

Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 4 th February Septuagesima	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 6 vv 1-13 p690 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 1 Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 p1155 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032
Sunday 11 th February Sexagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 2 vv 4-25 p4 Revelation 4 vv 1-11 p1236 Luke 8 vv 22-25 p1037
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 1 v1 – 2v3 p3 Matthew 6 vv 25-34 p971
Sunday 18 th February Quinquagesima	11.00 Holy Communion Stop! Look! Listen!	Exodus 34 vv 29-35 p94 2 Corinthians 3 v12 – 4 v2 p1160 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040
Wednesday 21 st February Ash Wednesday	9.30 am Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970
Sunday 25 th February Lent 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 26 vv 1-11 p203 Romans 10 vv 8-13 p1137 Luke 4 vv 1-13 p1030
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 4 th March Lent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 15 vv 1-21 p16 Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
Sunday 4 th February Septuagesima	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032
Sunday 11 th February Sexagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 2 vv 4-25 p4 Revelation 4 vv 1-11 p1236 Luke 8 vv 22-25 p1037
Sunday 18 th February Quinquagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 34 vv 29-35 p94 2 Corinthians 3 v12 – 4 v2 p1160 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040
Wednesday 21 st February Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	2 Corinthians 5 v20 – 6 v10 p1161 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
Sunday 25 th February Lent 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 26 vv 1-11 p203 Romans 10 vv 8-13 p1137 Luke 4 vv 1-13 p1030
Sunday 4 th March Lent 2	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 15 vv 1-21 p16 Philippians 3 v17 – 4 v1 p1180 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047

Copy Date March Magazine 9th February 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45.

Sunday School is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays).

After School Club, Thursdays @ St John's.

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> &
<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

The Mid-Kent Breast Cancer Research Appeal Reg Charity No 105549, raises funds to buy high-tech equipment for the early detection and treatment of breast cancer and is run entirely by volunteers. Help, support and donations to help fight breast cancer are really appreciated. Contact: 01634-716049 or visit our charity's website www.midkentbreastcancer.org.uk

Miriam was a lovely girl and most people in the village were disappointed that she became pregnant while still in her mid teens. It seemed such a waste. According to the mums at the school gates, Joe, Miriam's long term boyfriend, was so upset that he nearly gave her up because he knew the baby could not possibly be his, but, suddenly and mysteriously, he changed his mind and declared that they would very soon be married.

Before long, there was a lot more for the village gossips to chew over. Joe had to go back to his family home in East London to sort out some business to do with his entry on the National Data Base and obtaining an ID card. He took Miriam with him, though she was very near her time. The next thing people in our village knew was a report in the *Daily Star*. Some Rastafarians had said that they had seen a vision of an angel and the Messiah had been born in Hackney. Then there was news that three Saudi princes had been to an ordinary terraced house just off the Kingsland Road and given the astonished occupants incredibly valuable presents.

The next news was of a tragedy. Armed anti-terrorist officers had entered an East London home and shot several innocent children in the belief that there was an Al Qaeda cell meeting going on. People thought that Miriam's baby was among the victims until they heard another mysterious report that the family was now living in Jutland!

Whatever the truth of all this, Joe and Miriam eventually returned to our village with a healthy toddling boy, whom they had named Joshua. Despite the traumas surrounding his birth, Joshua grew up a normal boy, a good pupil at the local school and a regular worshipper at our church. The only slightly strange incident in his childhood was when he got lost on the school trip to St Paul's and firmly told Miriam and Joe that it was more important to obey God than to obey them. When he left school, Joshua joined his father in the family woodwork business.

All this, however, was to change. Miriam had a much older cousin Elizabeth, who was married to a priest. They had had a strange boy, John, late in life. John took his father's religion very seriously indeed. He spent hours in solitary prayer and Bible study and, then, one day, out on the Cliffe Marshes he started shouting that the Kingdom of God was near. Perhaps he had been influenced by one of those apocalyptic sects. Anyway, he said, people must prepare by repenting of their sins and being baptised. John was pretty weird, but his message was straightforward enough. "If you've got plenty to eat, share with someone who is hungry. If you've got two coats, give one away to someone who hasn't got a coat. Act honestly in all your affairs. Play by the rules. And don't think money, status or even professed religion will save you. The wrath of God is coming on a sinful world". Thousands went to hear John. Many believed; some scoffed. The authorities didn't know how seriously to take him.

When he was about thirty, Joshua left the security of the family home to meet with John down by the River Thames. John seemed to be expecting him. He baptised Joshua and Joshua promptly took over some of John's disciples and began proclaiming a message similar to John's.

Only he went much further. The crowds gathered in their thousands to hear him as he travelled around the home counties and beyond. He startled a world obsessed by sexual titillation when he said that lust was as bad as adultery. He told people that they could not play fast and loose with relationships because marriage is for one man and for one woman and for life. He shocked the city of London by saying that we should not lend money to comfortably off people, who can repay us with interest, but to the poor, who really need it, and not to worry if they don't pay us back. He provoked the fashion industry by pointing out that worrying about clothes is a waste of time; a flowery meadow is prettier than a supermodel. He upset a lot of decent hard-working folk when he pointed out that the blackbird digging in your lawn for worms each morning is happier than you and your fellow commuters on the 07.20 to Cannon Street. He told a public entertained by violent media and tales of lust and revenge that we should turn the other cheek because it is the meek who will inherit the earth.

Twenty first century people are supposed to plan: a student loan to get a degree so that you can get a good enough job to pay a mortgage off in time to buy into a worthwhile pension plan before it is too late. Joshua told them to give no thought for the morrow.

He said it was not enough to be kind to your family and friends and to treat other people fairly. If you want to follow Joshua, you treat bad people well and forgive those who injure you seventy times seven times. What is more, He really meant it. He told the National Association of Head-teachers that there is more joy in heaven over one teenage drug dealer who repents than over ninety nine model pupils who get their homework in on time and keep all the school rules.

He told two sisters that the one who sat and listened to him had used her time more wisely than the one who cleaned the house and cooked his dinner. He told a perfectly decent, ex public school, Oxbridge graduate, who was now a city financier and a pillar of his local church, to give up his job, turn all his assets into cash and give away everything he had to the poor.

He hung out with whores and crack heads, yet he never yielded to the temptations of the flesh. On the other hand, he was an embarrassment at formal dinners. He made fun of orders of precedence and seating plans and suggested to wealthy hosts that they would be better inviting the hungry to dine with them rather than inviting their rich friends who would only invite them back.

Despite his high moral standards, Joshua was much more relaxed with the so-called dregs of society than the self-styled élite. In his story about a near fatal mugging, it was a gypsy who saved the victim, rather than either of the respectable establishment characters who could have helped. He told people that God was like a father who let his wayward son browbeat him into letting him have half the family fortune and then, when he had frittered it all away and said he was sorry, welcomed him back with a better party than he had ever given to the dutiful brother who had stayed at home and helped on the farm.

He disappointed the revolutionaries by refusing to countenance violence, but he exasperated the establishment by treating its values as irrelevant. Paying or not paying tax didn't mean accepting the rule of the secular state or rejecting it. It showed that Joshua's friends were free of such mundane concerns.

He said that he came to bring abundant joy and eternal life. All were welcome. No-one would be turned away. Eternal life was available to everyone who knew Joshua and the God who sent him. Yet it was a narrow way which only a few would find, while millions, like lemmings, migrated to destruction.

In fact, he prophesied, that they would take his life from him and yet his life would be a ransom for the sins of many. While his disciples pondered this mystery, he added that the road to life was the path of self-sacrifice. They too must lay down their lives if they were to spend eternity with him.

His harshest strictures seemed to be reserved for the Church. There were the liberals who no longer seemed to believe in anything supernatural but thought that religious rituals and an established church contributed to the well-being of society. They were too scared to rock the boat by proclaiming God's Kingdom. Then there were the conservatives, who clung fiercely to revealed truth and believed fervently in the supernatural, but were more interested in squabbling and faction fighting than in proclaiming God's Kingdom. Then there were the lawyers and bureaucrats who occupied the church's time and talents with meetings and form-filling, re-arranging the deckchairs on the *Titanic*, obsessed with ticking all the right boxes to guard against every conceivable risk (and some inconceivable ones as well), enforcing mindless political correctness, tying down in red tape any innovator who dared to attempt to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

His attitude to money upset all the factions in the church. Joshua maintained that a poor widow who gave the only £100 she had was worth more than a multi-millionaire who donated many thousands of

pounds. £100 doesn't go far to pay the quota, send missionaries round the world or preserve a mediaeval building. But, he said, aren't these buildings you so lovingly maintain a witness against you? They were put up by people who gave their all for the glory of God. They were never meant to be a sacrifice to bourgeois taste as personified by English Heritage.

Twenty first century Britain was not a society at ease with itself. Secularism had undermined the traditional sources of moral authority and created a moral vacuum. Schools allegedly taught children our common values, but the phrase "common values" only ever meant what the government meant it to mean. Most kids grew up with the values of consumerism and this was reflected in an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour. Worse still, increasing numbers belonged to fundamentalist minorities who were quite prepared to enforce their values by violence. Government had responded by increased surveillance of citizens, restriction of liberties and increased powers for minor officials to impose punishments without recourse to the courts. At the same time, intimidation of witnesses and juries, plus the bureaucratisation of the police force, had made it very difficult to convict serious criminals, while human rights legislation protected thugs who claimed religious or political justification for their thuggery. You were more likely to be fined for putting out your rubbish on the wrong day than to go to prison for armed robbery. There was little respect left for authority. Excessive consumption by the rich was creating a shortage of good things for the poor and polluting the landscape in places where there was little political power. Global warming increasingly presaged ecological disaster. Yet no-one was prepared significantly to cut back on travel or on buying new things. Worldwide, there were wars and rumours of war and an uneasy peace enforced by the Americans, supported enthusiastically by Britain and, more or less reluctantly, by the rest of NATO and the EU.

In such a world, millions recognised Joshua as the Saviour, but the authorities became increasingly concerned about his destabilising influence. Anti-terrorism legislation made it easy to apprehend and hold suspects and to try them without a jury. In anti-terrorism cases the burden of proof was considerably reduced. "After all, MI5 wouldn't bring a man before the courts unless he was a terrorist!"

One Sunday this Spring Joshua appeared in Trafalgar Square on his way to the Holy Week services in Westminster Abbey. An enraptured crowd surrounded him, singing and shouting and demanding a new world order as they progressed to Parliament Square. As this constituted an illegal demonstration, both the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities demanded that he tell his followers to shut up. He said he couldn't do that and proceeded himself to demand that Westminster should be cleansed of all dishonesty, corruption and greed. This produced such a popular reaction that the authorities decided he would have to be got rid of. The death penalty had already been reinstated for terrorist offences at the instigation of the Americans.

Joshua was quietly arrested while praying in a London park and brought before the Cabinet and then a hastily arranged trial at the Old Bailey. The British Prime Minister pointed out that, if he was innocent and executed, that was only one innocent person killed, but, that, if they let him go and he turned out to be a terrorist, thousands of innocent people might die. So it was expedient that one man should die for the people. He also said that, if we fouled this one up, the Americans would take away our alleged independence in matters of security and military command.

At the Old Bailey, the Lord Chief Justice is far from happy with the case against Joshua. There is no real evidence against him. The supposed witnesses are obviously lying. Nothing Joshua has said under cross-examination is in any sense criminal or suggestive of any criminal intent. On the other hand, the judge has been warned that, if he lets this man go, he is no friend of the Lord Chancellor. Fortunately, the Lord Chief Justice has a way of washing his hands of the whole business. After years of complaints in the tabloid press about "out of touch" judges ignoring public opinion and handing out derisory sentences, government has introduced an Act which permits cases to be decided by the public voting on the internet. So it's up to you. Guilty or not guilty. Will he hang or walk? You decide. Vote now.

This is taken from a prayer given by Rev. Joe Wright when opening a session of the Kansas House of Representatives on January 23rd, 1996.

'Heavenly Father, we come before you to ask your forgiveness. We seek your direction and your guidance. We know your Word says "Woe to those who call evil good". But that's what we've done. We've lost our spiritual equilibrium. We have inverted our values. We have ridiculed the absolute truth of your Word in the name of moral pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism.

We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle. We've exploited the poor and called it a lottery. We've neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. In the name of choice, we have killed our unborn. In the name of right to life, we have killed abortionists.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbour's possessions and called it taxes.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honoured values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today. Try us. Show us any wickedness within us. Cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of the State of Kansas, and have been ordained by you to govern this great state.

Grant them your wisdom to rule. May their decisions direct us to the centre of Your will and, as we continue our prayer and as we come in out of the fog, give us clear minds to accomplish our goals as we begin this Legislature. For we pray in Jesus's name, Amen'



Halling WI November

At our November meeting we had a new face in the chair. Mrs Evelyn Low, our new president got us off to a good start, "I can't sing" she said. Not to worry Betty and I can. After Jerusalem, the previous months minutes were read and signed. It's getting nearer to Christmas so our correspondence included four party invitations, three on the same night. The County office want's to know the whereabouts of past records and minutes books. Long faces all round, Hoorah! We've got them all from 1967, and they make jolly good reading. The yearly subscription then was 5 bob. How times (and wages) have changed. They really are history. Ann Hayward explained as best she could, the situation regarding the plight of the Dairy farmers. It seems now the National Federation of W.Is are taking a serious interest, although it is much too big an issue for an individual W.I. to do much about. I will suggest that the Public Affairs and International committee at County level get something going in 2007. The District Carol service is being held at Ditton Church this year. Next year it is our turn.

I reported on the recent International day held at Ightham. I was so keen I went on the wrong day. Associated Country Women of the World's President, Ursula Gomar, and Vice President, Jenny Mitchell from Malaysia and Australia were the two speakers. It was one of the best meetings I have ever attended.

As our speaker for the evening couldn't attend, our very versatile new president stepped in and, after our refreshments, Evelyn waved her magic wand and turned some very ordinary flowers and foliage into lovely arrangements almost effortlessly. I thanked her, first for being willing to be our President for our special 40th year and for entertaining us admirably. Flower of the Month was won by Lily Hesketh with a pink fuchsia. They are hanging on very well this year, and J for Jaguar was won by Ann Heaseman's Jar of Jam. We had some Jerusalem artichokes and lots of Jugs, but not one Jumper, which surprised me.

2007 is our Ruby year. Haven't we done well!
Phyllis C.

October Church Hall Draw: £40 to Chris Beaney, drawn by Gill Bogg. November: £5 to Di Maxwell, drawn by Matthew Wells, £5 to Malcolm Curnow, drawn by Julia Wells.

Halling's Long Past

A talk to be given by

Mr Philip Lawrence

Chairman Churches Committee Kent Archaeological Society

24th February 2007 at 4.00 at St John the Baptist's Church

£5 includes light buffet.

VACANCY CARETAKER

HALLING COMMUNITY CENTRE

Hours need to be flexible to fit around hall use.

To start ASAP.

Call in to Community Centre for an application form
or phone

01634 243696

leaving your contact details.

ELECTORAL ROLL & ANNUAL MEETING

In 2007 there is to be a complete revision of the church electoral roll. This means that the old roll is torn up and everyone who wishes to be on the roll must obtain and fill in a form from Peter Crundwell. You are eligible to be on the electoral if you are 16 years of age or older, baptised and resident in and/or a regular worshipper in the Parish of Cuxton and Halling. You need to be on the roll if you wish to stand for office or vote at the Annual Meeting on 28th April at 10.00 am at St John's.

CONFIRMATION 2007

If you wish to be confirmed at St John's Church on 24th June this year, please see Rector asap.

December 2006 church hall draw:- £5 to Chris Beaney, drawn by Grace Pearce, £5 to Malcolm Curnow, drawn by Matthew Wells

St John's draw (November): £25 each Mrs Chidwick (27) & Mrs Botten (160), £10 Mr Brown (60) –drawn by Mrs Thorne, (December): £5 each to Mrs Acott (48), Mrs Mitchell (62), Mrs Dallas (126), Mrs Burren (55) & Mrs Terry (125) – drawn by Mrs Smitherman.

If you would like to join the Church Hall Draw, please let Buffy Maisey know. Cost is £12 per annum, payable in monthly, 6-monthly or annual instalments. Prizes are £40 per quarter and 2 prizes of £5 for the remaining 8 months. If you wish to join the St John's Draw please contact Betty Head. All profits go to Church funds.

Halling Bell Ringers

Jane Adams has been bell ringing at Halling since October and is progressing well. Halling came third in the Rochester District Quiz at Newington on 18th November. We can still do with a few more ringers – Wednesday nights at St John's. Peter. Silver.



17th February 2007

Jubilee Hall, Halling

7.30pm for 8pm start

Teams – maximum 6 Adults
£4 each

To book your table contact
Sue Martin – 715645

Feel free to bring your own
refreshments



Proceeds will be shared between
Demelza House and
Aiding Funds for Cuxton and Halling



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Nature Notes November 2006

The 1st was a day of beautiful sunshine and almost cloudless skies. Northerly winds blew and it felt very cold after the months of warm weather. I watched a great tit feeding from the bird table. That night there was a frost. The beautiful weather continued, so on the 4th, after we had taken Murphy to Addington, I walked across Church Fields where I found a few dandelions, red and white deadnettle and a single white clover. The sun shed its golden light across the grass where the cows grazed. I trod the leaf-strewn paths of Mays Wood. So many of the trees still bore their green leaves while some displayed autumn colours. A flock of chattering starlings had assembled on the telegraph wires. Sheep grazed in Dean Valley where I heard occasional bleating. Scarlet haws and pink spindle berries glowed in the sun's light. Gulls wheeled over the new crops, along the verges of which I found herb robert flowers then on the entrance to Six acre Wood, white deadnettle.

The next day, I watched the rogue harlequin ladybirds crawling along the window ledge. In church that morning, a peacock butterfly was flying backwards and forwards. I've noticed this in previous winter months.

Mild weather returned on the 8th. A peacock butterfly was perched on the patio steps before flying away. I was up early on the 9th as the light was creeping up the sky. Clear blue skies and golden sunshine filled the day and northerly breezes blew. Later in the morning I walked through Six acre Wood and back across Church Fields. There was a frost that night. On Remembrance Sunday it was mild with some sunshine. In the afternoon, I walked up the church path where black berries hung on the ivy. In Mays Wood, beeches and hornbeams still bore green leaves. I walked up to the Warren and turned down into Dean Valley where sheep grazed. Bracket fungi grew on an old tree stump. The views across the valley were beautiful in their autumn colours, while old mans beard straddled the fence as I walked up to North Wood Leaves were thick on the ground yet new chestnuts were growing up again after trees had been felled. As I crossed the field to Upper Bush, grey clouds were moving across from the west and I heard woodpeckers in the distance. Maple leaves were golden, dogwood leaves were a deep purple and beeches were yellow and gold. I noticed droplets of water on the grass. The light was fading as I climbed up Dean Valley and made my way home. When I returned from choral the following evening, I watched a fox run down the drive then disappear into the next-door garden.

On the 15th, when I walked across Church Fields, the strong wind moaned in the telegraph wires, cows grazed from the feeders and pigeons flew up from the hedgerows. Later, in Six acre Wood, I disturbed a fox as I walked along the path. Strong south-westerly winds blew on the 17th, bringing a mixture of sunshine and showers. I walked through Six acre Wood and up to Church Fields along a path strewn with leaves of brown, yellow and gold. As I crossed the fields, dark grey clouds marched across the sky. There was a special beauty here as the wind blew me along. It was of dark clouds, autumn leaves and fading light. The next day I watched a dragonfly hovering near the bedroom

window. and also noticed that the lilac leaves were still green. On the 19th, I watched mist rising up from the river as the golden sun's rays began to lighten up the sky. High winds blew that night and heavy rain fell continuing into the morning of the 20th. The following morning I watched a beautiful red admiral butterfly as it perched on a window frame. I was up before it was light on the 22nd and could hear a tawny owl hooting in the woodland near the river. Heavy rain fell through the night of the 24th and into the next morning but eventually it brightened so we took Murphy to Addington and into the paddock. In the afternoon I took myself for a walk through Six acre Wood where new cow parsley plants were thriving. Gulls circled the field of new crops as the sun set below the trees and the sky was tinged with pink. The paths of Mays Wood were strewn with leaves of gold, yellow and brown. The side path was soggy after the rain and was covered with leaves. Squirrels darted up tree trunks. As I made my way across Church Fields, where cows were grazing, I saw white campion, white clover and bristly ox tongue. Grey cloud was banking up in the west. The 29th was a beautiful, mild sunny day with clear blue skies. On the final day of the month, there was a distinct chill in the air.

Nature Notes December 2006

It was grey all day on the 1st and it never seemed to get properly light. Rain fell intermittently but it ceased for the time we walked Murphy at the Brookland Lakes. I found white deadnettle, scentless mayweed and bristly ox tongue. Darkness fell early. The morning of the 2nd was grey and damp but by the early afternoon, the grey clouds had dispersed and the sun shone, enabling us to walk Murphy in the paddock at Addington where I saw pink blossom on two of the trees. Later there was a beautiful sunset which painted high cloud a salmon pink. Many trees were bare, the leaves having been brought down by strong winds. The night sky was bright with moonlight. The next day, I watched a blue tit as it perched on the patio wall. It was very mild the following day and birds were singing as though it were spring. On the 6th, while at Addington, I noticed a weeping willow, which still bore some yellow leaves. The sun beamed down from a clear blue sky and a south-westerly wind blew.

It was cold on the 9th for there had been an overnight frost and the wind blew from the northeast but the sun was shining. I watched a robin perched in the holly tree. The early morning sky of the 10th was a deep red, angry in fact, then as the sun rose it became salmon pink. Mist hung over the river. High cloud cleared to give a morning of blue skies and golden sunshine. During choir practice after the morning service, a peacock butterfly settled for a while on my music. It was such a beautiful creature.

In the evening, north winds brought the rain. We took Murphy to Addington on the 12th and in the paddock I saw two trees covered in pink blossom but I couldn't identify them. The weather remained very mild. According to the Met Office, this year has been the warmest since 1695. At Snodland lakes car park trees were displaying buds waiting to burst into leaf.

North winds were blowing on the 16th and they blew away the grey clouds to reveal blue skies and bright sunshine. At Addington, with Murphy, I noticed fungi growing up among the brown chestnut leaves. The gnarled tree, bare of its leaves, revealed angular shapes of beautiful proportions. Drops of moisture on the grass sparkled in the sun's light. A few trees bore tinted leaves but most were bare. I felt that this was the first real winter's day. On the 18th, the bare trees stood like sentinels in the early morning fog beneath grey skies. As the sun rose, its pale beams appeared through the mist, which lay over the river. I later walked down to the village, where sparrows were twittering and hopping along the top of a hedge near the Scout Hall. I made my way back through Six acre Wood and the churchyard where the grass was very wet and where a few leaves were scattered. In the garden, when I put out nuts and seeds for the birds, I noticed bracket fungus on an old tree trunk. A pair of large fieldfare bathed in the pond during the early afternoon. The 19th was grey with fog for most of the day but it cleared the next day and golden sun shone but it was still cold. I noticed that the silver

birch trees by Whorne's Place still bore some leaves. The shortest day was grey and cold and the skies remained grey until the 28th. On Boxing Day friends came with Murphy for a walk across the fields over which gulls circled we could see the mirror-smooth river above which mist hovered. I found clumps of bristly ox tongue in flower. We trod the soft paths of Mays Wood where two squirrels scampered up tree trunks then as we returned the light was fading fast.

On the 29th, fiery strips of cloud hung in the early morning sky until the south-westerly wind blew them away and the easterly sky became a uniform pink like a watercolour painting. The bare branches stood tall and dark and mist hung over the river. In the late afternoon I walked across Church Fields as drizzle was falling and the wind was moaning in the telegraph wires. I spied a few pink spindle berries and red hips along the footpath bordered by trees and shrubs. A hawthorn and small sycamore still bore yellow leaves in Mays Wood. There was pale sunshine on the 30th then the month and the year ended with heavy rain.

Elizabeth Summers.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

19 th November	Thomas James Simmons	Rainham
17 th December	Paige Leah Brockwell	Bush Road
10 th December	Rose May Baker	High Street
17 th December	Morgan Lee Frederick Brockwell	Bush Road
17 th December	Mason Christopher Brockwell	Bush Road

Weddings:

18 th November	Elizabeth Wilce & Stuart Mitchell	Cuxton
25 th November	Francesca Stone & Peter Chivers	Cuxton
22 nd December	Claudia Camilleri & Shane Goldup	Cuxton

Funerals:

30 th November	Elsie Relf (91)	formerly of Bush Road
5 th December	Thelma Martin (81)	May Street
7 th December	Dora Millicent Adams (91)	Pilgrims Way
8 th December	Derek Francis Norman Johnson (76)	Snodland
14 th December	David Sydney Langridge (62)	May Street
15 th December	Elizabeth Blyth Hauton Brunton Wilkins (86)	High Street
22 nd December	Raymond Thomas Lingham (89)	Snodland
29 th December	James Anthony Gee (64)	Rochester Road Cuxton
5 th January	Michael Shaw (71)	Bush Road

Christmas Thanks!!

I am sure everyone who shared in our Christmas worship would like me to thank the flower arrangers and church cleaners, the choirs and ringers, those who participated in the nativity plays, the church wardens and everyone who worked so hard to make Christmas so special again this year.

The first magazine of a new year is also a good time to thank all of you who contribute in any way to the work and worship of our church throughout the year – including those who help to keep up the churchyards and cemetery by their donations for grass cutting and those who print, collate and distribute this magazine.

MAGAZINE DELIVERY & ADVERTISEMENTS 2007-2008.

We will shortly be renewing the adverts for the next year commencing 1st May, 2007. If you wish to advertise with us please contact me on 01634-240644 by the 14th February. If you wish to subscribe regularly to the magazine (delivered to your door) please also contact the above.



Halling WI December

Our last meeting of the year took the form of a party with our new president, Evelyn Low, firmly in charge. Would we have enough food? Would the entertainers turn up? It all started up in the air on a very dreadful night weather wise. Of course we had enough food. The tables were almost bandy with the weight of it, where did it all come from? Quiches, Pizzas, Salads cheese the sausages marinated in garlic and marmalade were ace. Our members and guest were well and truly fed. Evelyn had decorated the tables and the committee had done a grand job. Well done to all of them. Our entertainers, all twenty of them from the

Gillingham Opera and Drama Society entertained us in fine style, having been to Halling W.I before. They are like old friends who come to enjoy the friendship food and the fun. After a very energetic rendering of The Twelve Days of Christmas, it was almost time to say good night. But we could not go home without our cup of Yorkshire Tea. Yes a good time was had by all.

Another W.I year was almost over, and with a full programme for 2007, our Ruby Anniversary, bring it on we hope it will be a good one. Happy New Year to everyone from Halling W.I.

Phyllis C.



Cuxton WI December & January

Our Christmas meeting went very well with a tasty supper arranged by the Committee, followed by entertainment by a local Jazz Group of six musicians led by Mr Lear, husband of one of our members. They were very good and soon had everyone's feet tapping. They ended with Christmas songs and carols.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Val Shaw's husband, Mike, just before Christmas, and also Rene Barker had a nasty fall in Bush Road and spent several days in hospital. We hope she makes a full recovery.

The Poetry Group held their usual Christmas meeting, reading a poem of choice and exchanging presents. As usual, we drank mulled wine or sherry and enjoyed a variety of nibbles and mince pies. A good start to the festivities!

The day the Walking Group were due to go to Shorne Country Park, it was raining hard and so, by mutual agreement, they went to the Dockside Shopping Centre at Chatham and did their walking there! As usual lunch was had at a local pub. Next walk will be either Grain or Leybourne Lakes depending on weather.

Our January meeting was not very well attended. Possibly people were still recovering from the excesses of Christmas! However, after a small amount of business, we welcomed two teachers who had recently been to Zambia. Jo Lear, daughter of member Marion Lear, and Dan Witcombe had spent three months on a project to build a new school for local children. The slides they showed gave a good idea of what they were up against. Their living quarters were very, very basic – water available only twice a day, cold showers, water filtered through a sock to catch “wildlife” and small sleeping rooms. The bungalow was full of insects, spiders etc. and very poor food to eat. They both lost a lot of weight. Cuxton WI had given pens, pencils, paper and colouring books etc. to Jo to take out there, and the children were so delighted with these gifts and sweets. They got the school built. It was made out of bricks using local clay, dried in the sun to harden, and cement was brought in. The talk was so interesting and at times amusing. We all sat spellbound and there were lots of questions afterwards. Dan is going back again to teach in the new school for another year. Those members who were not at the meeting missed a treat.

Next meeting: Thursday 4th February. Maidstone Hospital League of Friends – Linda Wiffen.

Ann Harris.

Mothers' Union – Presidents in Rochester Diocese

2007 looks like being a special year for Mothers' Union members and friends. On Ash Wednesday, February 21st, our Retiring President, Angela Pain, will be speaking to us at St John's Church, following the Ash Wednesday service at 9.30 am. I am hoping all our MU members will do their best to be there and a warm welcome is extended to any friends who would like to join us for the morning.

Then, on March 13th, we will be attending the Cathedral for our triennial celebration service, when our new Diocesan President, Kathy Chadwick, will be commissioned. Kathy will be bringing a new dimension to the Mothers' Union in our diocese as she is the first present we have had who is in full time employment. She is younger than average and promises to be a dynamic worker. After the service I am hoping to arrange a buffet lunch for us at the *White Hart*, Cuxton, and we hope other members in our deanery will be joining us. So please mark the date in your diary and BE THERE if you possibly can.

A Happy New Year to all, Shirley Crundwell.

Women's World Day of Prayer

Service at St John's, 7.00 pm, Friday 2nd March – devised by women of Paraguay.

Dickens' Country Protection Society



The Society is becoming concerned about the urbanisation of our villages and country lanes. There is a tendency for people to erect large walls at the front of their properties and hard paving, both of which are out of character with the rural setting. Have you had a problem in your area? If so, the Society would like to hear from you at 135, Heath Lane, Dartford, DA1 2TW (01322 275389).

The Society is also concerned about the Barker Report on planning, which the Government has yet to consider. If this report is accepted, planning will become a developers' charter.

The AGM will take place in Higham Memorial Small Hall at 7.30 for 8.00 on 12th March

30th Strood (Cuxton) Scout Group JUMBLE SALE
2pm Sat. 10th February at the Scout Hall, Bush Road, Cuxton

As usual, Scouts will be collecting jumble throughout the village during the week prior to the sale, but if you would like jumble to be collected on a particular day, or if you have any large items, please contact Pat Catchpole on 01634 240480 or Matthew Wells on 01634 727424. Items can also be brought to the Scout Hall on the morning of the sale. This annual event has always been well supported by the local community and we are extremely grateful for the funds raised. Please help us once again in the centenary year of the Scouting Association by contributing items or coming along to the sale. Thank you for your support.

Cuxton Community Infant School News

A big HELLO to all of our village folk, and a very Happy New Year, we hope it will be a healthy and successful one for us all. That said, I am also mindful of the fact that some of our Children over Christmas sadly lost their grandparents. Our thoughts are with these children and their parents at this time.

Having just returned to school following the holidays, I can now reflect in a somewhat calmer manner the events of last term leading up to the holiday! It's always a busy time for us in school as you can probably imagine and levels of excitement rise and staff have rather strained faces under all the glitter and tinsel that covers the classrooms! We performed our Christmas play 'The Christmas Story' several times to appreciative audiences. The staff and I were very proud of the children who spoke clearly, sang well and remembered their acting skills. The Children sang unaccompanied this year, as we are taking part in a voices project and some sang a solo. Our younger Children delighted us, dressed as angels, even though on the second day some fell asleep, and the stars remembered their words to a song and poem. If any of you have read the works of the author Gervaise Phinn, who was a Head teacher, and then schools Ofsted inspector, his book, A Wayne in a Manger makes comical reading!

We had a successful party, thanks to all our parents' kind donations of food and that favourite visitor clad in red visited!

Last term we welcomed the 5 O'club, into school each week for a delicious Wednesday roast. We look forward to this week when they have their first visit of the year. The Children enjoy sitting with these folk and chatting and our friends are entertained!

Last term Sharon our cook raised money for Children in Need by baking Pudsey Bear biscuits. We also collected boxes for 'Love in a Box' and tins for the homeless. The Christmas Bazaar was a success once again thanks to the dedication of the Friends of Cuxton Schools and their helpers and staff. Thank you to all of you who came and supported us.

This term we can look forward to a Pantomime 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and the year 1 and 2 children will be visiting Rochester Castle to learn about life a long time ago and the Cathedral to link with work on Baptism and compliment art work looking at buildings and designs. The younger children in Foundation will be having a grounds day and to this we welcome the Beehive and Mayday playgroups with whom we continue to work closely. Cook will be inviting parents to sample her lunches and eat with their child, we welcome parents to parents' evenings and each class will perform an assembly to their parents and relatives about the work they have been doing in class. We look forward to our special Mothers Day Assembly.

My last newsletter did not reach Roger in time and as I look at it to refresh my memory, I had written about the lovely sunny days in November and needing a squirrel crossing on the drive! As I look out of the office window today the trees have been blowing wildly and the sky is quite grey and the air chilled. However, we in school are ready for a new year, the children claim to have made their new year resolutions (tidying up, helping to wash up at home, and working harder) and the staff have too (eating more fruit, visits to the gym, leaving work earlier than half past five!) I wonder whether we will keep our promises!

Finally I would like to welcome you into school at any time, just let us know! Also if you have a child that is due to start school in September do remember to return your forms to us, or indeed ring if you have not received one! Have a good month, and take care, Sandra Jones Head teacher.

Does It Matter?

I'm always slightly saddened by the thought that three pubs have closed in Halling in the 20 years I have been here: the *Plough*, the *Black Boy* and the *Robin Hood* (latterly the *Pilgrims Rest*.) Not only did I enjoy the odd drink in them (more than the odd one in the case of the *Plough*) but they were part of village life, Halling's history and community. Older people will tell you stories about the good times they had in those pubs in the past, funny things that happened there and other events that were not so good. A lot of individual fun was had there and they were significant in our village history too. In the Middle Ages, pilgrims to Canterbury worshipped at St Lawrence chapel (now converted into houses) and refreshed themselves at the *Black Boy* opposite. As recently as the 1980s, the *Plough* was a focus for events organised by the Rail Action Group in which hundreds of people were involved.

So what went wrong? I never went to the Upper Halling pubs very much and my attendance at the *Plough* tailed off before it closed. I'm not entirely sure why. There was always a warm welcome in all these establishments. I can remember an excellent Christmas dinner in the *Robin Hood*. One Boxing Day the *Black Boy* took pity on a party of us who had walked through the woods in torrential rain from Cuxton. They put up with the mud and dried our clothes for us. Every time I went, I thought *I'll have to come here more often*, but somehow I didn't. There were always too many other things to do and the Upper Halling pubs were just a bit too far to walk and out of the way. Then the landlord I liked at the *Plough* moved on and it didn't seem the same under his successors. As things declined, it wasn't so much fun to go and perhaps mildly embarrassing. I remember one lunch time at the *Plough*. I was the only customer and there were no desserts for customers. I ate the landlord's! Other times, walking in when there were only a few customers who all seemed to know one another extremely well, you couldn't help feeling like an intruder no matter how welcoming they were.

Of course I wasn't the only one to stay away and, in time, they all closed. And maybe it doesn't matter. Modern society doesn't perhaps need traditional village pubs. Compared with even 50 years ago, people's homes are more comfortable. There's more to do at home. Most people get beer and wine from the supermarket and drink it indoors. When you do go out, you aren't confined to the places within walking distance. Late teens and early twenties go to pubs and clubs where the music is loud and the beer flows freely, where there is little chance of a parent dropping in, or the local vicar or your old headmaster. Late twenties and thirties don't get out much, working long hours and having children to look after. When they do go out, they want something more exciting than the village pub. The middle aged want something classier with quieter music and, perhaps, food. The only people who need the local pub are the ones who don't drive and can't afford taxis. They are likely to be the sort of people who make a couple of drinks last an evening and they are never going to make a pub pay. So they don't rank very high in a business manager's calculations.

Most people socialise with work colleagues or people with whom they have common interests. You are no longer forced to socialise with people just because you live in the same street as them.

Village pubs are like village shops, post offices and bus services. We all have an atavistic sense that they are essential to the well-being of our community. We like them to be there in case we want them, but we very seldom do. The only people who really need them very often haven't the money to make them economically viable.

Given the price of houses, it makes a great deal of economic sense to close a struggling business and convert it into private housing. The *Black Boy* and the *Robin Hood* are now private houses and a small estate stands on the site of the *Plough*. Maybe the brewery invested the money they made in pubs that people actually go to.

All this makes me think, me being the proprietor of two of the biggest and most uneconomic buildings in the parish – St John's church and St Michael's church. At the end of 2006, we were about £8,000 in arrears in our payments. Is there a place in modern society for village churches, or are they in much the same position as pubs, post offices, shops and bus services? Nice to have around for the odd occasion when we want them, but only actually used frequently by a diminishing number of people who are barely able to afford the cost of keeping them open?

I believe that churches are different from all these commercial undertakings and that it is worth keeping them open for the following reasons (but it will not be possible to do so unless there are sufficient people in the community who agree with me).

1. Churches are for worship and worship is a duty that humanity owes to God. Churches are not there primarily as an amenity for local people, but to the glory of God. Of course, we don't need a special building or a sacred site to worship. We can worship anywhere, but we must meet together to worship because Jesus tells us to and a worshipping community constitutes a church.
2. I believe that it is good for a village or a town to have a worshipping community at its heart – to pray for that locality, to bear witness to that locality and to care for that locality pastorally. This raises the question whether, if we lost one or both of our church buildings, it would be better to continue worshipping in the village in someone's house or a hall, or whether it would be better to go to another village or town where they still had a traditional church building open.
3. It is actually good to meet together in Christian fellowship with all ages, classes and interests. We complement one another. We learn from one another. We grow by learning to cope with other people's annoying behaviour. It is not good always to sort ourselves out into groups of like minded people or the same age group.
4. Whereas a commercial organisation might not concern itself with the poor, the untalented, the elderly or whatever, the Church is a fellowship in which everyone has a unique place and is valued for himself or herself. Being you is contribution enough.

I think it is worth the huge effort of maintaining churches in Cuxton and Halling, whatever may happen to local businesses, because the church is essentially different from a business and the community would be very much poorer without them even than it is if it loses its post office or bus service, but it can only be done if we are sufficiently committed to working with God to sustain His Church. Thankfully, we still have three pubs, two post offices, several shops and bus and rail services. They all deserve our support, but the church is qualitatively different.

Roger.

Style 8

Modern life styles can put such pressures on Sunday mornings that it is difficult to attend our 9.30 or 11.00 services. Saying how much she missed coming to Holy Communion because of these pressures, someone recently said to me that she would love to come at 8.00 am. We already have an 8.00 on the first Sunday of each month at the Jubilee Hall, but I would be very happy to re-instate 8.00s at St Michael's (and possibly St John's) if half a dozen or so people expressed an interest in coming regularly – perhaps at least initially on a monthly basis. How about it? Roger.

N.B: It is highly likely that there will be an 8.00 am HC at Cuxton on 11th March for Blythswood.