

THIS AND THAT (341)

Nero certainly killed and persecuted Christians, but he didn't fiddle while Rome burned. The fiddle had not then been invented. This eases my conscience. Because these weekly articles are not going to be dolefully dominated by the dread coronavirus. Their scope will remain as broad, serendipitous, and wayward as usual. I shall continue fiddling furiously in defiance of dismal doom-mongering.

Bollocks

To those of us with faith the faithless can sometimes seem amusing. Such as their assumption of a faintly furtive and apologetic air whenever they find themselves admitting to doing or feeling anything remotely religious.

A delightful woman recently admitted to me that she reads *The Bridge*. "For community news not religious" she quickly added. She also confessed to listening to *Thought for the Day*, "for moral, not religious wisdom" she insisted.

She went on to tell me that when her father died she didn't lose him for ages. He often returned to her vividly and regularly in dreams, enjoyably so. In one dream the old fellow appeared to her in a sort of threadbare angel-suit and said: "We always thought it was a load of bollocks, but it isn't you know!"

This observation from the land of Nod didn't convince her of life beyond the grave, she hastened to add, though it did comfort her. When her mother died and did not turn up in her dreams with the same frequency and intensity she was disappointed.

It's a good funeral story that. The word 'bollocks' can be a good word too. I've only once dared use it in a sermon, and that was at a funeral. It sent a ripple of surprise and interest through a congregation expecting no more than pie-in-the-sky, platitudinous, parsonic pap. A preacher needs carefully to gauge his congregation before daring to use such a word.

Sooner jigsaws than toilet rolls

As the nation begins to hunker down it might be more profitable to stock up on jigsaws than toilet rolls. They were invented rudimentarily in 1760 by a cartographer called John Spilsbury. He pasted maps onto sheets of wood and then, using a marquetry saw, cut out each country to create the first puzzles. He called them "dissected maps" and they were used educationally. He created these puzzles on eight themes: the World, Europe, Asia, Africa, America, England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland.

They came to be called jigsaws in the 1880's. Oddly, because they are made not with a jigsaw but a fretsaw.

It was in the Great Depression that they blossomed into wide popularity as a cheap, long-lasting, recyclable form of entertainment. This should render them invaluable today as the dread virus restricts normal life ever more and more. A welcome relief from ubiquitous, all consuming, electronic, thumb-numbing tiny screens.

No queueing to visit the jigsaw doctor

There are hugely complicated jigsaws available these days. Three dimensional ones for example and specimens that can be enjoyed and completed on a computer, negating one of their chief attractions. The largest conventional jigsaw commercially available depicts a collage of animals. About 150 square feet in area it is made up of 52,110 pieces. Its cost, as I write, nearly £300.

To come to the end of a large, and complicated jigsaw only to discover a piece missing is as horrendous as coming to the end of one's life only to find the key to the pearly gates missing. No cause for despair in either case though. There's always Jesus to wake up St Peter with the key. At no charge, Jesus having met the cost. And there's the Jigsaw Doctor for the puzzle. He'll recreate any missing piece. At a price starting at £10.99. (www.jigsawdoctor.com).

A daily poem

Diana and I read a randomly chosen poem each day after matins to our delight or disgust, depending on the choice. I send a copy to our next door neighbour, usually with a single sentence comment. We seem to agree on what delights and disgusts. She's a discriminating lady. If you'd like to join us, it's easy to add a name to the list.

Andrew's weekly articles are at: <http://www.andrewneum.com/>

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TODAY: PASSION SUNDAY 29 MAR 2020

The Church of England has suspended all public services to assist in slowing the spread of the coronavirus. In both St John's Boldre and St Nicholas' Pilley on this day, your parish priest will be saying prayers on behalf of us all. Do join him in spirit.

For Prayer This Week

The Prime Minister and advisers. The NHS. Mothers: expectant, actual, grand and great grandmothers. Medical researchers & practitioners, care and community workers. **Prayer Requests:** Jean Broomfield, Joan Downer, Colin Erne, Michael Farrar, Harold Hendeby, Rachel. **R.I.P.** Helen Corke, John Broomfield,

Activities This Week

Mutual communication, care, assistance, and love transcending very necessary distancing and unnecessary gloom

NEXT WEEK: PALM SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2020

In both St John's Boldre and St Nicholas' Pilley on this day, your parish priest will be saying prayers on behalf of us all. Join him in spirit.

DATES FOR DIARY 2020

NB 4 July Boldre Church & Village Fete 1.00-5.00pm ???

ST JOHN'S & ST NICHOLAS' CLOSED TO PUBLIC

The medical emergency has persuaded the C of E to suspend public worship and has directed us to close our churches to the public. In rural circumstance such as ours I disagree with this ruling, but of necessity comply with it. At the usual time of service, in both St Nicholas' and St John's, Diana and I will be offering prayer behind locked doors to warm the walls with worship until these times have passed. Join us in spirit. The incomparable beauty of St John's churchyard in spring remains a peaceful pause on our permitted daily walk.

KEEPING IN TOUCH (1)

Keep in regular touch with anyone you know required to be "self-isolating" and let the Vicarage know of those in need of pastoral care. My priestly visiting will be largely by phone.

KEEPING IN TOUCH (2)

This pew-sheet will continue to be produced weekly to help keep us all in touch. It is sent electronically to the many who have requested this. Please ask if you don't receive it and would like to.

KEEPING IN TOUCH (3)

On our webpage (the address is on masthead above) not only will the pew-sheet for the week be displayed, but also the week's sermon for those odd enough to miss their weekly dose or doze. Timothy Rice and I are also hoping to produce for the webpage (above) a recorded worship clip that includes hymns, music, prayers and a short homily. Our first effort should be up this Sunday.

NO SERVICES NO COLLECTIONS

No services mean no collections and seriously diminished income. Please ask for our Parish Giving Scheme forms. It means we benefit from your generosity if you're at church or not!

THE THIRTY PRIZE GRAND FETE DRAW

We need interesting and tantalising prizes from generous folks to make the Fete Draw a success. It could be the only part of the Fete that goes ahead! Let a Churchwarden or Diana know if you, or a friend, have something suitable to contribute.

LENT APPEAL

Please respond generously to our Lent Appeal the money raised goes to worthwhile work in Rwanda.

THE BENEFICE OFFICE

Our Benefice Office secretary, Karen, continues in office out of office from home. Contact by email (address above) or Vicarage.

JOY AND WOE

Joy and Woe are woven fine,
A Clothing for the soul divine.
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine

William Blake 1757-1827