

Halling View Spring 2020 – Before a Fall.

Why was Cinderella no good at football?

Because her coach was a pumpkin.

I was never much good at sports at school, nor any kind of an athlete. In the early days, I used to get picked early for teams because I was big for my age, but, once people realised that I'm completely lacking in coordination and no team player, I was always one of the last to be chosen. And yet I have always enjoyed exercise and I like being out in the open air. When we reached the upper sixth form and had a choice about what we did in games, I used to go out cross country running. (In the lower sixth I'm afraid I spent games periods helping the English master to catalogue the library.)

I was never a good runner, but I enjoyed it and I used to go out running sometimes, mainly on my own, when I was at college. There was a time at King's London when a guy who was a county runner used to take out a group of us round the streets of Dulwich. He must have had a lot of patience! Some of them were even worse than me.

My final year studying to be a vicar was at a place near Oxford called Cuddesdon. The fruit and vegetables were home grown. We had a marvellous cook and three cooked meals a day plus afternoon tea with a large selection of home made cakes. I left Cuddesdon rather heavier than I was when I enrolled, even though I cycled, walked and ran a bit. The Cuddesdon bus ran only once a week.

My first job as a clergyman was curate at Orpington and I decided I needed to get fit by going for a walk every day. One morning, I'd cut things too fine and had to run over a mile wearing a cassock. I was considerably out of breath by the time I got to church and it was then that I started running seriously. Not too seriously, I ran for fun. I'm no masochist. I've never been able to run fast, but I did find that, going out several times a week, I could achieve respectable distances. Every year, the Orpington churches organised a 17 mile walk for Christian Aid. I thought I'd try running it and, when I found I could, decided to apply for various marathons, which I completed. I got my time down to just over 3 ½ hours and decided that to do any better would require a higher commitment to training than I was prepared to make.

There was some humour. One day I ran from Orpington to Dartford and enjoyed it so much that I ran on to Woolwich. I wasn't enjoying it so much by the time a couple of old ladies on Woolwich Common asked me why I bothered. So I stopped at Shooters Hill Police Station and borrowed the bus fare back to Orpington! I carried on running at Ramsgate. I remember the hospital weren't too pleased with me when I insisted on running with a broken arm and fell over in a puddle which made my plaster go soft.

I used to take my dogs running in the woods and parks and on the beach. Tommy, my current dog, has not, however, heretofore had that pleasure. About five years ago, I found that my knees just would not let me run at all. I told myself that I should be thankful that I am able to walk and cycle, especially in such beautiful countryside as we have around here. Too many people can't get out. At one stage, even walking became painful, but, strangely enough, cycling seemed to free up the joints and make walking easier again. I still felt a bit jealous of people I do see out running and jogging. I laugh at myself when I struggle to walk up slopes I used to run up.

Then, a week or so ago, I thought I would give running another try and found I could run a little bit – albeit not much faster than some people walk. So I decided to try to run a bit every day and see if I got better at it. I don't suppose I shall ever run another marathon, but I'd like to think I could run with Tommy around the local woods. So I was feeling good. This morning, I caught my leg up in a loop of old man's beard and arrived at church muddy and blooded. Pride comes before a fall. I'm not giving up yet, however.

Whatever happens about that, however, I always remember S Paul's words: "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Whatever your hopes and ambitions for life, never lose sight of what really matters. Roger.

Easter Services

Good Friday (10th April): 10.00 Family Service at St Michael's Cuxton, 12.00 Three Hour Devotion at St John's Halling.

Easter Day (12th April): Holy Communion 8.00 Jubilee Hall, 9.30 St Michael's, 11.00 St John's.