stone choir screen, disconnected from the Nave to the West of the screen, where the Congregation and the liturgical action took place. The arrangement seemed to work adequately. Though it did seem odd, the same sort of disconnection is visible in Westminster Cathedral [RC].

The liturgical action took place on what appeared to be a platform in front of the Screen, slightly raised, carrying a temporary altar of rather a dismissive size covered in a large cloth but without a seasonal frontal. The altar party was three persons, of which the President wore a chasuble of the season and the two in support simply white albes. Various other functionaries in albes were positioned on or adjacent to the platform.

It was not possible to see how full the nave was, because of the limitations of the two cameras – one, apparently fixed, for the Choir, and one for the nave altar, apparently with limited mobility and with part of the view obstructed by an out-of-focus object. However the Communion itself took a while, so presumably a fair number.

There were 11 watching this service live, though previous services had seemingly attracted several hundred viewers of recorded videos. Recorded videos were only retained for 48 hours. Getting in to this live webcast did present a problem. The Cathedral website appeared to be a model of lucidity, but following up the advertised 'Live' link landed this viewer on a "Not started yet" screen which stayed that way. Eventually, a re-start on the laptop did pull up a different live screen [it had started!]. It was headed "Evensong, but was clearly of the ongoing Eucharist! Lucid, but does it work?

The service opened with a brief welcome from the President – no special mention of the Web The service followed the now-conventional ASB wording, and the Confession was in full rather than the VR format St Nicolas uses. Incense did appear briefly, but no bells. The sermon, given from a pulpit half hidden between pillars, was about the "Apocalypse" [pace St Nics an hour earlier], starting by saying that the word was Greek and translated as "disclosure". It took about 12 minutes. Later, some words by another with emphasis on "Safeguarding Sunday" The singing appeared good, choir competent [service Sumsion in F, Elgar Ave Verum], congregation joyous.

Would I view again? Don't know -the web work did a job but seemed a bit sad and confused compared with St Nics' watched immediately before.

Church ambles

**The Church of St Peter and St Paul,
Walpole St Peter**

David Greenwood



For a steeplechaser, Norfolk is catnip. There are magnificent medieval churches throughout the county, with some of the best architecture and artistic creation to be found anywhere.

St Peter and St Paul, Walpole St Peter, is one of the finest churches in the whole of England. It is just a fenland village church but its beauty is so stunning that it has been called the Queen of the Marshlands and the Cathedral of the Fens. Lovingly maintained by its small community, it is impressive in its size and symmetry, bathed in wonderful East Anglian light, steeped in history and full of rare and beautiful features.

Worth a special trip for itself alone. Such a pleasure.



*There are 21 steps from nave floor
to high altar*



Organist's Definitions

Hymns - There are two kinds, long and short. They are bound together in volumes which are either too big or too little. Both kinds are sensitive to the pull of gravity at solemn moments.

Recitals - This is usually a performance given by the organist, with the heavy emphasis on the word given. Practising for a recital is one of the least understood activities in the church. The start of such a session may be the signal for three other things to happen - The Vicar wanders in for a chat, the Verger switches on the Hoover, and there is a sudden power cut which turns off the lights and blower switch.

Sent for our delight by **John Varney**
with a request that, again, it need not be taken too seriously,



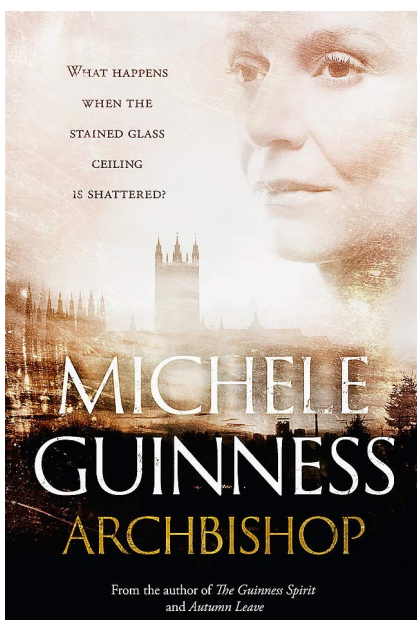
Grace Beckett

The Devil's Punch Bowl, near Hindhead,
and To Catch a Falling Star



Sally Lowe

Images from a recent Photography Retreat at Sarum Chase, Salisbury



Book review

Archbishop by Michele Guinness
pub. by Hodder, 2014

With the recent appointment of Sarah Mullally as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, I retrieved this intriguing novel from my bookshelf confident that I'd enjoy it just as much third time around. It hasn't disappointed. I won't spoil it by giving away too much of the plot, except to say that the Archbishop in the title is female. However, what's really fascinating is that it was written around 2012, even before women were admitted to the episcopacy. The action of the story begins in the future of 2019 with the appointment of Victoria Burnham-Woods as Primate and continues up to 2024, although its author first had the idea decades earlier, even before women were allowed to be priests in the Church of England.

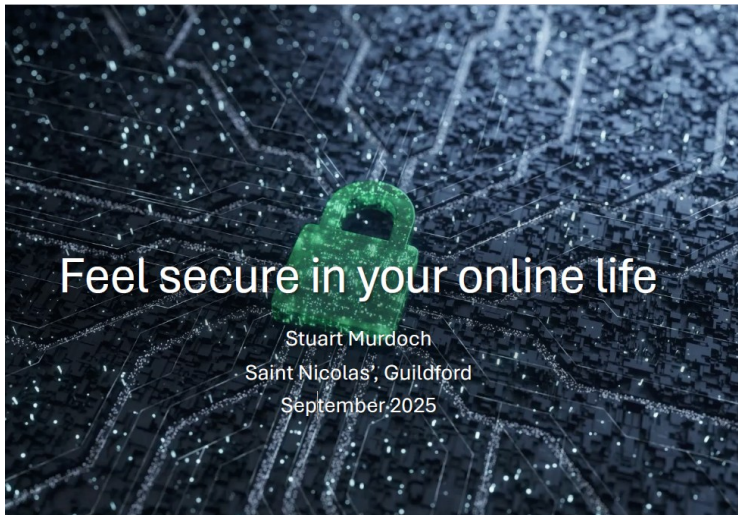
Sally Lowe

Online Security

In September, a day before many European airports were disabled by a cyber-attack, **Stuart Murdoch** gave a most informative presentation on personal online security which is briefly summarised below. A full copy of his presentation is available on request.



<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/advice-guidance/you-your-family>



By taking a few simple steps, people can feel confident they are doing their best to stay safe online.

Top tips for feeling secure online

- Really helpful cyber security advice for individuals and their families is available from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which aims to make the UK the safest place to live and work online.
- They encourage people to prioritise five top tips for staying secure online.

Key Cyber Security Tips for Individuals

- Turn on 2-Step Verification (2SV) for important accounts (e-mail, finance, social media)
- Protect your e-mail with strong, unique passwords. Combine three random words to make a password that is 'long enough and strong enough'.
- Regularly back up your most valuable data to external drives or cloud storage to prevent loss/ ransomware.
- Keep apps and devices (including smart devices like watches, speakers, doorbells) updated with the latest security patches and updates, ideally automatically.
- "Trust the tech": use a password manager or save your passwords in your browser - better still, use a Passkey
- PS. It's better to write the password down and keep it somewhere safe than reuse a bad password



Protecting Against Online Fraud

- Enable security features on personal devices (pin, fingerprint, face id), auto-lock & "find my phone".
- Check online shops are legitimate. Credit cards for online purchases offer more protection than debit cards. Apple Pay/Google Pay/PayPal mean you don't share card details.
- For online purchases: check out as a guest, only share mandatory info, don't store cards



Reporting and Recovering from Cyber Incidents and Fraud

- Victims of fraud can report incidents to Action Fraud, which can help prevent further criminal activities
- NCSC advice is available on how to respond & recover from fraud e.g. clicking on a “Phishing” link

Cyber Security for Families and Individuals

- Keep up to date with latest advice on how to secure your device (e.g. iPhone/Google)
- Forward suspicious **text** messages to **7726**. (Also choose “Delete and Report” on an iPhone)
- Forward suspicious **e-mails** to report@phishing.gov.uk (Also choose “delete and report as Spam/Phishing” in Google Mail)



National Cyber
Security Centre

[Go to ncsc.gov.uk >](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk)

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4 Feet 8 and a half Inches and all that by Philip Hooper

As you may well have learnt from the media, recent months saw the bicentenary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first steam-powered passenger railway. There had been earlier landmarks in railway history including the opening near here of the Surrey Wagon way in the 18th century. That, however, used horse drawn wagons running on wooden rails compared to the iron ones 4ft 8 and a half inches apart at Stockton. Over the coming months and years, as railways expanded, travel was revolutionised when journeys which took days by coach and horses were reduced to a couple of hours by train.

Why was the gap between the rails known as the gauge 4ft 8 and a half inches? The most feasible explanation I have found is that the tunnels in the coal mines in the area around Stockton were 5ft wide with the rails against each side leaving a space that wide.

The success of the Stockton and Darlington led to a steady expansion of railways with the network reaching many towns, and then the major cities of Liverpool and Manchester were linked by it in 1830. Thereafter confidence grew with so many new schemes being put forward that the early 1840s became known as the railway mania. In 1844 the bubble burst and in the resulting recession many schemes were abandoned. Nevertheless, the mania led to most of the towns and cities in the country becoming part of the network.

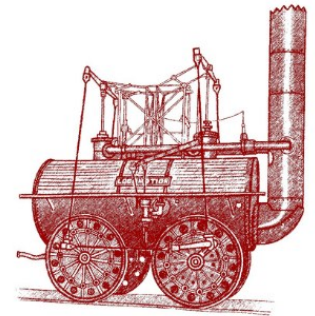
In addition to the revolutionary speed, trains were so much cheaper to use that travel became available to most of the population, leading to the growth of holiday resorts such as Blackpool and Weston-super-Mare.

The 4ft 8 and a half in gauge wasn't accepted by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the engineer appointed to build the railway from Bristol to London. Instead he suggested one of 7 feet. The board of the Company agreed to this and also to his suggestion that it be called the Great Western Railway. It went on to also link South Wales and Cornwall to the capital. Although the broad gauge continued to expand till it reached the western extremes of Cornwall and South Wales, the narrow, or standard, gauge did as well. Inevitable friction arose where they met. In particular at Gloucester where the standard gauge Midland Railways met the GWR from Bristol and the South West became notorious for the utter chaos which arose when trainloads of passengers had to switch from one gauge train to the other. In 1846 the GWR took over the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, giving access to the Midlands and right up to Merseyside. However, the Act of Parliament approving the take-over included a provision forbidding the

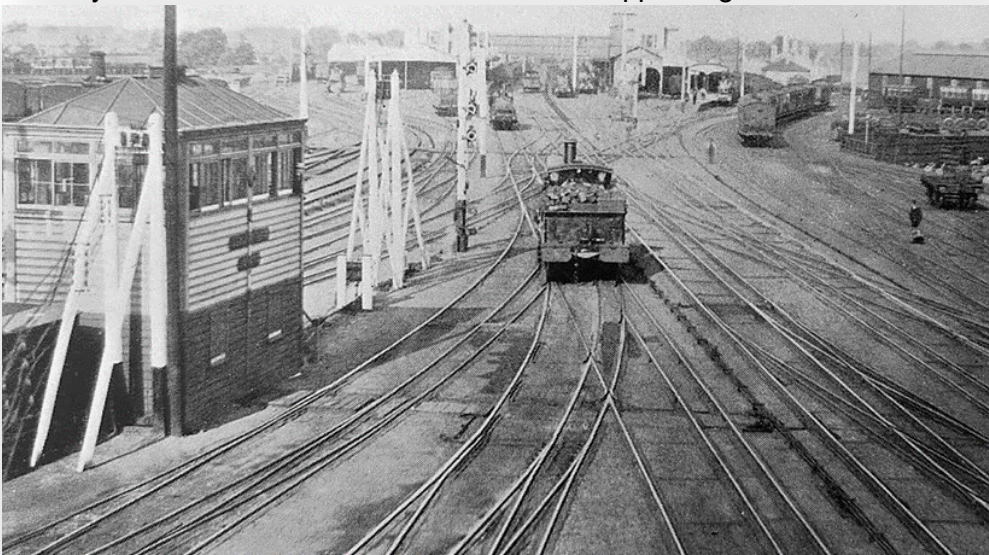
conversion of the taken-over track to broad gauge. There followed a gradual conversion of the whole system to standard gauge ending in May 1892, when

A platelayer's nightmare! Mixed gauge track (broad and standard gauges) on the GWR at Swindon circa 1880. Photo: Mike Peart's collection. From the website of

F Friends of the National Railway Museum



Steaming Ahead to 2025



the remaining broad gauge lines to Devon and Cornwall were converted over one weekend.

The country's rail network continued to expand during the remainder of the century after the 1844 crash albeit at a slower pace. In fact, the final stages of the development of the network to its current extent weren't completed until the early years of the last century. One of the final lines to open was the extension of the West Highland line, which had reached Fort William on the north west Scottish coast in 1892, to Mallaig roughly 100 miles to the north. This included the magnificent viaduct at Glen Finnen which was one of the first structures to be built of concrete. The line also had the distinction of being the first to receive government help in its finance.



The West Highland line, one of the world's most scenic train lines. Source: bbc.co.uk/travel

In the First World War railways played a vital part in transporting huge numbers of troops and munitions. The railway companies had been under government control during the war and this led to the decision after Armistice to bring them together into larger businesses. This was brought about in 1923 by the grouping of the 40 odd different railways into the "big four", namely the London Midland and Scottish Railway (at the time the largest commercial organisation in the world), the London Northeastern Railway, the Southern Railway and the Great Western Railway. The inter-war years also saw the development of road transport with railways losing traffic to buses and lorries.

In the Second World War the railways again performed a vital role in carrying vast quantities of traffic, and this time in addition suffering considerable damage from air raids. The post-war years saw nationalisation in 1948 followed by the Modernisation Plan in 1955 and the Beeching Plan in 1963. The former decreed that all steam locomotives be replaced by diesel and electric traction, which was achieved in 13 somewhat rushed years. The latter is of course a household name. I can only comment that whilst some of the closures were clearly justified by low levels of use, others were in hindsight disastrous mistakes. Happily a large proportion of the lines proposed for closure, possibly as much as a quarter including almost the entire network in northern Scotland, remain open. Furthermore, numerous country branch lines have been brought back to life on a part time basis by volunteers using restored steam locomotives and two closed lines, the Waverley route south west from Edinburgh and the "Varsity" line from Oxford to Cambridge have been reopened.

In recent years passenger and freight figures have reached all-time highs and I dare to hope that the industry faces a bright future.



Daniel Lucas, who has reliably attended to St Nicolas' Parish Centre plumbing in the past, has formed **Prime Boilers Ltd** and now offers all the following services:

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Eco News



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* Leave a container with your name & note about the required refill outside the Parish Office

* Pick up and pay next time you are at church

Washing up liquid - 25p per 100ml

Liquid hand wash - 40p per 100ml



St Nicolas' Zero Carbon Guildford Community Fridge scheme

On **Monday Mornings 10:30 -12:00** in the **Parish Centre Hall**, unsold food collected by our volunteers is offered for free to help prevent food waste and reduce the resulting methane and CO2 emissions. Come and help, or come and help yourselves, both very welcome!

Every week we have a lot of white French bread left over, so here is an easy Czech recipe to help use it up.

Czech Bread and Apple pudding

Jana's Baking



Ingredients:

600g (approx. 21 ozs) white French bread, cut into 1/2" or 1.5cm thick slices

3 eggs

700ml (24 fl oz) milk

150g sugar plus icing sugar to sprinkle on top before serving

600g apples

2 tsp cinnamon

Handful or raisins or sultanas

80g (3 ozs) butter plus enough to grease the baking dish

Heat the oven to 180 deg. C & butter the baking dish.

Slice the bread. Whisk the milk and the eggs and soak the bread slices in the mixture, then line the baking dish with half the soaked bread.

Core and thinly slice or grate the apples and spread over the bread. Sprinkle the dried fruit—pre-soak fruit if you have time, but not essential.

Sprinkle with a mixture of the sugar and cinnamon.

Cover with remaining bread, drizzle with melted butter and put into the hot oven for 15 mins. Take out, pour any remaining egg & milk mixture over the top bread layer and bake for about 25 mins until golden.

Sprinkle with sugar and serve. Can be eaten hot or cold.

This can also be made with a savoury filling of ham or any cooked meat, layered with tomatoes or peppers and grated cheese or a savoury vegetarian filling topped with seeds. →





The Autumn Term programme of activities for Tuesday Group meetings has proved varied and interesting - a happy mix of learning, sharing, and taking part.

At the end of September, David Greenwood gave a well-illustrated talk on "The Rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral", which covered both the history of the construction and the inspiration which lay behind it.



In October, autumn-themed bingo (a Tuesday Group speciality) gave opportunities for great teamwork and a lively mental workout. The following week's discussion on local animal wildlife remarked on the "wildlife corridor" through the town which sees a wide variety of creatures pass through an essentially urban environment. The story of Marigold the swan, who adopted some cygnets after an accident befell them one day, was much

appreciated. At the next meeting, simple card games (including "Beggar My Neighbour" and "Happy Families") provided amusement and companionship.

In November, the Group devoted a session to crafting decorations for the tree St Nicolas's is contributing to the Guildford URC's annual Christmas Tree Festival. (The Festival runs from Sunday 7th to Sunday 21st December.) This year, inspiration came from the

famous Christmas poem by Robert Herrick (1591-1634) which likens the birth of Jesus to December being turned to May - hence all those snowflakes and flowers in the photographs shown here. On Remembrance Day, the individual contributions session on what the day signifies resulted in thoughtful memories and family stories being shared, with some photos and other memorabilia also shown. Tuesday Group concluded the session by observing the two minutes' silence in St George's Chapel.



photos **Chris Goodwin**

Tuesday Group resumes on:

6th January, **at 11am**: "My Favourite Christmas or Epiphany Carol" - individual contributions

13th January: "A New Hobby - What Would you Choose?" - individual contributions

20th January: Quiz for two teams

27th January: Guest Speaker - topic: Allotment Endeavours.

*Tuesday Group would like to welcome you to these events - do drop into the Parish Hall to share in any of our meetings on a Tuesday; doors open 9.45 am. **Cathy Goodwin***

Boundaries

Saturday 24 January 2026

10 am – 12.30 pm, Coffee from 9.30 am

Led by Rev'd Peter Jackson

Is your life out of control? Do people take advantage of you?

- Do you have trouble saying no?
- Why is it important to have mental, physical and spiritual boundaries?
- How do we establish these boundaries?
- How do we cope with people who don't have boundaries or fail to respect ours?

Come and explore some of the challenging issues that have a profound effect on our already busy lives, as Peter sensitively helps unpack these questions and more.

The session will be free of charge but voluntary donations are invited for the vital work of 'The Sanctuary', providing support for victims of domestic abuse

Please reserve a place, **by Friday 16 January** by contacting Sally Pollard at
pollard3@hotmail.co.uk, tel: 01483 428646

Life Issues Series

At Godalming Baptist church

Queen Street, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1BA



The night sky in January

Rory Fenner



Coming up next year, the year of our 150th celebrations! On the 12 August, there will be a large partial eclipse of the Sun, with the Sun a razor thin crescent at 95% eclipse. Maximum eclipse

12 August 2026 — Total Solar Eclipse — London



occurs at 7:17pm, we should all be able to see this. It will be more spectacular than the deep Partial Solar eclipse of 20 March 2015. On the 28 August we will see a Partial eclipse of the setting Moon at 4am.

January '26 The Sun

The animation shows what the eclipse approximately looks like in London. Stages and times of the eclipse are outlined below. All times are local time (BST) for London.

moves from Sagittarius into Capricornus on 20 January. **Mercury** reaches Superior conjunction on 21 January. **Venus** reaches Superior conjunction with the Sun on 6 January and is unobservable. **Mars** reaches conjunction with the Sun on 9 January. **Jupiter** dominates the night sky, reaching Opposition on 10 January and is visible all night. **Saturn**, still an evening object between Aquarius and Pisces, is best observed in the first half of January. **Uranus** is an evening object in Taurus. **Neptune** is an evening object close to Saturn.

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Please email your material to Fr Neil or
Jana at or give to us at church



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NOT JUST SUNDAYS

Mondays Zero Waste @ 10am, weekly
Free food for the community

Tuesdays Meditation @ 8am, monthly

Tuesday Group @ 9:45, weekly
Social Group for adults

Toastie Tuesdays @ 5pm,
Monthly for school yrs 3-6

Beer & Banter @ 7:30, monthly
Exploring faith over food

Wednesdays Café Play @ 10am, monthly
Pre-School Toddler Group

Fridays Coffee Shop @ 10:30am, weekly
Monthly Lunch & Bible Study
@ 11:30am, monthly

Fizz & Friends @ 8pm,
Women's Group once a term

Saturdays Messy Church @4pm,
monthly

