

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
1 st July Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 II Corinthians 8 vv 1-24 p1162 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007	
8 th July Trinity 6 Sea Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv 1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008	
15 th July Trinity 7	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 7	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008	
22 nd July S Mary Magdalene	9.30 Holy Communion	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 p679 II Corinthians 5 vv 14-17 p1161 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089	
29 th July Trinity 9	9.30 Holy Communion	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069	
5 th August Trinity 10	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 16 vv 2-15 p74 Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
1 st July Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Peter 3 vv 8-15a p1219 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032	
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 II Corinthians 8 vv 1-24 p1162 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007	
8 th July Trinity 6 Sea Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv 1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	II Samuel 12 vv 1-23 p315 Matthew 3 vv 1-17 p967	
15 th July Trinity 7	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism & Stop! Look! Listen!	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008	
22 nd July S Mary Magdalene	11.00 Holy Communion	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 p679 II Corinthians 5 vv 14-17 p1161 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089	
29 th July Trinity 9	11.00 Holy Communion	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069	
5 th August Trinity 10	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Corinthians 12 vv 1-11 p1153 Luke 19 vv 41-47a p1054	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 16 vv 2-15 p74 Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070	
Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays @ St Michael's		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays @ St John's	
July 4 th	Amos 5 vv 1-24 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	July 5 th	Amos 7 vv 10-17 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
July 11 th St Benedict	Hosea 10 vv 1-12 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	July 12 th	Hosea 11 vv 1-9 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
July 18 th	Isaiah 10 vv 5-16 Matthew 1 vv 25-27	July 19 th	Isaiah 26 vv 7-19 Matthew 11 vv 28-30
July 25 th St James the Apostle	Acts 11 vv 27 – 12 v3 Matthew 20 vv 20-28	July 26 th	Jeremiah 2 vv 1-13 Matthew 13 vv 10-17
August 1 st	Jeremiah 15 vv 10-21 Matthew 13 vv 44-46	August 2 nd	Jeremiah 18 vv 1-6 Matthew 13 vv 47-53

"Our conduct has a direct influence on how people think about the Gospel. The world doesn't judge us by our theology; the world judges us by our behaviour. People don't necessarily want to know what we believe about the Bible. They want to see if what we believe in makes a difference in our lives. Our actions either bring honour to God or misrepresent His Truth." "Feminine Appeal" Carolyn Mahaney.

Copy Date August Magazine Friday 13th July 8.30 am Rectory

Mystery Solved

Following the interest in local bus services of yesteryear, I received the following from the Maidstone & District and East Kent bus club, researched by their editor Nicholas King.

In the early 1950s, the 20 ran from Gillingham to Maidstone via Snodland and West Malling, so indeed obligatory lowbridge beyond West Malling. The 120 was basically a Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoon service between Chatham and Upper Halling, plus schooldays and Monday to Friday

morning peaks which included some positioning journeys to/from Gillingham. By the late 1950s the midweek afternoon trips had been withdrawn.

The 39 was Chatham to Lower Halstow, but was extended from 10th June 1953 to and from West Malling to absorb short journeys on the 20. From 5 January 1964 it became Gillingham to Upper Rainham and the West Malling section transferred back to the 20. That was also the date for the 65/65A replacing the Lower Halstow section. As you say, the 39A only ran to the east of Gillingham.

In an earlier article, horse buses in Strood were mentioned. Here is a picture of one.



From the Rector



The Parable of the Burning House from the Lotus Sutra

One day, a fire broke out in the house of a wealthy man who had many children. The wealthy man shouted at his children inside the burning house to flee. But, the children were absorbed in their games and did not heed his warning, though the house was being consumed by flames. Then, the wealthy man devised a practical way to lure the children from the burning house. Knowing that the children were fond of interesting playthings, he called out to them, "Listen! Outside the gate are the carts that you have always wanted: carts pulled by goats, carts pulled by deer, and carts pulled by oxen. Why don't you come out and play with them?" The wealthy man knew that these things would be irresistible to his children. The children, eager to play with these new toys rushed out of the house but, instead

of the carts that he had promised, the father gave them a cart much better than any he has described - a cart draped with precious stones and pulled by white bullocks. The important thing being that the children were saved from the dangers of the house on fire. In this parable the father, of course, is the Buddha and sentient beings are the children trapped in the burning house. The Burning House represents the world burning with the fires of old age, sickness and death. The teachings of the Buddha are like the father getting the boys to leave their pleasures for a greater pleasure, Nirvana.

I had never heard of this Buddhist Parable until a Buddhist speaker on Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* spoke about it. He said it was as well known in the East as the parables of Jesus are well known in the West.

He was actually using it for a different purpose from the one first intended by the Buddha. The speaker was talking about climate change. He said that the evidence for man made climate change is overwhelming but we carry on

regardless. We are like the children in that burning house. We are so absorbed in our lives that we don't even notice the peril we are in. We make cosmetic changes like renewable energy and recycling the contents of our dustbins, but we don't engage at all with the real challenge, which is to cut back drastically on the amount of fuel and goods we consume. Even this is, in part, a spiritual problem. It is because we cannot *be still and know that I am God*, that we feel we have to keep moving. It is because we insist on seeking satisfaction in material things which cannot satisfy us that we are always demanding more of them. I think the speaker's point was that we need to develop a proper appreciation of the world in which we live so that we can enjoy it without destroying it.

There are similarities between the teachings of the Buddha and those of Jesus Christ and there are important differences. I could certainly see a parallel between Buddhist and Christian teaching in the Parable of the Burning House. The children are absorbed in playing with what will shortly be destroyed and they with it. *Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust*. So many people are completely consumed by the things of this world, which will all pass away, as shall we. *We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return*. The father in the parable is like God the Father Who calls us to return to Him. The wonders of the world we live in speak of the eternal truth if we could but raise our eyes and

look at them properly. *The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handywork*. God speaks to us through His ministers. *Their sound is gone out into all lands: and their words into the ends of the world*. Deep down inside, the truth is within us. *The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach*. Above all, He sends Jesus. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*. But, too often, we are like the children in the burning house, absorbed in futility, heedless of the Voice of God, which both warns of what will happen to us if we carry on as we are and promises us something infinitely better if we will but listen.

As to what this infinitely better thing is and how to attain it, this is where Buddhism and Christianity seriously diverge. I'm starting by admitting I don't know too much about Buddhism and you might want to consult an authority who knows a great deal more about it than I do, but, as I understand it, the Buddha teaches that, by living in a certain way, human beings may eventually attain a state in which there is no more suffering, perhaps no more existence. The Christian Gospel, in which I firmly believe, is that Jesus has accomplished everything necessary for my salvation and for yours and all that we have to do is to put our faith in Him. Indeed, faith itself is His gift to us. Heaven is not the cessation of passions, but all consuming love. Heaven is not non-existence, but life in all its fulness. Roger.

Psalm 1: BLESSED is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners : and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord : and in his law will he exercise himself day and night.

3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side : that will bring forth his fruit in due season.

4. His leaf also shall not wither : and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.

5. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them : but they are like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.

6. Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgement : neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

7. But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. **Amen.**

Memories of Halling in the 1940's **by Ron Underdown II**

(We are serialising Ron's memories in this Summer's magazines. You can see his whole article online on our webpage under magazine. <http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/Memories%20of%20Halling.pdf>)

It is perhaps difficult today to imagine that Halling once had a Station Master, whose house overlooked the station; the ticket office and signal box were manned and in winter an open fire warmed the waiting room. Stations also held a best-kept competition. Steam engines were still a major force, even on some passenger services and coal and parcel wagons would be shunted into the sidings adjacent to Station Road.

Each row of houses in Halling had a name e.g. Manor Terrace, Hilton Terrace. Large detached houses also had names such as 'The Paddock' and the three-storey property in the High Street, empty throughout the war, was 'Bedford House'. Most houses were rented and a rent man called each week to collect the rent.

The majority were without electricity and relied on gas lighting (with very fragile gas mantles) or candles for light. Candle holders with handles were used to provide light to go upstairs and night-lights, a very short candle with paper surround, placed in a saucer of water were used, particularly in children's rooms.

Kitcheners (a fire with a built-in oven) usually found in a living room, was used for roasting and baking. The fire was fed from the top by removing a round plate with a special tool. A couple of gas rings in the scullery were used for boiling kettles or cooking in saucepans. Pennies were fed into a gas meter to maintain supply and periodically the Gas man would call to empty the meter. The coins were counted and usually a few were handed back. Eventually the kitchener was replaced by an open fire with a tiled surround and the two gas rings by a gas cooker.

The main fuel used on fires was coal, which was delivered. Bags of coke (partially burnt coal) could also be purchased from the gas works in Snodland (close to railway station). My brother and I used a cart, made from wood and a set of pram wheels or, with snow on the ground, a sledge to carry the bags home. Logs of wood were sometimes used. With all open fires a long handled toasting fork was used to toast bread or crumpets.

Wash day for mothers was a long, arduous affair. Using a copper (a bricked-in, round metal tub with a fire underneath), the tub had to be filled with water and the fire lit to boil the washing. A wooden lid was placed on top. After boiling, as appropriate, items were removed using a copper stick (short, wooden pole) to be hand washed in the sink using a hard, green soap and at times a scrubbing board. The washed items then had to be rinsed in cold water and rung-out, again by hand. A hand operated mangle squeezed out excess water and as the items left the rollers they fell into a basket. Children sometimes helped by turning the mangle wheel. After 'shaking-out' the washing was pegged to a line in the garden to dry.

Ironing the dried washing was not easy either. A blanket was placed over the dining table (not varnished). Cast-iron irons were heated, either on top of the kitchener or gas ring and a cloth used to protect the hand. The temperature of the iron was tested by wetting the tip of a finger and lightly touching the surface of the iron. Two irons were used, one being heated while the other was in use. Once ironed the items were aired on lines close to the ceiling and/or on 'clothes horses'.

Generally, there were no bathrooms. The toilets were outside and for one's ablutions there was a bowl in the scullery sink or, for a bath, the option of either heating saucepans of water to fill a tin bath or to visit the public baths in Snodland. Water could be heated to fill the copper and bathe small children.

With no double-glazing or central heating, in winter ice could be found on the inside of bedroom windows. Hot water bottles, some of stone, were much in demand. Paraffin heaters, an obvious fire risk if knocked

over, were also used. A paraffin lantern hung by the side of the cistern in the outside toilet, helped to prevent this freezing solid.

Some households may have had one, even two, bicycles but generally people either walked or used public transport to get about. Children walked to and from school including at lunch time, carrying their gas masks in the early part of the war. With traffic largely industry or trade related and very few privately owned cars it was not uncommon, particularly of an evening, for children to play in the street until a vehicle came along. The local doctor, resident in the village, had morning and evening surgeries, visited patients at home on his rounds and could be called to attend at any time.

Church fetes were held in the Vicarage garden and the adjacent field. Children from the school were allowed to use the field during the summer. The Vicarage hall was used as a youth club for a few years, later for light industrial use.

School summer holidays were taken late in the year, running into September, allowing families, mainly women and children, to go hop-picking to earn extra cash. Farmers arranged transport, a coach if you were lucky or a canvas-topped lorry with benches, for an early morning pick-up – long before the sun cleared the heavy, morning mist. Those of us who went to Pye's farm in Dean Valley at Cuxton, went by Beaney's bus.

One of the first tasks was to get a fire started for the first brew of tea of the day. Children collected dead branches from the nearby wood for the fire. The bins used for picked hops were of loose sacking attached to a wooden frame, a dividing panel formed a half-bin allowing two different groups of pickers. The hop vines were cut down by men using knives on long poles and handed to the pickers. Adults sat on the bin frame as they picked while children picked into boxes or upturned umbrellas. When enough hops had been picked a 'binman' came round with a bushel basket to measure how many each picker had produced. The 'binman' would check for any leaves among the hops and would sometimes refuse to measure until the leaves were removed. The hops were emptied into a large sack and a tally kept of the number of bushels picked for payment (a few old pence per bushel) at the end of the week. When the hops were small an increase in the amount paid per bushel was made, often following complaints from the pickers.

Special memories of hop-picking for me include collecting wood for fires with my brother, the smell of hops, my mother sitting on the bin frame picking, picking hops (regrettably not as many as I should have done) into an upturned umbrella with my brother and sister and blackened fingers from picking, the occasional visit of the farmer riding a magnificent looking chestnut coloured horse, a long walk home when picking was rained-off for the day, the general good humour of the pickers and especially the taste of tea brewed in a billy-can over a wood fire – helped, perhaps, by the condensed milk used. (To be continued.)

Forthcoming Attractions

12th July: Cantium Singers 7.30 pm at St Michael's. Admission free. Donations.

29th July: Rectory Barbecue 12.00 noon. £7.00 adults, £3.50 children, £20 family ticket.

29th September (Michaelmas) 9.30 am Holy Communion at St Michael's followed by brunch in church hall.

7th October Harvest Festival: 6.30 pm Harvest Praise at St Michael's followed by Harvest Supper.

27th October: 7.30 pm Quiz for Church funds in the Church Hall. £7.00.

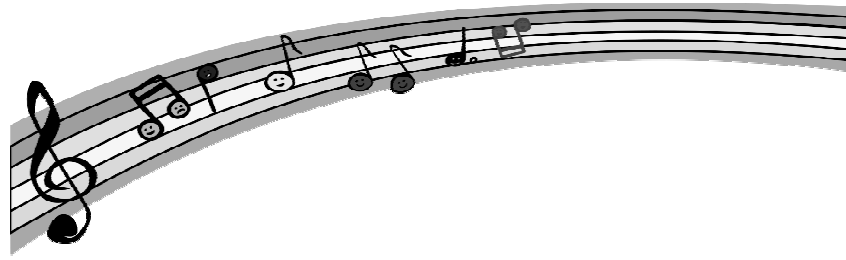
11th November: Concert in Commemoration of the Armistice at St Michael's.

1st December: Church Christmas Fayre at 10.00 am in the Scout Hall.

2nd February 2019: Folk Mass for Candlemas pm at St Michael's followed by refreshments and folk music.

Chicken or Egg?

On Trinity Sunday at St Michael's none of our usual organists was available. The gentleman who very kindly offered to play for us was also committed to playing at Strood at 10.30. So the choice was a short sermon or no music to accompany at least the last part of the service. Reflecting that what we teach about the Trinity derives from our worship of God Father Son & Holy Spirit, I chose music for worship above teaching. *O sing praises, sing praises unto our God : O sing praises, sing praises unto our King. For God is the King of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding.*



Cantium Singers

A community choir performing at St. Michael and All Angels
Church, Cuxton

on Thursday 12th July 2018, 7pm for 7.30pm.

Light refreshments available.

The concert is free but donations are welcome.

BARBECUE

Rectory Gardens

Sunday 29th July

12 noon

**Tickets: £7 adults. £3.50 children, £20 family available from
Matthew and Julia Wells 01634 727424**

Two courses Live entertainment Maypole Games & activities

Red or Green

Traditionally, Whitsun or Pentecost (the coming of the Holy Spirit) has been treated as a feast in its own right with readings for the weekdays following and a proper preface for the whole week. The colours in church have been red. The Spring Bank Holiday used to be Whit-Monday when many traditional events took place and Whit week was half term week for schools and children were taught about the Holy Spirit as the reason for the holiday. The culmination of the Christian year was Trinity Sunday at the end of Whit week. More recently, Pentecost has been seen as the 50th and last day of Easter, the Holy Spirit being the gift of the Risen Christ to us. The week days following are then “ordinary” time and the colours would be green. Trinity Sunday then stands rather on its own. I’m afraid I hover between the traditional and the modern, seeing merit in both. So we kept the Easter propers till Whitsun, but kept red frontals till the day before Trinity Sunday. RIK.

The Pilates Element

Pilates is a body conditioning exercise programme suitable for all ages and abilities. My classes are friendly, fun and enjoyable.

Emily Pollington, member of FHT, qualified instructor.

Pilates classes are held in the church hall on Tuesdays from 6.30-7.30 & 7.30-8.30 pm. For more information, please contact instructor Emily Pollington, 07940233296, emilypollington@btinternet.com Also on Facebook.

Please book through website

<https://the-pilates-element.pilatesnearlyou.co.uk/>

Christian Aid

The count of the Christian Aid contributions has

given the following results;

Contribution from Parish lunch.	£51.00
Christian Aid tea party.	£118.85
Christian Aid envelopes.	£464.29
TOTAL.	£634.14

Thanks to everyone who contributed and supported these events in any way.

Ruth Bierbaum kindly hosted the tea at St John's church. It was a very warm afternoon, the day of the royal wedding and the cup final. Many of us sat outside to enjoy the abundance of fine fare and the front of the church was gaily decorated with flags and bunting. We hope to do something similar next year.

Prayer Group Halling

For details, please contact Rev'd Ruth Bierbaum on 01622 722180.

House Group Cuxton

We meet at the church hall or Rectory at 11.00 on the first Wednesday of each month to pray together and to discuss the things which concern us in the light of our faith. All welcome. July 4th: When Life Shakes our Faith (Psalm 88). August 1st: Angels (Psalm 148). September 5th: How Christians Decide Issues (Psalm 1). (The psalms are for context, not, on these occasions, for bible study.)

Rest in Peace

Parishioners were sorry to hear of the death of David Joyce whose funeral was on the 30th May. A long term Cuxton resident, David had served on the PCC and was a regular member of our congregation. He is also remembered as a keen cyclist and for his interests in other sport and in village life in general.

We were also sorry to hear of the death of Ann Lucas, formerly of Halling, where she was a faithful member of St John's Church, a churchwarden and leader of the Sunday School. It was when she took Sunday School, that they planted the almond tree in the churchyard – a symbol of hope because it is one of the first trees to blossom early in the year. Ann's funeral was due to be held 22nd June.

Three Locks on the Med!

About 30 minutes drive from Cuxton is the market town of Tonbridge. Tonbridge is associated with idyllic manor houses, a castle, links to Jane Austen, a famous public school, an ancient landscape where woods and fields escape to picturesque villages and of course, the River Medway. My walk begins at Cannon Bridge about 1/2 mile from the High Street on the A26. Within yards, I can see a houseboat on the opposite bank. A lovely location so near to modern amenities yet moored in such a tranquil





spot. I walk along the river away from Tonbridge passing the back of a small industrial estate and a park. The countryside opens out revealing farm land and a river busy with ducks, grebes and swans. The river banks are changing in colour to vibrant green through trees, grasses,

brambles, water lilies, reed mace and various bushes. This next mile or two is a very popular zone for dog walking and it takes quite some time as so many friendly canines find it important to share their experiences whether it is to show a special tree branch, a lump of wood or to shower you with many droplets from the river! Oh Tommy, you would so enjoy this walk.



Along the river bank there are several species of butterfly and an extraordinary number of damselflies. The footpath continues beside the river and has some footbridges over small tributaries to the main river.



After just over 2 miles I arrive at the first lock, Eldridge's Lock. This lock was renovated and modernised several years ago. One of the new features is the provision for canoeists on the river. Unlike at many locks, canoeists can enter a special 'water lane' and by-

pass the lock thus avoiding the necessity to disembark, carry the canoe overland and start again beyond the lock. The concrete area

surrounding the lock has some seats and it is very pleasant to just sit and watch various water craft travel up and down the river.

Moving on from Eldridge's Lock there are more little footbridges over tributaries, fields of sheep and arable crops. The next lock is a little more than 1 mile away. It is called Porter's Lock. It is quite different in appearance. The huge lock gates support a pedestrian walkway leading to the far side which has picnic tables and a small pleasant grassed plot.

Back on the footpath and the next feature is the track under Hartlake Bridge and road. This marks the start of a very popular site for anglers. There are many marked and numbered stages used by leisure time anglers and for fishing competitions. The river and riverbank continues to teem with life and vegetation. There are lovely landscape views as I travel further along the river. One landmark, in the distance, is the tower at Hadlow.

Approximately one mile further along, the path leads me to my third lock, East Lock. This lock is very different from the previous two. It seems to cover a larger area and is more complex. It has a small planted border established in memory of a sad incident. There is an island accessible from part of the lock compound. The river widens a little and has landing stages for craft and canoeists before and after the actual lock. This is the ideal place for picnics and is often used as a meeting point for walkers and boat travellers. There is a permanent metal bridge over the lock which affords views up and down the river.

Usually, I stop at this point to enjoy my own picnic and then retrace my route back to Canon Bridge and end my walk. Today is different. I turn north and follow a footpath up to Golden Green. On the main road at Golden Green there is a pub which serves food. Following a suitable repast, I travel further along the road and turn left into Hartlake Road then down to the Hartlake Bridge, turn right and rejoin the river footpath and retrace my steps back to Cannon Bridge. On a sunny spring/summer day this is a glorious walk and one of my favourites. The total distance is approximately 6 miles. I recommend you try it!
Holly Croft.

The Seasonal Steps of our Seers – June and July

We now move into high summer. In June, country folk were very busy with hay-making and sheep-shearing, and therefore the various saints' days festivals were not commonly celebrated. One that was celebrated was St Barnabas' day with garlands of flowers such as roses, lavender, sweet woodruff and rosemary, and the saint himself was often depicted holding a hay rake. The summer solstice occurs on 21st June but Midsummer's Eve is traditionally celebrated on the 23rd June, with bonfires and beacons lit on hilltops soon after sunset. The embers of these fires were often said to have cleansing properties sparking purification rites and the hope of a change of luck. Traditionally it is time for fortune telling, fairies and magic and, as the fire died right down, people would look into the flames and attempt to foretell the future.

On Midsummer's Day the fortune telling continued and several flowers which supposedly contained magical powers were gathered and woven into garlands for the head and neck to ward off mischievous spirits, and favourite animals were also garlanded to protect them. St John's Wart, a pungent yellow herb sometimes known as "chase-devil" was used for this purpose and to cure many ailments. In Wales, it was placed above the door as a protective measure. Rowan was considered powerful against witches, and it was burned to ensure safety in parts of Cumberland on this day. Although many of the Midsummer Day customs have largely died away, it is still a traditional time for fairs and fetes.

The 24th June is the feast of St John the Baptist as celebrated in Halling, and the festivities can be summed up in this 16th century poem by Thomas Kirchmeyer.

*Then doth the joyful feast of St John the Baptist take his turn,
When bonfires great with lofty flame in every town do burn;
And young men rounds with maids do dance in every street,
With garland wrought of motherwort, or else with vervain sweet.*

St Peter follows on the 29th. He is believed to have eventually lived and preached in Rome, been crucified there and reputedly buried in what is now St Peter's Basilica. Although there are various festivals around Britain connected to the day, they bear little relation to the Saint Peter at all.

Into July the summer festivities continue. Until Henry VIII reformed the Church, the 7th July was Thomas a Becket's Day, the Archbishop of Canterbury murdered by Henry II's men in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. A close friend of the King, he defended the rights of the church against the Crown and after his death miracles were attributed to him. His day is still remembered in some parts of the country. Bodmin has a drinking festival followed by competitions in Cornish wrestling, and in Devon a pie day and fair.

July 15th is St Swithun's day. He was the 9th century bishop of Winchester, famous for his lack of pomp, financial administration and, allegedly, for performing a miracle in the town's marketplace when he made a basket of broken eggs whole. After his death his fame grew, and eventually his remains were moved from the churchyard to a shrine within the cathedral on 15th July, 971. The saint apparently protested the move by 'weeping', causing torrential rain to fall continuously for forty days, hence the legend arose:

*St Swithun's Day, if thou dost rain for forty days it will remain
St Swithun's Day, if thou be fair for forty days, 'twill rain no mair.*

It was also the custom to think that rain on St Swithun's meant that the saint was christening the ripening apples and thus there would be a good harvest, so no one would eat apples before this day. After the day, fallen apples would be picked up and jam made.

July 20th is St Margaret of Antioch's Day, celebrated perhaps more in the Middle Ages than now. The story goes that she was the daughter of a prince, brought up a shepherdess and converted to Christianity. Refusing the advances of a pagan governor, she was thrown to a dragon that swallowed her. A cross materialised inside the dragon, splitting its belly so that St Margaret was able to step out unscathed. She is regarded as the patron saint of safe childbirth. She is remembered in some parts of the country but mainly in Gloucestershire where a pudding is made in her honour, traditionally containing plums. James Henry Leigh Hunt:

*Stolen sweets are always sweeter, stolen kisses much completer,
Stolen looks are nice in chapels, stolen, stolen, be your apples.*

St James the fisherman is celebrated on July 25th. One of the first disciples, he preached with his brother John and was martyred in 43AD. By the 9th century legend has it that he preached in Spain and was buried at Compostella which became, and still is, a place of pilgrimage. The scallop shell, his symbol, became the badge of pilgrims who visited his shrine. It is often used as a badge of pilgrimage in many countries and it appears on the signs marking the Pilgrims' Way here and on the vestments of Rochester Cathedral. It is traditional to bless the boats of the oyster fleets on the feast day of St James, and the building of shell grottos could be associated with the feast as well. JGB.

Hip Hop Theodicy

At the May meeting of the Mothers' Union, Buffy Maisey talked to us about growing up with a congenital hip condition. Hers was not at first diagnosed, and, when it was eventually recognised, the treatment involved a long period in plaster to keep her leg straight. This necessarily limited her activities, but her father was able to ameliorate the situation somewhat by making specially designed furniture and play equipment. In later life, the hip was replaced with an artificial joint. By the time her daughters were born, it had become standard practice to examine new born babies for this condition and to provide any treatment found to be necessary straightaway. Such treatment would nowadays be much less drastic and probably more effective. Members reflected then on how in so many ways medicine has advanced in just a few decades with much improved diagnostic techniques and treatments compared with what was available in the recent past. The question was then raised why God allows suffering in the world, the suffering, not only of bad people whom some might think to deserve it, but also of good people and even innocent children. We might have another look at this at the house group on 4th July at 10.45 in the church hall.

St John's Draw (May): £10 each Mr S Head (8), Mrs Smith (49) & Mrs Shaw (102) – drawn by Mr Payne.
St Michael's Draw (June): £10 Mr Bogg (22), £5 each Mr (9) & Mrs (15) Haselden.



Tommy's Talking Points.

Lovely long days and short nights at this time of year. Sometimes we have tea in the garden and Master reads till it gets too cold or dark. Indoors, he can't see the TV with the sun on it, but hates to pull the curtains and shut out a lovely evening. Some nights, just before basket time, we sit on his garden seat in the gloaming, quietly enjoying the peace – until I spot a cat or a fox or a badger! These long days, we're out in the countryside early and sometimes in the evening, especially if we've missed our afternoon walk because he's been busy. What words should I use to describe being out in our wonderful woods and fields? Freedom, joy, exuberance, running and bounding, enthusiasm, meeting good people and nice dogs, beauty, all true for me and for him too albeit more moderately and with different tastes. I don't suppose I could make him understand the delight I experience in running around nose to the ground, tail waving in the air behind me, but I know how much he loves nature and how he loves to see me and all dogs and people happy. It has been a wonderful year for flowers. After the incomparable bluebells, a thick white carpet of wild garlic alongside the path up the woods and then a clump of yellow deadnettle (which some people call archangel) on the bank behind Court Farm. At one time, yellow and white flowers brightened every prospect – hawthorn, fields of buttercups, cow parsley, elderflower, then brambles preparing their bounty of blackberries in a few weeks time. Our bank was a waterfall of white may, yellow laburnum and lilac. There are also purple vetch and mauve mallow and many, many pink wild roses, more, he thinks, than in previous years. There was a field of blue scabious. There are bright red poppies. There are different sorts of trefoil, mostly yellow, and yellow, red and white clover. There's also a lot of what he calls sticky weed and the books call bedstraw, though he can't imagine making a bed out of a plant which irritates human skin and can cause a rash. The birdsong has also been especially beautiful this year, though he can't identify any but the most basic like cuckoos and larks, both of which have been heard north of Bush Road this year. Last Monday, we did some more Saxon Shore Way with Master's friend. The day started well when we saw a young badger really close up near St Michael's first thing. Later, train to Rainham then down through the Berengrave Nature Reserve (which I remembered from last time) to Motney Hill, where we heard the cuckoo once more. It was quite straightforward (once we'd negotiated the stingers) to walk along the river wall to Upchurch, with terrific views across to the Hoo Peninsula. After that, it got harder to follow the route, which is not well signposted. We made it to Lower Halstow, however, where Master was pleased to find the beautiful little church open because he wanted to show his friend the striking stained glass window of a first world war soldier being translated from the hell of the battlefield into the Presence of Christ in Paradise. After that, it got harder. We missed the path south of Funton Brickworks and found ourselves mainly walking on the road. Master was disappointed that what used to be a quiet lane is now really busy. There is far too much traffic! It's an amazing landscape, however, with a big sky, marshes and derelict barges. They saw a Saxon Shore sign which directed us into spaniel heaven, where I could run and spring and splash in the stream. Unfortunately, it looked longer than the men felt like walking and I should have had to have been put on my lead as we approached ground nesting birds, cattle and signs warning that dogs would be shot! So back to the road and onto the path in what turned out to be the wrong direction and forbidding notices on what appeared to be the most attractive routes. So back to the road again and we walked to Swale Station, which is just a single track, a solitary platform, a ticket machine and a broken train indicator. There was a train, however. So we went to Rainham and they ate and thence we came home on yet another train. Tommy.