

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



March 2024

60p

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

Services March 2024

Services March 2024			
3 rd March Lent 3		9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Exodus 20 vv 1-17 p77 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-25 p1144 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
10 th March Lent 4 Mothering Sunday		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Numbers 21 vv 4-9 p158 Ephesians 2 vv 1-10 p1174 John 3 vv 14-21 p1066
17 th March Lent 5 Passion Sunday		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 31 vv 31-34 p793 Hebrews 5 vv 5-10 p1204 John 12 vv 20-33p1080
24 th March Lent 6 Palm Sunday		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton (meet @ church hall) 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Mark 11 vv 1-11 p1016 (Cuxton only) Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p1179 Matthew 27 vv 1-54 p998
28 th March Maundy Thursday		9.30 Holy Communion Halling.	I Corinthians 11 vv 17-34 Luke 23 vv 1-49 p1059
29 th March Good Friday		9.30 Family Service Cuxton 11.00 Ante-Communion Halling	Hebrews 10 vv 1-25 p1208 John 19 vv 1-37 p1087
31 st March Easter Day		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Colossians 3 vv 1-7 p1184 John 20 vv 1-10 p1089
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
6 th March	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	7 th March	Jeremiah 7 vv 23-28 Luke 11 vv 14-23
13 th March	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 5 vv 17-30	14 th March	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-47
20 th March	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 21-30	21 st March Thomas Cranmer	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
27 th March	Hebrews 9 vv 16-28 Luke 22 vv 1-71	28 th March Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 17-34 Luke 23 vv 1-49

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For Diaries

1st March 10.30 am St John's: World Day of Prayer Service

Sat 16 March 3.00 concert St John's

30th March 10.30 Children's Easter Event St John's

1st April 2.00 Easter Egg Hunt St Michael's £2.00

8th April 11.00 St John's Lady Day Holy Communion & Lunch

21st April, 7.00 St Michael's - Concert (local talent) - Cancer Research UK

Sat 27th April 10.00 church Hall: Meeting to choose churchwardens & APCM.

Sat 15 June 3.00 concert St John's

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

A Story with a Moral.

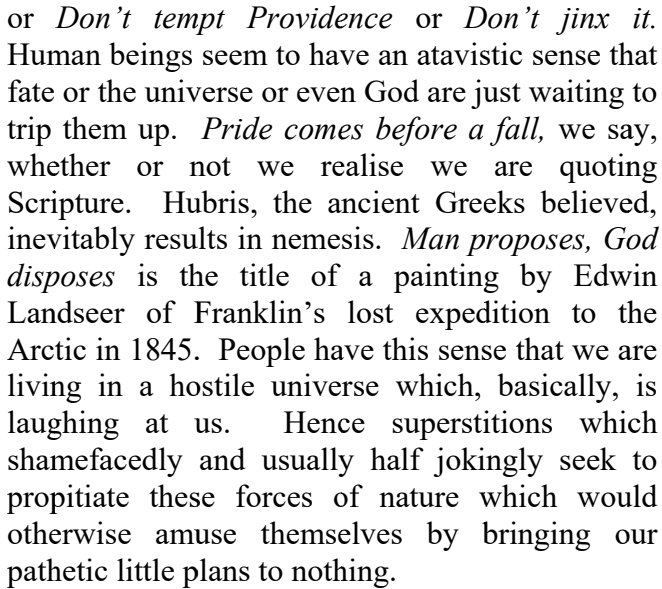
Two men were walking in the African savannah when they saw a lion eyeing them from behind a tree.

"Quick, run," said the first.

"You can't outrun a lion said," the second.

"But I can out run you," said the first.

St John's Draw January: £5 each Mrs Thorne (3), Mrs Farrow (25), Mrs Chidwick (26)



Deo volente is an expression I hear much less often in Latin or in English (God willing) these days than I did when I was a child. It was often abbreviated to DV, God willing. Cynics likened it to saying *Touch wood*

or *Don't tempt Providence* or *Don't jinx it*. Human beings seem to have an atavistic sense that fate or the universe or even God are just waiting to trip them up. *Pride comes before a fall*, we say, whether or not we realise we are quoting Scripture. Hubris, the ancient Greeks believed, inevitably results in nemesis. *Man proposes, God disposes* is the title of a painting by Edwin Landseer of Franklin's lost expedition to the Arctic in 1845. People have this sense that we are living in a hostile universe which, basically, is laughing at us. Hence superstitions which shamefacedly and usually half jokingly seek to propitiate these forces of nature which would otherwise amuse themselves by bringing our pathetic little plans to nothing.

Even when I was a child, expressions like *DV* or *if the Lord wills, if I'm still here, if I'm spared* tended to be used more by older people than younger. They had good reason to be aware of the precariousness of life. They had been through two world wars. Too many people were struck down by infectious diseases, which we would now expect to be able to treat and cure. Industrial and domestic accidents were much less uncommon before *health and safety* than they are today.

Moreover, at least for some people, it used to seem more natural than it does today to speak in religious terms in general conversation. As the number of people participating in religion has declined in society, so has a general sense that our lives are in the Hands of God though, in fact, they are.

As a boy, it seemed reasonable to me if a frail elderly person expressed doubt as to whether it would be God's Will to enable her to go to Tenerife next year, but overdoing it a bit to add *DV* to a sentence such as *I'll water the geraniums after dinner*. On the other hand, we depend no less on God for our survival until this afternoon than we depend on Him for what we plan to do next year.

The pendulum seems to have swung the other way. I often hear people talk about life plans and bucket lists. They know what they are going to do with their lives and will feel cheated if their plans don't come to fruition. *When I've passed my A levels, I'll take a gap year and then go to university. As a graduate, I'll fall into a well-paid*

job, swiftly climbing the career ladder, marrying, having children and eventually retiring to do whatever I want to do: golf, travel, play the market, whatever. There seems to be very little awareness in some people of the precariousness of life. Of course we know that our health could break down, we could fail our exams, someone else might beat us to that dream job; we know that relationships don't always work out, and our pension pot might not fund anything like the retirement we've planned for, but somehow we don't really believe that any of these things could happen to us. Even after CoViD 19 and the other unprecedented disasters of recent years, many people live on the assumption that their lives will progress on a course laid out by themselves. Completing the bucket list is regarded by some as almost a human right and we can be quite resentful if our plans are thwarted. I heard one young man on the radio angrily blaming society, the government, international capitalism, the universe or God because his plans to work in Alpine ski resorts through the Winter in return for a certain amount of free access to the slopes had come to nothing and it was embarrassing that he had told all his friends on social media about an experience which was now not going to happen. I reflected that many people have had far worse disappointments in their lives, but the interviewer seemed to think that the young man was justified in his rage and that something ought to be done about it. Surely it makes more sense, at least to some extent, to take life as it comes, to make the best of the opportunities which come our way rather than to resent it if we don't get to lead the life we feel entitled to. We only have one life!

I was brought up to consider three passages from the Bible with regard to divine providence and the wisdom of accepting the reality of Who is truly in charge. I'm going to take them in reverse order. This one from Luke 12. Jesus *spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall*

be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. The context is that two brothers have asked Jesus to arbitrate between them over a will. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Food for thought in a materialistic society which is apt to disregard the things that really matter.

My second passage is one I used to tease archdeacons with. The old ministry review forms included the question, What do you expect to be doing next year? I would reply quoting James 4^{13ff}: *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.* The Archdeacon would laugh, but it is a serious point. We have our plans, we draw up our strategies, but we need to recognise that they are always provisional. Many, many years ago we had a preacher at St John's who preached to us outside the church while Halling Fire Brigade dealt with the smouldering beam within. He warned us not to be pressurised into drawing up over prescriptive plans and strategies. He pointed out that, in the Gospels, Jesus travels over three years in the general direction of Jerusalem and the Cross, but there is very little evidence of a detailed itinerary over the course of those three years. He is always ready to change what appear to be His plans in order to preach the Gospel, feed God's people, quieten storms, deal with demons, attend to the needs of the sick and the bereaved and to those of His own disciples.

The most important of these three passages is perhaps Matthew 6^{33&34}: ³³*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* We don't have to worry about the rest, because, as Jesus says, God knows all our needs. Roger.

From the Registers

Funeral:
30th January

Jean Mitchell

Upper Bush

Malcolm Curnow RIP

Parishioners were sorry to hear of the death of Malcolm Curnow on January 16th. Malcolm was always very active in the life of the Church and the wider community. He was a long term member of Cuxton Parish Council. He served on the Parochial Church Council and as churchwarden for many years. He undertook the offices of sacristan and server, supporting our public worship. Malcolm was also our hall manager for very many years. He put in long hours of work for the Church. He had many skills and a deep commitment.

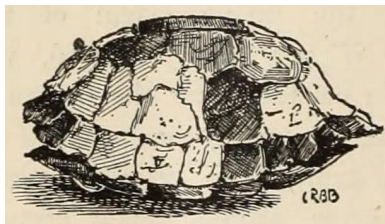
Malcolm's wife Doris was a valued member of the choir at St Michael's and his son Laurence ably assisted Malcolm in many of the practical tasks which he undertook. They are all three sadly missed.

Peter Lingham RIP

We were also sad to learn of the death of Peter Lingham on 9th January. Over the course of his long life, Peter had served Halling well. He was a member and sometime chairman of Halling Parish Council. He was a member of the band of local people who made possible the construction of the Jubilee Hall in place of the closed St Laurence Church. Peter was involved in several voluntary associations and was a supporter of our Church, including supplying us with corn for Harvest and a tree for Christmas.

Quotation

R H Tawney on human equality. "Sealed against the majesty of God, all were equally insignificant. Against the goodness of God, all were equally sinful. In taking the outward material form of bread and wine, all equally received the life of God himself."



Laud's Tortoise...

Roger was kind enough to send me an article about the bus that used to run from Chatham Town centre up Magpie Hall Road, close to where I lived as a child. The bus used to struggle with the steep gradient of the road and if the bus was full (as it often was in those days) a pedestrian could probably have kept pace with it quite easily!

19th-century drawing of Archbishop William Laud's tortoise. Reproduced from *The Church of England* by HDM Spence-Jones, 1898 Photograph: archive.org

Those of you who know Chatham as it was might remember the pet shop at the top of the High Street close to the Luton Arches. On my eighth birthday, my Dad and I went there to buy a tortoise as my present. I chose a handsome little Greek tortoise (*Testudo graeca*) with a yellow and black shell. He (and you can tell by the shape of the shell – a male tortoise's shell is concave on the bottom, whereas a female's is flat) cost ten shillings and part of the treat was the bus ride home! I think the tortoise might have got there faster on his own.

I kept that little tortoise for about another forty years but when we moved house I reluctantly passed him on to an aunt, who housed about a dozen or so of these enigmatic animals in her huge, well-ventilated greenhouse. Unfortunately, male tortoises are not gentle with their would-be mates and my frustrated reptilian Romeo caused quite a few problems for my aunt's settled little chelonian community. She subsequently transferred the old roué to a tortoise sanctuary near Canterbury where, by all accounts, he settled in quite well.

Those memories, long forgotten, came back to me recently while I was researching the long history of our little church of St. Michael and All Angels. Many of you will know that one of St. Michael's more

remarkable rectors was William Laud. Already enjoying the patronage of Lord Devonshire (garnered by conducting, somewhat against his own principles, the marriage of the said lord to his then-mistress, a divorcée, Penelope, Lady Rich), Laud was appointed to St. Michael's by Richard Neile, Bishop of Rochester, who had previously introduced Laud to the court of King James I.

Laud's tenure at St. Michael's was quite brief, lasting only six months: as one of his successors, Canon Robert Shaw, noted, Laud was: "*instituted 25 May 1610, resigned Nov^r. same year on account of the unhealthiness of the Place...*" The unhealthy "Place" was Cuxton's parsonage, which used to be where the Scout Hall is today, and in Laud's time was surrounded by a mosquito-infested swamp. As a result, it seemed that the unfortunate rector contracted the "Kentish Ague", symptoms of which suggested a form of malaria. The little parish of Cuxton was only a stepping stone for the ambitious and well-connected William Laud, however. In 1611, Laud (then aged 38) became Chaplain to the King and in the same year, president of St. John's College Oxford. In July 1628, he became Bishop of London and in 1633, Archbishop of Canterbury, thus becoming all-powerful in both church and state. The eleven years of personal rule by Charles I and the suspension of Parliament gave Laud the opportunity to bend the Church of England to the orthodoxy he wanted. He brought an end to reforms within the Church of England that he believed had already gone too far by the early 1630s. This approach angered the growing Puritan faction who believed Laud to be too "Catholic" in his approach.

Laud had already established himself as a ruthless and often cruel champion of church orthodoxy: as a judge, he showed a tyrannical spirit both in the Star Chamber and the High-Commission court, threatening one defendant (Felton, the assassin of the Duke of Buckingham, an ally of Laud's) with the rack, and arranged an especially cruel sentence in the Star Chamber in June 1630 for Puritan preacher and pamphleteer Alexander Leighton (who was whipped, branded, and had his ears and nose severed). In 1637, three Puritans, John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne, were arrested on the orders of Laud and were convicted of seditious libel. Their ears were cut off and they were branded on the cheeks for writing pamphlets criticising Laud's beliefs and decisions.

Archbishop Laud's stubbornness and cruelty eventually caught up with him, his many enemies conspiring to have him found guilty of treason and subsequently beheaded on Tower Hill on 10 January 1645. All in all, it seems that William Laud was a thoroughly unpleasant man, yet one who was also transparently honest, incorruptible and unquestionably brave and steadfast in his own beliefs. He also did many good things, founding the Oxford University Press and commissioning many fine buildings and library facilities there.

And it was during his time at Oxford that William Laud acquired a tortoise - the first recorded pet tortoise in England. In July 1628, when Laud became the Bishop of London and moved to Fulham Palace, he took his tortoise with him. On 18 September 1633, Laud relocated to Lambeth Palace, but not without incident. "*My coach, horses, and men sank to the bottom of the Thames in the ferry-boat, which was over laden,*" he wrote in his diary, "*but I praise God for it, I lost neither man nor horse.*" Nor, it seems, his tortoise. Laud's pet long outlived its owner, quietly residing at Lambeth Palace through the English civil war, the Interregnum, the reigns of Charles II, James II, William III, Queen Anne, and George I and II. Unfortunately, the Thames burst its banks on 22 March 1753 and sadly, Laud's long-lived tortoise was drowned (although other accounts suggest that it met its end at the hands of a careless gardener).

Lambeth Palace's then resident, Archbishop Thomas Herring, promptly reinstated a palace chelonian. Laud's tortoise was a Greek one (like mine) but the newcomer was probably a red-footed tortoise (*Geochelone carbonaria*) from the Caribbean. "*I have put a tortoise in my garden here*", Herring wrote to his friend the Lord Chancellor and the 1st Earl of Hardwicke, Philip Yorke. "*I hope he will like my coleworts*

(a sort of kale) as well as those of St. Kits, his native country. His house is a curious dome, & painted by the best hand in the universe. I have no foreboding from the circumstance that the first Archbishop that introduced a tortoise here, lost his head."

By the 1820s, it appears that the remains of Laud's tortoise were on display in the Palace, hanging near a chimney in the library, but went into storage. The shell was rediscovered by Arthur Benson (Archbishop Laud's biographer) in the 1880s and is now on display in the Lambeth Palace Guard Room!

So say what you like about Archbishop Laud, he couldn't have been all bad.

He did have a tortoise, after all...

Keith Hodges.

How Will You Celebrate Easter?

Easter comes early this year on 31st March and this reminded me of a clergyman, who, some years ago, was being encouraged by his congregation to celebrate Easter with a service of Holy Communion at dawn. He thought he would try it out one year when Easter was early and dawn was late.

Just before I came to this parish, Cuxton celebrated Easter for a year or two with a dawn service, held in the open air in what we used to call the cows' field. I understand that some people found this very meaningful. It was, after all, very early on a spring morning that the women found the stone rolled away from the cave, the tomb empty and met Jesus Christ risen from the dead.

You can't however, do everything. Easter is one of those occasions when every confirmed member of the Church of England is expected to receive Holy Communion and people have to be given the opportunity to do so. So it was also necessary to provide later services and to provide for people who live in all three parts of the parish.

In the old days, rectors had an additional, more mercenary, reason for wanting to see the Church full at Easter. They were allowed to keep the collection on that Sunday as part of their annual income!

My favourite service in the Church's year is the Easter Midnight. When we introduced this service in the parish, we held it at Halling, partly with a view to balancing the fact that the Christmas Midnight was always held at Cuxton.

The service begins late on Easter Eve by lighting and blessing a bonfire. *The light shines in the darkness.* From this fire is lit the Paschal Candle,

which is also blessed and then carried into the totally dark church. Even the sanctuary lamp candle will have been extinguished after the Maundy Thursday Eucharist. (Jesus and His disciples, after the Last Supper sang a hymn [probably Psalm 118] and went out into the pitch darkness of Gethsemane, where the Lord would be arrested and taken away to be crucified.) However each member of the congregation is waiting in the church with an unlit candle. The minister enters holding aloft the burning Paschal Candle singing *Christ is our light*, to which all respond, *Thanks be to God*. The candles all the people are holding are lit from the Paschal Candle, each of us receiving the light of Christ, sharing it with our neighbour, illuminating this dark world. In the course of the service, the light of the Paschal Candle ignites the candles at the lectern from whence the Word of God is proclaimed and the altar where we celebrate the Holy Communion in which we proclaim His Death until He comes again. There are wonderful words of praise. There are readings from the Old Testament which prophesied the coming of Jesus and all that He would accomplish. We renew the vows we made (or our godparents made on our behalf) at our Baptism. Some years we baptised new Christians at this service – a great joy.

Romans 6: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*
⁵*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

It troubled me somewhat that, having introduced the Easter Midnight, it was no longer possible to hold an Easter sunrise service. Some churches effectively do both. They commence on Easter Eve and spend the whole night in worship until dawn. That might work best when Easter is late and dawn is early.

The classic Church of England celebration of Easter would be (as it is every Sunday) Mattins fairly early in the morning, followed by the Litany, then Holy Communion and ending the day with Evensong. Although this is the pattern in the Prayer Book I have my doubts that it has ever been widely followed anywhere.

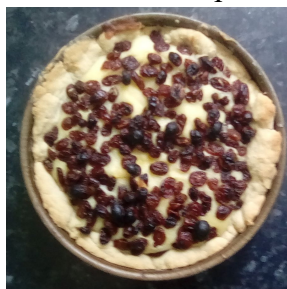
But what about what we do for Easter outside Church? As a secular celebration, Easter seems to be following in the footsteps of Christmas. There are Easter trees. The Easter bunny seems to have acquired some of the characteristics of Father Christmas. The season's merchandise appears in the shops long before the season itself. Lent and Holy Week seem to be going the way of Advent, not so much a time of preparation for the celebration of a sacred mystery as an opportunity to enjoy in advance some of the shallower aspects of the festivities we associate with the season.

A good thing or a bad? Do hot cross buns, Easter eggs, Easter egg hunts, Easter trees and Easter bunnies remind people of Easter and its importance or do they distract us from the true importance of the Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Hot cross buns and Easter eggs are on the shelves in the supermarkets before Christmas is even over. The egg as a symbol of resurrection is obvious. Some people boil real eggs and decorate them beautifully. Most of us indulge in chocolate eggs. The symbolism of hot cross buns appears equally obvious. A few people, however, associate hot cross buns with the much older (and sinful custom) of making cakes for the pagan goddess the Queen of Heaven which some people call

Ishtar, whose name might have given rise to our word Easter for the spring festival. It's not something I worry about! If we eat hot cross buns reflecting on the crucified Saviour, that is a very different thing from pagans making cakes as part of their spring festival to honour their goddess.

I had an idea that the Easer bunny was also associated with the pagan Eostre, supposedly a variant on the name Ishtar, but it appears that the Christians got there first. As far back as the Middle Ages, Christians associated the hare with the miracle of life. It was only in Victorian times, that scholars pointed up the possible pagan connection.



We have a wonderful Easter Egg Hunt each year on Easter Monday around the Rectory, the Church and the church hall.

I was very pleased to discover the recipe for this delicious pudding pie and to make it. I can let you have the recipe if you like. Although I believe we ate it all the year round at home, I think that there is a tradition of eating it in Lent. As with other festivals, special cakes feature largely in the traditional Easter fare. It is a project of mine one year to make a simnel cake – a rich fruit cake with a layer of marzipan in the middle and marzipanned all over. Traditionally, there are eleven marzipan balls, representing the apostles minus Judas. I have the means to make the marzipan. When I was acquiring the ingredients for the pudding pie, I made a mistake and bought ground almonds instead of ground rice. So what's stopping me?

We also enjoy meeting together with family and friends for Easter dinner – at which lamb is normally on the menu for all sorts of reasons.

So how will you celebrate Easter this year?

Jokes

What do you call a man who can't stand?
What do call a man with a spade on his head?
What do call a man with a car on his head?

Neil
Doug
Jack

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I hope that you are well and coping with the harsher days of winter. The days *are* getting longer, the bulbs are showing with snowdrops and heathers already blooming. It will soon be Spring. Please carry on putting out scraps for all avians - and water too! We heard of a very kind man in Upper Halling who boils up all his vegetable and fruit peelings and other scraps, mashes then and puts on his bird table. There's a mad scramble and his garden is filled with all sorts of birds - even a waxwing apparently! Of course the very best way to attract birds to your garden is to put out food and plant shrubs with berries - Holly, Cotoneaster, Skimmia in particular as you human beans don't eat their berries, while we avians will certainly be tempted by your currant bushes as well as raspberries and strawberries.

We have been reconnoitring for a new summer roost and think we have found a good one in the strip abutting the Close in Cuxton. Being on the edge of Six Acre Wood, it gives us a good view over the village and no cats to chase us! There are more squirrels and foxes though. We can see across the village and the rectory though we won't be able to see the church when the trees are in full leaf. We are also considering a large elm near Court farm shop in Upper Halling.

Well the new kebab place is open in Cuxton. Sadly for us, but happily for you, there has been no mess for avian foraging, or perhaps foxes get there first?

The new foxes, fending for themselves now, are quite reckless in their desperation for food. They are out and about in daylight hours searching for food in the streets. New baby fox cubs will soon arrive, making adults more desperate for food. It will soon be time to put out old bits of leather (e.g. that odd shoe or glove) for cubs to chew and play with. Avians are nesting, laying and hatching eggs and similarly desperate for food. Please remember us - scraps aren't wasted! A sprinkle of hot chilli powder will deter rodents but we don't mind it at all. We do our best to help the recycling effort!

We have two eggs. Philippa keeps them warm and looks forward to having our squabs to name, feed and fledge. Then it will almost be summer! Food will be more plentiful. We will have a new summer roost to make our own and we shall all have new sights and sounds to enjoy as the year moves on.

Coo coo.

Halling Memories

By Mary Smith

How Halling has changed from long ago

Whether for better, I really don't know

It was safer for children outdoors to play
With a sandwich and drink we were gone

all day

No parents with cars to take us to
school,

We walked in all weathers, that was the
rule.

Public transport was on the whole fine

Trains and buses mainly on time

Not forgetting the ferry, what can I say

I think the fare was a tanner each way.

Now for the shops, we had quite a few

Selling sweets Mrs Roots, Billy Roads
mending boots

Fried fish Mr Gore, up the hill general
store,

Butchers, hardware, post office too.

There were two dentists, two doctors to
see to our ills

The dentist took teeth and the doctor
gave pills

No waiting to see them, we went the
same day

How different now, what more can I say.
In abundance were pubs, six of them and
two clubs

Now only just two remain
Five bells, Homeward Bound can only be
found

And the Bolshie Club alongside Stake
Lane.

We've lost the cement factory, but on the
plus side

There are lots of new houses where
people reside
Where dust and grey buildings covered
the site
Many men worked there by day and by
night
In the heart of the village the Church
stands proud
Where baptisms funerals and weddings
are vowed
The bells use to ring in the old days

To call us to Church to sing the Lord's
praise,

It's nice to look back to the things that
we had
Perhaps I remember the good not the bad
Time doesn't stand still we've found to
our cost
No point in regretting the things that
we've lost.

Bring & Share Lunch for BHF

On Sunday 4th February, we enjoyed another Bring and Share Lunch in the church hall. As always, there was an abundance of good food and Christian fellowship. You will be pleased to know that we raised £235.52 for the British Heart Foundation.

Saturday 16 March 3.00 concert St John's	
<p>Saturday 30th March 10.30 - 12.00</p> <p>St John's Halling</p> <p>Children's Spring Festival</p> <p>Activities, Craft, Music & Prayer</p>	<p>Monday 1st April 2.00</p> <p>St Michael's Church, Hall & Rectory Grounds</p> <p>Easter Egg Hunt</p> <p>Plus crafts, raffle & refreshments</p> <p>£2.00</p>

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2024 - A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE!

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, HALLING

FRIDAY 1ST MARCH 10.30 am – 11.30 am

Meeting to Elect Churchwardens (formerly Vestry Meeting) & Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting

These will take place on Saturday 27th April at 10.00 at the Church Hall Cuxton. If you are already on the Electoral Roll, you need do nothing this year. If not and you would like to be on the Electoral Roll (and are 16 or older, baptized, resident in the parish or a regular worshipper in one of our churches), please speak to Joyce Haselden. You need to be confirmed and a least 21 to be a churchwarden and 16 and confirmed to be on the PCC. Unless you are under 18, you cannot stand for election to the PCC until you have been on the Electoral Roll for at least six months. Please consider prayerfully whether you ought to stand for either of these offices or to be a sidesman.



Tommy's Talking Points

Life wasn't as much fun in January as it usually is. Although we didn't realize it at the time, the problems probably started in December or even before. It was like Master was running down. Our walks and runs got slower and shorter. He was less eager to get out in the mornings into the countryside and he became even clumsier and more awkward than he usually is. We managed OK, however, though some people did notice that during the Christmas services he had trouble climbing the pulpit steps and coming down them – two events which quite a lot of people prefer not to be too far apart. He couldn't summon up the enthusiasm to climb St Michael's tower in order to put up the St George's flag for Christmas – which proved to be just as well because he certainly couldn't have got up there to get it down in January. (If you are wondering what happened to St John's union flag, it blew down in one of the storms we had and is in the church awaiting rehanging.)

It was in January that things really went down hill for Master. He lost the strength in his arms and legs. They were stiff and painful and he became very breathless. He was no longer able to pick me up or to take me very far. He couldn't get on his bike. We couldn't even have tinned ham for tea because the tin opener defeated his feeble muscles. He said it was worst when he went to bed and came to feel that there was an irony in the lines from that much-loved evening hymn, *Teach me to live, that I may dread the grave as little as my bed.*

With the tremendous help he received from so many people, for which he is immensely grateful, he was able to get to the various places he had to go and only one service had to be cancelled. He was forbidden, however, to attempt the pulpit steps. People naturally didn't want him to risk hurting himself and even he had to admit that it would have been a distraction for the congregation if he had fallen down them.

He tried to blame all this on the weather, the dark winter days, the stress of planning for the future (which he should know better than to worry about) and anything else he could think of, hoping and praying that it would clear up on its own. Meanwhile it got a bit worse every day and he got sufficiently concerned to check the whereabouts of his life assurance policy, to write an up to date will (and, importantly, to destroy the old one) and to give to the relevant people instructions for his funeral. I hope you like *Onward Christian Soldiers*. He's even specified different psalms depending on whether or not he dies before he makes three score years and ten. He thinks he might rather enjoy the funeral actually. Some people felt sad when he decided that he should get on with these jobs, but, as Christians, we don't have to be afraid of dying and, while we are sad when our loved ones die in the Lord because we shall miss their company here on earth, we know that we shall see them again one day in a better place if we have the same faith. Besides, he pointed out, it makes things much easier for those who are left if people leave their affairs in order and it is best to put them in order while still in reasonable health.

Anyway, at last he got desperate enough to seek medical help. It took a while to get a diagnosis. Trust him not to have something straightforward. Once they knew what it was, however, he was prescribed some magic pills and has been better every day since he started taking them. This is real answer to prayer. Walks are nearly back to normal and he intends to try running as soon as the weather improves. We have had tinned ham for tea. A fellow dog walker said that it looks like he has been given a new pair of legs. Master thanks everyone for all your prayers and other forms of support and for the offers of support which on this occasion he didn't need to take up (or was too stubborn to do so).

January was far from totally without fun, however. I get a lot of fuss made of me in church and the various social events we attend. The birds are singing their spring songs. The woodpeckers have begun hammering in the woods. Snowdrops are blooming. The first crocuses are showing in the churchyard. Buds on daffodils and other spring flowers are on the verge of opening. The winter has really been very mild and some plants are still flourishing from last year which would have been expected to have been killed by the frost. I wonder what the weather will bring over these next few weeks. According to the rhyme, *If Candlemas be fair and bright, Winter will have another fight*. Candlemas was fair and bright and warm. Let's hope the rhyme is wrong! Yesterday, we saw two deer in Bush Valley. Today we went for a run!