

The pound bounces around

News that there might not be a deal was said to have lowered the pound yesterday. Quite why signing a Withdrawal Agreement to force the UK to send another £39bn across the exchanges to the rest of the EU should be good news is anyone's guess. Of course it was not quite like that. The pound, along with other currencies, slipped against the dollar, but it stayed strong against the Euro at 1.14 compared to the August low of Euro 1.10 when a deal seemed more likely.

The habit of ascribing all these movements to Brexit is bizarre. Ask how you would have explained the moves without a Brexit vote and you will probably produce a more convincing explanation of what is happening.

Machine gaming

The government decided to cut the maximum stakes allowed on gaming machines from £100 to £2. It is very worried about addiction to these machines by people who cannot afford the scale of losses some run up.

The Treasury has decided to delay the implementation of this measure to give the gambling companies more time to adjust to this change. The many campaigners to stop this particular problem are unhappy about the delay. Some MPs will move amendments to the Finance Bill to put pressure on the government to change its mind and get on with earlier implementation of the measure.

I would be interested in your views as I consider adding my name to these proposed amendments. As the government accepts the argument that this type of gambling can become addictive and does harm, there is a case for getting on with implementation as soon as possible. Others defend the right of the gambling industry to offer a range of bets and challenges to people, and think all the time some forms of gambling are legal there will be a risk that some people do it to excess. So far I have had more writing in in favour of the ban.

Remembrance in Wokingham

This year's service in All Saints was unusually well attended. The Church showed flexibility to fit people in, inviting the many children from the

various scouting organisations to sit on the cushions and prayer mats and around the altar to make more space.

The service was modelled around traditional hymns and readings, with the special references to 100 years ago and the peace that broke out on the Western front. We then returned to the Town Hall for wreath laying by the War Memorial inside the building.

I would like to thank all who came, and especially to thank the organisers. I am grateful to All Saints for doing well as hosts faced with a multitude of people wishing to be in the congregation.

Remembrance Day service at Burghfield

There was a large attendance yesterday for the wreath laying in the Churchyard and for the service, with many not managing a seat in the Church. I would like to thank all those who came, and all those who helped organise the event. It was a dignified and well thought through service to remember the dead and to learn the lessons of the conflict.

Beenham Wind orchestra remembers 1918

I attended the Beenham Wind Orchestra to hear their Poppies and Peace concert on Saturday. They were magnificent. After two years in the planning, they delivered a moving and well orchestrated programme of music.

The concert began with the powerful and threatening music from Holst's Mars, reminding us of the terrors of war and the sounds of the violence. Dartmoor 1912 evoked the happy relations between man and horse before they went to war with suffering for both. Music from Noel Coward's Cavalcade sent us trying to identify the popular songs of the First World War. I think I heard Tipperary, Keep the Home Fires burning, Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and Take me back to dear old Blighty. David Tredici's alarming Wartime told us how the sounds of the bugle and the intense fighting that ensued swamped the strains of Abide with Me that the soldiers sang before battle.

Later in the concert we were lulled by the softer tones of Holst's Venus. The haunting strains of the Benedictus from the Armed Man by Karl Jenkins were memorably played. A newer piece, Sunset, by Richard Saucedo served to remind us that conflict and death carries through to our own era. The evening was finished off with the much happier and optimistic English country garden. Chris Guy our compere kept us well informed of what we were to hear. Robert

Roscoe conducted it all in good humour and with great skill.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the musicians for a wonderful concert, and to the organisers for making us welcome.