

# PARISH Magazine

 Croydon  
**Minster** and St George's, Waddon

Oct / Nov 2020



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**Eco Church** *Father Joe*

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## PARISH DIARY

### Croydon Minster

At the time of publication of this issue, The Minster remains open for the Eucharist on Sundays at 10.00am and Wednesdays at 11.00am, to which everyone is most welcome. The change in the law from 14 September restricting social gatherings over six people does not affect places of worship, and we have risk assessments and COVID-secure arrangements in place. We also continue to offer worship online.

### Diary dates

**Sunday 4th October Harvest Festival**

**Sunday 11th October APCM**

This will be woven into the liturgy for the day.

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### Diary for St George's from August 2020 until further notice

**Sundays** 9.30am & 10.30am Eucharist

Please call 020 8688 7006 if you would like to attend either service (we have restricted numbers for distancing reasons)

**Thursdays from 6 August 2020**

10am Eucharist with shared reflections on the readings

**Saturdays from 5 September**

10am – noon Community Breakfast £3 (**1st Saturdays only**)

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## God's Enduring Presence

This edition of the magazine contains a lovely variety of articles. They bear witness to tenacity in the face of adversity and the breadth of life here in Croydon in our churches. The pandemic has not gone away and neither have features of lockdown – we're all getting used to the 'Rule of Six'. Thank God our worshipping life resumed over the summer and whilst we are not yet permitted to sing hymns in church, we can offer our prayers, praises and spiritual sacrifices to God. I hope you enjoy the magazine, and again thank you to the team who have prepared it.

In this edition Derry-Anne Hammond takes us on a tour of features of the Croydon cityscape that we have almost certainly seen, but almost as certainly never thought much about, which are 'the Stones of Croydon'. She writes about the Stones, many of which she visited during lockdown. Denise Mead shares with us her experience of lockdown and how with a lot of help from a teddy bear she brought smiles to others who had been locked down, especially the young. Back on the theme of stones, David Morgan explores the story behind a gravestone that was once in the churchyard, commemorating one Captain Samuel Johnson and his global experience and Croydon links.

Fr Joe's article on Eco Church reminds us of the priority of Care for our Common Home, which is God's creation. From 1st September we are asked particularly to pray for our stewardship and custody of the creation, mindful of the destruction being wrought upon it. Eco Church gives a framework to help churches play their part in that care of creation, and I hope is something we will be able to embrace as a church. There are moves afoot on promoting that agenda further in the coming months. As Fr Joe notes, the care of creation is at the heart of mission, as defined by the Anglican Communion, so should be extremely important to us. As we come towards our harvest thanksgiving (the Minster Harvest is on 4th October), it is a good time to examine, personally and corporately, how we play our part in loving God's world.

Mother Pat's final article for the magazine was to have been earlier this year, and indeed a whole edition was commissioned with articles as tribute to her. As we know, COVID-19 and the lockdown intervened and Mother Pat's retirement and moving date was shifted into the autumn. As she says in her article, her farewell at St George's is Sunday 18th October. Mother Pat has been ministering amongst the people of Waddon throughout, and we benefit from her valedictory article which reflects on God's enduring presence through good times and bad.

As we move towards the setting back of the clocks by an hour at the end of October and autumn moves into winter, we prepare ourselves for continued strange times, not knowing what Advent and Christmas will be like, but always assured that God is 'our rock and salvation' on which is built the church first proclaimed by the Apostles.

Grace and peace,

Fr Andrew

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## ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The APCM is scheduled for Sunday 11th October. As with many churches, this is much delayed due to COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions. The meeting pertains to 2019 which will be reflected in the reports as normal, the presentation of accounts, and elections to the PCC and Deanery Synod. It will be an unusual meeting and will be woven into the liturgy for the day in order to minimise length and therefore risk. Everyone on the Electoral Roll will be sent the necessary paperwork beforehand. Please attend if you can.

## Letter from St George's: Persistence and Perseverance

Your sisters and brothers are constantly praying for our whole team, persistence and perseverance are our constant attributes during this such incredible time. It is also my last article for the magazine, as I will finish my ministry in St George's and the Minster on 21st October, and my last Sunday will be 18th October.

Since March, COVID-19, all the changes and experiences have had and will continue to have an effect on our daily lives. For me it's the little things that are so very annoying, more than they really need to be. I just have to be persistent and persevere with all those little problems, so that the larger and more annoying ones won't bring me to some state of inaction and depression. But, I wonder what you think about your ability for persistence and perseverance?



*'Jacob Wrestling with the Angel',  
Alexander Louis Leloir  
(Wikimedia Commons)*

There is a very relevant Gospel story about a persistent widow who kept badgering the judge until she got justice (Luke 18:1-8). In the Old Testament, too, we have the story of Jacob struggling all night, even with a dislocated hip (Genesis 32:22-31). He wasn't going to give up, either. Jacob is wrestling with a man and when it's over he says, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved'. It's a strange battle which we find at the end was with God (or God's angel).

Struggles – we all know lots about those. I am sure that everyone has what St John of the Cross calls the 'dark night of the soul'. COVID-19 has struggles of its own, because it's affecting my life. We should have moved in June/July to our retirement home, but I'm still here in Waddon! Every time the message is, 'well,

it's the virus that is stopping the building work'. Wales had much stricter rules than England. And now they are closing down Welsh counties with high COVID rates, very near where our bungalow is, too!

I come back to Jacob, he had come to this place of the battle by a strange and what seems at face value a dishonest path. Esau needed food and so Jacob blackmailed him to give over his birthright in return for food, and finally, stealing his father's blessing kept for the first-born son, with his mother's assistance. Yet, it was for a purpose which eventually led to the birth of Jesus many, many years later.

Another interesting verse from 2 Timothy 4:2: '...be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable'. St Paul knew a lot about painful struggles, mainly his own 'thorn in the flesh', which he asked God to remove several times. In the end God said, 'My strength is sufficient', meaning Paul had to put up with it – of course we have no idea what it actually was, but some feel it's about his eyes, as he writes in one of his letters – 'see I write with big letters'.

St Paul says we should 'convince, rebuke and encourage'. We can only do that if we have learnt by what life brings us, the rough and tumble of living with people, in community and in society. But, most important, what we learn from these experiences builds up our spiritual strength, wisdom and courage. So being persistent and persevering is all part of being a Christian.

If we are persistent and focussed in prayer things do change, but we are constantly tested for our stickability. You only have to listen the News on TV to hear how people are beginning to be less careful, not wearing masks and gathering in large numbers etc. The result is that even in Croydon infections are going up fast, we need to pray that we persevere with the regulations, and therefore stop the increasing numbers of people becoming poorly.

The Bible is full of images of weakness, loneliness and dependency. It is faithfulness in God that provides the power of our prayers. But I think the real

question is about whether we can remain faithful while waiting for a response from God? Why doesn't God answer the prayers of Christians? Those who have lost relatives and friends to the virus may be asking why God hasn't done something to eliminate the virus. But we mustn't forget that work is proceeding quickly to find an injection that will protect the world against the worst of the virus, even if it can't find a complete cure for it. Those prayers are working, perhaps not in our time slot, but it's in God's time. We have to both assimilate and live with the horrors that happen in our world and sometimes on our doorsteps. It may seem that we are living in the 'dark ages'. On the news and in the newspapers, we are bombarded by so many confusing stories and regulations for us to obey. Yet, if you look closely there are other stories, of courage, kindness, love and service. But they are overshadowed or hidden by bad things.

So we have to be persistent in our prayers, we could pray all day for good to come out of evil. There are many reasons for persistent prayer, as we see injustices of every kind – locally, nationally and globally. Sometimes it's a struggle to know God, to hold on to what we know, and to get involved by continually praying for justice. More than ever our world needs us to pray, to bring our prayers unceasingly before God who listens and responds – he is not like the unjust judge who begrudgingly deals with the widow. One example, we just need to be persistent in the way we follow the COVID-19 regulations.

God is committed and involved with creation and us in all that life brings, good and bad – but it seems to me that by our persistent prayer, we show our trust and participation in God's activity in our world and our lives. God does answer prayer; the problem is we want God to answer our prayer the way we want. It's hard to hold on to God in difficult times, because we are faced with people who ask us where is God, and we feel feeble and fail in the face of such powerful emotions. Perhaps, we need to remind those who question us that we are doing our very best by our actions in providing a whole range of support, from shopping to live-streaming worship. Also by supporting those who have been shielding for such a long time not to feel forgotten.

But, we mustn't forget that we are people of the Holy Spirit, and we represent God in any situation in which we find ourselves unable to answer 'where is God'. God is here now as much as we are here now offering support. You see, in Jesus we have received 'power'. Each of us has the Holy Spirit, we have the power to love and to remind people of God's love for them. That love comes through our words and actions – we are God's spokesperson and carer. I think we find that difficult to take on board, as we still see God as out there somewhere – but he's in us – heart and mind.

So let's keep on praying, sharing God's love regardless. And also remember that God has a much bigger picture than we do, God will act, but it is usually in his time not ours! That is why it's so hard. So just remember our key words – persistence and perseverance. We shall rise to all the challenges.

This comes with my blessings and a thank you for all your kindness and generosity over nine years. And please pray for St George's as they begin to face new challenges and rise to new opportunities to bring the Lord to Waddon now and into the future.

*Mother Pat*

### ***The Church Times***

Price **£2.50** (of which £1.25 goes to the church)

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*Contact Denise for further details*

## Eco Church

At the July Synod in 2019, the Diocese of Southwark voted unanimously to work towards becoming an Eco Diocese.

*'There is a growing and deepening awareness, and massive scientific evidence, that the environment and climate change is one of the biggest issues of our time. For Christians, our response to this is not simply a moral one, but it springs out of our whole understanding of how we see our place in the universe – our relatedness to God, the world, each other, and all of God's creation.'*

Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston

Southwark's pledge to Eco Diocese reflects and deepens the commitment to social justice and love of our global neighbours, and to our fifth Mark of Mission: safeguarding the integrity of creation and



sustaining and renewing the life of the earth. At Croydon Minster, we would love to play our part and join the growing number of 'Eco Churches' in the Diocese of Southwark. How do churches get involved with Eco Church? Churches complete the unique online Eco Survey about how they are caring for God's earth in different areas of their life and work. The answers a church provides will collect points towards an Eco Church Award – the more your church does, the more points you get!

In order for us to think about what this may mean at Croydon Minster, I spoke to Ann Turner at All Saints', Sanderstead, who has been part of their 'Green Team' for the last twenty years. "We received the Eco Church Bronze Award back in 2016 and the Silver Award last year, 2019," she reports gladly.



Here are some of the attitudes and practices at All Saints', Sanderstead that Ann mentioned:

- \* Our aim has always been to pass on the message to our congregation and others that 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it'. We are stewards of this world and therefore must be encouraged to care for, conserve and replenish the earth, as creation is a gift for ALL generations.
- \* We have an annual Ecology service with appropriate readings, hymns, prayers and talks.
- \* Displays on what we are doing as a team and how others can help.
- \* Have boxes for reusing and recycling items such as clothes and food, egg boxes, milk bottle tops, corks, magazines.
- \* Collect old unwanted garden tools (non-electric) and take them to the Tools Shed at Wisley. These are then reconditioned by prisoners at HMP Wandsworth and donated to Community Projects.
- \* Print an up-to-date guide on practical actions which can help to reduce our environmental impact. The emphasis is on small-scale actions.
- \* Produce an A – Z guide on recycling/re-using so that people know where they can donate items or get in touch.
- \* For our Bronze Award, the Green Team kept a record of their carbon and water consumption and either reduced or kept an eye to make sure we were not wasting precious resources.
- \* Meet together every three months or so, to discuss any further ideas on green issues.

- \* Working on the Eco awards helped us, as a church, to be as green as possible. Having achieved these two awards is by no means the end – it is an ongoing task. We have changed all our light bulbs to energy-saving LED.

I hope this gives us some ideas that we as a church might like to move forward with as we seek to be an 'Eco Church'. What are some of the ways that we at Croydon Minster can be 'greener'? May we be inspired and encouraged to act to pursue this, which is part of our Christian duty to safeguard the integrity of the earth.

**Father Joe**

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**Thursday 19 November**

**Please note:** The views in the articles of the magazine reflect the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the editorial board.



# Sunday SCHOOL

ROOTED IN GOD'S WORD  
*Growing in Faith Together*

I believe that Sunday School is so important for children as it helps them to grow their Christian roots in a relaxed, fun way, encourages new friendships and provides a safe environment for them to talk and raise any issues they have, to name but a few.

I was lucky enough to be a Sunday School teacher when my children were younger and it was always lovely to see them arrive each week, looking a bit nervous, and then by the end of the session they were happy, lively and engaged, ready to show the church family what they had created or learnt.

Obviously, times are challenging at the moment but in readiness for normality to slowly return I mentioned to Father Andrew the other day that in light of COVID we could create a Worship Bag for each child to receive when they joined Kingfishers. They would hopefully remember to bring this bag with them each week, so that each child had their own set of colouring pencils, pens, etc (which would help with COVID regulations).

The purpose of this article is to ask you what you think of this idea and what you think the bag should contain?

Please email us at [enquiries@croydonminster.org](mailto:enquiries@croydonminster.org) and if you could put 'Sunday School Bag' in the email title that would be most helpful.

Thank you,

Debbie Miller - Treasurer



## Prayers for Children

### A prayer for the world

God of love and hope,  
you made the world and care for all creation,  
but the world feels strange right now.  
The news is full of stories about Coronavirus.  
Some people are worried that they might get ill.  
Others are anxious for their family and friends.  
Be with them and help them to find peace.  
We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists,  
and all who are working to discover the right medicines  
to help those who are ill.  
Thank you that even in these anxious times,  
you are with us.  
Help us to put our trust in you and keep us safe.  
Amen.

### A prayer for when a friend is ill

Dear God, my friend... is ill.  
They are not allowed to go to school or come over to play.  
I'm sad because I miss them.  
They must be feeling miserable and lonely as well.  
Please be close to them.  
Please be with the people who are looking after them.  
Please help them to get better and to know that you love them.  
Amen.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-parishes/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer>

## God's Peace in our Meditation

Meditation is a funny old thing. Many of us either do so regularly or have practised it at some stage in our lives. Some of us can sit or walk in meditation for ages but most of us probably meditate without realising we are doing so, by being mindful of ourselves and others.

Mindfulness practice, which I refer to as 'bite-sized' meditation, whether through standing in a queue, by being aware of oneself and others or by helping someone cross the road, is in fact a more tangible form of meditation in our busy daily lives.

As a commonality, we all focus on our breath, our bodies, our immediate surroundings and pursue the 'art' of being 'in the moment'. Somehow it brings us to peace. Something to hold onto for our day.

Whether you practise complete detachment of thought and emotion or a form of identifying and letting go of feelings, it's all really much the same in our human experience. We all bring God into our presence. His presence of peace.

Shalom, meaning 'Peace' in Hebrew, has a much wider meaning than the English translation. Peace is not just the absence of war, it's peace in our home, our street and our hearts. It's all very well taking up the banner on behalf of a good cause but often peaceful movements turn ugly because their participants still have to grapple with the absence of peace, towards their aggressor in their own hearts.

But what actually happens during meditation? Practised regularly, one starts to notice a trend of thoughts and emotions which we label and let go of on a regular basis. Strangely enough, the more you meditate, the more you're able to notice your practice in your day and not just during meditation; the practice of letting go all day. But letting go to whom or what and what can we be open to receiving in return?

How does God's Peace in our meditation actually actualise? In order to answer this question, we must draw a comparison to neurobiology; we all know how electrical

current fires through our nervous system. Impulses 'jump' between nerves which aren't actually and directly connected to each other. They are separated by what is called the 'synaptic cleft'. It's up to each impulse to literally 'leap' from one nerve ending to the next.

The same happens in meditation, albeit on a spiritual level; each thought and emotion arises and jumps into an action and without meditation we mainly remain unaware of this. The space between the emotion and the action is what we call 'intention'. By practising meditation, we make ourselves more and more aware of the intention between the emotion and the action. I like to call this gap, this moment the 'intentional cleft'. It is at this point and through meditation that we are, through daily practice, able to identify our intention before it becomes an action. Most often our intention is very different from our actions and their consequences, unless we make ourselves aware of it. I believe it is our duty to do so.

This is God's moment of communication with us but can only be witnessed through minuscule attention and honest awareness. It's a chance to see our basal human emotion before it becomes action, a chance to take responsibility for our emotions and intention, a chance to let God's Peace take hold, rather than our own directionless and primitive emotive assault on the world. A chance for wise intention to become wise action. A chance for creating peace, in alignment with the Word and Will of God and only in the very moment we are able to notice it.

By responsibly allowing Our Lord to live through us as vessels of His Will, our honest awareness is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves, our neighbours and Our Spiritual Father. Meditation it seems is the vehicle, and if used wisely and in His Name, on a global scale, has the potential to help us individually do our duties in creating Heaven on Earth.

Shalom and have a peaceful day.

**Craig Holmes, fellow parishioner**

## Teddy at the Window

For many of us lockdown has been hard, and for all of us, being locked out of our churches has been the hardest of all. I was furloughed on the understanding that I could go into the office as a 'volunteer' on the very odd occasion when it was warranted, i.e. when the alarms went off at 3.00am! Thankfully that didn't happen too often. The phones were routed to my mobile, as were emails, so I never really stopped being in touch. I was also part of a team which did food shopping for any of our parishioners who needed it.

Just before Christmas we'd appointed a PA to our Priest-in-Charge (soon to be Rector). She's much younger than me and is far more IT-savvy, so it's certainly taken some of the burden from my shoulders. She's a young mum called Angela and we communicate regularly. She also lives very close to me. Anyway, once we were forced into lockdown, like most of you, I expect, depression and torpor took over. At first I couldn't see a way out of this. However Angela told me about a local campaign to keep small children amused as they were out on their daily walks. The idea was that houses put a Teddy Bear into their front window so children would have something to smile about as they walked or scooted past. So this 'bah humbug' thought she'd join in, of course taking it one step further!

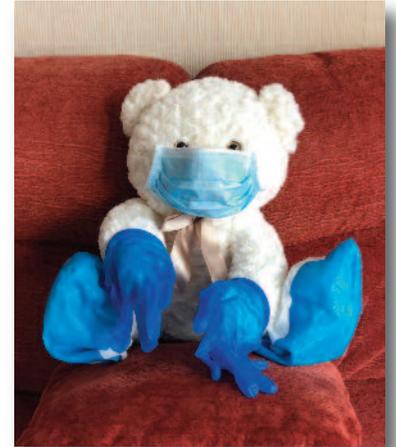
Day 1 - Teddy sat upright in the window!

Day 3 (or so) - Teddy had one paw up to wave at the children

Day 5 (or so) - Teddy had two paws up to wave at the children

Day 7 (or so) - Teddy lay reclining (sunbathing)

And so on: Teddy read a book, read a magazine, with reading glasses, without reading glasses, Teddy wore PPE, partial PPE, sunglasses, sported a fan, dressed for Ascot, was a bridegroom, then a bride, was mother of the bride, had bunny ears for Easter, wore his rainbow tie and then, horror, I ran out of costumes. Our Maltese neighbour trained as a firefighter in Malta



so lent me his firefighting helmet. My step-son is a police officer but I didn't like to ask to borrow a real police hat! However I knew someone who had one and hit upon an idea to ask my step-daughter if I could borrow a couple of hats from the grandchildren's dressing up box. We sat in her front garden more than two metres away whilst she went and got the hats along with a



vanity case full of dressing-up bits. Once home Teddy became a police officer, first flat cap and then pointed helmet (which the local beat bobbies thought highly amusing and photographed), Robin Hood, a pirate, Mr Tickle etc.

After a couple of weeks, Melvyn and I realised that not only were the local children coming past to see how Teddy was dressed, but several adults were as well. There were endless photos taken of him and selfies taken with him and he even received fan mail!



At the beginning of June when I was called back to work, I withdrew Teddy from the front window and returned the dressing-up clothes to my grandchildren. A couple of days later as Melvyn was putting out the recycling, a neighbour walked past and asked him where Teddy had gone. She said her small children had looked forward to seeing him every day. Melv told her, with his rather dry sense of humour, that Teddy had gone on a Spa break as he was totally exhausted.

I'm sure there is a moral in this tale somewhere!

Carry on keeping safe everyone.

**Denise Mead**  
*Secretary of L S & C Branch,*  
*The Church of England Guild of Vergers*

## PARISH RECORDS

### **Croydon Minster**

**R.I.P.**

Sonja Krippner

Graham Fry

Arthur Care

Margaretta (Peggy) Brown

## ‘One end which is always present’

*Time past and time future*

*What might have been and what has been*

*Point to one end, which is always present.*

*(Burnt Norton, T.S. Eliot)*

During the lockdown many people must have thought along the lines that “once this is over, then we can get back to normal”. Hope is a Christian virtue and it must have sustained many during this year. However there is a danger that by putting all our hope in the future, we do not accept our lives in the present. Everything will be all right only in the future, we think. This in turn can produce anxiety and frustration.

One person who saw very clearly the problem of investing all our hope in the future was the French mathematician and Christian writer Blaise Pascal, writing in the late 1600s. He collected his thoughts on Christianity in his *Pensées*, his book of thoughts, where he wrote:

*The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means, the future alone our end. Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning to be happy, it is inevitable that we should never be so.*

Jesus says something similar when he says (Matthew 6:34), “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” But that is not a totally reassuring message: we want to be free of anxiety, which is why we are always worrying about the future (or at least I do). I have found the whole idea of time can be frightening.

As a very young man I was very anxious about this. Before Christmas one year I went to see a priest. I forget what I said but he must have sensed this great concern

of mine and said something I have never forgotten. He asked me to say the collect of Christmas Day and drew attention to the phrase “Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may *daily* be renewed by thy Holy Spirit.” He stressed the word *daily*. He told me that when I walked out of the church I would never see the exactly same view again, each day it would be changed. We must live our lives daily, that is where God meets us and gives us his grace. I found this a great liberation: the fleeting nature of existence and the inevitable passing of time were not something to fear but a gift from God. Each day was a new gift, even if it included much to distress us.

A year or so later I came across the teaching of a French priest of the 1700s, Jean Pierre de Caussade, who taught us to recognise “the sacrament of the present moment”. We need to recognise that it is in the present that we can find God and serve him, although there will be times when we are distressed and anxious.

I remember that I once saw a poster outside a Baptist church that seemed to sum up the matter, although without mentioning the difficulties. It said:

The past is history.

The future is a mystery.

The present is a gift from God.

That is why it is called the present.

That is an expression of hope. However it is not a hope for a future that may never happen, nor is it necessarily sentimental or unrealistic optimism. It is hope in God and in the present.

**Jon Blanchard**

## The Croydon Stones

Psalm 18:2: *'The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.'*

Whilst Croydon is not known for its rocky landscape, it does have a collection of twenty rocks, or should I say stones, that I would like to tell you about. Whilst having no religious significance or being known as works of art, I am particularly fond of them, but have been surprised as to how few of Croydon's residents are aware of their existence.



So what are they and why are they here? On 1st April 1965 the London Borough of Croydon was formed, when the local council of Croydon joined with the former local councils of Coulsdon and Purley, both previously in Surrey. The new borough was formed of twenty wards. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Borough in 2015, Croydon Council placed twenty large stones in parks and streets throughout the borough, each representing one of the original wards, the majority of which have since been renamed. The stones had originally been purchased from the Mayor's Regeneration Fund, and placed in New Addington, but these unique and unusual monuments were seen as a fitting tribute to mark the Borough's half century.

During lockdown, Paul and I made the most of our allocated exercise allowance and the fantastic weather to visit many of these. We were already aware of the

Addiscombe Stone, at the south end of Morland Road, and the Shirley Stone in the park opposite St John's Church on Spring Park Road (not outside Shirley Library as recorded on the Stones of Croydon website), but we wanted to find the others. Whilst we haven't yet made it to those in the very north of the borough, we have visited most of the others. Opposite, I am pictured resting on the Sanderstead and Selsdon Stone at Sanderstead Pond, having spent quite a long time that morning looking in vain for the stone representing Sanderstead North, allegedly outside the railway station. Ashburton Park, in the ward formerly called East, was not too far to walk to and once there we played 'hunt the stone' successfully before going onto Woodside Green, where the stone was much easier to locate. By far the most impressive to date has been the Broad Green Stone in Wandle Park, purely for its sheer size.

For those of you who prefer to drive or cycle, many are visible from the road. The Purley Ward Stone is on the A235 opposite the War Memorial Hospital and the Woodcote and Coulsdon West Stone is placed at the southerly end of the main shopping street. For those of you who are unable to travel far from the centre of Croydon, why not visit Queen's Gardens, opposite Croydon Town Hall, where the Fairfield Stone, in the former ward of Central, can be found?

Whilst 'collecting stones' may not be as appealing as collecting shells on a beach, I certainly feel I know the geography of the borough better now than I did before. If you are interested in visiting the stones yourself, details of their locations can be found at <https://foursquare.com/kevan/list/the-stones-of-croydon> and the list of wards with their former and current names at <https://news.croydon.gov.uk/stones-mark-boroughs-50th-birthday/>

**Derry-Anne Hammond**



# The Tale of Captain Samuel Johnson

When the churchyard of Croydon Minster was reconfigured in the 1960s, the vast majority of the gravestones and memorials were lost. Some of the stones were used as slabs for footpaths whilst others were repositioned close to the church building. Subsequent generations of historians and genealogists from Croydon and beyond have lost out in not being able to wander through the graveyard looking for names and occupations, epitaphs and memorials, as well as appreciating the natural habitats associated with church graveyards.

This is the tale about one such lost stone; a name gone from public view; an inscription never to be seen again. Originally this grave had been positioned on the south side of the church and on the south side of the pathway leading to what is now called the Tudor gate. If you had wandered past this memorial you, too, might have been curious. It read:

'Captain Samuel Johnson, late of Her Majesty's Royal Waggon Train. Died July 10 1828, aged 44'

Initially you may have noticed that Captain Samuel Johnson shared the same name as the famous man who compiled the first English dictionary. There was no family relationship in this case though. More interesting was the fact that he served in the Royal Waggon Train. Readers of a certain vintage may recall the television series 'Wagon Train', which was set in the American Prairies and which featured settlers venturing across the American continent in covered wagons with the theme music titled 'Wagons Ho!' Johnson's Waggon Train was less dramatic on a day by day basis, but nevertheless had real moments of crisis and danger.

The Royal Waggon Train was formed in the 1790s to service the army on its expeditions. Initially serving in the Peninsular War under the Duke of Wellington,

it also saw service at Waterloo. The Waggon Train supported the British forces under Wellesley throughout the Peninsula campaign as they initially sailed from Ireland to retake the naval base at Lisbon in 1808 right through to the storming of San Sebastian in 1813, driving Napoleon's forces back into France. For their efforts in the Peninsular War the Royal Waggon Train was awarded the battle honour 'Peninsula'. They were still supporting the British army in 1815 when Wellington again faced Bonaparte's forces at Waterloo, this time inflicting a comprehensive defeat on the French General.

Army support today is in the form of the Royal Logistics Corps, one unit of them being based in Croydon. Back in Johnson's day, there was also an army presence in the town. The fear of a Napoleonic invasion was enough for volunteers to report for duty at the barracks in Mitcham Road in response to the French threat. These barracks became a base for cavalry in their preparations for foreign service. After just a short time, the garrison became the depot and headquarters of the Royal Waggon Train, so it is no surprise that a Captain from that group should be buried in the graveyard at the parish church.

The history of the Royal Waggon Train is only a short one, before it evolved into a new unit. Better support for the Army was certainly needed at the end of the 18th century. The defeat suffered in the American War of Independence and the debacle in the campaign in the Low Countries, together with the devastation suffered in the West Indies with disease rampant in the garrisons, meant that a rethink and restructure was needed in the echelons of power. The Duke of Wellington was a key figure in this. Surgeons were allocated to this group who would have not only to deal with the many daily medical needs of the army but also to operate on those injured or wounded in battle. Vets were employed to work with the horses and mules. These animals were vital for pulling and carrying heavy loads and so needed to be kept in good condition. This would always prove to be a challenge but it was Wellington's attention to detail that ensured that his army looked after and used these animals in the best possible way.

A further aspect of the work of this corps can be found in the title of a person being given as Cornet. In today's language he would be a bandsman or a bugler. This title casts light on an interesting report of the Royal Waggon Train. Local people were captivated by the musicianship of these soldiers, and a popular Sunday afternoon pastime for many Croydon folk would have been to promenade to the barracks opposite the officers' quarters and listen to their band playing. The report goes on to add that this was one of the few opportunities for entertainment to be had by the local residents. One band member can be identified. Jean Baptiste, originally from Guadeloupe and labouring in Croydon, joined the Royal Waggon Train in 1813 and was one of several black bandsmen at the Croydon Barracks at the time. One additional local story is that the name of one of the pubs close to the base, The Six Bells, got its name from a musical instrument used by the band at that time.

Captain Samuel Johnson's role in the Waggon Train is unclear. We do know that he was made Lieutenant on January 10th and was promoted to Captain on October 3rd 1811. He served in the Peninsular War on two separate occasions from April 1810 to September 1812, then again from September 1813 to April 1814. He is not listed among the Royal Waggon Train contingents who were part of the Battle of Waterloo. His first service in the Peninsular War probably ended after Wellington's first impressive battle success, that of Salamanca in the July of 1812. After such a pitched battle with 5,000 casualties from Wellington's forces, the Royal Waggon Train would have had to 'clean up'. Wounded soldiers had to be taken to medical tents. The dead had to be collected before burial. Weapons needed to be retrieved before the job of cleaning and repairing them could start. Horses and mules whose riders and drivers had been killed or wounded had to be rounded up. This part of their work was certainly the most unpleasant.

We know very little about Captain Johnson; no family details, no reason provided for his death. It could be that he continued to serve right up to the time of his demise. We only know that he was living in George Street at the time of his death.

The soldier who supported the early career of the Iron Duke in a long campaign in Iberia has had his final resting place disturbed and his memorial stone removed. Reading this tale ensures that his Croydon association lasts a little longer.

**David Morgan**

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# Times of Services

**\* REGULAR SCHEDULE IS CURRENTLY SUSPENDED \***

## **Croydon Minster**

Morning Prayer, weekdays (excluding Tuesday), 8.30am

### **Sunday**

8.00am - Eucharist

10.00am - Sung Eucharist;

Creche (ages 0 – 4), Kingfishers (4–10) and Blue Door Group (11+)

6.30pm - Choral Evensong

### **Monday**

11.00am - Eucharist

### **Tuesday**

8.30am - Eucharist

9.00am - Morning Prayer

11.00am - Eucharist

5.30pm - Choral Evensong sung by the Boy Choristers \*

### **Wednesday**

11.00am - Eucharist (Book of Common Prayer)

5.30pm - Choral Evensong sung by the Girl Choristers \*

### **Thursday**

7.00pm - Choral Evensong (men's voices) \*

### **Friday**

11.00am - Eucharist

### **Saturday**

10.00am - Eucharist

\* Term time only

## **St George's, Waddon**

### **Sunday**

10.00am - Parish Eucharist, Noah's Ark (ages 5–11)

### **Thursday**

10.00am - Eucharist with Discussion (Traditional Language)