

# Parish of Cuxton and Halling



November 2022

30p

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

Services November 2023			
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> November All Saints Day (said service)	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton	Revelation 7 vv 2-12 p1238 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968	
Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November All Souls Day (sung services)	9.30 Holy Communion Halling 11.00 Holy Communion Cuxton	Romans 5 vv 1-11 p1132 John 5 vv 19-25 p1069	
5 <sup>th</sup> November Trinity 22 Fourth before Advent Blythwood Care Shoeboxes	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Micah 3 vv 5-12 p932 I Thessalonians 2 vv 9-13 p1186 Matthew 24 vv 1-14 p993	
12th November Trinity 23 3rd Before Advent Remembrance Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton & Act of Remembrance 10.50 Holy Communion Halling & Act of Remembrance	Micah 4 vv 1-5 p932 Philippians 4 vv 4-9 p1181 Matthew 5 vv 43-48 p970	
19th November Trinity 24 2nd Before Advent	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Zephaniah 1vv 7-18 p944 I Thessalonians 5 vv 1-11 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 14-30 p994	
26th November Last Sunday after Trinity Christ the King	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Ezekiel 34 vv 11-24 p865 Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1173 Matthew 25 vv 31-46 p995	
3rd December Advent Sunday Year B Gift Services	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 64 vv 1-9 p750 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 Mark 13 vv 24-37 p1019	
Holy Communion on Wednesdays at Cuxton at 9.30 am		Holy Communion on Thursdays at Halling at 9.30 am	
1 <sup>st</sup> November All Saints	Revelation 7 vv 2-17 Matthew 5 vv 1-12	2 <sup>nd</sup> November All Souls	Romans 5 vv 1-11 p1132 John 5 vv 19-25 p1069
8 <sup>th</sup> November	Ezekiel 34 vv 1-16 John 10 vv 7-16	9 <sup>th</sup> November	Daniel 12 vv 1-4 John 11 vv 17-27
15 <sup>th</sup> November	Ecclesiastes 6 vv 1-12 Luke 18 vv 18-30	16 <sup>th</sup> November	Ecclesiastes 7 vv 1-29 Luke 18 vv 35-43
22 <sup>nd</sup> November	Hosea 5 v8 – 6v6 Matthew 9 vv 27-38	23 <sup>rd</sup> November	Hosea 8 vv 1-14 Matthew 10 vv 1-15
29 <sup>th</sup> November	Hosea 11 vv 1-11 Matthew 12 vv 1-21	30 <sup>th</sup> November S Andrew	Romans 10 vv 9-21 Matthew 4 vv 18-22

Copy December Magazine: 10<sup>th</sup> November 8.30 am Rectory

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### Quotations to Savour

**Advertising** may be described as the science of arresting human intelligence long enough to get money from it. Stephen Leacock.

**Professionals** built the *Titanic*, **amateurs** built the the Ark. Anon.

The **Christian ideal** has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried. G K Chesterton.

An **atheist** is a man with no invisible means of support.

It's an interesting view of **atheism**, as a sort of *crutch* for those who can't stand the reality of God. Tom Stoppard.

St John's Draw: £5 each Mr Johnson, Mrs Watts & Mrs G Mitchell.



### Keeping in Mind

It is often pointed out that November is a month for remembering. On the first we have All Saints Day when we celebrate all God's saints. On the second there is All Souls Day – the commemoration of the faithful departed. The fifth sees Guy Fawkes Night. The eleventh is

Armistice Day and the nearest Sunday to that date is Remembrance Sunday.

This year, as it often is, the Friends of Kent Churches Ride & Stride was for me a trip down memory lane. According to the author David Goodhart, there are *somewhere people* who *attribute a large part of their identities to their place of origin or local communities and are less likely to move and anywhere people* who *form an identity based on their life experiences rather than a place of origin*. It won't surprise those of you who know me that I am very much a *somewhere person*. It was not planned, but it is unsurprising that I have lived nearly all my adult life and attempted to fulfil my vocation in a place about half way between my two childhood homes and just about within sight of the church in which I was christened and the cathedral in which I was confirmed and ordained both deacon and priest. Apart from my time at college, I have always lived and worked in Kent and never really considered living anywhere else.

So, when I go out from here, whether on my bike or walking, I find myself reminded of many things from my childhood right up until the present day and, more important still, many people. My life has been richly blessed and I have much for which to be thankful. I can't say that I deserve to have received so much in the way of blessing, but I am grateful for God's grace in caring for me. I hope that all of you reading this are also conscious of what you have to be thankful for and are confident in bringing any troubles you may face to God in prayer - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you* (I Peter 5<sup>7</sup>).

My first port of call was Cobham where I arrived slightly too early to be welcomed by the welcomers. (I had to make an early start in order to be sure of being back to take a wedding at 2.00.) At Sole Street, there was a very nice lady

just opening up, with whom I had a pleasant chat. I didn't see anyone at Meopham or Longfield, but this is where I break off the account of my itinerary and think about All Saints. For some people, All Saints is about celebrating those Christian heroes and celebrities whom we recognise by putting the word *Saint* before their name. Cobham and Longfield are dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, who, having been delivered from possession, supported Jesus and the apostles in their ministry and who was one of the first witnesses of the Resurrection. Meopham is dedicated (like Halling) to St John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming of Christ. Looked at this way, All Saints Day fittingly comes close to the end of the Christian year and celebrates people who we believe, by the grace of God, had a special part to play in His plan for the salvation of the world.

There is another way – a more biblical way – of understanding what is meant by a saint. In the Bible, all Christians are called saints. We are sanctified through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is itself a gift of God's grace to us. It is through faith that we are enabled to do good works, not the other way round!

The saints then are not just the special people to whom these churches I visited are dedicated, but also their current congregations (some of whom I met and enjoyed Christian fellowship with) and all those generations of Christians down through the ages who have heard the Word of God and believed in Him.

**O ALMIGHTY** God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

From Longfield to St Nicholas Southfleet. This is where my father sang in the choir and where, later on, I, as a child, was taken by my mother. One year on the bike ride, I pointed out to the welcomer the place where I used to sit in those days. She asked me why I don't worship there now. I explained that I am expected to go to the churches of which I am rector!

There was nobody at St Nicholas in attendance this year, but I did have a look for my great grandmother's grave. I remember going there with my grandmother and planting forget-me-nots. But there's no stone and there are no forget-me-nots there now, and both my grandmother and my great grandmother are in Heaven. You don't need an earthly memorial when your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. On this ride, I was reminded of a number of people *whom I love but see no longer*. I trust that they are in Heaven and that one day I shall see them again.

The Commemoration of All Souls may be controversial. We can obviously give thanks for the lives of the faithful departed, but can we, should we pray for them? The more Protestant belief is that people must decide whether or not to follow Jesus before they die. If they have put their faith in Him and repented of their sins before they die, they are in Heaven and have no need of our prayers. If they have rejected Jesus right up until their last breath, they have gone to a place where no prayers can help them. The more Catholic approach is that our prayers can help the faithful departed on their final journey into the fulness of God's Presence, indeed that they need our prayers. After Jesus had died on the Cross, but before He rose from the dead, He descended into Hell and *preached unto the spirits in prison*. Maybe, there is a way, through the mystery of God's infinite mercy, to bridge even the unbridgeable gulf, which God's justice sets between the saved and the damned.

What do I think? I think that there is a great deal which we cannot understand about this matter. God doesn't desire the death of a sinner. He never gives up on us. He is always seeking the way to bring home those who are lost. It is quite natural to remember our loved ones in prayer, even after they have died. *I believe in the communion of saints*. We are one with all Christian people on earth and in Heaven, united in love for one another, united in the love of God. We dwell in time. They dwell in God's eternity. The prayers I might say after someone has died are eternally effective, not restricted in their effectiveness to the time in which I pray them.

On the other hand, I should not like to encourage any complacency. There is a vital decision to be

made. Are you on the Lord's side or are you not? You will not be able to halt between two opinions indefinitely. I pray that you make the right decision here and now. I also pray that you are going to the right place eternally even though you may be already gone temporarily.

Anyway, I couldn't resist being a bit naughty and visiting next the building that used to be Southfleet Congregational Church. It is now a house and I got into conversation with the people who now live in it. I told them that I went to Sunday School there and also attended evening service with my grandmother, who sometimes played the piano for them. So I was going to record it as a church, even though it no longer is! (I thought, but didn't say to the new residents, that the people I had worshipped there with when I was a child had been faithful in their generation and should be respected for that. It's not their fault if subsequent generations failed to meet regularly for worship, witness and service to the community, and for that reason the church which had been there for them had ceased to be.) I was able to tell the new people a bit about the building and its history – the pews, the organ, the coke stove, the hall and Sunday School, sales and strawberry teas – good times.

Later on, I made a stop at the building which used to be Northfleet Congregational Church (Dover Road) where my great aunt used to worship, but there was no-one there and no sign of life at all.

At St Botolph's Northfleet, I met another cyclist about to set off (having just worked a night shift!) and we were blessed by the vicar before carrying on.

Almost next door is the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption. That was the church my great aunt's husband and children belonged to. The only time I ever attended a service there was with my mother when we went to the funeral of one of my father's cousins. I don't think I had ever met her when she was alive physically, but we were all there in that *one communion and fellowship*. It turned out that the priest was a man I had known at Orpington and worked with in the Orpington Council of Churches. It was good to see him again and enjoy Christian fellowship together.

I can't say that there hadn't been tensions caused by the allegiance of various members of my family to different Christian congregations. Another one of my grandmother's brothers in law was pastor at Pier Road Pentecostal Church (which I missed visiting because of the great speed with which I passed through Rosherville to Gravesend). But the point is that we are all Christians, whichever denomination of the Church we belong to and it is right that we remember our Lord's Commandment that we love one another as He has loved us and that we pray with Him that we may be one. We may disagree among ourselves about all manner of things, but the important thing is that we believe in the Son of God. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. As we humbly await enlightenment, we ought never to forget that the most excellent way is love, self-sacrificial love.

Which brings us to Guy Fawkes. My earliest firework memory is of my mother, my baby sister and me watching through the french windows as my father battled appalling weather to put on a somewhat limited pyrotechnic display in our garden at Betsham. In these days of global warming, 5<sup>th</sup> November is tee shirt and shorts weather, but 'twas not ever thus. I remember family fireworks at my uncle's at Rainham. We were less safety conscious then and we children were allowed to handle sparklers and Roman candles. Rockets were launched from milk bottles. Catherine wheels hardly ever revolved as they should, either sticking or coming off the nail they were fixed with altogether. When you lit the blue touch paper and retired, there was also that doubt about what you should do next if nothing happened. Along with other organisations, our church at Wigmore decided that public displays were safer and better value. So that was how we celebrated Guy Fawkes thereafter.

I don't think that we were all that conscious of the fact that we were supposedly celebrating the foiling of a Catholic plot to blow up our Protestant King James and Parliament. If they had succeeded, however, the plotters would have brought about immense loss of life, including killing most of the country's leaders, wrecked Westminster Abbey as well as the parliament buildings and damaged most buildings for a third of a mile around, plus starting a war which could

not obviously have led to a speedy victory for anybody and therefore would have resulted in a prolonged period of anarchy and chaos. (Think 9/11).

We've mostly learned to live together and to respect one another – Catholics and Protestants – in this country, but the Gunpowder Plot is an effective reminder of what can happen when the powerful motivations with which our faith inspires us are perverted by our sinful human nature. Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators were religious and political terrorists. Our government's response was brutal – torturing and executing those responsible in a particularly cruel manner, and also persecuting perfectly innocent Roman Catholics. There are ruthless terrorists in the world today and brutally oppressive governments. Maybe, Fireworks Night, as well as being fun, should remind us of why tolerance is so vitally important.

From Northfleet, through Gravesend, Chalk and Higham to Cliffe. Now I was in the territory of our own Strood Deanery, where we clergy meet together as a fellowship supportive of one another, and where sometimes we all combine together for worship or for a social event or in order to achieve some purpose generally beneficial to the whole community.

Having cycled round the old haunts of my father's family, I was now in the territory of my mother's family with memories of staying with grandparents, the places we visited and the things we did. I concluded my list of churches visited with All Saints Frindsbury, where my parents, grandparents and sister were married and I was christened, joining thereby those who, by God's grace, *are knit together [God's] elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of [His] Son Christ our Lord*. In the words of T S Elliot, *In my end is my beginning*.

Remembrance? All those places I visited had their war memorials. As with most families, several of my parents' and grandparents' generations had fought in either or both of the world wars. Those who had not had experienced life on the home front. Unlike many families, I don't think that we lost any close relatives to the fighting. Those on the home front had experienced the deprivations

of war time life, the danger from air raids and, nearer the coast, shellfire, and anxiety for loved ones on the battlefields or at sea. My mother and my uncle were among the children evacuated to South Wales. Those fighting in uniform had experienced many horrors, including the deaths of close friends, danger to themselves and the requirement to perform acts against their fellow human beings entirely inconsistent with their natural instincts in peacetime. I can't tell you much about any of that. It was not something they talked about, except that they fervently hoped that our generation would not repeat what had happened twice in the twentieth century. I can tell you that my middle name is after a fallen friend of my father. Otherwise, I'm restricted to tales about the appalling conditions at Crowborough Camp during the first war, the clean up that took place before the official inspection which was undone as soon as the inspectors had gone, and the difficulty of getting from here to there because our train ran into Tunbridge Wells Central and the Crowborough train went from, Tunbridge Wells West, necessitating a fairly quick march if it was not to be missed. I can tell you that, in the opinion of one who knew from experience, BBC's *Dad's Army* was an accurate depiction of the Home Guard and that some signallers were

ironically among the last to know of the Armistice because they couldn't see the next semaphore station through the November fog. Otherwise, wartime experiences were too terrible to be talked about casually.

*Give peace in our time, O Lord.*

*Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.*

We don't get many cyclists visiting either of our churches for the FKC Ride & Stride. I think they don't like the main road. So we didn't open up Halling at all this year and, when I went to say Evensong at Cuxton at 5.00, mine and Matthew's names were the only ones on the list of visitors. Just as I was locking up, however, a young girl arrived with her grandmother, having walked from Meopham. The grandmother was actually from Northfleet and a member of St Botolph's congregation and lived in Dover Road. She even had a relative who had worshipped at Pier Road Pentecostal Church and might have known my Uncle Ted. So we finished up by sharing fellowship and comparing notes. A good time was had by all.

Roger.

#### Ride & Stride

Thank all of you who supported this event. We made £485 which will be shared equally between our parish and Friends of Kent Churches.

#### Magazine Subscriptions.

Unfortunately, on 8<sup>th</sup> September, our aging parish duplicator abruptly ceased operations half way through the production of last month's issue. It is beyond economic repair and we cannot justify the cost of replacing it under current circumstances. It has therefore been decided that we shall have the magazine professionally printed. This will result in a higher quality journal, but unfortunately it will cost more to produce. We're having it printed by John Tomlin printer at Snodland. 120 years ago, the Halling Parish magazine was printed by Snodland Steam Press. So full circle in a way! We'll keep the price at 30p for the rest of this year, but it will have to go up to 60p next year or £6.00 for eleven copies. (There is no January magazine.) I'm sorry about this big jump, but it will still cost less than many church magazines and it will probably run at a loss even at that price. I hope you will still feel it is worth it and continue to subscribe. Maybe, if the production values are higher, there will be more people wanting to receive a copy. We ought to be able to have pictures again. The magazine is free on my web site <http://cuxtonandhalling.org> and I will email you free copies if you ask me to and give me your email address. Roger.

#### Church Mission Society

Thank you all those who supported our CMS lunch on 10<sup>th</sup> September. You will be pleased to know that we raised £221.50 for our link mission partners. Not everybody was able to be present and, even for those who were, the short film about our partners was difficult to hear clearly. If you send me an email, I can send you the link.

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

16<sup>th</sup> September

17<sup>th</sup> September

Lucas Willian Hughes

Charlie Ray Edward Bridge

Clay Place

The Limes

### All Souls

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> November each year, the Church commemorates the Festival of All Souls. It is a day specially set aside to remember the faithful departed. In the words of the Creed, we believe in *the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body*.

In other words, we believe that we can trust God for those whom we love but see no longer. Death is not the end, but a new beginning, a new phase of existence. Our love for them and their love for us continues within the love of God. The things we have done wrong on earth can be forgiven if we ask God in Christ. Our personality, our soul, is not extinguished by death, but finds its fulfilment in God's love. These are the kinds of thoughts to remember when we think about our loved ones who have died.

In this parish, we remember by name on All Souls Day all those whose names are in the Books of Remembrance, those whose funerals we have arranged in the last year and any other individuals we are asked to commemorate.

The All Souls services this year are on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at 9.30 am at Halling and 11.00 am at Cuxton. At both services we remember all those whose funerals we have taken in this last year and people from the parish we have heard about. If you or other members of your family or friends would like to be present at either service, you would be most welcome. If there are other names you would like remembered, please give them in writing to the Rector.

### Blythswood Care Shoe Box Appeal 2023

Since our first Shoe Box Appeal in 1993 we have sent more than 2.5 million boxes – each one different, each one personal, each one an expression of your care and kindness towards a stranger in need.

Filled with small, practical items such as toiletries, stationery, and clothing, the individually-wrapped boxes have been distributed in schools, hospitals, orphanages and care homes, and to households in very low income communities. Many have gone to people affected by the war in Ukraine. Thank you for your kindness and generosity. Your gift truly makes a difference.

We shall be collecting shoeboxes for Blythswood at our services on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

### St. John's Christmas Tree Festival

Set up from 9.00 – 12.00 am on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December. Viewing from 10.00 am – 2.00 pm Monday 18<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December and Sunday Services. To exhibit contact: Jenny Beaney 01634 241599

### **PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS**

Good day to you all. Middle of autumn already! Time flies faster even than a pigeon methinks!

I guess you are busy preparing for your December festivities. Christmas always seems a cheerful time, whatever the weather. We notice how colourful you make it - little wonder you start preparing early! We overheard folk saying how sad it is that it has all become so commercialised now. Simple pleasures, fun with family and friends, that glorious Christmas music, are probably the best ways to celebrate your festival. Enjoy making your puddings and cakes but please don't forget that we like dried fruit, nuts, suet and breadcrumbs too!

We have now moved into our winter quarters - the Amazon box in a disused garage. It is dry and we make it warm and cosy. I know that many of you are struggling with rising prices but don't forget that a smile costs nothing and you will find that if you smile at each other and share a cheering few words, that will be returned to you in a warming way. Meanwhile don't forget to eat and heat.

As you know, we avians don't do much celebrating. We enjoy finding good food and enjoying each other's company. That's good reason to celebrate enough I hope you'll agree. We don't exchange gifts as I know you do. Your littl'uns can be quite demanding I suspect which I really find quite sad. We overheard one family recently discussing "Santa". Philippa was quite alarmed as she thought they meant "Satan" ...an easy mistake perhaps. This Santa was apparently a nominee for the provider of lavish gifts - mobile phones, tablets, drones for example. There seems to be quite a lore about this mythical Santa - his reindeer, sleigh and workshop. We find it very puzzling when a littl'un's common sense is so beguiled. Philippa tells me you have other tales to confuse children's understanding of the real world - like the tooth fairy for instance. Sigh. I shall never understand human beans, but will always be grateful for your generosity to avians. We overheard a couple discussing their childhood Christmases when items such as colouring books and pencils, annuals, and maybe a doll or an Airfix kit, a football were greatly prized. There may also have been a few sweets - a Selection box if very lucky. Hasn't your world changed! As the couple acknowledged many children got far less - and still do. I wish you a warm autumn and joy in your festive preparations. Coo coo.

***Reverend Robert William Shaw: A Remarkable Rector (Part 1)...***

On the south-eastern wall of the chancel in St. Michaels and All Angels Church is a brass plaque which reads:

“+ IN MEMORY OF  
THE REVEREND ROBERT WILLIAM SHAW M.A. FOR 42  
YEARS RECTOR OF THIS PARISH WHO DIED DECEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>  
1873 AGED 69 YEARS HE WAS FIRST HONORARY  
CANON OF ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL AND FOR SOME  
YEARS RURAL DEAN OF THE DEANERY OF ROCHESTER  
HAVING BEEN THE FIRST WHO HELD THAT OFFICE”

The plaque somewhat underestimates the good Reverend's contribution to the local community. Indeed, the Reverend Robert William Shaw could be considered to be one of Cuxton's greatest benefactors and was also one of St. Michael and All Angels' longest-serving Rectors. Born at Yalding in October 1804, Robert Shaw was one of the ten children of Sir John Gregory Shaw, the fifth Baronet Shaw of Eltham and his wife, Theodosia. He was educated at Eton College and subsequently graduated from Christ Church, Oxford University, with a Master of Arts (M.A.). He married Sophia Cornwall on 18 February 1830 and was invested at St. Michaels and All Angels in 1831. The Reverend Mr Shaw was clearly from a wealthy, well-connected background and he soon put those advantages into practical use.

One of the biggest drawbacks of being the Rector of Cuxton Church prior to the early nineteenth century was the unfortunate condition of the parsonage where the Rectors of St. Michael and All Angels' were supposed to reside. The Church records (available to view on-line at the Medway Archives web-page) show an entry made in 1757 by the redoubtable Caleb Parfect, Rector of Cuxton from 1719 to 1770 and a man always keen to extract the maximum value from the assets of the parish: *The Parsonage is very considerably underlet for the sake of keeping a good tenant – for it would hardly be possible – as the situation is very aguish, subject to be overflowed by the River Medway and attended by many other disagreeable circumstances.*

The parsonage was situated where the Cuxton Scout Hall can be found today. As the Reverend Mr Parfect indicates, it was sited in an area which was then little more than marshland and often flooded at high tides or during heavy rains. Caleb Parfect's successor as Cuxton's Rector, Charles Moore, is recorded as having attempted to improve the building fabric of the parsonage, noting that: *I have expended some hundred pounds and made a considerable part of the walls brick which before were only thin lathes and plaster, yet from the great indifference of the house itself and its very low, damp situation (being the lowest spot in the whole parish) it can never be made a comfortable or healthy residence.* Thus it seems that the old parsonage was a damp, unpleasant place to live and unsurprisingly, many of Cuxton's rectors therefore



preferred to live elsewhere. Caleb Parfect himself lived at Shorne and also had a residence at Rochester, the latter being the town of choice for most of his predecessors.

Today, that part of Cuxton is well-served by modern drainage and is also protected from tidal flooding by the railway embankment near the river. In 1610, however, one famous Rector of Cuxton, William Laud (subsequently to become Archbishop Laud) is recorded as having contracted the “Kentish Ague” (a fever probably similar to malaria), doubtless as a result of the damp, unhealthy nature of the parsonage and its surroundings.

In 1832, the Reverend R Shaw set about improving this state of affairs. After an exchange of church land with the Earl of Darnley, he instigated the building of a new Rectory just to the north of the Church, well above the swampy Cuxton levels. The work was completed on 17 April 1833, at a cost of £1,178 and 14 shillings (around £180,000 today). Canon Shaw was a wealthy man but over half of the money for the building of the Rectory was borrowed, under the terms of the Relief Of The Poor Act (Gilbert’s Act) of 1782. Whilst giving government money to rich people seems a very 2023 thing to do, the Gilbert Act was intended to bring the gentry into closer involvement in poor relief administration, and Canon Shaw did indeed do much to improve the lot of the local people in exchange for the loan that helped to fund his splendid new rectory.

Canon Shaw’s rectory was an elegant Georgian-style manor house, built from local yellow Kentish bricks with a slate roof (There is a nice picture of it – and the old school – on the wall inside the White Hart!). It served both as a home for Canon Shaw, his growing family (he was to become father to four children) and for his successors as Rectors of Cuxton Church. It remained a centre for many parish activities until 1964, when the Rectory was sadly demolished and replaced by the existing modern building. Around this time, Cuxton lost many of its historic buildings: Canon Shaw’s Rectory, the Old Post Office Row, the original school-house and many of the ancient cottages at Upper Bush. It seems that the local council’s planning department were just as dismissive of the idea of preserving Cuxton’s environment in the sixties as it is today.

Despite this, Robert Shaw’s legacy to Cuxton is one that has withstood the wrecking ball of short-sighted officialdom, a legacy that gave Cuxton its first permanent school, a revitalised church and a rather pleasant local dwelling that still exists today.

More of all that next month.

Keith Hodges.



#### The Mothers’ Union Annual Gathering 2023 in York

This year, the theme for the Mothers’ Union Annual Gathering held at the Barbican in York was “Transformation in Action”. Our Worldwide President, Sheran Harper, gave us inspiring stories from here and overseas. She thanked everyone for the work done to help others saying that we all do our part from small acts of kindness to large worldwide life changing projects.

The Rochester Diocese had a contingent of ladies and gentlemen representing the three Archdeaconry areas including two from the Cuxton and Halling Branch and four members from our twin branch of Holy Saviour in Trinidad and Tobago.

A large group of members walked to York Minster for Evensong. Many carried banners to raise awareness for “Domestic Abuse”. The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, welcomed over 700 Mothers’ Union members.

*“Where would the Anglican Communion be without the Mothers’ Union? At home and across the world the Mothers’ Union offers the love and hope of Christ, helping to transform communities through teaching, prayer and pastoral care and by working with others to stop violence, injustice and hunger.” Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York.*

Jenny – Branch Leader

### Mothers’ Union AFIA

Away from it all (AFIA) is a Mothers’ Union holiday scheme, primarily funded by our members, to give the opportunity of a break to those who may be experiencing stress or difficulties in their family life. The MU helps many people to have a holiday each year. Families can spend time together away from their stressful situations at home, engage in activities together and have fun. They often experience healing in their relationships by spending time with each other. The Mothers’ Union involved with AFIA will pay for the cost of a holiday. If you feel that you could benefit from this scheme or you know of a family who could, please contact Reverend Roger Knight and he will put you in touch with the AFIA organiser in the Rochester Diocese Mothers’ Union. All enquiries are treated in strictest confidence.



### Tommy’s Talking Points

Our September day out couldn’t have been improved upon. There was some ground for anxiety in that we were supposed to be meeting our friends in the mysterious county of Surrey, despite Master’s earlier remarks about never again venturing farther west than Westerham. The venue was Newlands Corner, which I can highly recommend. There is plenty of car parking, a cafe, a shop, lots of seats and a stupendous view from the Surrey Hills. The traffic flowed freely even on the M25. We only went wrong once and that was just short of our destination and a friendly postman quickly put us back on the right track.

It really was an incredibly beautiful day. The sun shone warmly every hour. There was a fresh, gentle breeze. Light cloud formations added interest to the otherwise uniformly pale blue of the firmament above us. It was Enzo’s first birthday and we dogs had plenty of space in which to run and socialise with other dogs. Enzo – to Master’s embarrassment

– is a bit wary of me, not without some justification, but we generally got on well together so long as we kept a distance.

We had done some of this walk before when we walked the North Downs Way. Where we started from, there were views of the Greensand Hills and the Weald and the South Downs in the far distance. We descended fairly rapidly through the fields before coming into open woodland. The trees were beginning to display their autumn hues. It was quite sandy underfoot and, having passed a farm, we briefly walked along a busy road before ascending St Martha’s Hill. They might have been a bit lost at this stage. I didn’t care. There was plenty of opportunity for me to run on ahead and come back when I realised they weren’t following. We did find the 1933 Guildford boundary stone which was a landmark we were supposed to look out for. From thence we were able to identify the ascent to St Martha’s Church. Again, amazing views. It seemed like there were hoards of other people and dogs. Two ladies were walking to Canterbury and we wondered whether we might see them on our bit of the North Downs Way on the following day. It was just outside St Martha’s churchyard that the humans ate their delicious sandwiches. I was tied to the bench and Enzo took station perhaps fifty yards away in the woods, greeting a variety of canine companions and their humans.

We had a traditional paper route plan, copied from a guidebook, possibly somewhat out of date. We had an aerial photograph to inform us of the topography. Towards the end of the walk, we had recourse to the direction finding abilities of a mobile telephone and we actually asked the way of someone who seemed to know where he was going. I don't think that we strayed far from the prescribed route, though we were somewhat misled by a guy who volunteered what proved to be misleading directions when leaving the churchyard.

There was (on the correct route which we did find) a very steep descent down a tricky pathway to pass Chilworth Manor and village. The landscape there is now so rural and peaceful. They even put up notices warning when the bird scarer guns will be discharged, presumably so that the birds will not be frightened. It might have been a kite or possibly a drone in the form of a hawk flying over the vineyards to discourage smaller birds from consuming the crop. However, the area was once quite industrial and there were the remains of a gunpowder mill and a cordite factory. The local woods supplied the charcoal for the manufacture of munitions. The photograph above is of Master and me at the gunpowder mill. We didn't cross the mill stream as that appeared impossible to do without falling in across a very rickety looking narrow bridge. He's had more than enough of falling into rivers in Surrey. He did sing us a song about someone called Nellie Dean, however, and Enzo and I took a drink and a dip. Master says that there used to be powder factories on the Hoo Peninsula and that the men going to working in them would take a drink in the Sans Pareil, which was run by his great grandparents, on their way to work. This may have accounted for a number of accidents and was one of the reasons for the introduction of Licensing Acts limiting the hours when pubs could be open.

We had a lot of freedom to run in the fields because there wasn't much livestock about. Birthday boy did manage to get across a ditch and through a fence and hedge, which were impenetrable to people, into a field of horses and declined to return despite being called. I looked quite smug till Master reminded me that I had behave similarly when I was Enzo's age.

From there, it was past another mill with an impressive mill race, some ponds and some attractive looking properties, back into the woods and up a long and steep ascent back to Newlands Corner. The human beings seemed to have grown quite tired by this time, but Enzo and I were still going strong as this photograph shows.



Ice cream for them at Newlands Corner and, somewhat regretfully, back into the cars to journey home. We only had to go round the roundabout twice to find the M25 eastbound north of Leatherhead and there was little congestion till we got to Wrotham and we were safely home in time for tea. Tommy.

Dates		
8 <sup>th</sup> December	Peninsula Big Band Open Rehearsal St Michael's Church	7.30
4 <sup>th</sup> February	Bring & Share Lunch for British Heart Foundation Church Hall	12.00