

Services October 2023			
October 1 st Trinity 17 Harvest Festival Poverty & Hope collection Tins & Packets for Foodbank		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Deuteronomy 8 vv 6-20 p187 Luke 12 vv 13-34 p1045
October 8 th Trinity 18		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
October 15 th Trinity 19		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 25 vv 1-9 p708 Philippians 4 vv 1-9 p1180 Matthew 22 vv 1-14 p990
October 22 nd Trinity 20		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 45 vv 1-7 p731 I Thessalonians 1 vv 1-10 p1186 Matthew 22 vv 15-22 p990
October 29 th Trinity 21		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Leviticus 19 vv 1-18 p121 I Thessalonians 2 vv 1-8 p1186 Matthew 22 vv 34-46 p991
Wednesday 1 st 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 nd 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 th November Trinity 22 Fourth before Advent Blythswood 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
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
4 th October	Amos 9 vv 1-15 Mark 12 vv 13-27	5 th October	Micah 1 vv 1-16 Mark 12 vv 28-34
11 th October	Micah 6 vv 1-16 Mark 14 vv 1-11	12 th October	Micah 7 vv 1-7 Mark 14 vv 12-25
18 th October St Luke	II Timothy 4 vv 5-15 Luke 10 vv 1-7	19 th October	Habakkuk 2 vv 1-20 Mark 15 vv 16-32
25 th October	Malachi 1 vv 1-14 Luke 14 vv 16-24	26 th October	Malachi 2 vv 1-16 Luke 15 vv 11-32

Copy November Magazine: 13th October 8.30 am Rectory

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Dates

30 th September	Hymns and Beer Church Hall	7.30
1 st October	Harvest Barbecue Church Hall	12.00
21 st October	Quiz for Church Funds Church Hall	7.30

Entry £6.00. Please come as individuals or in teams of 6-8 & bring own food & drink.

St John's Draw (August): £10 each Mr N Head (20 & Mrs S Mitchell (63).

A Bargain at Half the Price

I've just acquired a Van Gogh cabinet. I know it's genuine because it's missing a bit of veneer.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

9 th July	Charlie John Brian Cloke	Larkfield
12 th August	Rudi Ray Anthony David Lawry-Barnes	Ladywood Road
13 th August	Reggie-Lee Brian Winston Saunders	Strood
19 th August	Aurora Olivia Jean Stiles	Strood
27 th August	Hugo Anthony Ernest Murray	Hatcham

Weddings:

2 nd September	Grant Anthony Walsh & Annie Charlotte Lee	Cuxton
9 th September	Sean Graham Featherstone & Charlotte Louise Gates	Cuxton

Funerals:

25 th August	Elizabeth Jane Jessup	Vicarage Road
4 th September	Patricia Irene Harrison	Wood Street

Mari-Anne Harrison would like to thank friends and neighbours for their kindness in these last few months in which both her parents have died.

Quotations

Charles Kingsley: *There are two freedoms the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought.*

Tertullian on some controversial words of Jesus. First Jesus, then Tertullian.

Matthew 27: ¹⁶ And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? ¹⁹ Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. ²⁰ And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? ²¹ They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Render unto Caesar the things that be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. What will be 'the things which are God's'? Such things as are like Caesar's denarius (penny piece) that is to say, His image and similitude. That, therefore, which He commands to be 'rendered unto God', the Creator, is man, who has been stamped with His image, likeness, name, and substance.

I take this to mean that, just as the royal mint issues money stamped with the sovereign's image, indicating his right to rule and, in particular, to levy taxes, God has created human beings bearing His image. We are therefore obliged to keep His Commandments and to offer our whole lives back to Him - *our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee*; and to respect our fellow human beings who all also bear His image and whom He commands us to love as we love ourselves. Roger.



Despicable

To begin with a warning, I have no intention of mincing my words this month. I intend to denounce evil. I hope that I shall be able to discern and direct

readers' attention to the path from darkness into light, but that remains to be considered.

Despicable was the word which came into my mind when I heard about the case of Andrew Malkinson – the man who served seventeen years

in prison for a rape he didn't commit. There had been no forensic evidence to connect him to the scene of the crime. He did not look at all like the e fit picture the victim initially gave the police or her original description of the attacker. Two men who gave evidence against him were known by the police (but not the jury) to be career criminals. The only substantial evidence was that the victim picked him out in an identity parade. Identity parades are notoriously unreliable and, obviously, the poor woman had been traumatised by the event. He should never have been convicted. The case should never even have been brought to court. It has recently come to light that evidence turned up within a year of his conviction which cast serious doubt on the guilty verdict, but nobody official did anything about it. DNA from the victim's clothing was re-examined in 2021 and demonstrated that another man was the probable perpetrator, but it has taken until this year to release Mr Malkinson. He would almost certainly have been let out sooner if he had been prepared to lie and admit to a horrendous crime of which he was entirely innocent.

I myself once knew a man in a similar predicament. He was falsely accused of a crime. He had too much integrity to plead guilty when he was innocent, but the court believed the witnesses against him and the judge told him that he would have to impose a longer prison sentence because the accused would not acknowledge his guilt. After the man's death, one of his accusers admitted that she and her friends had made it all up.

I do wonder how many innocent people are in prison and how many guilty go free. There was another case fairly recently in which a relatively wealthy man was accused of rape. He was acquitted, but he had to sell his house to pay the expensive lawyers whose considerable legal skill and thorough forensic investigation exonerated him. How many poor men and women are falsely convicted because they can't afford expensive legal representation?

I have long puzzled over this conundrum. If you are more likely to win a court case if you can afford an expensive lawyer, that is not justice. If, however, you have an equally good chance of winning a case with a much cheaper lawyer, how

do the expensive advocates justify their stratospheric fees?

Sadly, we've heard all this before, an innocent person, unjustly imprisoned, vindicated many years after an unjust conviction, which was secured in the absence of due process, by prosecuting authorities who themselves were incompetent or even corrupt. What really, really disgusted me was that we were then told that, not only would it take many years to process any claim for compensation which Mr Malkinson might make, but that they would deduct from any payout a sum to cover the cost of his board and lodging while he was wrongly incarcerated. Apparently this has been the practice in similar cases for some years now. A judge had ruled that a person wrongly convicted should not be put in a better position financially than he would have been if he had never been sent to prison! [I was reminded of a case in the 1980s when a man wrongly convicted of murder was released after a long campaign and an elderly judge commented that it was a pity we didn't still have the death penalty because that would have settled the matter once and for all.] To my mind, Andrew Malkinson ought to receive from the government immediately a sum of money sufficient that, if he so desires, he need never work again and a beautiful mansion in which to live, waited on hand a foot by the Home Secretary, the Chief Constable, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Lord Chief Justice..

When this particular meanness came to light, the government quickly changed the policy with regard to board and lodging expenses, though I wonder whether this will be retrospective so that those who have already suffered from this disgraceful policy will now be recompensed? Mr Malkinson will still have to wait years for his compensation while civil servants and lawyers (the latter frequently getting rich in the process) prevaricate and procrastinate over the details. He has had his reputation trashed. He has lost his job. He has lost all those years. The least we can offer is the financial help he needs to rebuild his life now – not at some distant point in the future. The way cases such as these drag on a cynic might suspect that the authorities are really hoping that claimants will just give up or even die before they receive what they are entitled to.

Andrew Malkinson was not the only person treated unjustly in this matter. The true perpetrator still has not received what he deserves. The victim has not received justice so long as the actual rapist remains unpunished.

Cases of alleged rape are, of course, very difficult to try. It is probable that there are very many victims who have never received justice because they have not been believed, because their cases have not been taken seriously by the authorities or sometimes because there genuinely has not been enough evidence to convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt. In most such cases, only two people are present, it cannot be ruled out that one or both of them is lying and they may genuinely have different recollections of what took place – especially if alcohol or other drugs had been consumed.

What I actually said to my radio set, thinking of other scandals preceding this one, was, “To what levels of despicability will the people who run this country descend?”

When Hong Kong was handed over to China in 1997, there was considerable reluctance on the part of the British Government to allow the Chinese widows of British soldiers to become British citizens with the right to live in this country. There were only 54 of them and most of them didn’t want to come here anyway. But, while special arrangements were readily made for the extremely wealthy to come and live here, it was only under extreme pressure from parliament and the public that the government eventually conceded British citizenship with the right to reside here to these widows.

Similarly, the British Government has resisted giving proper pensions to Ghurkhas who have fought for us or allowing Afghans who worked for us during our occupation of their country to come here to live in order to evade persecution by the Taliban.

There is also the contaminated blood scandal. In the 1970s and 1980s, haemophiliacs were treated with what turned out to be infected blood products. A report in 2022 found that around 1,250 people with bleeding disorders were infected with HIV (the AIDS virus) in the UK and

that at least a further 2,400 people were infected with Hepatitis C. The report concluded that around three-quarters of those infected with HIV had died and that at least 700 people infected with Hepatitis C had died. The report also found that 8,120 people were chronically infected with Hepatitis C ten years or more after contaminated blood transfusions. Much of the contaminated blood came from America where there was a policy of paying donors and a failure to screen potential donors for possible health problems. I can remember, as a medical student in the early seventies, being warned that this procedure was unsafe. (I believe we were also told this in school Biology classes even earlier!) The dangers were not unknown. “Many Plasma donors in the United States and elsewhere were paid or fell into other high-risk groups for viral risk which included Prisoners, Prostitutes, IV Drug Users, Homosexuals and others.” The World Health Organisation warned Britain against using these products in 1975. As realization grew that people were getting sick and dying as a result of the treatment they were receiving, so the cover up began. Records were “lost”. Ministers misled parliament. It took until 2022 for any compensation payments to be made at all and these are interim payments. Victims are still waiting after all these years for the full amounts to which they are entitled. For many, it will be too late.

Then there is the Post Office Horizon disaster. Horizon, developed by the Japanese company Fujitsu, was an accounting system introduced into the Post Office Network in 1999. Due to glitches in the system, more than 700 sub postmasters were accused of stealing from the Post Office. Some went to prison. Some committed suicide. All of them lost their businesses and reputations as well as facing demands to repay money they had never taken. It took until 2019 (twenty years) for the Post Office to admit that there were problems with Horizon. It never seemed to occur to management just how unlikely it was that so many of these evidently decent hard-working people were actually criminals. There was the inevitable cover up. Those handling the prosecutions have been shown to be abusive, including racially abusive, concerning the people they were wrongly accusing of fraud. Some of those wrongly convicted have at last had their

convictions overturned. Some compensation has been paid out but it will come as no surprise that the compensation process is being dragged out while the people to whom it is owed live in poverty, give up hope and even die. Meanwhile, nobody at Fujitsu or in Post Office management has been held to account. In fact, Post Offices executives have even been paid bonuses while all this goes on and on with no clear resolution in sight.

Then there was the scandal of Payment Protection Insurance. “Up to 64 million policies were sold, mostly between 1990 and 2010, but a good proportion of them were actually mis-sold to people who did not want or need them, or who would not be covered.” It took twenty years for government and the courts to take decisive action against the banks and building societies who perpetrated this particular scam. Millions of pounds were eventually paid out in compensation, but, only after millions of people were caused considerable distress. When compensation was eventually made available to the general public, another lot of sharks set about deceiving people into paying them to submit their claims, when in fact it was something you could do for yourself without charge. Where is there any sense of moral responsibility in a supposedly respectable financial institution which not only makes available to its customers unsuitable products but also pressurises them into paying for them? Most of the banks and many building societies were culpable. Where is the morality in government – Conservative and Labour – which knew that millions of citizens were effectively being defrauded and turned a blind eye.

Think back to the banking crisis of 2008 when the recklessness and possible criminality of some of the world’s previously most respected financial institutions came close to bringing down the world’s economic system. We taxpayers had to bale them out because of the terrible consequences which would have ensued from a total collapse in the banking system. But who suffered? The most vulnerable were plunged into debt and many lost their homes. All of us paid for the bale out through our taxes and we all suffered from the economic downturn. Who were protected, spared criminal proceedings, sometimes even awarded bonuses? The very bankers who had caused the

crisis! These people were heralded as Masters of the Universe for their skill in raising vast sums of money. I’ve often thought that it wouldn’t be difficult to get rich quick gambling with other people’s money, keeping the winnings and relying on the government to make up your losses.

On 21st October 1966, a spoil heap belonging to the National Coal Board at Aberfan collapsed engulfing the village school and killing 116 children and 28 teachers. A generous and compassionate public donated £1,750,000 for the welfare of those who were left. The subsequent inquiry, conducted by Lord Justice Edmund Davies, concluded, “The disregard of the NCB and the colliery staff for the tip’s unstable geological conditions and its failure to act after previous smaller slides were found to have been major factors that contributed to the catastrophe. The tribunal found that the tips had never been surveyed, and up to the time of the landslide were continuously being added to in a chaotic and unplanned manner. Repeated warnings about the tip’s dangerous condition had been ignored; even after representations from Merthyr Borough Council. NCB civil engineers (who should have realised the dangerous state of the tip had they seen it) had not been involved.” ... ‘if there had been a proper investigation with a view to allaying the fears and resolving the doubts, the effect on the course of events must, in our opinion, have been dramatic and decisive.’” Nevertheless, the NCB took £150,000 out of the money donated by the public to pay for clearing the site. “No NCB staff were demoted, sacked or prosecuted as a consequence of the Aberfan disaster or for misleading evidence given to the inquiry (One notably unsatisfactory witness had been promoted by the time Parliament debated the Davies Report.). It took till 1997 for the British Government to refund that £150,000 and until 2007 (41 years) for the Welsh Government to donate £1.5 million to the fund and £500,000 to the Aberfan Education Charity as recompense for the money wrongly taken.

We come to the case of Lucy Letby – the nurse who murdered all those babies and tried to kill so many more. There are no words adequate to describe the horror of what she did and the suffering endured by her victims and their families. Yet it has come to light that serious concerns were brought to the attention of

management long ago by other staff and that it was these whistle-blowers who were disciplined, not the person who was committing those terrible crimes. Had action been taken sooner, some of these children could have been saved, but protecting the reputation of the NHS Trust and the position of its senior managers took priority over patient care and protection. In a letter to the "Times" of 22nd August, Emeritus Professor of Medicine Gareth Williams, says this, "Doctors who cause distress, injury or death face the GMC and the possibility of being struck off and never working again. Too often NHS managers whose incompetence, ignorance or prejudice has inflicted comparable damage merely move on to their next overpaid job or into retirement with a golden handshake".

The Lucy Letby case is the worst but by no means the only case in the last few decades in which things have gone badly wrong in NHS Trusts or other public or private sector corporations and the reflex has been to protect the institution and its chief executives at the expense of the most vulnerable: concealing the facts, threatening whistle-blowers, warning honest witnesses that they may face action for defamation, "losing" records, bribing and bullying victims to sign Non Disclosure Agreements – whatever it takes to protect the powerful.

Every so often I am asked to fill in a customer survey for the Ecclesiastical Insurance Office (the Church of England's own insurance company). I usually give them good marks for all but the last question. They are an efficient insurance company. When we get to "would I recommend them to other potential customers and, if not, why not", however, I tell them "no" because they pressurise victims of abuse to sign Non Disclosure Agreements and to accept lower levels of compensation than are fair. Not very long ago, it came to light that the C of E itself was still requiring abuse victims to sign NDAs. To their credit, both archbishops said that this was deplorable, but the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich told General Synod that the practice will continue. I am not at all surprised that one of the Post Office executives who presided over the Horizon affair was also a Church of England minister.

I've ranted against the darkness, but can I point to the light? I can certainly point to the Light. Jesus said, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." The Truth will come out despite the lies and obfuscations, the Non Disclosure Agreements, the sacked whistle blowers, the "lost" documents and the Slapps (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation), used to silence the critics of wealthy villains before they have even opened their mouths. There will be justice, if not always in this life, then certainly in the next. We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of God. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16 vv 19-31) should be read out loud at the beginning of every board meeting and every session of parliament.

What about light and truth in this world? I am certain that justice will prevail eventually even here on earth.

I hesitate to be too condemnatory of our institutions and top people. It isn't fair to lump them all together. There are conscientious people in politics, industry and commerce, and the public sector who are dedicated practitioners of their vocation with a real passion for public service. Perhaps they are in the majority. Unfortunately, it is the incompetent and corrupt who most often hit the headlines and thereby attract our attention. We should be grateful for and supportive of all those who do their best to carry out their work for the common good. We should pray for them, give thanks for them and treat them with respect. I am aware that drawing attention to the failures of the worst people in positions of power runs the risk of undermining public confidence in the system. If we cease to respect our leaders, if we lose confidence in our politics and our justice system, we are on the road to anarchy and totalitarianism. Just pay attention to what has happened across the Atlantic and in some Eastern European countries where enough people have lost confidence in the system that they are rejecting political parties which support democracy and the rule of law in favour of populist authoritarian government by self-styled "strong men". We have to respect government even when it is not very respectable. The alternative ultimately is civil war. We do, however, still live in a democracy and we still enjoy freedom of speech. We can speak out about the things which trouble us and we can use our

vote to support candidates whose principles we share. You and I can make a difference. It's not enough to rail against evil. As the saying goes,

It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.
Roger.



Mothers' Union

We've had a couple of very pleasant outdoor activities this Summer. On 17th July a group of members and friends met at Maidstone to cruise up to Teston Lock in the *Kentish Lady*. It was, for most of the time, a beautiful day. The sun shone. Either side of the river, there are houses with gardens, green lawns and pretty flowers. On the river banks we saw wild flowers and, floating on the water, water lilies. There were birds and butterflies. We were informed that the swans of Maidstone are unique in that they do not belong to the King of England, but to the Mayor of the county town of Kent.

Lunch was fish and chips – delicious. As we approached East Farleigh lock, a storm blew up – thunder, lightning, rain and hail. The passengers were snug in the cabin but we felt sorry for the guy who had to disembark in order to operate the lock.

Soon, the sun came out again and some of us spent the rest of the journey on deck, admiring the views. It is a beautiful part of the country. Coming back, we were able to see how little clearance there is for a vessel the size of the *Kentish Lady* at East Farleigh and something of the skill required to manoeuvre her under the bridge and into the lock. All too soon we arrived back in Maidstone and made our different ways home.

On the afternoon of the 16th August, we held our annual Teddy Bears' Picnic in the Rectory garden. This year, the weather was kind to us and there was a good turn out of adults, children and teddy bears. There was maypole dancing and there were games. Tommy enjoyed playing fetch mostly with tennis balls, which delighted the children, but sometimes with teddy bears, which was less agreeable to our visitors. There was plenty of food as usual and a bring and buy for Mothers' Union charities. A good time was had by all.

Mothers' Union membership is open to all those who support Christian family life. You don't have to be a mother to join and men are welcome. Our meetings mostly take place on the third Wednesday of each month at 10.45 in the church hall, with the option of attending the MU Corporate Communion at 9.30 in St Michael's. Non-members are welcome to all our meetings which usually include an interesting speaker. There is a programme, but I hesitate to publish it in view of a healthy flexibility in response to the availability of speakers. Ask Jenny for details.

From Medway Foodbank

"Ahead of the upcoming harvest season, I am writing on behalf of Medway Foodbank to thank you for your congregation's continued support of our work over the years in ensuring that in Medway, no one goes hungry without the offer of food.

As you will know, the needs of our local community are greater than ever. During the past year Medway Foodbank has provided 4835 emergency food parcels to people facing financial hardship in our community. Your ongoing support is vital to ensure that we can continue to provide our services for as long as we are needed. But it's not right that anyone should face the injustice of having to turn to a food bank because they are unable to afford the essentials."

We shall be collecting tinned and packeted food (well in date please, preferably not soup or baked beans) at our services on 1st October. Poverty and Hope Envelopes will also be available.

For four decades, **The Poverty and Hope Appeal** has allowed us to play our part in tackling the causes and effects of poverty in different parts of the world. In 2022, through the generosity of churches and individuals, over £23,000 was raised for the Appeal's chosen projects. Thank you!

This year we will continue to support:

- people living in the slums and prisons of Brazil
- children's education in rural Myanmar
- left behind minorities in Bangladesh

To these, we are adding exciting new initiatives: irrigation and bee-rearing pilot schemes in Tanzania and Zimbabwe and links via Amos Trust with several grass-roots organisations promoting reconciliation and hope in the Bethlehem area.

Every gift you make will go to these initiatives relieving poverty and the fear that stalks it.

See also [Poverty and Hope Appeal - Diocese of Rochester \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/poverty-and-hope-appeal) You can also donate online.

Percy Pigeon's Perceptions

Good day to you all. Well your littl'uns are back to school now. I thought you might like to learn a few pigeon facts today!

- Pigeons are incredibly complex and intelligent animals. ...
- Pigeons are renowned for their outstanding navigational abilities. ...
- Pigeons are highly sociable animals. ...
- Pigeons mate for life, and tend to raise two chicks at the same time.
- Both female and male pigeons share responsibility of caring for and raising young
- Pigeons are very fast birds, which is one of the reasons they make great messengers. Their speed also makes them great racers
- Pigeons can read by distinguishing the shape of words. They can distinguish between Kent Road and Ferry Road.

I hope you enjoyed your holidays. We had a good time at Leybourne Lakes meeting up with friends and relatives. The food was good and plentiful with cereal bars and wraps becoming new favourites.

I guess it's now autumn as leaves turn yellow and brown and float to the ground in crispy piles. There is still good weather as your littl'uns return to school but darker mornings and evenings mean less foraging time for us, so please don't forget to put out crusts and crumbs. Enjoy the last of summer and the beginning of autumn! Coo coo.

Oxymorons

An oxymoron is a phrase which appears to contradict itself. People who regard army officers as being of limited brainpower regard *military intelligence* as an oxymoron. I've always thought that *compulsory games* was an oxymoron. Games are what you choose to play because you enjoy them. You have to do what is compulsory whether or not you would choose to and irrespective of what you enjoy. Recently I heard *liberal democracy* described as an oxymoron. Democracy is about choosing between ideas. Liberalism is just one idea. So, what do you think about that?

Beer and Hymns

When it was considered too frivolous to sing hymns in church, it was the taverns and other places of public entertainment which kept the tradition alive. Later on, when hymn singing in church became popular again, the melodies of popular songs very often provided the inspiration for hymn writers. "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" they asked.

In acknowledgement of this history and in celebration of St Michael's Patronal Festival, we're holding a hymn fest in the church hall on **Saturday 30th September @ 7.30 pm in the Church Hall**. Come and have a good sing. Bring your own beer or other drink and maybe some nibbles to share. All welcome.

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 5th November.

Twin Tub

One of the things which makes you feel old is visiting a museum, seeing an exhibit and thinking “We had one of those” or maybe even “I’m still using something like that.” I took a younger friend (though not that young) to the Museum of Kent Life and she didn’t even recognise the twin tub washing machine.

My latest automatic is environment friendly and has made me quite nostalgic for the old twin tub. It swills the clothes about in luke warm water for about three hours, which is very time consuming for me, and it occurs to me that, come the Winter, there won’t be time for the third wash to dry on the line before dark. It would be ironic if I had to buy a tumble drier because I’ve bought a washing machine designed to protect the planet!

The dear old twin tub you filled with hot water from the tap, put the whites and detergent in and waited for it to get close to boiling point, while you made and ate your breakfast. (A tank full of hot water was provided by your domestic heating system at least in the colder months of the year.) The high temperature cleansed the clothes and killed the fleas and germs which sometimes survive today’s low temperature washes. You then turned on the agitator for ten minutes or less. You transferred the clothes to the other “tub” – the spin drier, which squirted the warm water back into the first tub, which you then used to wash the coloureds. You could use the spin drier also to rinse with cold water from the other tap. Not being part of the washing mechanism, the spin drier was much faster than the spin cycle on automatic machines and the clothes came out much drier and needed less time on the line. Moreover, being a fairly simple mechanical device, you could sometimes fix it yourself if it went wrong. So washing done and on the line by 10.00 am. Except of course you had to be there and hauling wet clothes from tub to tub was quite hard work.

Given that the water was recycled and warm water was not wasted, it might not have been much more wasteful than my new automatic, certainly not more so than older automatics. Automatic washing machines also tend to encourage us to use more water and energy because they are so easy that we wash our clothes more often, sometimes more often than necessary.

Tommy’s Talking Points

I’m really glad to be able to tell you that we have had another walk with Enzo and our human friends. The plan was to meet at Ranmore West car park, which is in Surrey! You can guess that we were late, but actually it turned out that Master was not entirely to blame. He thinks that the County of Surrey is probably the last uncharted wilderness on Planet Earth and I heard him muttering about never again venturing in our car west of Westerham. Just past Westerham, he saw a sign to the effect that the ULEZ charging zone would shortly be in operation from that point onwards. He reflected that we wouldn’t be able to afford to take our old car that way anymore anyway. But he came home, typed our registration into You don't need to pay ULEZ - ULEZ and it said that we are exempt even though our car was purchased in 2004. It does also say, however, “The compliance results from this ULEZ checker are based on the standards published by TfL, but we do not guarantee their accuracy and the results should not be relied upon.” So he’s not absolutely confident that it’s safe to enter the ULEZ. Anyway, we took longer to reach Junction 9 on the M25 than the AA Route Planner said we would. The M25 was very congested. What a surprise! We were therefore already running late. We followed the instructions, however, and eventually came to where we

were supposed to turn off the A246. By this time, however, he was panicking rather because he thought we were lost (even though we weren't yet) and the journey was taking much longer than he had anticipated. Three extremely narrow roads later with very poor visibility at sharp turns and on steep hills and nowhere to pass anything coming the other way, we came to a car park with a single car in it. This did not look like our friends' car and appeared to be unattended. Moreover, according to the AA, there was one more junction before we came to where we needed to be. So we carried on. Now, he has rechecked this carefully. The AA guide said turn RIGHT at the junction, which we did and failed to find the rendezvous. We did then turn right again into the other end of one of the narrow roads we had already been on – this end recently treated with loose chippings. Master contemplated giving up and going home as he thought our friends might have done by this time. But we continued round what proved to be a big circle and came back to the wrong car park with the single car in it. Master got out to look at the notice board and there was a man sitting hidden by the solitary vehicle. It was he who told us that, contrary to what the AA said, we needed to turn LEFT. Left was right. Right was wrong. We met our human friends and Enzo and set off on our walk after a restorative roll (salmon, not on our backs) and coffee.

Before I tell you about the walk, let me say that the return journey was perfect. We didn't get lost. There was always a gateway when we encountered an oncoming vehicle. When we got to the M25, we beat Surrey County Council and turned eastwards. We've always been forced to take the westbound M25 in the past because we couldn't find the sign for Maidstone. But, we did this time. It's half hidden by a tree which SCC have failed to cut back. Traffic was heavy but free-flowing. We made such good time that we were able to stop in Snodland to buy dog food, an enterprise in which he had failed two days previously because the pet shop's card machine was bust and Mr Trendy Twenty First Century wasn't carrying cash.

The walk was well worth the car journey. The sun came out and the weather was beautifully warm. Master feels that the sunlight is more golden in August than earlier in the Summer. This could be because the sun is lower in the sky. The trees and shrubs are also just beginning to display their very first hints of Autumn hues.

Enzo and I got on very well, except for a brief contretemps over a water bowl. There was much off lead time and we bounded on ahead for a lot of the time. Plenty of interesting scents. Pleasant encounters with other dogs and their companions. We didn't see much livestock, but that is good for us dogs as we are allowed more freedom when there is nothing we might be suspected (unjustly in my case) of being tempted to chase. There were plenty of butterflies, including some blue ones which I don't think I have seen around here. The chalk downs are rich in flora – including scabious, gorse and a lot more flowers Master doesn't know the name of.

We had parked at the top of the escarpment and the early part of the walk was mostly down hill. There were stupendous views across the valleys from the North Downs where we were to the High Weald and the South Downs.

We stopped for lunch at St John the Evangelist's Church and they ate their sandwiches in the porch. Master commented on the remarkable beauty of the valley we then traversed to the bottom of the hill which we had to climb in order to return to our vehicles. Its formation was unlike anything in our stretch of the Downs.

I think that they found it tougher going back up the hill than they had coming down, though Enzo and I showed very few signs of tiredness until we slumped down in our vehicles at the conclusion of the perambulation. From a distance, we had seen the tower on the top of Leith Hill (the one which adds enough to its height to qualify it for mountain status). You may recall that we missed seeing Leith Hill close up a few years ago because Master couldn't find the only mountain in the whole of the South of England.

We have hopes of another expedition in a few weeks' time.

Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.

St John's Christmas Tree Festival.

The Christmas Tree Festival for the Parish of Cuxton & Halling will be held at St. John's Church, Halling the week before Christmas. The Church will be open for viewing from Monday 18th December to Saturday 23rd December from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm., and then the trees are normally collected after Christmas.

This is a true community event with everyone being invited to exhibit a tree, from individuals, families, local businesses, schools, shops, clubs and societies.

It is a wonderful opportunity to visit our local church with its outstanding history. There will be refreshments provided and craft activities for children. Contact: Jenny Beaney 01634 241599

The Cuxton & Halling Mothers' Union

Members of the Cuxton & Halling Mothers' Union have enjoyed a diverse range of topics this year such as "St. Maximillian Kolbe, the Saint who gave his life for another in a Concentration Camp", "The Thomas Stephens' Charity", "Story of a Welsh Cottage" and "Flying Adverts with the History of Ballooning". Our annual summer outing was a most enjoyable trip up the Medway on the "Kentish Lady" from the Archbishop's Palace with a delicious fish and chip lunch.

A group from our branch commemorated "Mary Sumner Day" by joining the evensong service at Rochester Cathedral which was attended by Mothers' Union members throughout the Diocese. It was a great time to meet up with old friends and we were also able to view the beautiful display of tapestries in the Cathedral. Everyone had great fun at the "Teddy Bears' Picnic" in the Rectory Garden, joining in all the activities especially the Maypole Dancing. Proceeds from donations will sponsor the Mothers' Union "Summer of Hope" Appeal. We would like to thank the couple passing by who gave our Treasurer a generous donation.

We look forward to our future talks on:

"Bread making" – Chris Beaney – Wednesday 20th September

"Vaughan Williams" – John Bogg – Wednesday 28th October

"Pilgrimage to the Holy Land" – Buffy Maisey - Wednesday 15th November

Our meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 10.45 am – 12.00 noon.

Jenny Beaney