

Services July 2023			
July 2 nd Trinity 4	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 28 vv 5-9 p788 Roman 6 vv 11-23 p1133 Matthew 10 vv 40-42 p976	
July 9 th Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 vv 14-25 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-30 p976	
July 16 th Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 55 vv p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	
July 23 rd Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979	
July 30 th Trinity 8	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Kings 3 vv 1-15 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am Cuxton		Holy Communion 9.30 am Halling	
5 th July	I Samuel 3 vv 1-19 Luke 13 vv 10-21	6 th July	I Samuel 4 vv 1-18 Luke 14 vv 1-11
12 th July	I Samuel 9 v15 – 10 v1 Luke 16 vv 19-32	13 th July	I Samuel 10 vv 1-16 Luke 17 vv 1-10
19 th July	I Samuel 14 vv 1-15 Luke 18 vv 31-43	20 th July	I Samuel 14 vv 24-46 Luke 19 vv 1-10
26 th July	I Samuel 17 v55 -18 v16 Luke 20 vv 27-40	27 th July	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 John 20 vv 1-18

Copy Date August Magazine: July 14th 8.30 am Rectory

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St John's Draw (April): £10 each Miss Heighes (41) & Miss Mitchell (72)

Church Hall Draw (June): 1st prize - Ann Saunders, 2nd prize- Joyce Haselden, 3rd prize- Jenny Beaney

Dates

24 th June	Halling Patronal Festival Nativity of St John the Baptist	4.00 tea @ St John's 5.00 Evening Prayer
1 st July	Children's Celebration	10.30 St John's
16 th August	Teddy Bears' Picnic Rectory Grounds / Church Hall Bring & Buy for Mothers' Union Charities	2.00
10 th September	Bring & Share Lunch for Church Mission Society Church Hall	12.00
1 st October	Harvest Barbecue Church Hall	12.00
21 st October	Quiz for Church Funds Church Hall	7.30

Alpha Course

It is years since we did Alpha Courses in the parish – an opportunity to taste & see the Christian faith for those interested but as yet uncommitted and for those of us who do believe to grow in our understanding of our faith. Since we did these courses, they have been significantly revised and come in a new format. (Who remembers videotape?) If you are interested, please let me know, and we'll arrange another course.

Confirmation

It's also some time since we had a Confirmation service in the parish, though we have taken candidates to other churches. If you are interested in being confirmed, please let me know. The preparation could be linked with Alpha, though it does not have to be and the two things are separate.



“Not My King”

There is a story about a habitual criminal who, when asked to plead, replied, “I don’t recognise this court.” Well, you ought to,” said the judge. “You’ve been here often enough!”

“Not my King” was the placard some republicans carried at the coronation of King Charles III. I hasten to say that I don’t support them. I believe in our constitutional and sacral monarchy and I am very pleased to give my allegiance to King Charles. However, I wouldn’t carry a banner proclaiming “Not my King” even if I were a republican or if I were a monarchist who, for some reason or other didn’t believe that Charles Windsor should be our head of state. There are still those who believe that the descendants of James II (dismissed by parliament in 1688 and replaced at parliament’s invitation by William of Orange and his wife, James’ daughter, Queen Mary). There are also people who believe that, because of certain episodes in Charles’ earlier life, the succession should have skipped a generation and that the present Prince William should have become King on the death of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Then there are all those republicans who believe that we should not have a monarch at all. Anti-monarchists and supporters of other claimants to the throne are all entitled to their opinions. They are free to state their beliefs. They are welcome to try to persuade the rest of us that they are right and to campaign for political change. How far they should be prepared or allowed to go in disrupting what was a special day for so many people is another matter, but we would not wish to return to the days of King Henry VIII, when the

last Bishop of Rochester to live in Halling, John Fisher, was beheaded for his refusal to accept that the King was the Head of the Church of England, rather than the Pope. Actually, it is Christ Who is Head of the Church, not any human being.

Fisher himself had had Thomas Hilton burned at the stake as a heretic because he had been bringing copies of biblical books in English into the country. Freedom of speech is very precious and we must guard that freedom in the face of a growing tendency to silence those who dare to question a new orthodoxy. In twenty first century Britain, we don’t get burned at the stake for reading the Bible in English, but people do lose their jobs for affirming what it teaches about issues such as sex, gender and marriage. Let me be clear. I’m not just defending the freedom of Christians to say what they believe. I’m defending the freedom of atheists and people of any religion to say what they believe and to argue for it and to campaign for it. It displays very little confidence in one’s own beliefs if one feels that the best way to defend them is to silence any opposition. A rational examination of the evidence in a prayerful atmosphere in which we respect and are prepared to learn from those with whom we disagree will eventually lead us into the Truth. *Seek and ye shall find.*

If they are citizens of the United Kingdom or any of the other countries of which Charles became head of state on 8th September last year, whatever they think about monarchy in general or Charles in particular, they are in error in displaying “Not my King” banners because, like it or not, he is their king. It’s just not true to say “Not my King”. It is worrying that “Not my...” has become a slogan for three reasons.

- 1) It appears to spring from the notion that truth is not absolute – that there is my truth and your truth, but there is no such thing as the Truth. This foolish notion seems to have infected the King's younger son. Statements are true or false. There is no my truth or your truth. Charles is our King whatever you or I think about that fact.
- 2) Democracy depends on losers' consent, as does law. We'll return to this, but a coherent society depends on everyone accepting election results, court judgments, etc.. We shall be able to think of exceptions to this in extreme cases – such as when a Hitler gains power by constitutional means or a court condemns a political prisoner under pressure from a Stalin – but, generally speaking, society cannot function unless most people play by the rules most of the time and accept the results of elections, the judgments of the courts and even, galling as it sometimes may seem, the rulings of officials, who have been invested with power by the state. It isn't sufficient to dislike, however strongly, the outcome of an election to justify a decision to defy the laws the new government enacts.
- 3) Waving banners with slogans such as “Not my King” destroys social cohesion. The bearer of the banner is effectively saying *I and people like me don't really belong to the same nation as the rest of you poor fools. We form an educated elite, an intelligentsia; we are intrinsically superior to all you ordinary people mad enough or bad enough not to recognise that we are right.* This is the direction in which America seems to be heading – not so much *one nation under God* as two tribes, Republican and Democrat, with such a gulf opening up between them that they can no longer even respect one another. I must be careful not to exaggerate, basing my views on overblown media reports. The so called coup by Trump supporters on the Feast of Epiphany 2021 very soon came to nothing, but it is very worrying that it happened at all. [It must be more than twenty years ago that I attended a lecture at Windsor Castle in which the distinguished speaker,

a former US ambassador to the UK, stated that one of the great things Britain and America had in common was that leaders defeated in elections accepted the result and went quietly. He observed that, if John Major or George Bush lost the next election, they would leave their offices and go home. They wouldn't summon the guard and barricade themselves in the official residence. That seemed obvious then, not quite so obvious now.]

It was back in 2016 that I first saw “Not My...” placards on display. Young idealistic democrats in the United States were waving “Not my President” signs following the election of Donald Trump. I can quite understand why they might think that Trump was not the right man to be President of the United States, but the fact was that he had been duly elected by the processes prescribed in the US constitution. Trump was the President elect and it was simply untrue to deny this or to say that he was only the President of those Americans who had voted for him. It wasn't too difficult to foresee, when these young people refused to accept the result of the 2016 election, that, if their candidate won in 2020, their opponents might feel justified in rejecting that result – which was what happened with a vengeance. Then there was the rather nasty implication that the millions of people who voted for Trump (perhaps because he was the only alternative to Hillary Clinton, a globalist who had made herself unpopular with Middle America by describing people with traditional views as *deplorables*) were to be pitied or despised. Unemployed factory workers with traditional values who had lost their jobs to globalization did not enjoy being told to *watch their privilege* by students whose tuition at some of the world's leading universities was being paid for by their extremely wealthy parents and who could expect to be offered prestigious and well-paid jobs anywhere in the world when they had completed their formal education.

Though with trepidation because the wounds are still raw, I cannot avoid mentioning that a similar division opened up in the United Kingdom with regard to the Brexit referendum in 2016. There were strong correlations between social class and where people lived and whether they were

somewhere people or *anywhere people* and the way they voted in the referendum. *Somewhere people* are people who are settled in one place. They like living near family and long term friends. They hope to make their homes and to find jobs in the places where they come from. *Anywhere people* are much more prepared to leave their home towns and villages, even to live in other countries, whether for work or adventure. There was a powerful tendency to think that people who voted differently from the way they themselves voted were stupid, bigoted, arrogant, unpatriotic, nationalistic, selfish, uneducated, elitist, etc.. Friends, even families, fell out over the referendum. And it has to be said that many remainers didn't accept the result of the referendum. They argued that the margin 52% / 48% was too small to justify such a major change, that the issue was too complex to be decided in a referendum, that the voters were lied to by the leave campaign, that many leave voters were old and relatively poorly educated, and anyway that it was such a big mistake to leave the EU that Brexit must be resisted at all costs.

All those points raise questions about democracy. The parliament we voted for in 2015 had an overwhelming majority of MPs from all three main parties committed to holding a referendum on our EU membership. Having got into that position, the referendum had to go ahead. If 50% + 1 isn't enough to win a vote, what ought the figure to be? Who would decide the necessary margin? How serious would an issue have to be in order to introduce qualified majority voting? The belief that many voters won't understand the issues has been an argument against democracy at least since the time of Plato 400 years before Christ, but nobody has yet thought of a better system of government. In reality, statements made by both sides in the referendum debate turned out to be untrue. If an election or a referendum is invalidated by politicians failing to tell *the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth*, there has probably never been a valid vote. The essence of democracy is that we all get a vote – not just the privileged. Maybe you believe it was a big mistake to leave the EU, but it would set a dangerous precedent if election results could be set aside by those with power simply because they were confident that they knew better than the majority of the electorate.

I worry that those who lose elections so quickly attempt to challenge the results. Maybe the challenges are honest attempts to put right a genuine wrong, but sometimes they are spurious, intended only to overturn an unwelcome result. Back in the year 2,000, there was controversy about so called “hanging chads” in Florida, voting papers which may or may not have been properly counted in the contest between Bush and Mondale. It sometimes seems as if, no sooner does a US president take office, than his opponents are looking for grounds on which to impeach him. After the Brexit referendum, Gina Miller went to court to prevent the UK government from triggering Article 50 (which would take us out of the EU) without the authorisation of parliament despite the referendum result. Eight Supreme Court judges supported Ms Miller; three took the opposite view. This was not a simple question such as *Is the accused guilty?* to which there could be a definite answer based on the evidence, the legal arguments and precedent. This was a complex question which political ramifications on which equally learned and experienced judges could come to different conclusions. It has become very common for the losing side in British elections to pore over every detail of the winners' campaign in the hope of finding something they can take to the courts or the Electoral Commission with a view to having the result overturned. Please don't mistake me. I'm not suggesting that people who win by fraudulent means or even as a result of genuine mistakes should remain in power, but electoral law is very complex and it would not be a good thing if every result faced potential challenge because all the minutiae might not have been complied with. Back in 1966, West Germany had to accept that we had won the World Cup despite the controversy around the referee's decision to allow our third goal.

So far my argument has been that we must almost always accept the results which are churned out by our political and legal systems. If we don't, we have anarchy, fractured societies in which individuals behave as they think fit, heedless of the needs of others. *Almost always*, that's the rub – *almost always*. We admire people who stand up to tyranny: political prisoners, brave journalists who defy oppressive regimes and publish the

truth, martyrs for their faith, resistance fighters in occupied countries, citizens who defy laws which require them to report the whereabouts of dissidents or Jews, slaves who lead uprisings against their masters, soldiers who disobey orders to commit war crimes. There are many examples in the Bible of people who defied authority and refused to do what they knew to be wrong and insisted on doing what God had commanded them to do. In Acts 4, the authorities forbid the apostles Peter & John to preach the Gospel. They reply, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* We support people who put obedience to God or to their own consciences before their allegiance to human society, to its governments, parliaments and courts.

But how sure do you have to be and how importantly must the issue matter to justify breaking the law or denying the legitimacy of an election? Are you justified in disobeying an order issued by an authority which you believe to be corrupt and dishonest? Climate change and animal rights are important. People who have strong opinions on these matters are entitled to express them, especially if they know what they are talking about. They have a right, maybe a duty, to share what they know and what they believe. But how far should they go in exercising their right to free speech, their right to demonstrate? The same might be said for nuclear weapons. In a democracy, we get to assert our beliefs by voting for the people we believe will best represent us. But, in reality, we live in a managed democracy. There are only two parties which have a realistic chance of forming a government and they are really not very far apart on most issues. If you vote for candidates committed to nuclear disarmament, for example, you are probably wasting your vote. But what if you believe very strenuously that nuclear weapons are intrinsically immoral and should never be created or stockpiled, that it could never be right to use them? Some members of the Campaign for

Nuclear Disarmament calculated the proportion of their taxes spent on nuclear weapons and withheld that amount of tax. Were they morally justified in doing so? Would people concerned about the environment be justified in withholding the proportion of their taxes spent on motorway building?

When the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link was under discussion, we were told many things that turned out to be untrue. One very respectable, law abiding lady told me that, if the bill authorising its construction was passed fairly and honestly, she would have to accept it, but if it passed on the strength of lies told to MPs and the general public by the developers and the government, she would be prepared to lie down in front of the bulldozers rather than allow the CTRL to be built. Would she have been justified?

If you had very strong reasons for believing that a decision taken by a local authority was made outwith the proper parameters of legality, impartiality and honesty, would you be justified in disregarding it?

My conclusion is that there is a general duty to accept decisions taken democratically or by other lawful authority. We are all members one of another and it is wrong to think of ourselves and people like us as somehow separate from (and perhaps better than) the rest of society. It is vital that we respect everyone as we respect ourselves. We can disagree politely and remain friends with the people we disagree with. Humility is a virtue. The other guy might just be right. But there are times when conscience or our loyalty to God require us to take a stand for what we believe rather than go along with what most people think or what the government has decided or even what the courts determine. Such occasions are very rare. We have to be both confident and humble if we ever feel bound to act in this way. And, if we do so decide, we have to be prepared to take the consequences. Roger.

No Charge for Christenings

I'm often asked what it costs to be christened or baptised and I was very sorry to hear recently that a family were postponing having their children christened because they might not be able to afford it. There is no charge for a christening or baptism. Faith is God's gift to us. It would be quite wrong for the Church to charge a fee. In response to God's gift to us, we offer back to Him our whole lives.

From the Registers

Funerals:

31st May
6th June

Stephen John Tower
John David Nicholas Hartridge Summers

Rainham
Rochester Road

Serendipity

Socrates once said, "Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel."

One morning in Dean Valley, approaching a fence post, from a distance it looked as if it were topped with bladderwrack seaweed like you see on breakwaters. Getting closer, however, it proved to be a swarm of wild bees, the same colour and shape as the bladders on seaweed but all moving and shimmering in the sunlight. Although, I believe that swarming bees don't usually sting, we kept a wide berth. I thought they would probably not stay there long. The location was too open and exposed to be a good place to nest and on a popular walking route. So it proved. They were gone by the afternoon, though I don't know what happened to them.

When I was at Ramsgate, I had a parishioner whose boyfriend was a salesman for Gillette. He told me that the reason I still used the original kind of safety razor with a single blade at 90 degrees to the handle was that I too was single. Men apparently don't think of changing their shaving habits until a wife or a girlfriend buys them a new razor. (It's hard thinking of presents for men as most of us only want things that cost hundreds of pounds or alcohol or, in the bad old days, tobacco.) I never fancied using a cutthroat like my grandfather did. So I stuck with the original standard safety razor until indeed I was given by family members the more modern safety razor with multiple blades at an acute angle to the handle. They also gave me an electric razor but I never have got on with technology.

Anyway, it seems that the pendulum has swung back and the original safety razor is back in fashion and has become a must have item for us young and trendy people. Family members duly gave me one for a present and my shaving habits have gone full circle. I'm not sure whether or not this is a good thing. I seem to cut myself more often, though that may be a question of getting used to a ninety degree angle again. Whether the shave is better or worse, it's difficult to tell. I shall have plenty of opportunities to find out as blades now come in packs of fifty rather than six! Forty nine still to go!

At least these single blades fit all razors. With the newer multi blade types, you never seem to be able to get replacements when you've used up all the ones that came originally with the razor in question.

I did see that there is actually a recognised selling technique based on the sale of razors. You sell the razors relatively cheaply and make your profits on supplying the blades. In the same way, computer printers are sold relatively cheaply and the suppliers make their money on the outrageous prices they charge for the ink.

Want to look sixty years younger? Try tripping over and grazing both knees. Though it hurts more now than it did when one was eight!

Back in those days, when I was eight and younger, I remember my father labouring, first with a hand mower and then with a temperamental petrol mower, in order to create and maintain lawns reminiscent of billiard tables. That, in those days, was the aspiration. He did enquire of the doctor whether all that perspiration might shift some weight. The doctor asked him what he did when he'd finished the grass. He replied that he went to the 'fridge, took out a pint of milk and drank it. "No," said the doctor, "You're not going to lose weight by mowing." In due course, mowing came to be my job. It's something I enjoy and I too tried to achieve the perfect lawn, sometimes using the hand mower because I thought it did a better job than the petrol one. That was when the aim of gardening was to impose order (as defined by human beings) on nature. Pretty plants like daisies and buttercups were too easy. We prized exotic flowers which were that much more difficult to grow. Hedges and edges were clipped in geometric patterns and different parts of the

garden were allocated to different kinds of plant. Actually, to be fair, we in our family never totally went for total formality. If self-propagated plants turned up where they weren't supposed to be, we cherished them. I've always maintained that an untidy garden full of weeds (perhaps because you can't look after it or just don't love plants enough to tend it) is better than concrete, paving, decking or artificial grass and I feel this ever more strongly as I notice front gardens disappearing at an alarming rate, spoiling the look of our streets and diminishing the quality of our environment. I did try to keep one small area of grass at the Rectory pristine, using a cylinder hand mower, but I've always just kept the rest short using a rotary mower and I've even given up on the Eden in front of the kitchen. Too many moles. I've also believed in working with nature in the Rectory, making the most of what grows easily as well as trying to keep things more orderly and respectable in certain areas. My grass is now liberally sprinkled with buttercups and daisies and it looks great. Besides, I don't use weed killers, which one would have to in order to get rid of them.

What gardening is all about has become much more of an issue recently. I always felt that the show gardens at Chelsea had too much wood, metal, concrete, etc. in them. Gardens are for plants and the animals which feed on them and live among them. But now there is talk of re-wilding. There are more gardens at Chelsea with fewer cultivated plants. As climate change tends to bring extreme weather, weeds are being re-designated as resilient plants. A weed always was nothing worse than a plant in the wrong place. So, why struggle to grow begonias, say, rather than English marigolds? Traditional gardeners continue to maintain that the art of gardening is to achieve something special. Re-wilders are more inclined to let nature take its course. I think both have a place, but, please, gardens are for plants. Try to minimise the amount of artificial surfaces. I'm not really a fan even of statues and works of art in gardens (or beauty spots). The works of man are always inferior to the works of God.

PERCY PIGEON'S PERCEPTIONS

Good day to you all. I think you will be looking forward to your summer holidays. Philippa and I will also be flying off. We are going to Leybourne lakes again this year with short-haul flights and a stopover en route. Leybourne Lakes give us the chance to catch up with friends and relatives. Of course the picnickers and fishermen ensure we have plenty of food - sandwiches, crisps, mealworms and sometimes even popcorn which is Philippa's real treat of the holiday. Sometimes there are ice-cream cones too! We have done well with food near to home too with coronation celebrations and Eurovision parties.

Thursday mornings remain our "big shop" of the week when we follow on from the foxes and cats who have taken first pickings from the refuse bags you still leave out overnight. Our culinary delights have widened from "cheesy wotsits" to nachos, tortilla, croissants, pain au raisins, ravioli, flat bread and even enseimadas. Quite cosmopolitan for Kentish avians!

Now that the squabs have fledged, we have moved back to our summer nest in the crazy ash tree in the rectory garden. The only down side to our summer quarters is the scary noise of the church bells on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Tommy shouts at the foxes most evenings at about 10pm. Our week is well-defined by noises - even the grunting of the badgers and the sounds of your littl'uns on the school runs. We are quite used to howling gales and thunderstorms but we really hate your fireworks and don't know what they are for. We overheard a group of Cuxton folk saying how much they'd like a cafe in the heart of Cuxton village. We agree! Cake crumbs are much better than kebab sticks! Please don't forget to put out fresh water - as well as food - for the avians now that the days are getting warmer. Coo coo.

Cemetery & Churchyards

Medway Council keep the grass cut in Halling Churchyard, the Payback people have done a wonderful job of tidying up and the Parish Council fixed the flag & flagpole. So all good there. We got off to a good start with Halling Cemetery - Payback again. There were appreciative comments on social media. The cemetery has now got a bit out of hand and there has been some fly-tipping. We hope to have these problems sorted soon. I'm sorry that Cuxton Churchyard became very overgrown, attracting adverse comment on social media. This has now been attended to. I don't do social media myself. I'm afraid I might waste too much time. I might read unkind things people say about me. And I might, in the heat of the moment, make uncharitable comments about other people. It's too easy to do because it's so quick and because you can't actually see the other person to judge how they are taking it. I'm sure none of us wants to hurt anyone else and we can be positive about one another.

Tommy's Talking Points

Just over a month since our last foray to Boxhill, we set off again for the Surrey Hills with a view to meeting our human friends and their canine companion Enzo. The ease of finding the way last time had lulled Master into a false sense of security and we left home a little bit late. The AA guidance had changed so that we left the M25 at J8 instead of J9 (presumably because of the road works) and, although it was supposed to take the same time, the route was much harder to find and we finally arrived a quarter of an hour late.

You may remember that last time we went to Boxhill there was something of a contretemps when I ate Enzo's lunch and then barred him from his bowl. Master is not pleased with me that I still feel the need to express my dominance over a beautiful puppy with such a sweet nature that he engages everybody's affections. Master reminds me that the green eyed monster is not an attractive addition to the fauna of the English countryside. The result, to Master's chagrin, is a certain wariness on Enzo's part towards me.

Our aim was to complete the Happy Valley Circular Walk. It was a wonderful day, with the sun coming out later, the hottest day of the year so far. The spring vegetation had advanced another month and, as always on the North Downs, the views were splendid.

I don't think we actually did the walk described in the guide. Neither my Master nor Enzo's family is very good at directions and, when other ramblers asked for their help in finding the way, I was reminded of a biblical text about the blind leading the blind. We nevertheless had a wonderful time. There were plenty of opportunities to run about up hill and down dale. We met lots of other people and their dogs, including another Italian water dog like Enzo. We did see Broadwood's Tower which we were supposed to, but, if we saw Saloman's Memorial Viewpoint, we were unaware of it. We failed to find the steps down into Happy Valley, but we enjoyed a steep decline and a glorious ascent into open fields via a stile with a special flap for us dogs to go through. We came back via Juniper Top, which was the opposite to the way we went last time.

Once we'd sorted ourselves out, we had lots of off lead time. The human beings had an excellent lunch of three kinds of sandwiches plus satsumas, while we rested in the shade and beheld the valley below. Enzo and I both refused to eat, despite being offered scrumptious viands. To be honest, dogs like me (and apparently like Enzo) prefer to eat at the proper time and in the proper place. I only ate his dinner last time because I could and to show him.

The human beings enjoyed catching up with their life stories, sharing their plans and striving to understand the mysteries of the world while we dogs more sensibly pursued the simpler pleasures of exercising our muscles and sniffing all the interesting smells there are in a woodland so frequented by dogs and their owners. Despite there having been little rain recently, the Italian water dog did find some mud in which to wallow, negating the effect of the previous day's bath. He had looked so smart, too!

Without intending to, we came home via Chessington, Hook and Epsom, not necessarily in that order and maybe more than once, joining the heavily congested M25 two junctions west of where we ought to have. Master thinks that, if Surrey County Council were to invest in more road signs, far fewer miles would be driven on their thoroughfares, there would be less congestion and pollution, and Surrey's carbon footprint would be considerably reduced.

We had had an excellent day out, however, coming home tired but happy and eagerly anticipating our next excursion in a few weeks' time – hopefully.

Tommy the Rectory Spaniel.

Too Anxious to Please

A young couple went to a guest house on honeymoon. The land lady was so keen to take care of them that she kept asking them what more she could do. Finally, they'd had enough and when she asked what they wanted for breakfast, the young husband replied, "Please just let us alone." And that's what they got for breakfast – a very plain salad!