

Services February 2021			
7 <sup>th</sup> February Sexagesima	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Proverbs 8 vv 1-31 p641 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063	
14 <sup>th</sup> February Quinquagesima	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	II Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 II Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012	
17 <sup>th</sup> February Ash Wednesday	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Joel 2 vv 12-17 p912 Matthew 6 vv 16-21 p970	
21 <sup>st</sup> February Lent 1	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 I Peter 3 vv 18-22 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002	
28 <sup>th</sup> February Lent2	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 17 vv 1-6 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 p1131 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
Septuagesima			
3 <sup>rd</sup> February	Jeremiah 2 vv 14-32 John 1 vv 35-51	4 <sup>th</sup> February	Jeremiah 3 vv 6-18 John 2 vv 1-12
10 <sup>th</sup> February	Jeremiah 6 vv 9-21 John 4 vv 1-26	11 <sup>th</sup> February	Jeremiah 6 vv 22-30 John 4 vv 27-42
Lent			
17 <sup>th</sup> February Ash Wednesday	Joel 2 vv 12-17 Matthew 6 vv 16 - 21	18 <sup>th</sup> February	Jeremiah 10 vv 1-16 John 6 vv 1-15
24 <sup>th</sup> February S Matthias Ember Day	Acts 1 vv 15-26 Matthew 11 vv 25-30	25 <sup>th</sup> February	Jeremiah 17 vv 5-18 John 7 vv 1-13
3 <sup>rd</sup> March	Jeremiah 20 vv 7-18 John 8 vv 12-20	4 <sup>th</sup> March	Jeremiah 21 vv 1-10 John 8 vv 21-30

We're carrying on with Holy Communion at Cuxton at 9.30 am on Wednesdays and Sundays and at Halling at 9.30 on Thursdays and 11.00 on Sundays. Cuxton Church is open for personal prayer Wednesdays & Sundays. Please sanitise and socially distance.

For now, we shall be producing the magazine online only. It can be found on my webpage <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> and I can email it to anybody who asks. There will be no charge until we are back on paper. I'll carry on with the advertisements in the online edition, but I shan't charge advertisers for 2021 unless and until we can return to paper copies. Copy date for March is February 12<sup>th</sup> 8.30 am at the Rectory.

I'm sending out a weekly email newsletter and a weekly sermon which can also be found on my webpage. If you would like to be added to the list of those who receive these, please let me know. Please also feel free to share the contents, forward them, print them, pass them on in any way you would like to. The thing is to keep in touch and to support one another.

Christmas was good. We celebrated the Birth of our Lord which is what it is all about. It was very disappointing not to be able to do everything we usually do – including carol services, nativity plays and Christingles. We usually donate our Christingle collections to the Children's Society. If you would like to give directly this year, you can do so online at [Donate | The Children's Society](#). You can send a cheque payable to The Children's Society to: Freepost RSYH-HEEE-XZEG The Children's Society 50 Banner Street London EC1Y 8ST or call their friendly Supporter Care team on 0300 303 7000 and they can securely take your payment. Like many charities, the Children's Society's services have been in much greater demand this last year as they still are but their fund-raising has been much more difficult. So any support you can give would be much appreciated.

Thanks to everybody who did so much to celebrate Christmas and to mark the occasion. All through the year, we depend on those who keep our buildings and their furnishings and fittings clean and in good repair.

There is the work of organising services, including sacristan and vergers duties, those who read and those who act as sidesmen and churchwardens. There has been so much more for these people to do because of COVID and we are all very grateful for the hard work they have put in. We have had organ music, even though we have not been able to sing. Thank you to those who put flowers in our churches and those who obtained and decorated the Christmas trees. We had our lovely cribs in both churches. Also, this year people put nativity scenes in their gardens. Here are some pictures that we can all look at.

I am very sorry that we have not been able to enjoy the contributions of bellringers and choirs this year. Let's hope and pray that we shall soon be free of the virus and able to do more of the things we so much want to do.



## **Nativity Scenes in Cuxton and Halling**



X Kids went well on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. We held it outdoors in order to reduce the danger of spreading the virus. It was a very mild day for December, but, just as we were about to start, there was a short, sharp shower. Given that the sun was shining and that the sky was blue, there was a beautiful rainbow over the river – another sign of hope. With difficulty, we lit three Advent candles, counting off the days to the Birthday of the Light of the world. Being out of doors, we could sing. The recorded accompaniment to *Little Donkey* had rather more words than we knew, but it was all joyous fun. *Away in a Manger* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* were more straightforward. We prayed together. We heard the Christmas story as it written in the Bible and from the point of view of a baby camel. The camel came to understand that Jesus is for everyone: rich and poor, grand and humble, powerful and vulnerable, old and young, mature and immature and indeed for the whole of creation, not just human beings. We learned what a lot of people think is the best known verse in the Bible, the verse that sums up the Christmas story and the whole of the Gospel, John 3<sup>16</sup>. Because it's so well known, we tripped one another up a bit when we reciting it, because different people knew different versions. That doesn't matter. What matters is what it means! This is the version I know best (I guess, though I also know the King James version quite well). *So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

### Light in the Darkness

I thought I would take a look back to see what I wrote about in last February's magazine. It certainly wasn't COVID! I guess that most of us thought then that this was a problem in China and the Far East which would not make a great deal of difference to us here. How wrong we were! We had been warned that one day there could be another global pandemic, but I'm not sure how seriously we took these warnings. COVID seems to have caught everyone out.



What I was thinking about this time last year was education. We had a new headmistress at Halling School and there had been a considerable amount of building work, as there had been at Cuxton a couple of years previously. What was education? What was education for? My message was to the effect that education is much more than training, though training is an aspect of education. Education is much more than what goes on in schools. Education is not only for the young. Education is about developing our full potential as people. We continue to develop throughout our lives. As we grow older, we learn new skills and foster our talents, we discover more about this wonderful world in which we live, we may meet new people and make new friends. I hope we

become better people, nicer to know, more able to play our part in the home and in the wider community and more inclined to do so. It is true that, as we get older, we find that we cannot do some of the things which we did when we were younger, but we can still be there for people. If we have more time, we might also have more patience just to sit and talk. Grandparents have a lot to offer their grandchildren which busy parents may not have time to give. We can all pray. Even if we become long term patients in need of care for much of the time, we can still do our best to make life agreeable for those who look after us.

Education forms us as people. Given that human beings are made to be the children of God, education is an intensely religious phenomenon. Education is about setting us free from the darkness of ignorance and folly and empowering us to become the people God means us to be – people of love, who use their gifts, talents and opportunities to the glory of God and for the common good (which is an aspect of the same thing). It is only in so doing so that we fulfil our potential as humans beings. God's service is perfect freedom. The fear of the LORD is the

beginning of wisdom. To know God is to have eternal life.

A year ago (I write on the last day of 2020), we didn't know how our formal education in schools and colleges was about to be so badly disrupted. We didn't foresee having to stay at home and avoid human contact, even with those we most love. We had little inkling of the huge numbers of people who would contract COVID and how, while some would have no symptoms or only mild symptoms, many would be very seriously ill and die. We didn't foresee the pressure on the NHS, on hospitals and care homes, and the way their staff would have to work so hard and such long hours very often without the protective equipment which they needed to keep themselves safe. We hadn't thought about the closure of so many businesses and the consequences for their employees. We quite probably had never considered that democratic governments would enact Draconian legislation in order to limit the spread of infection and the pressure this would put on the police and the emergency services. Our world has been turned upside down.

Most of us had probably not realised how poorly paid many key workers are or how many people live in poky accommodation, perhaps sharing with violent and abusive family members. We didn't know how important school is in the lives of many young people – not just as a place of learning, but also as a refuge from domestic violence or the only place where they experience stability and discipline or even receive a decent meal each day. The tremendous inequalities in our society have become ever more apparent – those of us living in nice homes with every modern convenience and a decent income which continues to be paid despite emergencies such as COVID, on the one hand, and, in contrast, those who had to self-isolate in damp tower blocks, try to home school their children with limited online access (perhaps with little formal education themselves), and whose poorly paid jobs disappeared unless, if they were lucky enough still to be needed by an employer, they were prepared to go to work despite the risks. Government has poured vast sums of money into ameliorating the worst effects on people's incomes, but not everyone is covered by the various schemes and even for those who are covered it is a come down from properly paid full

time employment. The better off have seen their savings grow as they continue to get paid but have less to spend their money on. Those with no savings and no dependable income have found it harder to make ends meet.

As the rules have changed, businesses have invested heavily in creating COVID safe environments only, very often, to be told that they still must close. Pubs and restaurants have bought in stocks of food and drink in the expectation of being able to remain open and then have had to close and waste what they had purchased.

I think COVID turned our expectations of the Church upside down too. It certainly had that effect on me. I had always thought that meeting for public worship was something we should do in the face of any kind of opposition or persecution. There must be millions of Christians who have continued to meet for prayer and worship despite the threats of hostile governments, from ancient Rome to the Communist regimes of the C20. Even in the world today, Christians continue to meet to practise their faith under Muslim and other faith governments and in Communist countries, where they may face legal prosecution by the state or more informal persecution by their neighbours. I always hoped that we would be brave enough to do the same in similar circumstances. However, risking personal martyrdom is different from risking other people's health by possibly spreading infection.

Similarly, we had always thought that Christian ministers ought to be prepared, at whatever risk to themselves, to care for the sick and dying. Hamo of Hythe, who was one of the Bishops of Rochester who lived in the palace at Halling (C14), instructed clergy who had fled the plague to return to their parishes and look after their parishioners. In those days, of course, the clergy were probably the only professionals available to care for the poor and the transmission of disease was less well understood.

When it came to COVID, we were told to stop meeting for public worship for fear of spreading the infection and, for the same reason, clergy were instructed not to visit. Not only might they spread the disease, if they caught it themselves, they would be an added burden on the overstretched

health service. Some chaplaincy work has continued with PPE and all the precautions, but many have died without seeing their priest, their family or their friends.

It has been very hard (especially for the authorities) to get the right balance between meeting our intense need for human contact and limiting the risk of infection. I don't suppose they've always got it right. Who could, given our limited knowledge? I'm certainly not confident enough to say how I would have done things differently if it had been up to me.

It has helped tremendously that we are now able to keep in touch and do so many things over the internet: business, social interactions, Christian fellowship. We can all pray. We can pray on our own, in the knowledge that God is always with us. It has been good to remember that millions of others (including members of our own congregations) are also praying on their own in fellowship with us and with one another and with God. I've shared teaching and preaching materials and celebrated Holy Communion alone on behalf of us all when it has not been possible to meet. We've checked up on one another by whatever means we can. Christians have played their part with others in looking after neighbours, supporting charities and doing voluntary work, and in doing their jobs as paid staff in the caring professions and as key workers more generally. The Church hasn't disappeared!

Since I've been an ordained minister, I've found many reasons to be impressed with the resilience and inventiveness of ordinary people. We're all special in our own way, but most of us probably think of ourselves as unremarkable and maybe other people think of us in that way too. It is unremarkable to be amazingly resilient. I find this strength and courage in people very often when I visit the seriously ill and their families and the bereaved. Researching into addresses for occasions such as Remembrance Sunday, I am often deeply moved by the way ordinary people just got on with things in wartime, finding the resources within themselves both to *keep the home fires burning* and to endure the horrors of the battlefield. The pandemic has brought out the same virtues in people: personal resilience, an eagerness to volunteer to help others, a sense of community, the gritty determination to get on with

the job despite all the difficulties placed in people's way and their own tiredness and anxieties for their own safety and that of their families. People have shown tremendous inventiveness in finding ways to *keep calm and carry on*. I include in this admiration businesses which have switched to online or takeaway and especially those who have generously given or made available at low prices the stock they cannot sell to people who really need it.

None of us can be strong all the time and there is no shame in sometimes feeling overwhelmed by the difficulties and sorrows which confront us. But we are here for one another. We are a community. We can all pray. Even when we feel we can't pray, Jesus and His Church pray on our behalf.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of February is Candlemas – the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Purification of S Mary the Virgin. Candlemas is the last day of Christmas. On the fortieth day of his life, the first born son of a Jewish family had to be redeemed with an appropriate sacrifice. There were also rites of purification after a woman had given birth. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February, we celebrate these events in the life of the baby Jesus. Joseph and Mary brought Him to the Temple in Jerusalem in order to fulfil the requirements of the Law. Two old people in the Temple – Simeon and Anna – recognised the specialness of Jesus. Simeon took Him *up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Anna coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Simeon and Anna recognised Jesus as the Light of the World and made known His glory to the people in the Temple. There arose a tradition of blessing the candles to be used in*

Church on this feast day. Hence Candlemas – one more celebration of Christ the Light of the World.

**A**LMIGHTY and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Ultimately, it is in God and in Him alone that we find hope and that is why, however deep the darkness, we can be confident in the Light. This is the vision of the Holy City to which all Christians are bound which was given to John in his Revelation 21<sup>21ff</sup>:

**21** And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

**22** And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

**23** And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

**24** And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

**25** And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

**26** And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

**27** And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

There is nothing to fear if we trust in the Lord.

Every blessing,  
Roger.



#### From Blythswood Care

Thank you so much for your support for Blythswood Care's 2020 Shoe Box Appeal. The part you've played has been so important, and is so appreciated. This year has brought challenges to us all and as I write, I realise that this has been far from an easy year for you. Schools and churches have been closed. Some have lost loved ones. Many have lived in fear. Securities and freedoms we perhaps didn't realise we had, let alone took for granted, have been taken from us. The world as we knew it has been changed beyond recognition. But in spite of all the turmoil and change, I believe strongly that God remains in control — He remains God and He remains good, even in what we struggle to understand. Your support would be so valued and appreciated at any time, but in our 28<sup>th</sup> year of the Shoe Box Appeal, your support is more significant than ever. The need for shoebox gifts has certainly not gone away in 2020. Many needs that existed before have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the losses that it has brought with it. What joy these gift-filled shoeboxes will bring to people in need across Eastern Europe this winter — what light in what for so many has been such a dark time. It's been said before, but it's worth repeating here, every gift in every shoebox makes a difference. Your support for the Shoe Box Appeal counts more than ever this year. You have made a difference. It's my privilege to be able to thank you on behalf of Blythswood Care, but thank you also on behalf of those you might never meet, but whose lives have been made better thanks to your kindness and care. Wishing you every blessing for 2021, Mairi Ferrier. Fundraising Administrator.

#### Food For Thought

It has been suggested that God should just be seen as the ground of our being but also as the ground of our becoming.

#### This Made Me Laugh

Ten years ago a man went to the opticians. "Look in this machine and tell me what you can see," the optician said. The man said, "I see deserted streets, shops and pubs closed, people wearing masks." The optician said, "No need to worry about you eyesight. You've got 2020 vision."

## From the Registers

### Funerals:

19<sup>th</sup> November  
4<sup>th</sup> January

Elaine Parris  
Dorina Hooker

Ladywood Road  
formerly of Stake Lane

### Brian Topham RIP

Many of you will be sorry to hear that Brian Topham died on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> aged 83. Brian was a very active member of this Church. When I arrived here in 1987, he was one of our churchwardens. He took on some of the accounting responsibilities when our then treasurer was unable to continue and took a big interest in our liturgy (public worship). After moving to Yatton, near Bristol, Brian became very much involved in the life of the Church there. He leaves a widow Betty and two sons Bruce and Simon, who are in our prayers.

#### Planting Your Spring Garden

#### For The Garden of Your Daily Living

##### Plant Three Rows of p̄as

1. Peace of Mind
2. Peace of Heart
3. Peace of Soul

##### Plant Four Rows of Squash

1. Squash Gossip
2. Squash Indifference
3. Squash Grumbling
4. Squash Selfishness

##### Plant Four Rows of Lettuce

1. Lettuce Be Faithful
2. Lettuce Be Kind
3. Lettuce Be Patient
4. Lettuce Really Love One Another

##### No Garden is Complete Without Turnips

1. Turnip For Meetings
2. Turnip For Service
3. Turnip To Help One Another

##### To Conclude Our Garden We Must Have Thyme

1. Thyme For Each Other
2. Thyme For Family
3. Thyme For Friends

Water Freely With Patience And Cultivate With Love.  
There Is Much Fruit In Your Garden Because You Reap  
What You Sow. Pass It On!!!

## A Walk to Luddesdown Church

My walk, today, starts from St Michael & All Angels' Church and follows country footpaths to Luddesdown Church. I want to stay local and where possible avoid popular spots. The weather is mostly cloudy with some sunny intervals but chilly. From St Michael's I walk up Church Hill and admire the views behind me before moving to the woodland path. This path is muddy, mostly due to its popularity.



I follow the well known and popular path to The Warren then join

the North Downs Way. I can see sheep and cattle grazing in the fields. Gradually the path becomes less muddy and the hum of traffic gives way to the sound of squirrels and birds rustling in the trees and undergrowth. I walk on passing through Wingate Wood, Scrub Wood, Pasted Wood and down to Ten Acre Wood. As I leave the woods there is a wide open meadow with two clear pathways which cross at the centre. I walk straight ahead and through a little scrub land area until I meet a stile. I climb over the stile, cross a track and enter another field. The footpath direction is clear but muddy in places. The field is open and allows the chill wind to find me. At the next five way junction of pathways I leave the North Downs Way and walk down hill to Great Buckland and Wrangling Lane. I turn right, walk passed the



fork in the road and take the first footpath on my left. This footpath is part of the Wealdway and

leads along the Bowling Alley. The first thing that meets the eye, at this point, is the lines and lines of vines. There are lines of vines to my left and to my right. It seems, perhaps as a result of climate warming, that growing vines is becoming very popular in our part of the UK. The produce of these I have yet to sample! The footpath leads between the vines and gradually uphill. The recent wet and frosty weather has made the path slippery in parts but the view across the valley is



excellent although a bit misty at times.

At the top of the hill the Wealdway turns left and I can see



Luddesdown Church nestled among a few buildings. Rather kindly someone has placed a bench at the top of the hill. I sit and rest for a while, admire the scenery and eat my snack. During my stay, several walkers arrive from different directions and brief greetings are exchanged. For my final part of the journey I descend the steep hill with caution. The sun has left, it is very cloudy and is becoming quite cold. I arrive at the Church of Saint Peter & Paul.



Sadly, the building is closed but notices on the board indicate that there is an active community of church goers.

In the border next to the church something catches my eye. It is a primrose in flower. What a lovely and

most welcome sight.

A new year and already new life is upon us.

Happy  
New  
Year!  
Holly  
Croft



St Michael's Draw (December): £10 Mrs Holdsworth (23), £5 each Mr Gates (18) & Mrs Bogg (24)

#### Topical Tips.

You can learn a lot of useful things in church. What I have discovered this Winter is that, when the building you are in is so cold that the butane lighter won't light, if you put it in your pocket for a bit, enough of the fuel will vaporise to produce a flame. Matches are a dead loss in vestries because of the damp!

And now a word of caution. I once read a true and terrible story about a man who lit a bonfire and put his matches back in his pocket. When he got too near the fire, the matches ignited and he was badly burnt. So don't do that!

Don't do this either, though I did get away with it on one very foolish occasion. The house I lived in as a curate was very cold and very poorly plumbed. In the 1960s, the PCC had built a new church hall and thought they should be able to sell the old one. They discovered, however, that if they did, the diocese would get to decide how to spend the money they made. Unwilling for that to happen, they decided to let it out instead. But what commercial firm wants to rent a hall? If you could make a profit out of running a community hall, we wouldn't be depending on volunteers to raise funds and carry out cleaning and maintenance work.

In the end, they let it out to a plumbing firm who really weren't very good and had trouble paying the rent. So the PCC had the bright idea of employing them to plumb and to install central heating in the curate's house. This was what I moved into – in June I hasten to remark. Come the Winter, I found the boiler was quite good at ejecting clouds of steam into the atmosphere but the radiators hardly got warm and the hot water wasn't very hot. After it had been on a couple of hours, a stream of hot water was pumped out of the overflow pipe – into next door's garden. It was suggested by someone who knew about these things that a full bottle of washing up liquid poured into the hot water tank might clear any air lock. I tried this and the result was that the stream of hot water pumped out of the overflow pipe into next door's garden now had bubbles in it! That's a tip not to take.

I remember the pot plant in my hall dying of frost bite. I remember the occasion when I had gone out after the water upstairs had been frozen in the loft for some time and when I returned it was to discover that the ice had thawed, water was pouring through the ceilings and a soaked dog was desperately trying to find a dry refuge.

I got in the way of taking the electric kettle upstairs with me when I went to bed so that I could get some hot water to wash and shave in when I woke up.

You might think that the moral of this story is that church governance is not very good at coming to sensible decisions. You might be right, but it's not the warning I'm coming up to.

One very cold morning, I got out of bed in an unheated house and found that the water supply to the kitchen as well as that to the bathroom was frozen solid. In desperation, I put the electric fire in the sink. Obviously, it worked and I got away with it. But please don't try it at home. Roger.

### Tommy's Talking Points

As there is no January magazine, it has been two months since I was able to write to you and a great deal has happened in that time. We came out of the second lockdown and resumed going to Church. It was good to see all my friends again and to be thoroughly made a fuss of. We got into the habit of a morning run just after it gets light and an afternoon walk just before it gets dark. Now Master says Morning & Evening Prayer at home rather than in church, it doesn't much matter at what time he says them. So we can be more flexible about when we're out. In fact, sometimes we stay out a bit longer in the morning when there is no fixed time for him to start any particular task. Even so, we've been curtailed by the shortness of the days. Until well after Christmas, the weather was very mild for Winter. Then it turned colder and then it got very wet. He doesn't mind the cold, but he's a bit less keen on going out in the wet and this third lockdown also imposes constraints. So my exercise programme may be cut back a bit.

We enjoyed celebrating Master's birthday. Of course, there wasn't a big party, but he had lots of kindly greetings and some very nice presents. The same could be said for Christmas, which we spent together in the Rectory after church. It was possible to see family in small quantities around his birthday and we did that. At Christmas, he very much enjoyed the Christmas cake one of them had made for him. We should have had a wedding on Christmas Day at St Michael's, but that has had to be postponed because of COVID.



We got another nice walk in in November. Having checked that it was within the rules, we met another household in Ashdown Forest, where the Winnie the Pooh stories are set.

The journey was a bit fraught. It's ages since we'd been out in the car. The dashboard computer said that we were good for many miles, but suddenly changed its mind when we were on the M25 and the calculated mileage left in the tank declined drastically. Of course, there were no service stations coming up and Master got quite worried. He thinks that it had calculated the distance left at the speed we drove out of the garage and through the gates and then recalculated it at motorway speeds. We drove around a bit looking for a service station and eventually found two close together in Edenbridge. Then we got lost. You should have seen him wrestling with a large map spread out on the bonnet in a high wind. The B something or other we were supposed to be following becomes the B something else for about half a mile.

Anyway, here we are on the Pooh Sticks Bridge. As you see, the sun is shining and it was a lovely day. The Sussex countryside is very beautiful. We could see the brightly sunlit North Downs beyond the deep shadow cast by the High Weald. The gorse was in bloom and there were still plenty of golden and brown leaves on the trees to make the woods and fields glow. We had a wonderful walk until lunchtime. Then, as we were packing up our sandwich wrappers, the weather forecast unfortunately proved correct and a light rain began to fall. The route back to the car park was quite confusing to find and the going underfoot was sticky. It began to get dark quite early. Nevertheless, we had a great time, especially me. There were lots of other walkers, joggers and dogs out and about – one just like me, running with her master.

Coming home in the car, we had an amazing experience. It was really dark by this time and it was still raining. Master was somewhat dazzled by the headlights of other vehicles. All of a sudden, he saw what he took to be a horse crossing the road and took evasive action. When he got closer, I saw that it was actually a stag with a magnificent set of antlers. Thankfully, other vehicles also avoided it and it leapt over the hedge into the woods.

Hopefully, we'll all stay well. I'm glad dog-walking counts as essential exercise. At least we're able to keep church services going this time and, to be honest, I quite like having him home with me most of the time. I expect I shall see some of you on essential trips out, but it will be wonderful when we're all able to meet up again normally.

Happy New Year,

Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

## CARE HOMES

For obvious reasons there has been a lot of concern about the safety and availability of care homes during the pandemic. Some people, however, do need the services of care homes – either permanently or to provide a break for them and their families. Care homes are still open and are making every effort to protect residents and staff. So, please, if you are considering moving into such a home for a period or for the foreseeable future, make contact with prospective home providers, who will be pleased to tell you about their arrangements to keep everyone safe, to enable visits, etc.

Odd Job  
Lady. Inside or  
out.

Painting & decorating,  
carpentry, tiling,  
gardening etc.

Please call  
Julie 07507  
826756

live  
happy  
with  
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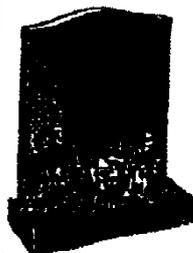
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