

Never Forgotten. — Whom am I talking about?

News of this man's great leap into the heavens, this giant step for mankind gripped people's attention. Universal acclaim and praise was showered on him. The public could not get enough of him. Young men desperately wanted to emulate his achievement. He was the idol of his day.

Who was he? No, not Neil Armstrong, who 48 years ago was the first man to walk on the moon. Nor was it Yuri Gagarin, the first man into space in 1961. Not even Orville Wright, the first man to conduct a powered flight in 1903. I am talking about a local Oxford man who was the first Englishman to make a balloon journey.

His name was James Sadler. He was a pastry cook, without much education, and yet he managed on 4th October 1784 to travel 6 miles from Oxford to between Islip and Wood Eaton. Being a humble man and fearing public failure he made this first flight virtually unnoticed. However, his second flight on 12th November was made with great publicity, and large numbers saw him take off on a trip that took him 20 miles to just outside Aylesbury. On his return to Oxford, crowds gave him a hero's welcome and pulled his carriage through the streets of Oxford so that all could cheer him.

He went on to make several more remarkable flights and was one of the most famous men of his day, not only in Britain but throughout the Continent and North America. And yet within a very short while he was forgotten. Today, almost no one has heard of him. Such is fame.

It is commonplace to hear people say of the victims of terrorist attacks, as their character and achievements are being described, "They will never be forgotten." Those remarks are sincere and yet the truth is within a generation or so they will be forgotten, as those who knew and loved them die out. The same is true of all of us with very few exceptions. I have recently conducted the funerals of two very well known village people. The church was packed on each occasion. The tributes to two remarkable people were sincere and deserved. And yet, within a comparatively short time they will be to almost everyone at most just a name on a tombstone or a passing reference in a local history book.

Is it all then just meaningless? Each one of us has our own story of joys and sorrows, successes and failures, which is so important to us and our family and friends. But then to a generation or two later all of these things are probably forgotten and our names just those on the family tree. Is there no one who will remember?

I find encouragement in the thought that there is a God who is a shepherd to his sheep, who knows all about each member of his flock and will never forget them because they will be with him for ever. Jesus told his anxious disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled... In my Father's house are many rooms... And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

It is good that, in his book *King of all Balloons*, Mark Davies has resurrected James Sadler's memory. But for all of us there is the great encouragement of a God who has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," and, "I am with you always." If this is true, we will be 'never forgotten.'

Tony Rogerson

Our new Vicar is Rev Rob Glenny, who will be inducted on the evening of Tuesday 1st August at St Swithun's Church, Kennington, and will take up his duties then. He has a wife, Beth, and a young son, Theodore. They will be living in the vicarage in Radley.

On Sunday 16th July Messy Church will be happening as usual from 9:30 a.m. However, as it is the Sunday when the Church traditionally remembers the life of St Swithun, Messy Church will be in the Church Hall and grounds, while the Patronal Festival service will be in the church itself. We will all come together for a bring and share lunch afterwards. All welcome!