

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



June 2024

60p

<http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Services June 2024

2 nd June Trinity 1	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Samuel 3 vv 1-10 p274 II Corinthians 4 vv 5-12 p1160 Mark 2 v23 – 3 v6 p1004	
9 th June Trinity 2	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Samuel 8 vv 4-22 p278 II Corinthians 4 v13 – 5v1 p1160 Mark 3 vv 20-35 p1005	
16 th June Trinity 3	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Samuel 15 v34 – 16 v13 p287 II Corinthians 5 vv 6-17 p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006	
23 rd June Trinity 4	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Samuel 17 vv 1-16 p288 I Samuel 17 vv 17-28 p288 I Samuel 17 vv 29-37p289 I Samuel 17 vv 38-50 p289 Mark 4 vv 35-41 p1006	
30 th June Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	II Samuel 1 vv 1-27 p304 II Corinthians 8 vv 7-15 p1163 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
5 th June	James 4 vv 13-17 Mark 9 vv 38-40	6 th June	James 5 vv 1-6 Mark 9 vv 41-50
12 th June	I Peter 1 vv 18-25 Mark 10 vv 32-45	13 th June	I Peter 2 vv 1-12 Mark 10 vv 46-52
19 th June	II Timothy 1 vv 1-12 Mark 12 vv 18-27	20 th June	II Timothy 2 vv 8-15 Mark 12 vv 28-34
26 th June Ember Day	I Kings 18 vv 20-39 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	27 th June	I Kings 18 vv 41-46 Matthew 5 vv 20-26

Copy date July Magazine: 14th June 8.30 am Rectory

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For Diaries

Sunday 12th May Bring & Share Lunch Church Hall 12.00

Sat 15 June 3.00 concert St John's

6th July, 7.00 St John's Halling - Peninsula Big Band - CRUK

Self-Denial

A young man felt called to a life of self-denial. So he joined a monastery. The abbot conducted him to his cell – a beautifully decorated and attractively furnished room with a comfortable bed and an en suite bathroom. “Just set the thermostat to any temperature you desire,” the abbot said and went on to explain that mostly the monks lie in till about 10.00 each day. “Then chapel, if you feel like it,” he explained, “for perhaps 10 minutes or so. A French chef prepares all our meals,” he added. “There’s a good wine at lunch and dinner and, for the rest of the time, you might choose to enjoy the TV lounge or the games room.”

“I was looking for the opportunity to deny myself,” the young man said.

“That’s just the point,” the abbot replied. “You enjoy self-denial too much. You need to deny yourself the pleasure of denying yourself.”

I liked this which I came across recently. “Westminster Abbey joined in the joke at Ronnie Barker’s memorial service with an order of service note that the procession would be led by four candles.”

Church Hall Draw April: 1st - Pippa MacDonald, 2nd - Neil Coombes, 3rd - Huw Silverthorn.

St John's Draw (April): £5 each to Mrs Chidwick (18), Mrs Beaney (71) & Miss Heighes (88)



From the Rector

For some time now, I have been trying unsuccessfully to find a particular photograph. It is over thirty years old. It was taken outside the Overlord Tapestry Museum at Southsea and, unsurprisingly, shows me

in shorts and an Andrew Gossage Bike Ride tee shirt in front of an elderly red bus like this one, but probably not this one. We were on a family holiday at Bognor Regis – my father and mother, my sister, my nieces, Bobby the dog and I. My nieces would have been around ten or twelve years old at the time and we thought it would be good to take a trip out to see the Overlord Tapestry. This wonderful piece of embroidery depicts the D Day landings on June 6th 1944 and the subsequent Battle of Normandy, the eightieth anniversary of which we mark this month. It consists of 34 beautifully sewn panels and is 272 feet long. It was completed in 1974 and has been at its present location since 1984. So the museum was quite new at the time of our family visit.



My mother was a child at the start of the war. When she and my uncle were being evacuated by rail to what was believed to be the relative safety of South Wales, they experienced the horrific sight of trains full of wounded soldiers being brought home from Dunkirk. Like millions of others, her education was disrupted by

the war. Despite being evacuated, she experienced being on the receiving end of bombing both in Monmouthshire and Kent and, of course, she endured rationing, ameliorated somewhat by the fact that the Welsh family she stayed with grew fruit and vegetables and kept chicken, as did her own father. Later on in the war, she came home to Frindsbury, completed her education and went to work at Shorts Seaplane Works in Rochester in the drawing office. I used to joke that it was only when my mother went to work in the defence industry that the tide of war turned decisively against of Hitler.

My sister and I were of the next generation, born in the nineteen fifties. The adults in our lives

certainly had memories of war. The older of them had lived through two global conflicts. There were still plenty of bombsites when



my sister and I were growing up, still air raid shelters in gardens, still talk of the Blitz and of rationing and of life in wartime England. I don't know what my sister may or may not have thought about these things. We never discussed them. I think I talked about them much more with older relatives than she did. I was a boy and three years older than my sister. So maybe that accounts for it. I've perhaps thought more about these things than she apparently did in my adult life because, as a clergyman, I have had to preside at Remembrance services and write articles such as this. I was also officiating chaplain to RAF Manston, which played a big part in the defence of our country during both world wars from 1916 onwards, and honorary chaplain to the Ramsgate & Broadstairs branch of the Royal Airforce Association, in which capacity I preached at services and parades commemorating the Battle of Britain. My sister had the more demanding responsibility of bringing up a family in the here and now!

I was a curate in the 1980s when Britain went to war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands and the debate about the morality or otherwise of nuclear weapons was reinvigorated by the stationing of American cruise missiles in this country and the decision to replace our fleet of Polaris nuclear submarines with Trident. The Church and her ministers are called upon to try to discern and to proclaim God's Word in these difficult matters and to provide pastoral support for everyone caught up in them. There has been no shortage of conflicts since the 1980s in which we have had to consider whether wars meet the criteria for a just war, whether campaigns are being conducted in accordance with Christian principles, how they can be brought to a peaceful and just conclusion, and what to do about those who have lost their loved ones, their mental or physical health, their homes or their livelihoods as a result of conflict – and all in the knowledge that the first casualty of war is truth.

My nieces, of course, thankfully had had no knowledge or experience of war.

It was very different for my father. He was older than my mother and had been part of the British Expeditionary Force evacuated from Dunkirk. He trained as a commando and was one of those who returned to France in the immediate aftermath of D Day. He said very little about his wartime experiences, especially the fighting. He didn't send for his medals at the end of the war. Ivan, my middle name, is after a best friend who was killed in action. I was recently talking to an old schoolmate whose father was in the Royal Navy. He too was present at Dunkirk and he also took part in Operation Overlord. He too never spoke about either of these events.

Visiting the museum and seeing the scenes depicted in the embroidery moved different members of the family in different ways, depending on our own knowledge and experience. I remember my older niece was moved to tears by the sight of the innocent cattle killed and wounded, caught up in the ruthless conflict between human beings, who are supposed to be the stewards of God's creation. My father found it difficult that she only manifested her feelings at the plight of the animals when his thoughts were very much with the thousands of human beings and what they had endured on those beaches and in the subsequent battles – two million allied soldiers by the end of August 1944.

I've written about this eightieth anniversary commemoration from the point of view of one ordinary family who were enjoying a day out as part of a lovely holiday because I wanted to think

at this particular commemoration about the effect of war on ordinary people, on individuals and families and communities. What about those young men who, like my father, took part in the Battle of Normandy, but who, unlike him, never did come home to meet a wife and have children of their own? What about the people whose homes are bombed? What about those who are denied sufficient food because of war, or healthcare when they are sick? What about the widows and fatherless children? What about the refugees? What about the effect on the minds of ordinary decent men and women when their duty is to kill the enemy, who probably are people just like themselves? What is it like to be on a battlefield knowing that you could be killed or horribly maimed at any moment by your fellow human beings?

We could say a lot about the reasons for war, good or bad; about strategy & tactics, successful or otherwise; numbers of combatants and numbers of casualties on all sides of any conflict; acts of remarkable heroism; the wisdom or folly of commanding officers, politicians and the high command; the long term consequences of the battle and the ultimate outcome of the war. All these things are extremely important, yet, as I think of and pray about the wars going on the world today, I cannot help but think of all the individuals and families suffering in the various causes for which men fight, both good and bad. One can only justify war if, as in the case of the Second World War, we can be confident that the evil if the other side were to win would outweigh the evil we can't avoid in our fight to prevent him from doing so. Roger.

Confirmation 2024

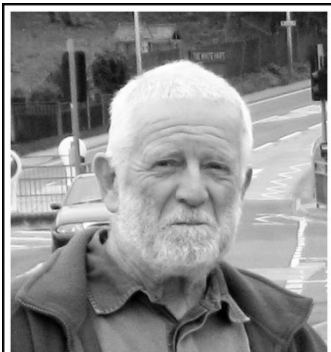
There will be a Confirmation service on 24th November. Classes will take place beginning in the Summer. When you are confirmed, you reaffirm the promises made at your Baptism or Christening to follow Christ & to live by faith in God and the bishop blesses you with the grace of the Holy Spirit to sustain you in your Christian life. You can be confirmed at any age upwards of 12. Please contact me if you are interested in being confirmed this year. It will probably be my last chance to prepare you!

Doubts About Debits

I recently cancelled my subscription to two magazines. One publisher used to send me an annual bill which I settled by cheque. The other I simply paid by direct debit. I wrote to the paper publisher telling him I no longer require the magazine and, whatever he thinks about that, I shan't send him any more cheques. With regard to the other publisher, my bank tell me that, despite my cancelling the debit with them, they may continue to pay the publisher if he asks for the money even though he has gone bankrupt and there will be no more magazines. I think we should be very cautious about bank transfers & direct debits. The banks are not on our side! RIK.

“On The Ropes” – Some notes on Parish Church Bell-ringing for April 2024

It is with great sadness that we have to record that our longest-serving ringing colleague and great friend, Colin Cogger, passed away on Wednesday April 10th after a short illness. He was 85.



Colin Cogger (1938-2024)

Colin’s role as a bell-ringer extended back over 60 years and he had a hand in training most of the current ringing team at St. Michael’s today. For nearly 20 years, starting after the bell tower restoration in 1964, he was Tower Captain at St. Michael’s (a role that involves conscripting, cajoling and sometimes even coercing recalcitrant ringers into supporting Sunday service ringing and other bell-related activities) until his work called him away from Cuxton village. Nevertheless, Colin remained a regular ringer right up until last year, when he felt that old age was finally catching up with him and he could no longer ring to the high standard he had set himself throughout his ringing career.

Unsurprisingly, practice evening that Wednesday was rather overshadowed by Colin’s loss. The night was nevertheless very well-supported, the session concluding with the tenor bell being struck 85 times in Colin’s memory. The group then retired to the White Hart (something Colin himself seldom failed to do after ringing practice) to raise a toast to our absent friend and mentor.

On a happier note, support for Sunday service ringing in April was very good. A team of five (one short of the ideal number) rang some “minus” methods for Holy Communion service on Sunday April 7th.

A full band of six was available to support Holy Communion services on both Sunday 14th and Sunday April 28th, which saw the team ring courses of “Plain Bob Doubles”, “Grandsire”, “Reverse Canterbury Pleasure” and “April Day”, along with a spot of “Plain Hunt” and some “call changes”.

Sunday April 21st saw a team attempt to ring a “quarter peal” of Bob Doubles, which requires 1260 “changes” to be rung. This takes about 45 minutes of continuous ringing, along with a fair degree of skill and concentration. Unfortunately, a set of 10 changes got missed out so the effort was a technical “fail”, not that anyone listening would have realised! It was nevertheless a worthwhile exercise for a sunny spring Sunday morning.

April also saw our annual “spring clean” of the St. Michael’s belfry. Church Hill’s population of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock butterflies hibernate in the tower and so we wait until they have woken up and flown off. They do not seem to be the least bit bothered by the ringing of bells during the winter. This year, the painted metal frame of the treble bell (but nowhere else in the tower) also seemed to be attractive to hundreds of hibernating ladybirds for some reason. These were quite active and soon flew off and out of the tower windows when gently persuaded with a hand brush.

Other than cleaning the belfry and evicting sleepy insects, we also grease various bearings on the bells and give them and the tower a general look-over. The bell components are sixty years old this year (five of the bells themselves are over 150 years old) and hopefully have a few more years left in them without needing major work any time soon.

‘April Day’

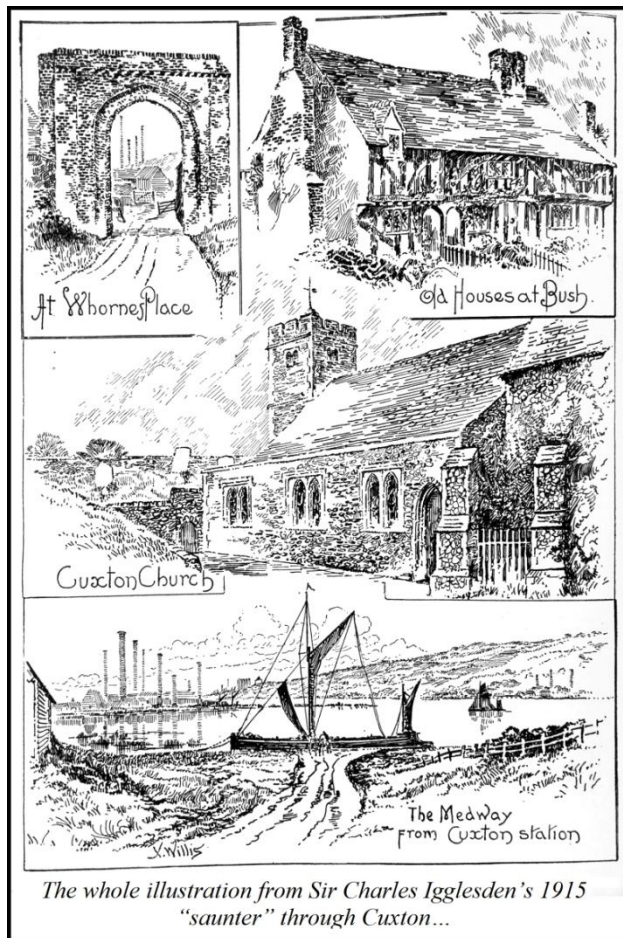
PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. We are so pleased that the days are longer now - more foraging time. It's good to see colour in the gardens again. We are especially pleased that some of you are braving the weather and having barbecues they seem to create an avian feast of bun-crumbs. We like your littl'uns enjoying popcorn too, so much misses their mouths and popcorn is Philippa's favourite treat! Thanks to the Thursday bin-overspill, we have recently enjoyed couscous, flatbread, sourdough, nachos and fajitas. We are very cosmopolitan!

When will the rain stop? My brain is quite waterlogged I think. We overheard a couple speculating on how much timber they would need to build an ark! Cousin Pedro Paloma sent us a tree mail recently similarly lamenting the dull wet and cool weather in the Mediterranean. Far fewer tourists eating al fresco; so far fewer crumbs too.

Life in Six Acre Wood is very different from the rectory garden. Some of the trees here seem quite perilous too so we hope we are safe in our vantage point. Indeed some trees have recently been felled as they were deemed to be dangerous. There is lots to see here - folk walking their dogs or just walking to see the bluebells. Nightlife is noisier though with so many foxes hunting and calling. We still hear the church bells on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. They mark the passing of our weeks.

Have you booked your holidays in search of sun and warmth? We are again going to Leybourne Lakes but will stay in touch by tree-mail. We have the luxury of taking off when conditions suit us. We don't have to book months in advance of course, nor do we need paperwork for the journey. It is just good to meet up with friends and relatives, see new sights and enjoy different foods. - all much like you I guess. We have our own in-built GPS so need no maps nor technology. Enjoy the early summer! Coo coo.



The whole illustration from Sir Charles Igglesden's 1915 "saunter" through Cuxton...

Saunters and Saunterers: Views of Cuxton from 1915...

Glancing through some old church magazines, my attention was drawn to a snippet from the February 2017 edition, accompanied by a drawing of St. Michael's from "about 1900". It came from an article featured in the April 24th 1915 edition of the *Kentish Express* newspaper, just one of a long-running series about Kentish villages written by the newspaper's editor, Sir Charles Igglesden, with illustrations by Xavier Willis.

They were entitled "*A Saunter through Kent with Pen and Pencil*" and regularly featured in the newspaper from April 1899 until October 1944. The essays and accompanying illustrations were also published as hard-backed collections in an eventual thirty-four volumes, the first being issued in 1900 and the last in 1944. Volume 12, published in March 1916, included the account of Sir Charles's "saunter" through Cuxton and also recorded details of his visits to Halling and Luddesdown.

As with many such things, the story of the people behind "*Saunters*" is worth recounting. Sir Charles Igglesden was quite a remarkable man, of a well-rounded and dynamic type that the Victorian era seemed to so often produce. His father, Henry Igglesden, founded the *Kentish Express* in 1855 as Kent's first "penny" newspaper (though it has to be said that its quality far exceeded that of today's "£1.90" local newspaper!).

Born in 1861, the young Charles soon showed promise as a gifted musician and sportsman. As a young man, his talent as a violin player led him to attend the Paris Conservatoire before returning to join his father's newspaper as a cub reporter, writing articles about cricket under the pen-name "LBW". At the age of 23, he was appointed editor of the Kentish Express. In terms of his sporting prowess, Charles represented Kent at Lawn Tennis and was runner up twice in the County Singles Championship. He also represented Ashford at rugby and cricket. In later life he beat Sir Arthur Conan Doyle twice in the Authors' Club Billiards Championship and also was a lifelong friend of W. G. Grace.

In public life, Charles was a County Councillor and Alderman for 45 years. He was chairman of the Kent Insurance Committee (forerunner of the Area Health Authority) for 35 years. He was one of the first journalists invited "Up Front" by Lord Kitchener in January 1916, and was elected President of the Institute of Journalists in 1927. He was knighted in 1928 for his services to journalism and was also the author of 13 novels. After a life full of achievement, Sir Charles Igglesden passed away in 1949 at the age of 88.

Somehow, in the midst of all of his sporting, literary, journalistic and public service activities, Sir Charles also found time to explore a total of 233 Kentish towns and villages, his detailed, well-researched, gentle and often whimsical accounts of these visits making up his *Saunters* series.

The Igglesden family were devout Methodists and there were some interesting examples of their charitable and forgiving Christian characteristics. In 1891, an arson attack committed by one Frederick Day (a disgruntled former employee) razed the offices of the Kentish Express to the ground, although somehow alternative premises were found to print and publish the newspaper until its own works were rebuilt. At Day's subsequent trial he was due to be sentenced to deportation, but Henry Igglesden pleaded with the court to show leniency.

Charles Igglesden seemed to share his father's non-judgemental demeanour, which extended to the criminal activity of his illustrator, Xavier Willis. In the same year that the *Express* offices were burned down, Willis (although from a reasonably well-off family himself) was sentenced to 18 months hard labour for forging cheques to the value of £196 (worth around £20,000 today) against the estate of an elderly relative. This black mark against Willis's character did not prevent him from being employed by Sir Charles, even though the *Express* reported on the fraud case (and also upon the subsequent good fortune of Willis who, whilst incarcerated, inherited a sum of nearly £20,000 - worth nearly £2 million today - from his godfather!).

Willis's artistic style was rather similar to that of his more famous contemporary, Donald Maxwell (who once resided in Borstal and produced many images of the scenery around Cuxton and Halling, including its churches). The drawings of his shown here provide an interesting snapshot of Cuxton as it was in 1915. The view through the arch of Whorne's Place shows the Trechman and Weekes cement works. The arch still stands and looks much as it did then, although the factory behind it was to close six years later and remained derelict until the chimneys were demolished in 1951. Likewise, the drawing of High Birch Cottage at Upper Bush shows that it has survived virtually unchanged (at least externally) in the hundred years or so since Xavier Willis sketched it. Whether it will survive the inevitable despoliation of the immediate area by the imminent construction of a billionaire's massive restaurant and winery complex at nearby Barrow Hill remains to be seen.

In his 2017 observations, Roger noted that there seemed to be much more space beside the church in the 1915 drawing. I wonder if the spoil from the excavation for the foundations of the vestry (that was to be built 20 years later) was piled up there and the row of gravestones replaced. Other drawings I have suggest that Roger's "cross" on top of the tower was probably a weather vane similar to the one on St. John's at

Halling. I don't know for certain when the one at St. Michaels's was taken down, though the tower underwent major repairs in 1964. It is noticeable how open the skyline behind the church once was.

The sketch of "The Medway from Cuxton Station" is perhaps the most interesting one. It was made from the northern end of the Maidstone-bound platform, looking up-river towards Rochester. The mass of chimneys to the left were the Wickham (Martin, Earl's & Co/BPCM) cement works, while the little group of three chimneys on the shore opposite would have been the Borstal Court (Booths/APCM) cement works. Rochester Cathedral and the castle can be seen just to the left of the rigging of the boat, away in the distance. That view has changed out of all recognition over the past hundred years and despite the de-industrialisation, it seems to have changed for the worse. A strip of unmanaged, ivy-choked scrub behind the galvanised platform railings of Cuxton's sadly neglected railway station now blocks the view of what once seemed like a pleasant little creek leading to the old wharf. The wharf itself is currently occupied by the offices of Port Medway Marina. The M2 viaducts now dominate the skyline. The Martin/Earls works shut in the 1970s and the site is now home to the Medway Valley Leisure Park. Booths shut in 1921 and the land remains undeveloped.

We must be grateful to the people who had the foresight to keep records of our past surroundings for the benefit of future generations. It is sad to reflect that "change" seldom equates with "progress". As a result, it seems that visions of the past often leave us pining for the things we have lost, rather than appreciating the many good things we have now.

Keith Hodges.

The Teacher Taught

The person who learns most is the teacher. He or she not only has to acquire a firm grasp of the subject but also to understand it well enough to be able to explain it to the students. As many of you know, I prepare daily Bible reading notes to support & encourage you all in reading the Bible. They come out quarterly & are available by email or on my website [www.http://cuxtomandhalling.org](http://cuxtomandhalling.org) under teaching or, on request, I can print off paper copies for you. I learn a lot from preparing these notes.

Currently, we are reading together St Matthew's Gospel and, while preparing for the next quarter, I came across four verses which I have always found difficult. This is the result of my labours for that passage.

July 17th

Matthew 12 vv 43-45

Having always found these verses difficult, I looked them up to see what a respected commentator might have to say about them. Applied to individuals, he says, "By religious education or impressions, the devil has been cast out of a man; but how often do the religious lives of men spend themselves in the sweeping and garnering, in formality and hypocrisy, till utter emptiness of real faith and spirituality has prepared them for that second invasion of the Evil One, which is indeed worse than the first!" We may have the outward appearance of being Christians, we might even have been sincere once, but we've become what my father called *psalm-singing hypocrites*. We put on an appearance, but we're not really people who love God & our neighbour and, pretending to do so, we may be worse than honest sinners. We delude ourselves as to our own spiritual condition. We put non-believers off the faith we profess for ourselves.

The commentator, Henry Alford, also applies this teaching of Jesus to the whole people of God communally. Time and again, ancient Israel or the Christian Church have been purged of their rebellion against God,

only to lapse back into sin, quite often worse than the wickedness for which they had previously been restored & forgiven.

Alford writes of the ways in which the Church and allegedly Christian nations such as ours have gone wrong since the Reformation. "The first evil spirit has been cast out. but by the growth of hypocrisy, secularity, and rationalism, the house has become empty, swept, and garnished: swept and garnished by the decencies of civilization and discoveries of secular knowledge, but empty of living and earnest faith. And he must read prophecy but ill, who does not see under all these seeming improvements the preparation for the final development of the man of sin, the great re-possession, when idolatry and the seven more evil spirits shall bring the outward frame of so-called Christendom to a fearful end." Those words were printed in 1874. I can't help thinking, the more I think about them, that they are coming true in the world as we know it.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For centuries, England thought of itself as a Christian nation. We've certainly not always been a good Christian nation, but Christian moral and ethical teaching has shown us what we should aspire to and has guided our progress towards a kinder and more just society. I am sure that it is our Christian culture which, over the centuries, has led us to eschew torture and cruel punishments, to introduce universal education, to provide hospitals and care for the sick more generally, and to establish a welfare state, to give just a few examples. Progress has been slow and not always consistent but it has been real. We have progressed a long way since 597AD when Augustine preached the Gospel to the King of Kent. Belief in progress is, I would contend, a product of our belief that a benign Deity is in charge and that, often slowly but certainly inexorably, He is leading us on towards that day when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ*.

Christianity has also provided the context in which Science and other disciplines have flourished. The universe makes sense to us only because it is the Creation of a Mind which is analogous to our own minds, albeit infinitely greater. Qualities such as beauty, wisdom, justice and love exist in their perfect form only in God and it is in relation to Him that they exist in the material world of time and space.

If we lose our faith in the Source of such qualities as beauty, wisdom, justice and love, only superficially holding fast to *the decencies of civilization and discoveries of secular knowledge, but empty of living and earnest faith*, our culture is without foundation and therefore doomed to dissolution.

The atheist philosopher David Hume pointed out that the concept of scientific laws has no real foundation, as far as an atheist can see. We may know that a particular experiment has always produced a particular result, but we only assume that, if we carry out the same experiment tomorrow, the result will be the same as it always has been. We may know that, as often as it has been measured, gravitational force has been proportional to the product of the masses of the two bodies involved and inversely proportional to the distance between them, but how can we know that that will still be true tomorrow? Scientists like Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton were confident in the laws of Science because they were men of faith and believed that the laws of Science were the laws of God Who is always dependable.

Writing 150 years ago, Alford pointed out the hypocrisy in much of our public religion. He pointed out the corrosive effect of secularity or secularism – the marginalisation of religion. When a nation cuts faith out of public discourse, it cuts off the branch on which it is sitting. We talk about *modern British values*, but what are these values based on if not on God's Word to us? Are these *modern British values* nothing more than the thoughts of opinion formers, influencers, politicians and academics? If *modern British values* are merely

the invention of particular human beings in positions of power and influence, why should the rest of us accept them? And why does the established Church persist in performing the traditional rituals if it has lost confidence in the traditional faith?

Alford speaks of the dangers of rationalism. Now no-one ought to be irrational. There is nothing wrong with reason and a great deal wrong with being unreasonable. Jesus is the Word of God. Faith is rational. What Alford is warning against is the belief that reason is the only route to truth and that there is no room for faith. The truth is that faith & reason are inextricably linked. As we have seen, Science depends on our having faith that what we discover about the world is explicable to rational minds, that the laws with which Science describes the way the universe works are consistent and reliable. Scientific laws are only reliable because they are sustained by God.

Alford's words seemed to me prophetic. We now live in a country in which only a minority profess to be Christians. Many doubt the findings of Science. Reason no longer trumps emotion. Truth is regarded as personal or relative, rather than absolute. We make an idol of material things and personal experiences. It feels like we have lost our way and our civilization is disintegrating. And so it will, unless we return to Him Who is the Way, the Truth & the Life. Roger.



Tommy's Talking Points

Here am I, monarch of all I survey, resting on the upstairs landing with half an eye on the garden in case any foxes dare to disport themselves on our lawn in the evening sunshine, resting after our wonderful April day out, the last day but one of the month. Following weeks of wet but warmish weather, the rain had at last ceased, but it then became very cold and then the rain returned. Things looked unpromising for our outing, but

the weather forecast was good and, a sign of Spring, sitting in our garden saying Morning Payer the previous day, we heard the cuckoo for the first time this year. We heard it again today.

Our rendezvous with Enzo and his family was Eynsford. Master actually knows the way to Eynsford, decades ago having frequently cycled the A20 from Orpington to Wigmore, though he doubts that he could manage Wrotham Hill now. We passed the turning to Fawkham & Longfield, the route of the Saturdays only 452 bus from Dartford, an exciting outing in the days when Master was a child. We passed Brands Hatch and descended what was called Death Hill in the days when various sections of the A20 were favourite places for ton up boys to demonstrate the power of their motor cycles and their ability to control them.

Without mishap (or exceeding the speed limit), we made it to the pretty little village of Eynsford, crossed the River Darent by the bridge rather than the ford, where, according to the sign, the water was 2' deep, and parked beside the water. We found our friends parked around the corner.

There was a cold wind but mostly the sun shone and it was a very pleasant walk indeed. We hardly got lost at all. There were plenty of people and dogs about, some of whom we saw more than once. Most of the mud was avoidable. The route was quite hilly, but this meant that there were stupendous views of the ineffable Kent countryside. Quite a lot of the route took us around or across the golf course. The grass was a vivid green. The trees had very recently and quite suddenly this year put out their tender shoots. We saw a horse chestnut with its candles and a number of other wild flowers plus squirrels and different kinds of bird. Enzo, the Italian Water Dog, did enjoy a bit of mud wallowing and tentatively dipped himself into the river. I remained aloof from all that this year.

We came to the visitors' centre in Lullingstone Park, where they ate their lunch and drank coffee and Master had an ice-cream. The post-prandial perambulation was mostly flat, at first beside the River Darent until we came to Lullingstone Castle, a beautiful manor house with a renowned World Garden. In former days, it

was the location of a silk worm farm, which provided silk for Queen Elizabeth's (the late Queen Mother) coronation robes in 1937, for the late Queen's wedding dress in 1947 and for the robes in her subsequent coronation in 1953.

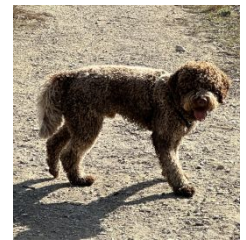
From there onwards, it was a quiet road at some distance from the river. The Roman Villa was closed for renovation work, though we sat outside for a bit in the sun and reminisced with a motor cyclist about the days of the ton up boys. He said that he was too young to have been around in those days but is now too old to exceed 50 mph. Master last visited this historical ruin on a school trip. Lullingstone has a Christian chapel, which invites us to speculate that the Roman villa which was on the site of Cuxton Church also had a chapel – in which case Christian worship would have been going on where we take our daily walks for pretty well as long as the Gospel has been believed in Britain. We didn't visit the falconry. Birds of prey hate dogs! We saw and passed under the rather splendid Victorian railway viaduct and found ourselves back in the village.

St Martin's Eynsford is in a united parish with St Peter & St Paul Farningham and St Botolph Lullingstone, which is in the grounds of the castle. The benefice is well known for its promotion of the Book of Common Prayer.

The sun was really warm by the time we finished our walk and we drove home without incident to relax for a bit in the garden before tea and before I took up station as stated in my first paragraph. Tommy.

Enzo's Observations

Eynsford was quite a long way, but we drove in comfort and found free parking in the centre of the pretty village which pleased my human supporters. As the name suggests there was a river running through the village but I was prevented from crossing at the ford and startling the rather insolent ducks but had to risk life and limb on the narrow bridge with the cars.



As usual the humans were soon at a loss as to the route, and hotly in debate. This was partly because they had no map or diagram, only words to describe the way. It has struck me that humans have become overly dependent on language; loving its nuance, ambiguity, and playfulness the very qualities which mean it is unreliable. Tommy and I knew where to go because it was obvious - there was a big track that smelled interesting and led to a golf course. Once the humans realised the walk had been developed since their guide was written into the "Lullingstone Loop" and they just had to follow signs around a big circle everyone was content. The bit after lunch was best when I could splash in and out of the Darenth to my hearts content and sit for ages in muddy puddles.

My human supporters have got interested in visiting Roman villa mosaics trying to see if the dogs the Romans had are anything like me (a Lagotto Romagnolo) - but this one was closed so no progress. While we were there having a rest a man drove up on a very loud motorcycle. I barked at him of course. I thought he said that he had driven out into the countryside for some reason which made sense to a dog. But it seems he was there for a "pootle" whatever that is.

It was a very good sunny day and we were all companionable , and rather tired by the time we reached our carriages. I think we will arrange another outing soon. Enzo.

Young Love

“My dearest darling,” writes the young man, “Every moment I am not with you is an eternity of desolation. I would climb the highest mountain to be with you even for just for one second, swim the widest ocean (even if it was shark-infested), trek across the most enormous and driest desert just to see you smile.

“PS: See you Wednesday, if it's not raining.”