

Parish of Cuxton and Halling



October 2024

60p

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

Services October 2024

6 th October Trinity 19 Harvest Festival	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 21-27 p913 Matthew 6 vv 25-34 p971	
13 th October Trinity 20	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Amos 5 vv 6-15 p920 Hebrews 4 vv 12-16 p1203 Mark 10 vv 17-31 p1014	
20 th October Trinity 21	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Isaiah 53 vv 1-12 p740 Hebrews 5 vv 1-10 p1204 Mark 10 vv 35-45 p1015	
27 th October Trinity 22	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-9 p791 Hebrews 7 vv 23-28 p1205 Mark 10 vv 46-52 p1015	
2 nd November All Souls	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Romans 5 vv 1-11 p1132 John 6 vv 37-40 p1070	
3 rd November 4 th Sunday Before Advent Trinity 23 Blythswood Sunday	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 6 vv 1-9 p185 Hebrews 9 vv 11-14 p1207 Mark 12 vv 28-34 p1018	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
2 nd October	I Corinthians 12 v31 – 13 v13 Luke 7 vv 31-35	3 rd October	I Corinthians 15 vv 1-11 Luke 7 vv 36-50
9 th October	Proverbs 30 vv 5-9 Luke 9 vv 1-6	10 th October	Ecclesiastes 1 vv 1-11 Luke 9 vv 7-9
16 th October	Job 9 vv 1-16 Luke 9 vv 57-62	17 th October	Job 19 vv 21-27 Luke 10 vv 1-12
23 rd October	Galatians 2 vv 1-14 Luke 11 vv 1-4	24 th October	Galatians 3 vv 1-5 Luke 11 vv 5-13
30 th October	Galatians 5 vv 18-26 Luke 11 vv 42-46	31 st October	Ephesians 1 vv 1-10 Luke 11 vv 47-54

The 9.30 & 11.00 Services on 6th October will be Harvest Festival Services at which donations to the Foodbank of tinned and packeted goods will be welcome (not baked beans), also monetary donations to the Poverty & Hope Appeal, please. Envelopes will be available in church for cash or else donate online. [Poverty and Hope Appeal - Diocese of Rochester \(anglican.org\)](http://Poverty and Hope Appeal - Diocese of Rochester (anglican.org))

Copy date November Magazine: 11th October 8.30 am Rectory

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Church Hall Hire: cuxtonchurchhall@gmail.com.

Churchwarden initial contact details: Cuxton Joyce Haselden 01634 724634, Halling Chris Beany 01634 241599

St John's Draw: £10 each Mrs Chidwick (26) & Mr Daniel Mitchell (73)

September Church Hall Draw: 1st. - David Haselden, 2nd - Gill Bogg, 3rd - Dawn Gates

For Diaries

29th September 6.30 Songs of Praise Cuxton

(Please choose a hymn which means something special to you and let John Bogg or the Rector know your choice at least one week in advance.)

October 6th Harvest Barbecue Church Hall 12.00

19th October Quiz Church Hall 7.30.

Teams 6-8 or come as an individual & join a team. Bring your own food & drink. £6.00 for church funds.

14th December Big Band Concert St John's 7.30pm



You will be pleased to know that our bring & share lunch for the Motor Neurone Disease Association raised £336.



Where Do Flies Go in the Winter Time?

This is the title of an old music hall song. It was a line my grandmother often quoted but I can't remember her ever singing the whole chorus or any of the verses. Here's the chorus. You'll have to go online if you want the words to the verses and the tune.

*Where do flies go in the Winter time?
Do they go to gay Patee?
When they've finished buzzing round our beef and
ham
When they've finished jazzing round our raspberry
jam
Do they clear like swallows every year?
To a distant foreign clime
Tell me, tell me, where do flies go in the Winter
time?'*

The answer is that flies normally live only about four weeks, but for a shorter time in cold weather. They try to keep warm by coming into our houses, concealing themselves in crevices or hanging around compost heaps. Many die, however, as the temperature drops in the Autumn. A lot of fly eggs are laid at the beginning of Winter and emerge first as maggots then as flies when the weather warms up.

Why the fascination with flies? In our grandparents' time, they were much more

numerous than they are today. In my own lifetime I've seen a considerable diminution. My grandfather told me that the horse buses used to turn round at *The Old Gun* in Strood (opposite the end of Gun Lane). What with the horse manure and the spilled beer, there were swarms of flies and a pungent aroma which was probably more attractive to our insect friends than to human noses. I gather that the drivers would partake of a pint at the turn round. (The breathalyzer didn't come in until 1967!) What I find remarkable about this picture, just a little bit down the road from the pub, is that Strood at this date prior to 1906 looked so much cleaner than it does today.

We're possibly not sorry to see the back of so many flies. Their buzzing is irritating. They get in your face and eyes when you are cycling. They spread disease as they flit from drain or filth to our tea tables and lay their eggs in meat which shortly thereafter erupts in maggots. Improved hygiene, refrigeration, insecticides and those little ultraviolet lights in butchers' shops have all played their part in bringing down the number of flies. Better than fly papers, which attract the flies so that they become stuck and are then poisoned. Every reader of classic detective stories knows that fly papers contained arsenic which a wronged woman could extract and make use of to get rid of a cruel husband who wouldn't give her a divorce.

But would it really be a good thing if all the flies disappeared? I very much doubt it. My grandfather also used to tell me that everything has its place (even wasps) – a truth which is becoming ever more apparent. There is a balance of nature and we tip it too far at our peril. There is a story about a scheme in India to get rid of malaria. They used DDT to destroy the mosquitoes which carry the parasites responsible for the disease. This led to a drastic reduction in the number of lizards which fed on the mosquitoes and were themselves a significant part of the diet of feral cats. The number of cats shrank, allowing an increase in the population of black rats, which, of course, play host to fleas. The final result of the scheme to get rid of malaria was thus an outbreak of bubonic plague.

On the other hand, I personally am not sorry that there are far fewer mosquitoes around in my garden (and elsewhere in Britain from what I read). I have, years ago, seen a parish social event ended very abruptly at dusk by the advent of clouds of mosquitoes. I gave up sitting or working outdoors after tea – too many bites. One of the reasons that I liked to see bats was that they devour millions of mosquitoes. Now I can sit out of doors in the evening without getting bitten, but I don't see any bats either.

Famously, William Laud wouldn't stay in Cuxton Rectory (then at the bottom of Church Hill) in 1610 because of the Kentish ague (malaria) transmitted by the local mosquitoes. There were malaria infected mosquitoes on the Isles of Grain and Sheppey at the time of the First World War, the parasites having been brought to this country by troops who had been stationed abroad. The outbreak was dealt with by using insecticides and draining some of the marshes where the insects breed. I have an idea that local residents in those places were given quinine prophylactically, but I am not sure. Does any reader know?

There is a fear that global warming could result in malaria again becoming endemic in England as it was in the Middle Ages. If it did, would you try to eliminate all the mosquitoes?

When we used to go on holiday to Bournemouth, wasps were a menace. I remember standing in the sea to eat ice cream in an attempt to avoid them.

Wasps are few people's favourite insect. When I refrained from having the nest destroyed which they built outside my back door one year, I thought that they were most ungrateful when they stung me. Wasps have ruined many a picnic and reduce small children to paroxysms of terror. So, are we glad or worried that there are far fewer wasps this year than normal? To be honest, I'm both glad and worried – glad that they're not buzzing round my tea table, worried that there aren't many about anywhere. Wasps kill a lot of pests such as caterpillars which eat our crops, play a major role in pollination (It's not just bees that pollinate; many insects & other creatures do too.) and, like worms & ants, wasps aerate the soil.

I've mentioned three examples, but this year there has been a dramatic decline in many varieties of insect. We're not always terribly fond of insects. They may bite or sting us. We think of them as creepy crawlies. Some of them spread disease. They are, however, essential to our well-being. By way of example, I mentioned some of the redeeming features of wasps in the last paragraph. Many kinds of insect share these characteristics. Insects also form a large part of the diet of larger creatures – fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, including human beings. John the Baptist ate locusts! Scientists are currently working on growing insects in such a way that they turn into palatable meat. If insects became extinct, so would we - very quickly.

So what's killing all the insects? There have always been natural population fluctuations, often weather related. The numbers of some species will naturally recover or decline as we have good years and bad years and as the predator/prey ratio varies quite normally. We do use a lot of insecticides designed to kill insects – though not as many as we used to and not such drastic ones. DDT was banned in the USA in 1972 and in many other countries in the 1970s, though not till 1986 in this country. There is global warming which mucks up the life cycles of insects as it does of many plants and animals. There is pollution generally, poisonous chemicals deliberately or accidentally discharged into the environment. The abundance of artificial light outdoors at night confuses many kinds of insects and results in their deaths – *a moth to the candle flame* or a street light or a security light. There is habitat

destruction as we concrete the planet to build houses, factories, office blocks, roads and car parks and, the one that makes me really angry because it is so unnecessary, so many people lay plastic grass on their gardens.

So what ought we to do? There seems to be general agreement that we need to stimulate economic growth – more houses, more infrastructure projects, get people to spend more money on experiences such as holidays and to purchase & consume more stuff – in order to pay for the life style we desire – full employment, a sufficiency of high quality homes, good health care, fair levels of welfare, decent education for everyone, proper provision for the elderly, armed

The mention of Tom Jones in last month's magazine reminded me of the story of the man who went to his doctor complaining that he couldn't get the song *The Green Green Grass of Home* out of his head. The doctor told him that he was suffering from Tom Jones syndrome. "Is that common?" he asked. The doctor replied, "It's not unusual."

I have had to accept that there is no escape from my having to retire on my 70th birthday – the 30th November this year. My last day will be marked (God Willing) with a service of Holy Communion at 11.00 am at St Michael's on that day. (Please note change of time.) There will then be refreshments served in the church hall. Everybody is welcome & I hope to see as many of you as possible. I am very grateful to God for the time I have been Rector of Cuxton and Halling and for all the friendship, support & encouragement I have received. None of us knows what the future holds, but please work prayerfully & faithfully for God's glory, the well-being & growth of His Church and for her service to the parish and to the world in general. After 30th November, my address will be 5, May Street, Cuxton, Rochester, Kent, ME2 1LR. My email address will be unchanged. I shall keep my webpage <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> because there is a lot of potentially useful archival material – church guides, sermons, bible notes and parish magazines dating back to 2005. There will not, however, be current parish notices on it after the end of this year. Please go to [A Church Near You](#) and type in your postcode for up to date information regarding the Parish of Cuxton & Halling. It's magic, Bible Notes for the last quarter of this year are already on the web page – the rest of the Gospel According to St Matthew & readings for Advent & Christmas.

A Little Dog's Prayer

A master who is firm and kind,
And understands a Doggie mind
A Walkie and a meal each day
That's all I ask for when I pray.

Quiz Night

Saturday 19th October
7.30 pm Church Hall

Teams 6-8 or come as an individual & join a team. Bring your own food & drink. £6.00 for church funds.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

25th August

Grayson Franklin La Roche
Hallee Winnie Leata La Roche

Strood

8th September

Hope Eleni Alexander

Acre Grove

Funeral:

13th August

Polly Draper

The Caravan Site

Joan Sutton RIP

We were sorry to learn of the death on 18th August of Joan Sutton at Canterbury. Joan Sutton and her friend Joan Charlton lived for many years in the Hall House Halling and were great supporters of the parish. Joan was very committed to the restoration of the Church of St John the Baptist and was a leader in the fund-raising which made this possible. Along with other people from the village, Joan – a wonderful cook - made vast quantities of pies, preserves and other produce to sell at the weekly stall over a period of years, as well as taking part in drama and supporting fetes and festivals, notably the Mediaeval Fayre. Joan also convened, directed and rehearsed the Verse Speaking Choir, which was a great asset at our services and events. “The two Joans” (as we tended to think of them) maintained a hospitable home in their beautiful historic house with its splendid and imaginative garden. We missed them both when they moved to Canterbury, but friendships have been maintained and “the two Joans” remain in our prayers.

All Souls Day

On the 2nd 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 Saturday 2nd November at 9.30 am at St Michael & All Angels’ Church Cuxton and at 11.00 am at St John the Baptist’s Church Halling. 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



“Since our first Shoe Box Appeal in 1993 we have sent more than 2.6 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.”

We've supported this annual appeal in this parish probably since it began. Our own Phil Shorthouse used to drive one of the lorries. Please start saving your shoeboxes to fill and bring to one of our services on 3rd November. You can find information about what to put in them at [Shoe Box Appeal | Blythswood Care](#) and there will also be leaflets available in church during October.

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

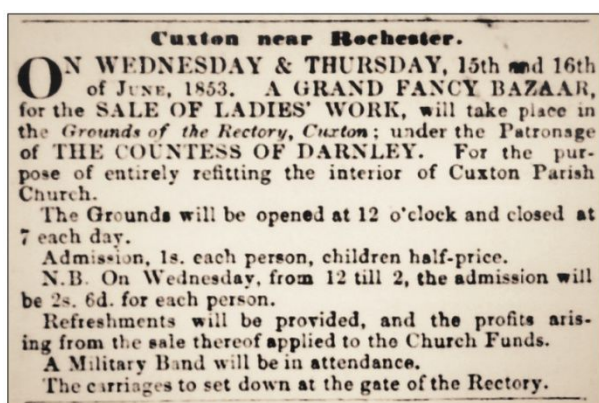
Good day to you all. I hope you are all well and summer was kind to you. I do think the Cuxton parish street cleaners do a very good job. Last week we saw Bill collect a half-empty bag of popcorn for which Philippa had plans, and then he picked up a slice of fruit cake that we were moving towards with great anticipation. Our diet remains very varied and we will usually try anything. If it's on the ground, we will investigate it, hopefully. Rarely do we find nuts, corn or seeds. Hint hint. As we move into autumn now we are mindful that we must build up our energy reserves to survive the coming winter. I have recently been to check out our winter quarters in the disused garage. Our winter nest of the battered Amazon box has gone! But phew! there is a new box with "Lily's kitchen" written on the side, and it is lined with paper straw! Luxury for the harder months ahead.



We spent some time recently on the top of St Michaels church with its wonderful views. We watched Tommy and his master dozing in the rectory garden but the jackdaws kept us from getting closer. When we have been to St. John's church top there are always more people around and it is very close to the fishermen and their pasty crumbs. The sunflowers in the top Cuxton field were wonderful, and so were their seeds which we all enjoyed - as did so many of our friends and family.

We did enjoy watching your litt'uns going back to school. That is usually the time when the weather improves and some litt'uns were plainly uncomfortable in new clothes! There were some tears + from litt'uns and their mums and dads. Philippa said the parents' tears were of relief and she reminded me of how we feel when our squabs are fledged. There are no schools for pigeons of course - we parents teach our young the basics and the rest they learn on the wing. I think schools are a good idea but feel sorry for the teachers sometimes! As the days shorten I wish you all a bountiful autumn. Coo coo.

Looking Back Continued



From the *Maidstone Journal*, 14th July 1853. £150 was raised.

August's parish magazine included a description of St. Michael's, which first appeared in the October 26th edition of *The Maidstone Journal, Rochester and Chatham Journal and Kentish Advertiser* from 1852.

Around this time, a rather wonderful spirit of optimism and achievement prevailed in the British Isles. It was the time of what was called "The Victorian Restoration", a time when around 80% of English churches were being built or rebuilt. The Rector of St. Michael's at the time was Robert William Shaw, a man typical of the period, who instigated not only the building of his own rectory in 1833¹ and of Cuxton's first National School in 1849², but also the complete refurbishment of his (and our) church in

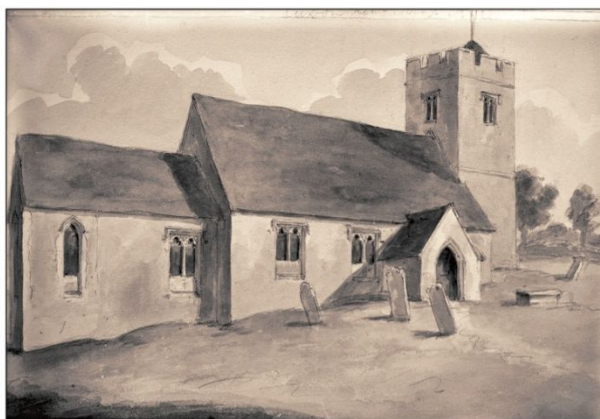
1867-68. By all accounts it seems that the Reverend Mr Shaw had inherited a church in dire need of repair. The *Maidstone Journal* tells of blocked up windows and doors, suggesting a long period of neglect that could well have dated back to the post-Reformation times of the early 17th century. The entry for 28th May 1867 in the "Vestry Book of the Parish of Cuxton" noted that: "...the sum of money which is requisite for the purpose of repairing, enlarging and extending the accommodation of the Parish church amounts to £1,200..."

It seems that much more money than that was required. To finance the work, £500 was borrowed from the public works commissioner on the security of church rates, with Lord Darnley contributing over £1000. The Rector himself contributed £850, with other monies appearing to come in donations as a result of fund-raising between 1853 and 1868 (see example above).

The *Maidstone Journal* of February 17th. 1868 tells us that: “...On Weds 12th the Bishop of Rochester re-opened this ancient parish church which for the past nine months has been undergoing a complete restoration and has also been enlarged to meet the requirements of the Parish. The work was ably carried out by Mr. (Albert) Stump of Brompton, under the skilful directions of the architect Thomas Wyatt Esq....”. Prior to that, work at St. Michael’s had certainly kept Mr. Stump’s firm of Garden Street, Brompton, busy. It was they who had erected (and presumably, subsequently removed) the organ loft of 1839³ and what scant church records there are from this period also show that they were also paid sums of £97 and £67/10s in 1860 and 1864 respectively for unspecified but seemingly substantial projects.

We have a reasonable idea of what St. Michael’s looked like before this period. From the outside, we have two drawings dating from the early 19th century. The first of these drawings show the south-western side of the old nave, before the extension was built. You can see there was once a door at the western end, presumably the one that was ‘blocked up’ as stated in the 1852 *Maidstone Journal* account. There was also a curious thatched lean-to on the side of the tower, now long gone. You can also just make out the bricked-up south-western window of the sanctuary. This now contains patterned stained-glass of Victorian origin, but a church survey from 1841 tells us that the Lady Harley memorial⁴ was “on the south side of the chancel”. The only place this could have been was over the window, explaining why it was bricked up. The memorial is now hidden away on the south-western wall of the Lady Chapel, but the 1852 *Maidstone Journal* account surprisingly did not mention it at all. Had it been taken down and put into storage prior to the major refurbishment works of later years?

Also worthy of note is the absence of buttresses on the chancel. I wonder if these were added in 1867 due to worries that the church might fall down into the (then) recent cutting in which the National School was built!*



The other drawing shows St. Michael’s eastern aspect. The most striking difference from today is the porch – it was set much higher with respect to the roof and the cutting to it was absent. There used to be five stone steps leading down to the nave and the porch had no front door, just a wooden gate. Canon Shaw’s restoration made the cutting and lowered the porch so that it led straight into the nave. The 1769 *Registrum Roffensis* tells us that the altar tomb on the right was that of Johannes Bennett (who died in 1662 at the age of 73) and which was subsequently moved to the west of the tower, presumably to make way for the porch cutting – one of the many memorials that were uprooted during Canon Shaw’s restoration of St. Michael’s. The drawing (which I think was made by the antiquarian Henry Petrie in around 1807) also fails to show the little Norman lancet window between the two others in the north-eastern chancel wall. It seems to have been covered over at the time. The 1841 survey of the inside of the church only refers to “a small flat square

* This was also an issue when the old school was demolished and two houses built in its place.

recess” between the northern chancel windows. Neither does the 1852 *Maidstone Journal* account mention it.

This is the window with the mediaeval “vine-leaf” decoration around it and the curious little face painted at the top, which would surely have been worth a note had it been visible[†]. Quite when it was uncovered I don’t know. Henry Smetham’s brief (and occasionally somewhat dubious) history of St. Michael’s written in 1925 – one of a series of essays entitled “*Rambles Round Churches*” - mentions it, so perhaps it was found during Canon Shaw’s restoration work.

Next month, I hope Roger will let me finish off my ramblings on the topic of the Reverend Robert Shaw’s church refurbishment, with an account of the changes made to the interior of St. Michael’s in 1867.

Keith Hodges

1) *Parish of Cuxton and Halling magazine*, November 2023, pp. 8-9

2) *Ibid*, December 2023, pp. 7-9

3) *Ibid*, April 2024, pp. 3-5

4) *Ibid*, September 2023, pp. 3-5

Out of the Mouths of Babes & Sucklings

Several times I’ve been very impressed by the insights children have shared in lessons or services.

The first I remember was while taking a confirmation class when I was curate at Orpington. We were talking about the words in the Creed *I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all thing visible and invisible*. I asked the class if they could think of any invisible things God had made, expecting their answer to be entities such as angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, which would have been correct, of course, but I was most impressed with the boy who answered *love*. Yes, God made love and all the other abstracts such as wisdom & joy, beauty & peace, as well as the concretes such as animals, vegetables and minerals, you and me, and, indeed, angels & archangels. So Love made love. That’s a thought.

Another example was a young person preparing for confirmations in this parish. Her primary school teacher stated in class that Jesus came into the world for the good people. Very bravely, and I’m sure politely, this little girl pointed out that Jesus came into the world to save bad people. *I am not come to call the righteous, He said, but sinners to repentance*.

I asked another group of children in a service at St Michael’s why they thought God had sent Amos to be a prophet in Northern Israel when he really didn’t want to go? He was quite happy to be a farmer in Judah! One boy hit the nail on the head. The Israelites had left off worshipping God and had therefore left off treating one another decently. That’s what happens when a nation forgets about God.

The remaining two examples come from our children’s service at St John’s. One week we were talking about the time when the Israelites demanded a king to rule over them. They had lost confidence in the old, freer, less formal way of managing their affairs under God. They wanted a military leader. They just wanted to be like their neighbours who all had kings. The prophet Samuel warned them that a king would tax them to enrich himself and the elite gathered around him. He would compel the women to work for him & conscript the young men to fight his battles. One of the girls present commented, *Sounds like nothing’s changed*. It’s an important point. We have to entrust individuals with power if we are to live in an ordered society with law and order, properly managed public services and the ability to defend ourselves, but power corrupts, as Lord Acton said, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Last year, when ULEZ (the Ultra Low Emissions Zone, which is designed to reduce carbon emissions but bears hardest on poor people who cannot afford to replace their old cars and vans and therefore have to pay daily fines of £12.50) was

[†] Restored in the 1980s.

extended, at the same time it was reported that there had been an increase in the number of flights taken in private jets and helicopters.

On another occasion, we were discussing the state of the Church at Corinth, when St Paul sent them the first of two letters. Some of the Corinthian Christians claimed to be loyal to Paul, others to Apollos, another minister who had worked in Corinth, others to Peter. Some (possibly in a spirit self-righteous hypocrisy) claimed to be the true followers of Christ. I asked the children whom they thought Christians should follow. One lad said, *Jesus*, and I thought, *I hope you remember that when you grow up*. It's too easy for Christians to split into factions and sometimes they do so out of what they consider to be loyalty to particular ministers. This could be an issue when there is a change of ministry in Cuxton & Halling. Very many ministers have served here in the past. I am coming to the end of my time here. There will be a new ministry however it is organised, but, while one sows & another reaps, it is God Who gives the increase. Paul writes (I Corinthians 3): ²¹ *Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;* ²² *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;* ²³ *And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

The phrase *out of the mouths of babes & sucklings* does not, of course, originate in Radio 4's *Quote, Unquote*. It is a quotation from one of the most beautiful of psalms.

Psalm 8. *Domine, Dominus noster*

O LORD our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world : thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens! 2. Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies : that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. 3. For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that thou visitest him? 5. Thou madest him lower than the angels : to crown him with glory and worship. 6. Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands : and thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; 7. All sheep and oxen : yea, and the beasts of the field; 8. The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea : and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas. 9. O Lord our Governor : how excellent is thy Name in all the world!

On The Ropes – August 2024.

Sunday service ringing was reasonably well-supported at St. Michael's this month, with only the first Sunday, the 4th (or Tenth Sunday after Trinity in the liturgical calendar, if you prefer) going uncelebrated by the sound of bells. Our little band of seven or eight regulars is vulnerable to the holidays and life events of its individual members, but we are all keen to maintain the tradition of Sunday service ringing as best we can. We would all like to ring at St. John's a little more often than we do at the moment and we hope to put that right in the near future. Looking back through some old parish magazines from the early 1980s, it seems the towers at both St. Michael's and St. John's each had ringing teams of around 20 people back in the day. St. John's even had to turn away potential recruits because practice nights were so busy! Oh, for such riches these days...We would certainly welcome any new apprentices to St. Michael's for our practice nights on Wednesday evenings at 7.30.

The majority of church bell towers in England ring simple "rounds" or "call-changes", but the teams at our two parish churches have historically always been a bit more ambitious. On Sunday's we normally attempt cycles of "method ringing", with Bob Doubles, Grandsire and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place being our favourite stand-bys. Two or three of our little team are still relatively inexperienced compared to its members of old but we are always looking to widen our repertoire, with varying degrees of success.

Sunday the 18th saw us attempt, somewhat ambitiously, to ring a "quarter peal" of St. Simons. Alas, the wheels came off (metaphorically speaking, and to much team laughter) after about five minutes. Instead, we used the occasion to repeat a few individual cycles of St. Simon's as practice – which we got right in the end. Fortunately, we don't think any of it sounded too discordant for our long-suffering neighbours or parishioners and was still of an appropriate standard for a Sunday.

Sunday the 25th also saw a fair bit of hilarity as one or two of us got into a muddle on a couple of occasions though again, not to the extent of making too much of a clanging, tuneless racket (we hope). Our Rector was indeed prompted to admonish us, tongue-in-cheek, for the degree of jocularly emanating from the ringing platform as we mocked our own technical ineptitude. He should be grateful that our team does not indulge in the drunkenness and ribaldry that was historically associated with bell-ringing in pre-Victorian times – at least, not before Sunday service. We do take a pride in trying to get our ringing right but (unlike some other towers, dare I say?) we don't take ourselves too seriously when things don't quite go to plan! It's just nice to ring the bells, after all. And it's all good fun. 'April Day'.

Teddy Bears' Picnic



Many thanks to all those who contributed to the MU Teddy Bears' Picnic, whether arranging, setting up, taking part, spending money or just enjoying a very pleasant afternoon. We made £70 and were able to send £85 to Mary Sumner House for the *Summer of Hope Appeal*.

The highlight of the year for the Mothers' Union is always the "Teddy Bears' Picnic" when everyone in the village is invited into Roger's lovely Rectory Garden for a picnic and games. Members of the Mothers' Union organised a selection of stalls including a Bric a Brac Stall and a Book Stall and a Raffle. Many children enjoyed the Craft Stall using their skills to make and colour all sorts of wonderful creations. Some children made up their own games. There was a game of cricket happening in one corner and hula hooping in another. The refreshments included cream teas which we all enjoyed.

The Maypole was set up as usual on Roger's lawn and everyone joined in the Maypole dancing. Even our doggie guests were well behaved and did not run off with the teddies! A big "Thank You" must go to Roger for the many years that he has opened up his garden to the children and adults from the villages of Cuxton and Halling. We have always had so much fun. Jenny .

The Rector's Retirement

I have had to accept that there is no escape from my having to retire on my 70th birthday – the 30th November this year. My last day will be marked (God Willing) with a service of Holy Communion at 11.00 am at St Michael's on that day. (Please note change of time.) There will then be refreshments served in the church hall. Everybody is welcome & I hope to see as many of you as possible. I am very grateful to God for the time I have been Rector of Cuxton and Halling and for all the friendship, support & encouragement I have received. None of us knows what the future holds, but please work prayerfully & faithfully for God's glory, the well-being & growth of His Church and for her service to the parish and to the world in general.

After 30th November, my address will be 5, May Street, Cuxton, Rochester, Kent, ME2 1LR, telephone 01634 713294. My email address will be unchanged. I shall keep my webpage <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk> because there is a lot of potentially useful archival material – church guides, sermons, bible notes and parish magazines dating back to 2005. There will not, however, be current parish notices on it after the end of this year. Please go to [A Church Near You](#) and type in your postcode for up to date information regarding the Parish of Cuxton & Halling. It's magic, Bible Notes for the last quarter of this year are already on the web page – the rest of the Gospel According to St Matthew & readings for Advent & Christmas. I am continuing to add material to my website, including a sermon for Trinity 13 – That Peace Which the World Cannot Give. Roger.

AI For the Visually & Physically Impaired

A reader has a neighbour who suffers from glaucoma which impairs sight & may eventually lead to blindness. He wondered what help there might be on line "After talking to him I decided to have a look at what is available by using AI artificial intelligence." It turns out that there is a great deal, using devices such as Alexa and the Google equivalent. I can't go into them all here, but it's amazing. You tell it what to do and it can help you get the radio & TV you want, add commentary or sound effects, control your light switches and even pull your curtains, phone a friend, including video calls, read you an audio book and much more. It's not hard when you know how. If you don't feel confident ask a friend or a family member.

Harvest and Armistice

Two big things to mark each Autumn are Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday. At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month 1918, the guns at last fell silent. Harvest is about ends. It is the end of Summer. It is the purpose underlying the whole agricultural year - ploughing, sowing, nurturing the crops and, finally, reaping. Harvest is very hard work, often in amazingly golden weather. Ultimately, we all depend on successful harvests (though we may be unconscious of that fact, given that most of us get most of our food from shops selling us other people's harvest goods). Harvest is a time for celebration – hence Harvest Festival. With harvest home comes a brief respite from labour before preparing the ground for next year's sowing. Harvest is a good time. There is also, however, a darker side. In many cultures, a poor harvest means severe hardship in the coming winter. Death we think of as the Grim Reaper. The final harvest is indeed the end, the conclusion of our life on earth and its meaning. Harvest is a time of separation – the wheat from the chaff. Our patron saint, John the Baptist, speaks of Jesus thus: *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* There is a judgment to come and Jesus is the judge. What about Armistice Day? What about the very mixed feelings there must have been on November 11th 1918, VE Day & VJ Day 1945? Joy that we had won; relief that it was all over; grief for all those millions of lives lost; continued suffering and hardship for the grievously wounded; hope for the future and, no doubt, apprehension as to what it might bring; the resolve to end war forever, to build a better society, the promise never to forget those who had fallen. Things could never be the same again and yet a longing to restore all that had been lost. The Grim Reaper had stalked so much of the world, as he still does. There was an end to celebrate, the end of the fighting. The allies had achieved their end, but at what cost? *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* There were astonishing acts of sacrifice that must be honoured eternally and yet there must also be judgment. *Thou shalt not kill.* How could human beings, made in the image of God, for whom Christ died, act as we act in war? What do we deserve for what we have done? Thankfully, our Judge is also our Redeemer. He also is our teacher, our example, our friend and our brother and it is in Him that we find the means to overcome evil with good, the only true and final victory, when the sacrifice of self brings in the Kingdom of God – earth's Harvest Home.



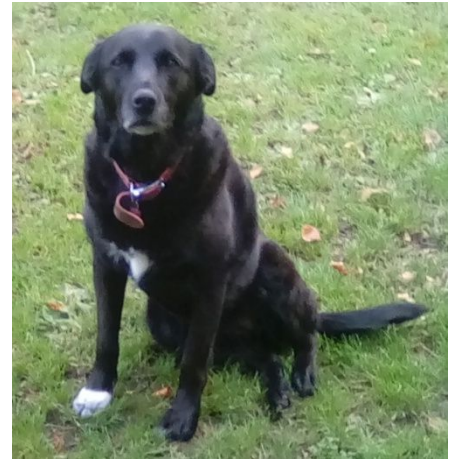
Tommy's Talking Points

We haven't been out for one of our long country walks in foreign parts with Enzo since I last wrote, but we have had a good Summer. After Evening Prayer, we've been sitting in the garden while Master has his tea and enjoying the warmth of the declining sun so long as it remains light enough for Master to read and no pressing task calls us indoors.. By the time you read this, the days will be shorter and probably colder, but there will be the joys of Harvest, the autumn colours in the woods and the prospect of Christmas in the offing. We shall have at least one more walk with Enzo before Winter comes and I look forward to giving you an

account of it in next month's magazine.

This picture of me was taken in our garden the evening after the Teddy Bears' Picnic on 21st August. Lollie has been staying with us while her immediate family are on holiday in Spain. It's good to have the company, though there is a certain wariness and Master is careful to feed us at the same time in order to avoid conflict. However, Lollie still gets some of my food. I generally like to leave something in my bowl perhaps for future consumption. Lollie never passes up the chance of something to eat and, takes advantage of the opportunity when I am not in the same room to scoff what a more refined animal has saved for later. Lollie was lying down on her bed resting when Master took my picture. So Lollie's picture is an older one, before she got her smart new collar.

As Lollie is older now, she is not supposed to have too much exercise. So Master & I haven't been taking her on our morning runs. She doesn't like not coming, but Master thinks it's probably for the best. She does usually come with us on an afternoon walk and can easily manage an hour round the valleys. Maybe her pills are doing her as much good as Master's are doing him. We're both made very welcome by the church people.



Speaking of walks, we have really enjoyed seeing the flowers in the field behind Mayflower Heights. There are sunflowers and poppies and lots of mauve flowers Master didn't know the name of but turn out to be Phacelia (aka scorpion weed, purple tansy, fiddle neck and fernleaf fiddle neck) and some others which are probably weeds. There are also bean plants, presumably self-sown from last year's crop. These then would be has beans!

The Teddy Bears' Picnic was really good. It was a lovely day. Some people think that our garden now looks better than it ever has. It was nice to see lots of children who made a fuss of me and played with Lollie, who loves chasing balls and windfall apples. There were not many teddy bears in evidence. I think my reputation as a teddy bear thief put them off. There was a bring & buy sale for the humans and a raffle, which Master called in his customary carrying voice. The humans had a lovely tea – sandwiches, quiche, sausage rolls and cream teas with home made scones. There was so much cream and jam that they had to eat at least two scones to avoid the sin of wasting food. One nice girl offered me a dog chew which I declined. I was more interested in the sausage roll in her other hand, but she kept that for herself. Lollie & I had a wonderful time, but were really tired afterwards and in no hurry to get up the next morning.

Master has been looking for a new home for us when we have to leave the Rectory. He has found a nice one which is not very far from where we live at present. So I'm hoping to go on the same walks and to meet all my friends just as we do now. He says that he hopes the conveyancing is quicker than when he sold his other house. Otherwise we might be spending Christmas in a homeless shelter. I don't believe that that is likely, however.

Tommy.

The Accession of His Majesty the King

To be honest, I have not usually made use of the service provided for the anniversary of the reigning monarch's accession to the throne, but I did pay more attention this year probably because it fell on a Sunday. I was very taken by this Prayer for Unity provided for use on this annual commemoration. I discovered that it was first included during the reign of Queen Anne (1665-1714). They were tumultuous times. Guy Fawkes had tried to blow up her great grandfather James I. Her grandfather, Charles I, had been beheaded by parliament in 1649. Her father, King James II, was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the British throne was taken by William of Orange and Anne's sister Mary. Anne succeeded on William's death in 1702. During Anne's reign, the Scottish & English parliaments joined together in the Act of Union, we were mixed up in the War of the Spanish Succession and there was much political upheaval. Religious differences had played a major part both in the Gunpowder Plot, the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution and had not gone away in Anne's time. The need for this prayer was evident, as I suggest that it is today. It asks God for unity in Church and state, which, in those days aspired to be the same thing. We need unity today in Church and state and, however the two relate, I am sure that we shall not find peace in ourselves and with one another until we are at peace with God.

Roger.

A Prayer for Unity.

O GOD the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that, as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all; so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*