

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



August 2024

60p

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

Services August 2024

7 th July Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
14 th July Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008
21 st July Trinity 8	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 23 vv 1-6 p782 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174 Mark 6 vv 30-56 p1009
28 th July Trinity 9	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30
3 rd July	II Kings 2 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 1-18	4 th July Ecclesiasticus 48 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 7-15
10 th July	II Kings 22 v8 - 23 v3 Matthew 7 vv 15-20	11 th July II Kings 24 vv 8-17 Matthew 7 vv 21-29
17 th July	Amos 5 vv 14-24 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	18 th July Amos 7 vv 10-17 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
24 th July	Hosea 10 vv 1-12 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	25 th July Hosea 11 vv 1-9 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
31 st July	Isaiah 10 vv 5-16 Matthew 11 vv 25-27	1 st August Isaiah 26 vv 7-19 Matthew 11 vv 28-30

Copy date September Magazine: 9th August 8.30 am Rectory

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For Diaries

11th August – Bring & Share Lunch for Motor Neurone Disease Association
Church Hall 12.00

21st August Teddy Bears' Picnic Plus
2.00 Rectory Grounds

31st August Frank & Jean Concert
St Michael's Church 6.30 pm

29th September 6.30 Songs of Praise Cuxton
(Please choose a hymn which means something special to you.)

October 6th Harvest Barbecue Church Hall 12.00
19th October Quiz Church Hall 7.30.



The Personal Touch

A few weeks ago, I had a bit of business with my building society. It was a fairly simple matter, but not straightforward. It wasn't a "frequently asked question" and it didn't fall easily into any predetermined category. So I hopped on my bike into Strood. A very pleasant person on the counter dealt with my

question and I was back in Cuxton in half an hour, feeling very pleased. I'd enjoyed the ride. It had probably done me good. I'd had a nice chat & I'd achieved what I set out to do. How different it would have been if I'd had a similar issue with my bank, I reflected. I'm not even sure where the nearest branch is now – certainly not ten minutes on a bike. I would have spent probably at least twice as long wrestling with the bank's website or trying to get through on the phone to someone who could and would help me, my blood pressure

rising, and very likely failing to find out what I needed to know. We have spent 20 years trying to get Santander to update the list of authorised signatories to our PCC account. Perhaps they think they have won. I believe that I am the last surviving signatory and I might not be around much longer! They are still paying out long ago authorised debits, however. So, for now at least, we're able to make use of the relatively small amount of money deposited into it and we use our NatWest account for everything else.

It did occur to me that I might have my income paid into the building society instead of the bank, draw it out in cash and use that to pay bills. But some corporations will not now accept cash or even cheques or charge customers more if they do not pay by bank transfer or direct debit. So that is probably a non-starter. Whatever your personal view of Nigel Farage, it was chilling to discover that, even though it is now very hard to live without a bank account, you can be de-banked because someone in the office or even an algorithm decides that you cannot be trusted or simply that it does not like you.

When computer banking first came in, I welcomed it for straightforward transactions. I could find out my balance online and transfer money into the accounts of the handful of people to whom I owed money. I could still go into the branch for anything more complex and to pay in or take out cash. I could write cheques where I did not feel that bank transfers were appropriate. I'm less happy now. Branches are few and far between. People expect or even demand that we use bank transfers to do business with them. There are three reasons why I am uncomfortable in doing business this way.

1. I don't trust that they are entirely secure. Time after time, we hear about the databases of large organisations which one ought to be able to trust – commercial enterprises, government departments, financial institutions, colleges, etc. – being hacked into by criminals. Memory sticks are left on trains. Confidential data are accidentally uploaded onto public internet sites. (The day before I wrote this the Post Office displayed on the open web the names and addresses of sub postmasters wrongly convicted because of the failures

of Horizon. Was this an accident or petty revenge on those whose cases coming to light had embarrassed post office management?) It seems to me that the more people to whom I give my bank details, the greater the risk that my personal data will fall into malign hands.

2. If there should be a mistake regarding a transfer one would have to resort to the bank's customer "help" line with a view to sorting it out. Good luck with that!
3. Personally, I feel more confident about keeping my accounts straight if I actually have something on paper. The fact that companies warn us to label very carefully what transfers are for indicates to me that they have the same trouble. Electronic payments do not always get correctly allocated.

You don't always have to give in. There is a firm of monumental masons which highhandedly and unilaterally announced that it would only pay its bills by bank transfer. I tell them that I will not provide my services unless they pay me in cash or with a cheque. But you can't always win these battles with powerful corporations whose only interest is profit. The scoundrels even charge charities for processing cheques. They used not to. So why the change? I wonder if it could be because, when there were local branches, banks were invested in the local community. Our prosperity and theirs were bound together. Branch employees lived in the town. Branch managers were respected public figures. *In the peace thereof shall ye have peace.* Nowadays, there is no commitment to a locality. We are just a source of profit which goes to make rich people in London and overseas financial centres even richer.

That was a bit of a digression. The point I am coming to is that changes in the way we do things are sometimes beneficial and sometimes not, but that there is a worrying trend towards the loss of the personal and the personal care which goes with it.

Within living memory, for example, in villages like Cuxton and Halling a significant proportion of the population worked for at least part of the year in the fields. Since the Second World War, however, mechanisation has been rapid and

relatively very few people work on farms nowadays. In some ways, this a good thing. Agricultural labour is often hard work, sometimes dangerous and historically has been poorly paid. Mechanisation has raised crop yields and improved the profitability of farming. On the other hand, for the few who still work in agriculture, theirs can be a lonely life. Also a large proportion of the population have very little appreciation of where their food comes from – the importance of quality, what food really costs to produce, the challenges which confront our farmers, the environmental consequences of farming.

I much prefer Cuxton Co-op to Snodland. This is partly because Snodland is a very long way to carry home one's shopping, but also because Snodland has automatic checkouts whereas Cuxton has pleasant human beings to add up our bill and take our money. Some people like automatic checkouts because they are quicker (if you only have a few items) and some shy people (or misanthropes) would rather not have to deal with a human being. I expect that the proprietors of retail emporia would argue that machines are cheaper than people and so they can keep down the price of goods by *migrating* us onto robot service. Nevertheless, I prefer dealing with people.

They want to take away as many as possible of the ticket offices on stations. Potentially, machines are quicker to use and cheaper to run. But you can't ask a machine advice about which train you should catch. It can't offer help if you are taken ill or call the police if you are being mugged. They said that, if ticket offices were removed, staff would be redeployed onto platforms and so be available to provide passengers with the assistance they require. I don't think I have seen an employee of the railways on either Cuxton or Halling station since the ticket offices were closed in 1989.

Lockdown saw a rapid rise in the incidence of working from home and holding meetings online or by conference call. Again, for many of us this is a very good thing. It saves commuting. You don't have to shave every day. It deals with some of parents' childcare issues. I've worked from home for most of my life and I love it. Even thirty years

ago, when electronic communications were much less developed than they are today, I remember arguing that the case for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (HS1) based on the fact that it would reduce the amount of carbon generated by business trips which would otherwise be taken by air was not wholly valid, because business people in different countries could speak on the 'phone. But people want to meet in person at least sometimes whether it is to do business or just to go to work. For some people, working from home is a very lonely experience. Also, you need to learn the job from watching and being mentored by more senior colleagues.

There has been a trend towards large medical practices in which a team of doctors and other professionals interchangeably care for patients. In some ways, this makes sense. Some staff are part time. So you can't guarantee an appointment with any particular practitioner. Different members of the team have different skills. Consultations may be online or by telephone. Medical care may be more efficiently administered in what were once known as *polyclinics*. Busy people with not much wrong with them may well prefer to be able to drop in briefly at a time which suits them and see whichever doctor happens to be available. Survey after survey, however, shows that people are healthier if they consistently see the same doctor. The doctor understands them not only as cases but also as people. Trust builds up between the patient and the doctor.

Politicians frequently promise more bobbies on the beat. There are all sorts of reasons why the traditional community policeman has been withdrawn. If the post office is being robbed by a gang with a fast car, possibly armed, the village constable chasing them on his bike isn't going to catch them. Young recruits, brought up in a softer culture than their grandparents, don't expect to be pounding the streets in all weathers and at any hour of the day or night. The demand for greater accountability on the part of the police force inevitably adds to the need for bureaucracy. The number of officers required to serve an area is considerably smaller if they have cars in which to respond to any situations which may arise than the number we would need to have men and women on foot patrol serving the same area just in case something happens. And yet, most of us

instinctively feel safer if there is a regular bobby on the beat in our neighbourhood, someone we know and trust. Their very presence on the streets, we think, discourages crime. When minor crimes (the vast majority) are committed, he or she will have a good idea who is likely to be the culprit. If there had been a constable in the street, that post office raid might not have happened. If it did occur, while the local bobby couldn't catch the getaway car, he might have noted down descriptions, taken early witness statements and comforted the traumatised victims of the crime and given them confidence in the service they could expect from the police.

This train of thought began with the guy who asked me if I had considered using artificial intelligence to write a sermon. I wasn't keen, but he gave it a go and the AI came up with a very good sermon on the Love of God. In principle, an AI sermon should not be a problem. God inscribed His Word, the Ten Commandments, on stone tablets. Why should He not write His Word on silicon chips? An AI sermon would be better than no sermon at all if you couldn't get a human preacher – perhaps.

I resist suggestions that we could sing along to recorded music when we find it hard to get an organist or other accompanist. There is a rapport between an accompanist and a congregation. If we don't encourage talent at a local level, there will come a time when music is the preserve of an elite. If we accept too easily that we can't get a person to play for us, we'll give up trying and recorded music will become the norm as seems to have happened at crematoria. Most importantly, church musicians are themselves offering their music as an act of worship. It's hard to see how a robot could worship God in any way similar to a human being made in His image. The same considerations apply if we think that we can do without a human minister to take the service and preach the Gospel. Taking this to an extreme, we could all stay at home and play a recording of a service with an AI generated sermon to God in an otherwise empty Church. *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.*

Of course services on TV and radio and online can be a great benefit to the housebound, but even so personal contact is highly desirable. Surely

church members should visit if possible, maybe pray with the person. A parish priest can bring Holy Communion and will do so if asked.

We might be tempted to think that online services could substitute for traditional church where a shortage of clergy and money makes the latter difficult. Having examined the facts, the Rev'd Marcus Walker of Save the Parish concludes that the crisis in clergy numbers and church finances is exaggerated. He says: "The risk of parish church closures is not due to declining church attendance but is driven by the C of E's own policy to cut parish clergy jobs. **This policy is not because of lack of money.** The church has a £10.2 billion endowment to support the provision of clergy in every parish, but funds are being diverted to create pet projects of the central church. This policy has never been democratically debated or approved. **The C of E's own studies show that reducing clergy via parish mergers leads to a faster rate of collapse** - and the loss of community benefits and heritage hits the poorest communities hardest. Despite this, some dioceses are increasing clergy cuts and parish mergers. Over 400 C of E churches have closed in the last decade, and 278 parishes have been lost to mergers. **This has been a deliberate strategy** leading to "mega-parish" groupings, with fewer priests managing more churches. In one diocese, only two priests now look after 23 former parishes, while more staff work in the diocesan HQ than as frontline priests. That diocese has more people working in diocesan HQ (41) than frontline priests (39.5)! There are enough clergy available. With 1,000 priests in diocesan HQs, often with better wages than in parishes, they are not being deployed where desperately needed." Clergy are usually expected to retire at 70 even if they are able and willing to continue to serve.

The human touch is vital. The essence of faith is love. We need one another. The ideal is that there is a Church, a worshipping fellowship, at the heart of every community with daily prayer, Holy Communion (what Jesus told us to do) at least on every Sunday & holy day and a resident rector or vicar who is a neighbour and potentially a friend to all the people who live in the locality, not merely a professional person doing a job of work on them. Such a local Church glorifies God,

affirms the Gospel in its life, serves the whole community and, taking its part in the worldwide fellowship of Christian people, makes its own particular contribution to the coming of the Kingdom of God. The local Church cannot be replaced either by robots or by a distant bureaucratic management. After all, while God

does indeed make Himself known in the grandeur of the universe, inscribing on tablets of stone the commandments which reflect His nature, declaring His Word in the pages of the Bible, etc., it is only in the person of Jesus Christ that God Himself can be fully known. Roger.

Looking Back

This story (taken from the *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, dated October 26th. 1852) tells of a journey from London to Cuxton made by two of its correspondents to view St Michaels and All Angels church. Amongst other things it provides a snapshot of St. Michael's, about 15 years before it underwent significant changes in the mid-nineteenth century, as did many parish churches during the "Victorian Restoration" of the time. I thought the article (or at least, most of it) is worth recounting here.



"Wanderings To Cantian Churches"

BY A SCUIT, (Anglice,) A VAGABOND – ("Picts and Scots".)

CUXTON:

"Incontinently we hied to the British Museum to look into Hasted's History of the County of Kent, after Cuxton, to ascertain the name of the manor. Without any difficulty we found Hasted, and Ireland's piracy of Hasted, but not so easily in it the history of the parish of "Cuxton"; twice we searched the index under "Cu", then we tried "Ku", and two or three other variations of the appellation. As a matter of course, in the end, we gained the reward of merit deserved by our industry and on turning to the page we found a choice of names, not one of which over much resembles that in use at the present day.

Cookstone, Coclestane, Cucolanstan, Cuclestena, beside half a dozen more aliases in its orthography, very interesting, doubtless, to the curious in such matters. Some wild hankerers after wildering etymologies will seek in some ornithological specimen the root of "Cuckoo-stone" whilst others will appropriate the Domesday name of "Cuckhold-stone" to some miserable victim of conjugal infidelity; so far as we however are personally concerned we prefer asserting that the etymology of Cuxton and its innumerable aliases is of adulterated Celtic origin with a Saxonian filial...

...Having ascertained the above, and looked into Dugdals and other big books we shut them up and putting on our hat very majestically, stalked out of the reading room, leaving the attendants to put the heavy volumes back into their proper places, for, they are paid to do it.

A penny omnibus soon took us to Holborn Bridge, and then a cab conveyed us to the North Kent Line, where we obtained a ticket for Strood. As everybody knows the dirty-den, by courtesy styled a station at Strood, we will say no more about it, than, that if possible, it is now dirtier than ever. Thence to Cuxton is a very pretty walk

At the entrance to the village there is a post office , a nice old house; a little farther off is a public house, close, of course, to the church; at the east end of the burying ground where our rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, is a modern school-room. The key was in the possession of the post-master who, marvellous to say for any one connected with the Post Office establishment, is a very civil and obliging individual! From the clergyman too, we were offered every accommodation in our hurried glance at the sacred fane; the situation of which on the edge of a lofty hill, is very pleasant, sloping down to the meandering Medway.

Cuxton church consists of a nave, chancel, south mortuary chapel, at the south-western angle of which is the staircase to the rood loft, a two-storied embattled tower, and north porch. The east window is a three-light, with early English window, blocked up. The mortuary chapel was very probably built with the materials previously comprised in some Roman structure, for both tufa and squared stones from the Andernach quarries are worked up. The east window of this chapel is a square-headed Tudor two-light. This chapel is now used as a baptistery, and it contains a Norman font. On the west side the stone steps to the rood loft are evident.

There are several monumental slabs to the Marshams, who formerly resided in this parish. Lord Romney still possesses property here. On the south side is a piscina under the arch. Severing the chancel from this chapel is a tomb, with round the edge “Hic iacet Ihohannes Botyler, rector huius ecclesie qui obiit vitimo die junil, anno D.M. 1568” in hatched and obliterated capitals. Upon the tomb is a brass, with the following inscription:

**[PRAY] FOR THE SOULE OF JOHN BUTTYLL, PARSON [OF THIS]
CHURCHE AND CHAPLAYNE TO THE HIGH AND NOBYLL
[PRINCE EDWARDE WHICH Mr JOHN DECEASED THE []
OF [] ANNO DOMINI MV [UPON] WHOSE SOULE JESU PARDON**

The effigy above it has been torn away, but in its place is a fine and particularly curious palimpsest brass, or rather, (which we believe to be an unique instance) a portion of two brasses joined together, upon one is ..atic Steere, twice repeated. These two different mortuary materials, were adapted by the heirs of the wealthy, all of whose inscriptions are now left, we give herewith.

**PRAY FOR THE SOULE OF JOHN [TURNER] WOLPACKER OF LONDON
SOME[TIME OF] [ST.] KATHERINE OF CHRISTCHURCH WHO DIED []
AUGUST ANNO DOMINI MDXLV ON WHOSE SOULE JESU HAVE MERCY**

There is also a corbel now carrying a marble slab to “Thomas Swindon, Rector”. The chancel contains some inscriptions on slabs which we trust the clergyman will one day translate for us. An aumbry on north side, square aumbry on south wall. Some encaustic tiles decorate the floor under the rails. On a large pew on the south side of the chancel, adjoining the rood screen is some nicely carved linen pauncing. A bench also has two poppy heads.

The windows on the south side of the nave are two light square headed, and a blocked up doorway to which is a stoup. The old roof still remains. At the west end there is a gallery. The porch stands on the north side. The statue which erst filled up the niche, has long since gone; some strangely painted tins, probably of heraldic meaning, now do the decorating business in its stead; upon one is a swan, and on the other is a cock’s head. To each door is a stoup.”

Next month, I’ll discuss in more detail some of the things I think this account tells us (and doesn’t tell us!) about our church history....

Keith Hodges.

From the Registers

Funerals:

3rd July
8th July

Kay Barbara Homewood
Elizabeth Anne Summers

May Street
Rochester Road Cuxton

St John's Draw (June): £3.00 each Mrs Winter (14), Mrs Chidwick (36) & Miss Mitchell (73)
Church Hal Draw (June) 1st - Margaret Booth, 2nd - Jan Cheesmer, 3rd - Trudy Fenton-Scott
Church Draw (July): 1st - Huw Silverthorn, , 2nd - Di Maxwell, 3rd - David Gates

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I hope that you are all well. Summer is here apparently. I am rather disappointed with the cool damp and grey Spring weather. We are currently on our holidays at Leybourne Lakes and I am sending this by tree mail. As we left Six Acre Wood last week, tree maintenance was in full swing so we are concerned that our roost might be in danger of that "maintenance" which seemed to be just chain-sawing down quite a few trees - some of which seemed quite healthy and then some were left that seemed quite old and frail.

We went to the Cuxton Big Lunch last month but the deafening music sent us flying well away until it was all over and we helped to clear the site.

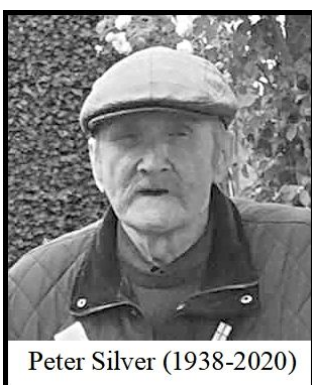
Following my last posting about magpies, we were quite intrigued to watch magpies and crows intently pecking at the shiny parts of cars parked near the woods. Exhaust pipes, wheel trims, anything chrome and shining were pecked for up to ten minutes at a time. It was quite comical and a pity we couldn't take photos to show you. They returned to this activity several times a day and for quite a few days. We really couldn't understand their behaviour. We know, of course, that magpies collect silvery items - tin foil, silver paper and bottle tops - but they weren't about to fly off with a hub cap. Quite puzzling. The crows were quite ferocious in their stabbing of the chrome. Surely it must have hurt their beaks. Quite puzzling. We have seen less of the gulls recently. Philippa says they have gone to the seaside to steal chips. In the recent very hot spell we stayed in our cool roost all day, emerging in the cool of dusk, to help clear up barbecue residue - baps and crisps in particular. A shorter holiday tree-mail this month. Coo coo

On The Ropes – Bell-ringing at St. John's and St. Michaels, June 2024

This month saw the bells of both our parish churches ringing out for several special occasions.

On Saturday 1st June, a memorial service was held at St. Michael's for our departed colleague, Colin Cogger. Over one hundred people attended the service and the bells were rung both before and after the service, by anyone who knew Colin and was able to ring. Some twenty-three people participated in this "open session", most of whom had formerly rung with Colin and had been trained by him.

Thursday 6th of June saw a nation-wide effort to get as many bell towers involved in "Ringing Out for Peace", the 80th Anniversary for D-Day. A team was able to support our parish's contribution to this event, ringing first at St. John's and then at St. Michael's prior to the lighting of the respective village beacons. A repertoire of call-changes, Bob Doubles and Grandsire marked the occasion at both towers.



Peter Silver (1938-2020)

Journeying between the churches, a lively discussion ensued as to what the "D" in D-Day stood for. It seems that our national "meeja" had been touting the view that the "D" just stood for "day" but to us, marking the occasion as "Day-Day" just seemed rather silly. Our own consensus ultimately agreed with the view of General Eisenhower, who (when questioned in 1964) apparently "*advised that any amphibious operation has a 'departed date'; therefore the shortened term 'D-Day' is used.*" We thought the General knew best...

The late afternoon of Friday 21st saw a team ring at St. John's Halling. This was to render a quarter peal of "1260 Plain Bob Minor" in memory of another departed colleague, Peter Silver. Peter had been both a verger and tower captain at St.

John's for many years and a member of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers for over 50 years. His enthusiasm and kindness saw a well-supported local team come to join in bell-ringing at St. John's during the 1980's. Peter sadly passed away on July 2nd 2020, just before his 82nd birthday while CoViD restrictions were in place. Plain Bob Minor is a demanding method that requires all six bells to participate in the sequence changes, and one that we felt Peter would have enjoyed ringing himself. We were fortunate to have the visiting services of "The Bristol Youth", a couple of young and extremely talented ringers who helped to ensure that the peal (after a couple of false starts) was successfully concluded.

Sunday morning of the 23rd saw another quarter peal rung at St. Michael's Cuxton, which was dedicated to the former Cuxton tower captain, Colin Cogger. This was a 1260 of Grandsire Doubles, another demanding method requiring some 60 "calls" over the 40-minute continuous duration of the peal, which ensured that the sequence ran smoothly to a successful conclusion. 'April Day'.

Ars Gratia Artis

A visitor to an art gallery was leading off at one of the attendants about the hideousness of modern art exemplified by the picture in front of him. "What you are looking at, sir," observed the attendant, "is a mirror."

Did You Know?

Mars is the only *known* planet inhabited entirely by robots.

What Are We Missing?

What are we missing if we don't come to Church? That's an inappropriate question. We don't come to Church to serve ourselves; we do so in order to serve God. We do, however, serve our own interests when we worship God. We are made in His image to be His family and to enjoy loving Him as He loves us in all eternity. Our lives work best if we follow our Maker's instructions. His service is perfect freedom.

But what are we missing out on when we don't come to Church? There is the fellowship & friendship, admittedly not perfect. Christians are human and, like any human family, we sometimes rub one another up the wrong way. But we don't give up on our family, no matter how much they get on our nerves. The Church is here for all of us and we are here for the Church because we are the Church if we are Christians.

There is shared prayer. Of course we can pray on our own and so we should, every day, without ceasing, but there is something special about praying together. Jesus promises to be specially present when we meet in His Name. The people who lead common prayer and the books we may use help us to put our prayers into words and to guide our thoughts. We don't need to be led. We don't need special words. We don't actually need any words at all and we all have direct access to God through Jesus. Jesus prays with us and for us, as does the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, but it does help many of us to use the words which wise Christians have been inspired by God to compose for the Church from the earliest times until the present day. Ditto hymns and psalms and spiritual songs.

Then there is the Word of God – the Bible. Again, we can and should read the Bible alone – preferably every day. It is the Word of God. Again, however, there is something special about reading the Word together, hearing it read out loud, as much of it was originally meant to be heard. We don't always appreciate sermons, but the Rector or other minister has, the Church believes, been chosen by God, educated in the Word and endued at his ordination with the spiritual gifts he needs in order to perform his task. You don't have to agree with the preacher. You too are called to read the Scriptures prayerfully & apply them to our daily lives. But, unless the clergyman totally neglects his calling, what he says *in the Name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Ghost* is deserving of consideration.

Then there are the Sacraments of Holy Baptism & Holy Communion – outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. In Holy Communion: we remember Christ's Death, how much God loves us; we experience His Presence, with us and within us, sustaining us on our journey, transforming us into the people we have the potential to be; we receive a foretaste and a guarantee of what God has prepared for those who love Him in the age to come. If you would like me to prepare you for Confirmation (which is normally a condition for Communion in the Church of England), I'm happy to arrange a crash course with a view to confirmation on 24th November, as, if I'm forced to retire, there might not be anyone around after that to arrange confirmation classes for some considerable time.

The Parish Magazine in History

I don't know for how long we've had a village or parish magazine. The oldest I've got is January 1890. It was published by the church, written by the vicar (C F Howes) and printed by G F Gay of Snodland. It was available at the Post Office and Mr Brown's Upper Halling (presumably the shop which was later Baker's general store and then a ship's chandler, maybe a reader will have more information on this). There was a charge of three halfpence (about ½ p). As well as a couple of sheets of Halling news, you also got a twenty page illustrated national magazine with stories, news and information about Christian matters

In that January 1890 issue, Mr Howe reported that he didn't think that things had gone backwards in the previous year. As it is impossible to stand still, church life must therefore have gone forward. Certainly, larger numbers were attending the Holy Communion service which they had inaugurated to follow Mattins. They were raising funds for a vestry and an organ chamber. There was to be a band of church workers whose anniversary day would be Ascension Day with Holy Communion at 5.00 am and then Evensong and tea in the evening. Being a Thursday, most of these church workers would have been at their day jobs in the fields, cement factories or paper mills between the two services. There was to be a penny bank to encourage poor people to save against a rainy day. Mr Howe advocated a temperance society to discourage drunkenness and alcoholism. They were also planning a parish mission.

The records showed that in 1889 there had been 78 Baptisms, 10 Marriages and 25 Funerals. I always like to see more christenings than funerals! Two of the weddings were on Christmas Day. One of the funerals is of a woman with the same surname as a widow who has died much more recently. Very likely, this lady was married to a descendant of the husband of the woman who was buried 9th December 1889 as it is an old Halling name.

The headmaster of Halling School, Mr Scholey, had arranged for the children to perform an entertainment at Halling Institute on 7th February. The Gardeners' Society had held its show on 14th January. Mr T Flint won first prize for a Primula – which I wouldn't have expected to be in flower in January. The other prizes were for eschalots, onions, Savoys and Brussels spouts and went to Messrs C Backhurst and W Sadler. The show is still going strong annually in 2021, but I don't think the gardeners any longer have an annual supper as they did on 25th February 1890. In 1890, moreover, the shows were monthly. In those days, gardening societies were very important for encouraging people to grow more of their own food and teaching them how to do so when families were often large, wages low and employment uncertain.

On January 10th, the Vestry Meeting (ancestor both of Halling Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council) agreed to the construction of Halling Waterworks which would supply water to Wouldham, Burham, Aylesford and East Malling. They would have to dig down 350' before they reached water. There is now just a pumping station more or less on the site, though the waterworks employed a number of local people when it was in operation. The February magazine notes that the influenza epidemic had reached Halling and many were down with it. Children were apparently mostly immune. It wasn't, it says, "a very serious ailment to people of careful habits. Hard drinkers find it very dangerous to grapple with." We have been warned. Maybe they weren't too careful about social distancing in the pubs! Or maybe the hard drinkers had already compromised their own health. According to the March issue, there was a Carnival Season in which the Institute held its annual dinner and the Marionettes performed a long and much appreciated season. The vicar booked the theatre on Saturday afternoon so that all the children from the school could see them. It says that the Institute also arranged a Ladies' Social, but that the reporter couldn't say anything about it because men were rigorously excluded.

The station was complete and the first ticket was sold at 7.00 am on 1st March. The station was described as 1 mile 59 chains from Cuxton station and 1 mile 43 chains from Snodland. Dredging up my long division skills from when I was at primary school, there are 88 chains to the mile! Confirmation candidates were invited to prepare to be confirmed at Snodland on 30th April. Well that's the first quarter of 1890. What has the future in store for us today?



Tommy's Talking Points

This is me in the driving seat of our friends' car at Elmore Pond, Chipstead, Surrey. We had just arrived at the commencement of our walk, but I had serious doubts about allowing myself to be driven home by Master. As soon as I realised that our meeting point was to be in Surrey, I should have known that there would be problems. There was a programme about the astronomical phenomena known as black holes on the car radio while we were driving lost around Surrey and just into Sussex. Black holes, for many years, were merely a mathematical concept, but are now known really to exist, matter so dense that even light cannot escape from their gravitational attraction, absolute darkness, the death and destruction of whatever falls into their maw. The possibility of a body of such density that even light could not escape it was first postulated by an eighteenth century clergyman.

Well, I know a twenty first century clergyman for whom Surrey is the terrestrial equivalent of the celestial black hole. A SatNav has been suggested, but, since these depend on electro-magnetic radiation in order to perform, they would be useless in a black hole.

I suppose I should not blame him for the traffic jams due to roadworks on the M26 and the M25. It was his fault, however, that we got into the wrong lane for the M23, southwards instead of northwards, and consequently had to go to Gatwick and back in order to recover our position. Chipstead wasn't hard then to find, but we swept past the rendezvous without seeing it onto what proved to be a single track one way street from which we were unable to extricate ourselves until we reached its conclusion from whence we had to descry a route back to where we'd come from. Extremely apologetic, we eventually found our astonishingly forbearing friends who were only just beginning to contemplate giving us up and seeking an alternative way of passing the day. Coffee was drunk and off we set on the Shabdon and Upper Gatton Park Walk, well worth the car journey.

It was a beautiful day, warm sunshine, the sky blue but dappled with bright, white cumulus cloud drifting and forming inspirational patterns against the cerulean background. Mid-June the sun is high in the sky, almost all the trees are fully in leaf but still fresh and pale green. The green deepens as the year advances and increasing numbers of plants compete for the light of the sun, boosting their chlorophyll production in order to make the most of it. There were stupendous views of the downs. The human members of the party were very pleased to see that Enzo and I are now firm friends, no scrapping even when one of us gets fussed over by the other's human companions or is offered a desirable item such as the water bowl in advance of the other.

The paths were as difficult to follow as the roads and we got lost a number of times, on several occasions having to retrace our tracks. This added about a mile to the walk – no problem for Enzo and me, but somewhat strenuous for the humans, especially considering that there was a lot of up and down dale. Most of our route was in open fields or through woods. Enzo and I were free most of the time to run off our leads. There were places where we had to be constrained because there was livestock in the fields. There were also fields in which we were kept on our leads because signs said that there were cattle even though there were none in evidence. Master was reminded of a story about a little boy who cried wolf. When we got to a field with horses in, Master was somewhat reluctant to risk walking through it. He knows of a case of a woman who was badly injured by a kick from a horse which had initially appeared friendly. His friends, however, supported him and he made it past the equine threat, even pausing to stroke a nose.

One field appeared to have been either left to its own devices or deliberately planted as a wildflower meadow. There were many species of plant present and no doubt many invertebrates. They hypothesised

that it was a sanctuary for wild butterflies. We saw some brown ones but none of us was sufficient of a lepidopterist to know whether they were wild or not.

Gatton Park is a manor which can be traced back to the Domesday Book. The grounds were landscaped by Capability Brown. For much of its history, the estate belonged to the Colman family of mustard fame. During the Second World War, the house was requisitioned for use by the Canadian Army and the Royal Military Police, which might explain the presence of small brick built air raid shelters in the fields.

There was plenty of water to splash in, though I didn't go in as deep as Enzo and I'm not as fond of mud. But we all certainly had a great time and hopefully will be doing something similar again soon.

I needn't have worried about the journey home. He didn't get lost. The traffic continued to flow despite the roadworks and we were home in good time for tea, which for me included some of the ham they had with cheese in their lunchtime sandwiches.

Master loves the long light days of June and, as we quite often do, that evening we sat for a while on our garden seat just as it was getting dark around 10.00. He enjoys the peace which the twilight brings, the gradual fading colours of the flowers, the scent of the Syringa and the appearance of the night time creatures. Sometimes, sitting on that seat at that time, we see bats. We hadn't seen them so far this year and he hoped that we might end a perfect day by seeing some now. Something flitted past too rapidly to be sure what it was. He thought we might sit quietly for a little longer and see what might transpire. The second time I shattered the serenity by chasing off after a fox, he gave up and we went indoors, me to my basket, him to bed. Nevertheless, his thoughts turned to these beautiful evening prayers which are so seldom shared with a congregation now that well-attended Evensong has become such a rarity. So here you are.

The Second Collect at Evening Prayer.

O GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

The Third Collect, for Aid against all Perils.

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

Enzo's Observations

Tommy is right. He and I got on very well this outing, and enjoyed barrelling along together down lane and 'cross field.

As soon as our SatNav took us directly to Elmore pond, my humans despaired of Roger finding it. It was not easily visible from the road and the car park was labelled Rugby Club. They had reckoned without the detour to Gatwick. They took it in turns to go and stand by the road and look hopefully at passing cars - all to no avail of course. As Roger was bringing the sandwiches (which they eventually very much enjoyed), they began to discuss practical arrangements for lunch, and took me for a walk on the Rugby pitch before setting off to find some. Roger and Tommy turned up just in time, and Tommy took refuge in our car - I did not mind as I prefer the back without the steering wheel.



The Humans exchanged books. Roger was given baking recipes. Alex had made some cookies, but why she made ones with raisins unsuitable for dogs she did not say. The Humans scoffed the lot. Mark and Alex were lent a book by a literary dog Buster about his human a Yorkshire politician who is inconsistent although well meaning in his main job of paying attention to Buster. My humans seem to be learning something from it and keep talking about excerpts from it.

Having problems with directions last time, my humans over-prepared and took with them 3 different maps of the route. As soon as we set out it was clear that the maps were inconsistent and did not tally with the poetic words at all. Fortunately someone had put up little orange way mark signs, some of which were still in place. There were footpaths on the maps, and permissive routes in the instructions. We were told to leave and re-join the orange route from time to time. A friendly lady either set us right or sent us the wrong way. There were horses, sheep and fields of broad beans. Sometimes the footpath just disappeared for a while.

The Humans had provided water for me, but not for themselves. After a sustaining lunch on a well placed bench with glorious views, they became dehydrated and more irritable and argumentative, until Roger diagnosed the problem and shared his water with them. Roger and my humans have different approaches to the heat. Roger removes his shirt and exposes his torso to the sun. My humans cover up and wear broad brimmed hats. I must investigate the causes and benefits of these- not that I can remove my coats or wear a floppy hat.

Anyway with all these considerations we did not finish our walk very early and then had to drive home. I was very hungry and had a huge tea and then spent my time in rest and quietness. We all enjoyed the outing very much, and will set about arranging another very soon.



Animal Tales

An English woman touring in Africa admired the necklace worn by a local man. “What’s it made of?” she asked. Told that it was made of crocodile teeth, she responded rather patronisingly, “I suppose you people value crocodile teeth in the same way as my people value pearls.”

“Rather more,” the man replied. “Anyone can open an oyster.”

The vicar’s family goldfish died and the children decided to give it a proper burial. The vicar’s wife was amused to hear her oldest son solemnly intone, “In the Name of the Father & of the Son and into the whole he goes.”

HIGHBROW JOKES

What does a dyslexic, agnostic insomniac spend most of his time doing?

Staying up all night wondering if there really is a dog.

Why did the chicken cross the Mobius strip?

To get to the same side.

it’s not easy being a self-made man...

...unless you have an Oedipus complex and a time machine.

Helium walks into a bar and orders a beer.

The bartender says, “Sorry, we don't serve noble gases in here.”

He doesn't react.

Did you hear about the man who was cooled to absolute zero?

He’s OK now.

Your mother is so classless, she could be a Marxist utopia.

There are two types of people in this world. Those that can extrapolate to find missing information.