

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 15	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 16	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 50 vv 15-21 p 57 Romans 14 vv 1-12 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 21-35 p985
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 17	9.30 Holy Communion	Jonah 3 v10 & 4 vv 1-11 p928 Philippians 1 vv 21-30 p1178 Matthew 20 vv 1-16 p987
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 18	9.30 Holy Communion Vivien Walter will speak about Poverty & Hope.	Ezekiel 18 vv 1-32 p845 Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> September Michaelmas, Preacher Ven Norman Warren	7.30 Holy Communion & Party, Celebration of Our Patronal Festival and Music in Worship.	Genesis 28 vv 10-17 p30 Psalm 40 Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 John 1 vv 47-51 p1064
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> October Harvest & Dedication Festival	9.30 Family Communion	1 Kings 8 vv 22-30 p345 Matthew 21 vv 12-16 p989
Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 15	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 33 vv 7-11 p864 Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 15-20 p985
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 16	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 50 vv 15-21 p 57 Romans 14 vv 1-12 p1140 Matthew 18 vv 21-35 p985
	5.30 Evening Prayer St John's	Ezekiel 20 vv 1-44 p847 Acts 20 vv 17-38 p1116
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 17	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Jonah 3 v10 & 4 vv 1-11 p928 Philippians 1 vv 21-30 p1178 Matthew 20 vv 1-16 p987
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 18	11.00 Holy Communion & Baptism Vivien Walton will speak about Poverty & Hope.	Ezekiel 18 vv 1-32 p845 Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> October Trinity 19 Harvest & Dedication Festival	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
	11.00 Holy Communion	1 Kings 8 vv 22-30 p345 Hebrews 12 vv 18-24 p1211 Matthew 21 vv 12-16 p989
	6.30 Harvest Hymns of Praise	Deuteronomy 8 vv 7-18 p187 II Corinthians 9 vv 6-15 p1163 Luke 12 vv 13-34 p1045

Please make Harvest Gifts items in tins or packets with a long life so they can be distributed where they are most needed and used when they are needed.

Copy Date October Magazine: 9<sup>th</sup> September 8.30 am Rectory.

You will receive a warm welcome at any of our services and, of course, you are equally welcome at St John's and St Michael's whether you live in Cuxton or Halling. The 9.30 at Cuxton on the first Sunday of the month and the 11.00 at Halling on the third Sunday are family services.

On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler service at Halling at 2.00.

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

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> and

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Log on to our home pages for up to date information on what is happening in the parish. In addition to notices etc, other items such as Proceedings of the PCC and sermons are from time to time displayed on the web page. Daily Bible notes are available electronically if you send me your e mail address. These too now appear on the web page.



### Readers' Questions

The Church Survey I referred to in last month's magazine indicated that people want more teaching and guidance from their clergy. Three areas were particularly mentioned: apologetics, the demonstration that Christian faith makes sense; guidance in prayer; and how to help other people to come to faith. If readers like to send in their questions on these and other topics, I will happily try to answer a selection of them.

### Atheism

I have just finished two books. One is *The Map That Changed the World* by Simon Winchester. (I borrowed it from Cuxton Library where you will find it if you want to read it.) It tells the story of William Smith (1769-1839), known as *the Father of English Geology*. It is an interesting story of how the son of an Oxfordshire blacksmith was among the first to notice how rocks are arranged in strata and how he became the first to produce a map of the country showing what kinds of rocks are to be found where and where, therefore, there are likely to be coal or other mineral deposits. Such a map was not only of tremendous commercial importance. It was a huge step on the road to our developing an understanding of the make up of our planet.

It is, in a way, an annoying book, however. It keeps repeating the myth that the discovery of the great age of the earth and the fossils contained in its rocks disproved the Bible and therefore fatally undermined the Christian religion. It is part of the wider myth that Science and Religion are necessarily opposed. According to the myth, scientists are rational people who can prove their theories from irrefutable evidence whereas the religious are credulous people clinging on to faith because they are ignorant. It is a myth, but it is widely believed and it is still repeated unthinkingly by journalists and the makers of television programmes and I suspect it is still the tacit assumption behind many school science lessons. It certainly was when I was at school!

The other book I have just finished has the possibly surprising title *The Twilight of*

*Atheism*. It is by Alister McGrath. (I bought this one and you are quite welcome to borrow my copy.) McGrath's thesis is that atheism is just as much a religion as Islam or Christianity and that it has effectively had its day. Atheism was a protest movement against abuse of power by the Church and now the Church has largely lost political power there is no reason for militant atheism. You need to read the book, but I will endeavour here to explain some of McGrath's ideas, together with some of my own and some I have gleaned from other sources.

For a start, many of the oft told stories of conflicts between scientists and the Church are exaggerated or entirely mythical. It suited certain anti-religious propagandists to portray religion and science as at war with enlightened intelligent scientists on the one hand and bigoted prelates on the other. In particular the famous meeting at Oxford in 1860 between Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Huxley, Darwin's public supporter, was nothing like the popular myth. The story of the stupid arrogant churchman silenced by the wit of the scientist was invented 30 years after the meeting took place. In fact, Wilberforce was an intelligent man who had made a thorough study of Darwin's work and Darwin himself had expressed his respect for the bishop's analysis of his book. Many of the early geologists and naturalists were clergymen and saw no conflict between their studies and their religious beliefs. Indeed the severest early critics of Darwin were not clergymen but scientists who were convinced that everything that happens is directed by natural law. They could not conceive of a world in which chance was the key to the development of species.

Some churchmen, far from feeling threatened by evolutionary theory, thought that, if evolution were true, we should be even more impressed by God. In 1884 Frederick Temple (later Archbishop of Canterbury and father of William whom some of you will remember with affection) *argued that God did something rather more splendid than just make the world; he made the world make itself.* (McGrath p105)

It is easy to sneer at the wrong ideas that scientists and churchmen held years ago. Of

course they got things wrong. They did not have our advantages. No doubt we get things very wrong too and, if they are so uncharitable, future generations may well sneer at both our science and our theology.

The interesting thing is not that people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries disagreed about how to explain the world they observed. The interesting thing is that they were convinced that there is an explanation to be discovered. Scientists and churchmen were united in believing that the universe is essentially intelligible. The most obvious reason for the intelligibility of the universe is that everything that exists is the creation of an intelligence, an intelligence which is infinitely greater than ours, but to which our minds are essentially analogous. That, some people believe, is why science develops and flourishes in cultures which believe in a personal God.

Religion and science are not in conflict with one another. They are both seeking the truth, though they may be approaching different aspects of the truth and using different methods. Science and religion are, however, united in conflict with post-modernism, the popular present day creed which asserts that there is no ultimate truth or that, if there is, it so completely inaccessible to us as to make no difference.

Just to clear the air, science does not prove things. It tries to observe the world objectively (though most scientists now believe this to be impossible) and explain what it observes by theories, theories which are then tested by further observation and experiment. Every scientific theory is therefore provisional and subject to modification or abandonment if new evidence requires it. Science produces an account of the world which works, but the beliefs of scientists are always open to being challenged by new facts.

This is not to say that we cannot trust science or to follow the post-modernists and to say that one theory is as good as another. There is truth out there and, while we know we have only an approximation to the truth, that does not stop us seeking a more perfect vision.

In fact you have to trust. There are no ultimate proofs on earth. You have to believe that your train won't crash, that you've chosen the right girl to marry, that your bank manager won't misappropriate your money. You can't know any of these things with absolute certainty, but if you trust nobody and nothing you cannot live.

Which brings us back to atheism. You cannot absolutely prove or disprove the existence of God. You can hypothesise as to why people believe in God – or not. You can demonstrate that there is nothing illogical in belief or disbelief, but you cannot prove that there is or that there is not a God. If you insist on proof, you can only be an agnostic, but it is too important a decision for agnosticism. If you dither until you are certain, you are worse off than the person who cannot decide on a career, a wife or how to vote for a government, until he is absolutely certain.

Atheism itself is a kind of religion. You take a step of faith when you insist that there is no God. Organised atheism these days tends to be made up of diminishing numbers of increasingly elderly supporters as western society becomes more and more indifferent to all forms of religion and relaxes into a cosy agnosticism.

So, why the militant atheism of the past? The answer seems to be that it was a reaction to a corrupt Church – especially in eighteenth century France, where modern atheism really took off. The French Church was too close to the Kings of France and their associated corrupt and oppressive aristocracy. Atheism came to be associated with republicanism. Overthrow church and state and set the peasants free!

An alternative to overthrowing the Church was of course reformation and this happened in some places, though sometimes the reformed churches became as corrupt as their catholic predecessor and those who demanded social justice were as anti-Lutheran as they were anti-Catholic.

America is an extremely interesting case. People in Western Europe (the most irreligious

continent on earth) tend to assume that Christianity retreats in the face of political freedom, science and prosperity. Yet America is possibly the freest country in the world. It has high levels of scientific literacy. It is certainly the richest country in the world. And it is very religious. The American Revolution separated church and state so it was no longer necessary to abandon your religious beliefs if you wanted to change the government.

England is also an interesting case. After the persecutions of Mary Tudor and the tyranny of Oliver Cromwell we established the Church of England – whose watchword is toleration. We have still not decided what the limits of toleration should be!

The corruption of the Catholic Church through political power made atheism attractive, but did Protestantism pave the way? Mediaeval Catholicism reflected the belief that the world is permeated by the sacred. There were holy places (churches, wells, etc), holy people (priests, monks and nuns), prayers and blessings for every eventuality of life, holy pictures, statues, medals, relics. Above all, Christ was mysteriously present in the mass. All these phenomena made mediaeval man feel close to God. In the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist was understood as giving us a glimpse of Heaven. Hence the extreme beauty and richness of Greek and Russian churches. The danger of all this is that, corrupted by ignorance or the mercenary designs of the clergy, all this religious art, all these sacred symbols, can tip over into idolatry and superstition.

Protestantism reacted to this danger by telling worshippers to look for God only in the Bible. The Bible is our only reliable source of information about God and communion with Him. The preaching service then replaces the Eucharist in many Protestant Churches.

The trouble is that this kind of Protestantism appeals only to the head, not to the heart. There is no scope for the religious imagination, little sense of being in God's presence all the time. If you only encounter God when you are reading the Bible or listening to a sermon, the danger is that the rest of the time you live as if

there were no God. If you live as if there were no God, it is not too difficult to stop believing in Him altogether.

The Protestant might say that we don't need a church building as the house of God; we don't need to observe the feasts and fasts of the Christian Year; we don't need a consecrated priesthood because God is with us everywhere, all the time, and in every believer. Have, however, we protestants made everything sacred or nothing sacred? If you don't need to come to church to worship, do you worship everywhere or nowhere? If you don't keep Sunday special, do you worship God every day or hardly at all?

To be fair, some strands of Protestantism (in England especially Methodism) do place tremendous emphasis on a real, living experience of Jesus in every day life. Hence the popularity of certain C18 & C19 hymns which we still sing – especially when the laity get to choose the hymns! Nevertheless it has been observed that, in Western Europe, those churches where the emphasis is on Word are declining faster than those where the emphasis is on Sacrament.

Early atheists found it hard to envisage a world without worship. Keats (a medical student) felt deprived by the scientific explanation of the rainbow. If there was no mystery, there was no wonder. Atheists found themselves worshipping nature or abstracts like reason. If God was dead, there was a huge vacuum to fill.

So, if atheism is in its twilight years, where is faith growing? Everywhere but Western Europe apparently! What form of Christianity is growing? It is Pentecostal or Charismatic Christianity which is growing fastest. Believers claim to have a real and lively experience of God. They know Him personally. He has set them free from sin and all the powers of darkness. They talk to Him in daily life. They are never happier than when they are worshipping. They spend their time with other members of the Church doing the Lord's work. Typically they tithe. Such churches are filled with joyful believers and grow amazingly, though the dangers of leaving behind reason and scripture are obvious.

So what do we deduce from all this? First that we should not think that religion is on the way out and that atheism is the faith of the future. Atheism has failed. It has failed to prove itself intellectually. Atheist regimes, such as those of the Communist bloc, have shown themselves to be every bit as oppressive and unjust as the allegedly Christian monarchies of mediaeval and early modern Europe. In fact they have been worse because they are without the doctrines of the Church to rein them in.

Secondly, what might be the future of religion in this country? I would hope to have a Catholic sense of the sacred, of belonging to a

holy people called by God to be the salt of the earth, our identity defined and sustained by the fact that we are the Lord's People, who meet around the Lord's Table on the Lord's Day. I would hope to have a Protestant sense of the importance of the Bible as definitive source for doctrine and corrective of emotional excess. I would hope to have a Charismatic sense of the individual Christian's intense closeness to Christ so that we are individually and corporately filled with His love, joy and power.  
Roger.

PS: I bought the book with the vouchers *Thursday's Children* kindly gave me for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

July Church Hall Draw: - £40 to Gill Bogg, drawn by Eileen Knight

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Chidwick (27), Mrs Knell (31), Mrs Burren (55), Mr Mitchell (68), Mrs Tower (145) – drawn by Mrs Seager.

### Bible Study

The next parish Bible Study is 7.30 pm on Friday September 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Rectory. All welcome. The next after that is October with MU. Daily Bible reading notes are now also available on the website <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> and <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm> or by e mail on request.

### Confirmation 2006

We normally hold confirmations on alternate years in this parish. The other year we are invited to go to Higham. If anyone, therefore, is interested in Confirmation in the near future, I shall start classes after Christmas with a view to presenting you at Higham next May. Candidates are normally 12 years old or older (no upper limit). They may be seeking Baptism. They may have been baptised already and now wish to reaffirm their baptismal commitment and to receive the sacramental grace of Confirmation. If you are not yet sure, but want to study the matter further, you are most welcome to attend the classes and explore the faith with no obligation to be confirmed at the end. Roger.

### Bogus Water Officials

Three smartly dressed men (two white, the youngest black) were seen on several occasions in July wandering about the Glebe, Cuxton. Among other things they were taking photographs of the Rectory. They told neighbours that they were from Southern Water, but Southern Water denied that they were working for them and suggested we inform the police. I have informed the police of these incidents. If you see people acting suspiciously in the Glebe or anywhere else, please attempt to get descriptions, registration numbers, photographs, even, if you can do so without risk to yourself. Genuine utility company workers or employees of the local council will gladly produce identification. Anyone else claiming to be an official should not be admitted to your property and should be reported to the police. Roger.

### Fairtrade

You have probably heard of the Fairtrade Campaign. In fact, years ago, we used to sell Fairtrade goods after our 9.30 service. The point is that small farmers and businessmen in poor countries are often under enormous pressure from multi-national companies and because of international trading agreements forced through by wealthy, powerful nations. The result is that they may not get a fair price for their goods, workers may be forced to work in appalling conditions which would not be accepted in the West, and they may not be allowed to grow the crops or to farm them in such ways as would be for the long term productivity of the land and the economic welfare of the home country.

Fairtrade tries to correct that by making sure that farmers and workers in poor countries are properly paid and treated with respect. The Fairtrade movement is really taking off as people think about the issues raised by Live 8 and G8. Locally, the Diocese of Rochester and the Mothers' Union have signed up for Fairtrade and requested parishes to follow suit. We shall be trying increasingly to obtain what we use as a parish from Fairtrade sources. There will be a Fairtrade Stall at the Christmas Coffee Morning on 10<sup>th</sup> December. As individuals, we can find Fairtrade goods for sale in the ordinary shops, including especially the Co-op. If you feel really strongly, you can ask your regular shop to stock Fairtrade products so long as you intend to buy them and encourage your friends to do the same.



### Mothers' Union

On 21<sup>st</sup> September at 10.45 in the Church Hall we will be welcoming (at long last) Katharine Broughton with her dog Athena, who is a hearing dog for the deaf. Due to Katharine's illness, we have waited a long time for her to come to us. So please come and make her welcome. As always, the meeting is also open to non MU members. The 9.30 service at St Michael's is the MU Corporate Communion, a bit special this time because it is St Matthew's Day.

3<sup>rd</sup> October: Archdeaconry Festival Service at Gravesend (time to be announced).

19<sup>th</sup> October: Deanery Overseas Evening at St Francis Strood – speaker Richard Jones from Bible Lands Society.

26<sup>th</sup> October: 7.30 Bible Study Rectory.

### For Your Diary

September 6<sup>th</sup> 10.30 – 12.00: Coffee Morning at 73, Charles Drive,

September 10<sup>th</sup>: Friends Kent Churches Bike Ride. Sponsor forms from Rector.

September 21<sup>st</sup> St Matthew: 9.30 MU Corporate Communion at St Michael's followed by meeting (10.45) with hearing dog for the deaf (Athena).

September 28<sup>th</sup>: PCC at St John's (7.30) with stewardship adviser David Noakes.

September 29<sup>th</sup>: Michaelmas: HC 9.30 am at St John's & 7.30 pm at St Michael's – followed by party.

October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Harvest Festival and Dedication: HC Jubilee Hall 8.00, St Michael's 9.30, St John's 11.00.  
6.30 Harvest Praise at St John's followed by Harvest Supper.

October 22<sup>nd</sup>: Quiz in Church Hall for Church Funds. Entry enquiries Rector (717134)

### Invitation To Coffee Morning

Everyone is welcome to the Coffee Morning at 73, Charles Drive on 6<sup>th</sup> September, but what about you school mums? Child just gone to school? Feeling a bit down? Ready to celebrate? Whichever, why not come along and spend some time with friends in a welcoming environment?

### Diamond Support Group

The Metropolitan Police have asked that we assist them in circulating as widely as possible a regular document from their Diamond Support Group entitled "Communities Together Information Bulletin". This lengthy document is aimed at community groups and organisations, government departments, and businesses who operate in and around London. Members of the diocese in the London Borough's may have seen this already via the Archdeacon, but we have been asked to disseminate it across the whole Diocese in recognition that many people work or regularly travel to London from our area. The document gives information about current crime levels, Race and Religious Hate incidents, public information about ongoing investigations, and known events and demonstrations in the near future that may have an impact on travel etc. We have put the current copy on the website at <http://www.rochester.anglican.org/noticeboard/met-police/> and will continue to post updates as we get them. Neil Thomson Communications Officer (ICT)/IT Support & Development Officer.

New Address: Ann Lucas & Tim Lloyd now live at 13, Old Bridge, Egremont, Cumbria, CA22 2AZ.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

30 <sup>th</sup> July	Alfie Paul Reynolds	Maidstone
7 <sup>th</sup> August	Amy Lauren Rodway	Upper Bush
7 <sup>th</sup> August	Molly Anne Rodway	Upper Bush
7 <sup>th</sup> August	Jamie Robert Murray	Upper Halling
14 <sup>th</sup> August	George Abbotts	Nine Acres Road
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Evie Alice Pullinger	Howlsmere Close
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Imogen Beatrix O'Brien	Staunton
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Saffron Lily O'Brien	Staunton
14 <sup>th</sup> August	Jemma Louise Flack	Epsom

Weddings:

16 <sup>th</sup> July	Matthew Philpott & Sarah Harris	Halling
13 <sup>th</sup> August	Richard Shorthouse & Sarah Ford	Cuxton
13 <sup>th</sup> August	Andrew Hunt & Tina Hunt	Halling

Funerals:

22 <sup>nd</sup> July	Mary Hall (59)	Bush Road
2 <sup>nd</sup> August	Emily Florence Bennett (93)	Sittingbourne
3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Dorothy Christine Dutnall Atkins (81)	formerly of Cuxton
3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Hilda Tricker (77)	formerly of York
10 <sup>th</sup> August	Ellen Agnes Sherringham (93)	Bearsted



Halling WI

Our July W.I. meeting continued along the same lines as our June party, very International. Jill Joyce came to speak to us about The Railway children of Istare, although most of her talk was about the Indian continent. She was an excellent speaker and it was obvious she was passionate about the place and it's people. Mrs Joyce had been to India many times, over a long period of time. It seemed like many other countries. It has extremely poor people and very rich ones, but some very clever ones with regards craft work. She had brought with her some excellent examples of Indian craft work and embroidery, all very colourful. From some of the things Mrs Joyce said, some of the men left a lot to be desired, I think I would have given them a wide berth, but she was made of sterner stuff. Towards the end of her talk she did explain why her talk was entitled "The Railway children of Istare". She was speaking on behalf of a charity who cared for children, mostly young boys, who live on the railways of India, and particularly of one man who is

making it his life's work to care for these orphan boys and to give them a better life. After Mrs Joyce's talk we had our W.I. business, quite a lot from the National Federation, our subscriptions are going up even though the National is "comfortable". I then showed members our exhibit that we had entered for the County Show. We didn't win but we were in the right area. The winner was Cobham and Luddesdown, their entry, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Our entry was to celebrate Ellen McArthur's epic voyage around the world, all very watery and we were the only basket to contain a mermaid. Flower of the month was won by Betty Head with a perfect Freesia. I think it was the first time ever the judge judged the flowers by their scent.

Next month our speaker will be Mr Graham Johnson with his unusual views of Kent. The competition, an ITEM beginning with the letter K, quite a bit easier this month, there are loads of ITEMS beginning with K, but don't forget it's illegal to carry Knives, but you can always fly a Kite. We'd love to see you. Phyllis.



### Cuxton WI

We had a good attendance at our August meeting and during the business June Hanrahan went over the various points being questioned by members with regard to *Members' Night* next month. Once again everyone got into a huddle in Social Time to discuss what they were going to do. There were lots of jams and plants for sale on the Trading Stall, which did quite well.

Our speaker, Mrs Margaret Davies, gave us a talk on *The way With Words*. She had been a teacher of English with infants and junior children, and had also appeared in musicals and drama at the Orchard Theatre. Her anecdotes about her life, her school experiences, all to do with words, had us in fits of laughter. When she moved on to the answers given to some exam questions by pupils we were nearly crying with laughter. She was a wonderful speaker and we could have listened a lot longer, but the meeting had to end.

We were very pleased to have some work done by our China Painting Group exhibited at

Cuxton Library last month. Two of our members spent a day demonstrating how to do this and we had several children eagerly having ago. They all enjoyed this and surprisingly preferred to paint flowers instead of clowns!!

Future events include a social evening at West Malling WI and an Open Day at Frindsbury, both events being well supported by Cuxton.

The newly-formed Walking Group went to Gore Court Farm on a beautiful day last month, walked for an hour through the countryside, meeting horses, black swans and peacocks on the way and having a nice lunch in the restaurant on our return. The next walk is from Leeds village, starting at the pub and through Leeds Castle grounds with lunch to finish.

Plans are going ahead for the next visit from our friends at West Tilbury. Next meeting Thursday September 1<sup>st</sup> 7.30 pm Church Hall – Members' Night, Produce Show with a difference.

Ann Harris, Cuxton WI publicity officer.

### **NATURE NOTES : JULY 2005**

There was plenty of cloud on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month but there were bright periods and it was warm. I took Sam through Six Acre Wood where a few wood avens and herb robert bloomed. The nettles and cow parsley looked bedraggled and limp through lack of rain and the grass in the fields was straw coloured. We crossed Church Fields which were very dry and where the cows no longer grazed. Wild clematis climbed over some hawthorns and blackberry flowers bloomed. Few fruits had formed on the elders, probably through lack of rain. The morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> was grey and this continued into the afternoon when it became very humid. I drove to Snodland lakes where I found St John's wort, common centaury, creeping buttercup, some elder, blackberry flowers, agrimony and knapweed. I saw a red admiral butterfly and meadow brown butterflies. A chiffchaff sang in the woodland.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> there was intermittent sunshine and variable cloud on what was another humid day. We went to Halling, where we walked by the river to the heath and where the flowers were so beautiful. Marjoram, centaury, mallow, St John's wort, vervain and vipers bugloss provided a spectacle of colour in the warm sunshine. Meadow brown butterflies hovered over the grasses which had turned straw coloured. Hawthorns, maples and sycamores were showing signs that they

needed rain, for their leaves were turning yellow or spotted. Orchids bloomed but there were not as many as last year. The following day I found soldier beetles on hogweed flowers and scabious bloomed along the verge of the quarry road. I read recently that this has been the driest winter since 1904. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, a blustery day with warm sunshine, I watched, at the Snodland lake, Canada geese with their goslings, coots and a swan gliding on the rippling water. As we walked up a slope, the air was filled with the aromatic fragrance of privet flowers, soldier beetles perched on hogweed flowers and three ladybirds alighted on a clump of tansy flowers which were in bud. A pair of pied wagtails flew up into a tree just ahead of us.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> we went to Woodchurch where a very chilly wind blew making it feel like autumn along the lanes. As we walked, skippers and meadow brown butterflies hovered over blackberry flowers; there were so many creatures, and grasshoppers, in large numbers, were in the grass of the fields which we crossed. The morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> was grey and chilly because of the northerly winds but the sun shone warmly in the afternoon when I drove Sam to Addington. The heathland was bright with pink centaury, golden ragwort and St John's wort, plus yellow evening primrose flowers. Rosebay willowherb, a beautiful mauve, bloomed on one of the banks, while on

another bank a large cluster of white, pink and mauve goats rue, covered in red tailed bumble bees and soldier beetles, bloomed. It was a beautiful sight. A green woodpecker flew across the trees as we returned to the cricket ground.

It was very hot on July 10th with almost clear skies and on the 11<sup>th</sup>, which was another hot day, north-easterly winds blew which kept down the humidity. We went to Rodmersham on 12<sup>th</sup> and when we arrived, I heard sparrows twittering in hedgerows; then, later in the afternoon, I heard skylarks, a delightful sound. It was a very hot day on the 13<sup>th</sup> with the breeze coming from the south. I took Sam, in the early-evening, to Snodland, where we walked round the Brookland lake. Great willowherb, various umbellifers, agrimony and hemp agrimony bloomed. The grassy banks were straw-coloured. As I walked, I saw a ladybird on a blade of grass and dragonflies hovered on the air. A heron flew overhead while Canada geese with goslings, swans with six cygnets and coots with chicks glided on the water. I heard the poplars rustling in the breeze. The weather was hot for the next three days.

On the Saturday, the sun beamed down all day from a clear blue sky brushed with plane trails. In the late afternoon I drove with Sam to Halling, from where we walked by the river to the heath. Pink and white yarrow, bird's foot trefoil and thistles bloomed among the straw-coloured grasses where meadow brown butterflies hovered. The bank was adorned with hundreds of teasels breaking into flower and a carpet of white yarrow flowers. Nearby, thistles had dried to a dark brown. I heard the calls of a magpie and the sound of church bells in the distance. Viper's bugloss, evening primroses, hemp agrimony, bramble, vervain, ragwort and St. John's wort bloomed on the heathland. Soldier beetles perched on yarrow and ribbed and yellow meadow bloomed. The ground desperately needed rain. We walked along the top field where welcome fresh breezes blew. Beautiful perfume of wild clematis filled the air. On the 17<sup>th</sup> there was still no sign of rain for this part of the country. It was hot again with clear blue skies, golden sunshine and a westerly breeze. I noticed, as we drove along the Snodland bypass that silver birch trees leaves were yellow and brown through lack of water. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, while walking round the Brookland lake I watched a grey wagtail bobbing near the water's edge, then a reed warbler balancing on a reed stem. A female blackbird flew in front of us. Snails perched on nettles, and a pair of gulls dipped and dived over the lake. Blackberries had ripened. We had still had no rain nor was there any forecast for this area. Billowing clouds, both white and grey, built up during the morning. The sun shone warmly and quite a strong westerly wind blew. Sam and I walked at Snodland, by the stream where I saw a mallard duck with little ducklings which emerged from the reeds by the bank which was adorned with great willowherb and meadowsweet. On the other side of the path Himalayan balsam bloomed in profusion. We walked round two of the lakes where I watched juvenile coots, a swan and a heron. Another swan was on its nest by the stream. Water lilies bloomed and I found common fleabane. Thistles were in flower.

We crossed the railway to another lake where knapweed, purple loosestrife, fleabane, thistles, bramble and creeping buttercup were in flower. Blackberries and sloes had formed while hawthorns had many yellow, leaves. Soldier beetles perched on hogweed flowers. A clump of tansy had just burst into flower. We had an evening walk along the top of Six-acre Wood, down the straw-coloured field where hazelnuts were ripening then back along Six-acre lower path. In the churchyard wild clematis and buddleia emitted beautiful perfumes. I noticed in the evening that we now have three frogs in the pond. On the 21<sup>st</sup> north-westerly winds kept the air fresh, free from humidity. In the afternoon, I took Sam to West Malling country park where we walked by the lake inhabited by various wild fowl. Part of the water was thick with unpleasant looking algae. Great willowherb, white bryony and purple loosestrife bloomed along the water's edge. We walked through the straw-coloured field and back to the car. The morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> was grey and cold with slight drizzle. I took Sam to Snodland, by which time there was some sunshine, and it became very humid. We walked round one lake where a skein of Canada geese called from the water where they glided. Meadow brown butterflies hovered over the grass and blue damselflies flitted to and fro.

On the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, members of the Cuxton Countryside Group came with me on a search for wild flowers. We found a wide variety; more than I'd expected. Ken Law brought his knowledge to bear by pointing out the variety of trees in Mays Wood.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, rain fell steadily throughout the morning and early afternoon; then there were some bright periods as Sam and I walked along Pilgrims Road and up into Mays Wood, where the breeze caused water to drip from the leaves overhead. There was a fresh scent of good earth, as we walked the paths that eventually took us to the field where Sam trotted happily. Dark clouds were building from the west as we made our way home.

Some cool and grey days followed. Woodlands were silent, as July is the month when birds renew their plumage and don't sing. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Snodland lakes, I found a wealth of flowers, juicy blackberries gleaming in the sunlight and elderberries ripening.

The 29<sup>th</sup> was a very warm day with bright sunshine and billowing cloud. From Halling, we walked by the river to the heath, down the track back to the river, then round the heath again to the field overlooking the school. There were plenty of flowers, although many were fading. Pale pink marshmallows bordered the creek and pale pink soapwort flowers lifted their heads to the sky. Blackberries had ripened and there were berries on the dogwood tree, privet bushes and wayfaring trees. A beautiful goldfinch flew across our path to a hawthorn. The teasels on the bank stood like sentinels, their mauve heads bright in the sun. A westerly wind rippled the river.

Heavy showers fell throughout the 30<sup>th</sup> when we walked through part of Mays Wood to the top of Dean Valley

where the ancient beech tree was magnificent in its greenness. I gazed across the valley where the woods and fields were highlighted.

The last day of the month was grey and cool. I took Sam to the Brookland lake where common fleabane,

agrimony, hemp agrimony, great willowherb, hogweed, hedge and field bindweed and hedge cranesbill bloomed. Golden tansy bloomed on the path. Grey-green willows swayed in the breeze and a pair of coots called from the rippling water. Elizabeth Summers.

### **After you become a Christian, what should you do?**

The Bible tells us that God expects His children to do certain things to help them grow closer to Christ. These are called spiritual disciplines — habits that help us become more mature and grow as Christians.

In the Bible, in church history, and in the experience of Christians, certain basic habits help us grow in faith, increase our personal experience of God, and help us to serve others.

**"Teach us to pray,"** the disciples asked Jesus, and Jesus responded by teaching them what we now call The Lords Prayer. (Luke 11:1-4).

Prayer does not need to have special words as God knows what is in our hearts when we pray. All we need to do is to talk to God. On Sacred Space (a website I use each evening), we are told to imagine Jesus as a friend sitting next to us and to open up our heart and mind to Him. This I have found puts things totally in prospective, as it then makes it easy to think of God as someone personal to us, and not just somewhere "up in the clouds." Praying in this context we can tell Him our fears and worries, we can thank Him for all the blessings in our day, and we can tell Him we are sorry for the times we have failed Him.

Jesus assured his disciples that God hears and answers our prayers. Sometimes it is "yes", sometimes "no" and other times we have to wait awhile. As our loving Creator, God has all the power of the universe. As our Heavenly Father, he is filled with love for us and we can be sure He will answer our prayers in the way that is best, as God doesn't give us what isn't good for us.

There is much more that could be said about how to pray, but the main thing is to keep praying each and every day. The Lord's prayer asks for "our daily bread" so we look each day to God to supply our needs. This means that we pray each day until it becomes a habit in our Christian lives and it builds and strengthens our relationship with God.

But prayer isn't just about asking either. It's being quiet, it's listening and it's allowing God to take control of your life, to guide you and ultimately to teach you to do His Will, and it's praising Him and thanking Him for all the Love He shows to us each and every day.

### **Reading the Bible**

This is a way that we can listen to God. I love the opening chapter of St. John's Gospel – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

The Bible is God's Word to us and by regular reading and meditation we can learn what is God's Will for us in our lives.

The Bible was written by people, but the message contained in its passages came from God. "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). And God's Holy Word contained in the Bible is the basis upon which we should live our lives and ultimately find Salvation.

But again the solution is to reading and studying it. Although the main message is simple, it is also filled with profound insights, and there is a lot to think about, again and again, every time we read it.

In the Bible, God reveals His thoughts to us, and He invites us to think about them, too. These are things that He wants us to know — so we do our part to try to understand them. These are the writings that tell us what God is like, what He has done, what He will do. These are the writings that tell us what Jesus Christ was like in His earthly ministry, how He wants us to live our lives, and how we may one day share in God's Heavenly Kingdom. Jesus came to redeem us, save us from our sins, and to help us to also reveal God's Love for the world in our own earthly ministry too.

### Our Ministry

At the end of each Eucharist we say the words "Send us our in the power of Your Spirit to live and work to Your praise and Glory".

God has called us together to serve one another in our own personal ministry. God has given us certain abilities "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7), and He wants us to use them to serve others. We grow spiritually by doing this, and we become more mature Christians .

Every Christian is a minister, for the word "minister" simply means "servant." Priests serve in the way that God enables them, teachers serve in the way that God enables them, and even the mother looking after her child is serving God in her work. Everyone ministers in one way or another, and by doing so, we are all strengthened in our faith.

"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. (1 Peter 4:10-11). Amen.

Lesley Watkin.

### At the Foot of the Cross Written by Marcia Krugh Leaser

Fearing the battle was over  
And I'd already lost the war,  
I was tired of trying and failing.  
I just couldn't fight anymore.

So, dragging my battle-scarred body,  
I crawled to the foot of the cross.  
And I sobbed. 'Oh please, Father forgive me.  
But I tried...I tried.. and still lost.'

Then the air grew silent around me.  
I heard his voice just as clear as the dawn:  
'Oh, My child, though you are tired and weary,  
You can't stop, you have to go on.'

At the foot of the Cross, where I met Him,  
At the foot of the Cross, where He died,  
I felt love, as I knelt in His presence.  
I felt hope, as I looked in His eyes.

Then He gathered me lovingly to Him,  
As around us God's light clearly shone.  
And together we walked though my lifetime  
To heal every wound I had known.

I found bits of my dreams, long forgotten,  
And pieces of my life on the floor.  
But I watched as He tenderly blessed them,  
And my life was worth living once more.

I knew then why I had been losing.  
I knew why I had not grown.  
At the foot of the Cross came the answer:  
I'd been fighting the battle alone.

At the foot of the Cross, where I met Him,  
At the foot of the Cross, where He died,  
Then I knew I could face any challenge  
Together--just my Lord and I.

### Friends of Kent Churches Sponsored Cycle Ride

This will take place on 10<sup>th</sup> September this year. The idea is to cycle or walk round as many Kent churches as you can. It makes a nice day out seeing other people's churches and meeting the people who man them for the day, handing out free refreshments and encouragement to the cyclists. You get sponsors and the money raised is divided equally between our parish general fund and Friends of Kent Churches, who support struggling churches throughout the county. So it is well worth doing. Sponsor forms from me. If you cannot take part yourself, please sponsor those who are. At the time of writing Steve and Valerie Brown and I are the probables from this parish, though there are also some possibles not yet signed up. Roger.

### Speaking of Money

Over the last few months I have referred occasionally to our desperate financial situation. I am quite concerned that we have not been able to pay our full parish share (quota) to the diocese. This puts pressure on the diocese who can only recoup their position by setting a higher quota on parishes for next year. The basic problem is that we are trying to run a national church for a nation in which only a small proportion of the population are committed to the Christian faith.

I get the impression that the situation has eased somewhat since the beginning of the Summer. This may be partly due to the fact that we receive more wedding fees and lower fuel bills at this time of year, but I also have the impression that people are giving generously because they love the Church and the Lord Whom we serve. I am very pleased that this seems to be the case. God is the giver of everything and He will not let us down, but it is very much harder for Him to sustain His Church here if we do not respond to His love by offering back to Him everything He has given us – our time, our talents, our lives and even our money.

Basically there are two motives for giving. We give where we see a need as when we respond to a charity appeal. We give simply because we love as when we give lavish presents to our wives or our children. Both motives apply to our giving to the Church. We give because the need is desperate, not just to maintain our buildings and minister and to pay our parish share, but also to work for God's Kingdom of justice and loving-kindness. But we also give generously simply because we love God.

On September 28<sup>th</sup> David Noakes will be talking to the PCC about Christian Stewardship, which is really about thinking how we use what God has given us to His glory and for the good of other people. We may then decide to have a stewardship campaign. So watch this space.

Michaelmas: I do so much want you to feel that Church celebrations are unmissable. I must admit to being pained at the poor turnout some Sundays and major weekday occasions. Worship is *our duty and our joy*. It is the most fulfilling activity we can engage in. It does us more good than anything else. And, irrespective of how good it makes us feel, it is our duty to God.

29<sup>th</sup> September is our Patronal Festival at Cuxton. This year our 7.30 pm service will also be a celebration of music in worship and the preacher is Ven Norman Warren. I hope you can all make it. There will be a party afterwards.

### Link Mission Partners

Because of Sue's health problems we now know that Sue and Marc Vallente-Kerr will not be able to serve overseas in the foreseeable future. They have been working at CMS London Headquarters, but their work there will end soon. Marc is trying to develop his music. He is an accomplished guitarist. Sue is taking a course in Applied Theology, Family and Youth Work. They hope to do mission work in England. They are still in touch with the people they were working with in Indonesia. Please pray for their health, God's guidance and support in their future life, and the community in Indonesia they had to leave. We are hoping soon to meet a new prospective mission partner, perhaps at the Harvest Supper. He might be Andrew Daunton-Fear formerly vicar of Barming, now in the Philippines.

### Christian Aid Quiz

What are Mescalitis, Mozarella, Gnocchi? What is the name of Southampton Football Ground? Who is the patron saint of astronauts? You would have learned the answers to these questions, if you did not already know them, if you had been at the quiz night held at St John's Halling on Friday evening 5<sup>th</sup> August. 49 of us joined in the fun, including teams from Strood Methodist Church and St Nicholas Strood. Colin, with Sheila's help, was a genial quizmaster, albeit with a wicked sense of humour. E.g. *An English War fought only with numbers of Romans*, or a round entitled *Southampton Football Club*, which was little to do with football but a lot to do with saints! Also, apart from guesswork, how do you work out the prime numbers between 720 & 760?

The winners were Strood Methodist Church and they went home with a bottle of wine each. St John's Bellringers also distinguished themselves by winning the booby prize. Together with the proceeds of Malcolm's raffle and subsequent donations, £267 was raised for Christian Aid. For making the evening an enjoyable social occasion and a good money raiser for Christian Aid, thanks are due to Colin and Sheila, Malcolm and Doris and the catering team (Janice).  
Mary Acott.

### Parish Web Pages

For some time we have had a rather unambitious web page <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> This gives basic information about services and events in the life of the church plus contact details. It also carries our daily bible reading notes. We now have an additional webpage <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm> This gives a lot more information including pictures, guides to the two churches, notes about basic Christian belief, etc. When I have finished them it will also carry next quarter's bible notes. Log on to see what we have on offer.

### Master's Life on the Edge by Max the Rectory Spaniel

Don't human beings embarrass you? Mine is so disorganised, a daring risk-taker always living on the embarrassing edge. What do you think? One day he goes to the post office without enough money for a first class stamp and then knocks on a door in Bush Road to borrow. They gave him a stamp in return for a parish magazine. So he made 3p on that. Then he ran right out of matches. He went and found one that had been used as a peg in a crib board. It must have been 20 years old, but it worked. Then he found he didn't have enough money both to pay the paper bill and buy fruit for the weekend. Luckily he met someone who owed him £5 on the way to the shops. So the risk of scurvy was averted for a few more days. He gets by, but I don't know how!  
Max.