

Memories of Fakenham fire.

May 25th 2014 started as any other Sunday. Being one of the bell ringers I cycled to the parish church, arrived about 9.45, and chained my cycle to the railings close to the church lane steps. Denis Allcock, the tower captain, arrived about the same time and parked his car in space 5 facing the carpark entrance. Together with the other ringers we climbed the tower and rang the bells until about 10.25.

On our way back down, we noticed a strong smell of smoke, comments were made about smoky bonfires on a Sunday, shouldn't be allowed etc. As we left the church by way of the west door, we saw Adrian Bell, the rector, and other members of the church guiding the congregation from the various exits and away from the church. It was then we saw a column of smoke rising above the Aldiss building. A column of smoke that was getting thicker by the second. Denis leapt into his car and left the carpark moments before a police car drove up and blocked the road by the cinema. Others were not so lucky and had to drive their trapped cars into St. Peters garden and park as far from the church and the fire as possible.

Fireman started to run from the lychgate and up Church Lanes to rescue the people trapped in the flats above the old Currys shop. I just had time to unlock my cycle from the railings before the lychgate was cordoned off. With Church Lanes blocked the only way out now was through St Peters garden.

Curious to see what was happening I rode across Queens Road car park and down the slope onto Norwich Street. By this time this end of the market place was cordoned off so I went via Bridge Street carpark and Tunn Street into the market square. The fire had really taken a hold by now and a display of aerosol deodorants were exploding like distant small arms fire. The main window then blew out sadly destroying a parked car. By now the area was swarming with firemen and police who were extending the cordon and slowly driving the onlookers out of the market place and into Tunn Street triangle.

After nearly an hour of watching the firemen at work and not wanting to get in the way of the emergency services I made for home.

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