

# Parish of Cuxton and Halling



November 2024

60p

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

**Services November 2024**

2 <sup>nd</sup> 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 <sup>rd</sup> November 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Before Advent Trinity 23 Blythswood Sunday. Please bring filled shoe boxes.*.	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	
10 <sup>th</sup> November 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday Before Advent Trinity 24 Remembrance Sunday	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion & Act of Remembrance 10.50 Halling Holy Communion & Act of Remembrance	Jonah 3 vv 1-10 p928 Hebrews 9 vv 23-28 p1207 Mark 1 vv 14-20 p1002	
17 <sup>th</sup> November 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday Before Advent Trinity (Collect Epiphany 5) Safeguarding Sunday	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Daniel 12 vv 1-3 p898 Hebrew 10 vv 11-18 p1208 Mark 13 vv 1-8 p1019	
24 <sup>th</sup> November Christ the King Last Sunday After Trinity Roger's last sung service at Halling.	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 1-14 p892 Revelation 1 vv 1-8 p1133 John 18 vv 33-37 p1087	
30 <sup>th</sup> November St Andrew Roger's Last Service in the parish followed by reception in church hall.	11.00 Cuxton Holy Communion	Romans 10 vv 9-21 p1137 Matthew 4 vv 18-22 p968	
1 <sup>st</sup> December Advent Sunday Gift Services Year C	9.30 Cuxton Holy Communion 11.00 Halling Holy Communion	Jeremiah 33 vv 14-16 p796 I Thessalonians 3 vv 9-13 p1187 Luke 21 vv 25-36 p1057	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
6 <sup>th</sup> November	Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 Luke 12 vv 39-48	7 <sup>th</sup> November	Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 Luke 12 vv 49-53
13 <sup>th</sup> November	Ephesians 6 vv 1-9 Luke 13 vv 22-30	14 <sup>th</sup> November	Ephesians 6 vv 10-20 Luke 13 vv 31-35
20 <sup>th</sup> November	Philippians 2 vv 12-18 Luke 14 vv 25-33	21 <sup>st</sup> November	Philippians 3 vv 3-8 Luke 15 vv 1-10
27 <sup>th</sup> November	Revelation 15 vv 1-4 Luke 21 vv 12-19	28 <sup>th</sup> November Roger's last service at Halling.	Revelation 19 vv 1-9 Luke 21 vv 20-28

\* 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. Small, practical items such as toiletries, stationery, and clothing, but not talcum powder, loose sweets, sweets with sell by date before 31/3/25 or any other food items.

Copy date November Magazine: 8<sup>th</sup> November 8.30 am Rectory

The Rev. Roger Knight, The Rectory, Rochester Road, Cuxton, ME2 1AF, Tel. (01634) 717134 email.

[roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk](mailto:roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk)

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

I shall have no responsibilities or rights with regard to the running of the ecclesiastical parish after 30<sup>th</sup> November. Please refer any queries to the churchwardens. I do hope, however, to maintain friendships and I look forward to seeing many of you out and about around the parish, in the shops, in the woods, at the station & in the pub, but not the church because of Church of England protocols. Roger.

**For Diaries**

**19<sup>th</sup> 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.**



### A Timely Paradox

There is an ancient and prestigious university which takes great pride in its Science faculty. For centuries, it has been at the forefront of humanity's growing understanding of the universe and, in this present time, it is very much a leader in research and the development of ideas. Generations of its undergraduates have gone on to achieve great things both in the realm of academia and in the wider world in which the principles in which they have been instructed have found their practical application to the benefit of humanity. Its professors are unmatched both in their contribution to progress in their particular disciplines and in their ability to teach their students with the result that the roll call of notable alumni is both long and impressive.

Watching a few episodes of the Netflix series *The Big Bang Theory*, however, convinced the Dean that there was something lacking in his staff and students. An understanding of Physics, no matter how deep, is insufficient to nourish a whole human person. There is so much more to life than scientific knowledge, awesome though Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry & Biology are. The brightest students recognised this truth and availed themselves of the opportunity to take courses laid on by other faculties. Fatefully, these included a module on the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions.

So horrified were our genius young physicists by the squalor in which their compatriots had dwelt in ages past that they built themselves a time machine in which they could flit between the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries righting the wrongs of the past and re-ordering society in accordance with our enlightened modern philosophies.

The sudden arrival of a group of healthy, enthusiastic, apparently omniscient young people with good teeth, radiating beneficence, in a vehicle the like of which had never before been seen, gained for them a respectful audience and they were at once able to commence an assault on the greatest evils of ages past. The Slave Trade was an obvious abuse to which a stop had to be put and our heroes were pleased to discover that

they were not alone in this belief. Powerful voices, such as that of William Wilberforce, were raised with theirs in successfully bringing an end to this vile business much more quickly than is stated in the pre time machine history books which you and I read at school (ie IRL). There was even talk of paying large sums in reparations to those individuals and communities which had been victims of the trade, but, as much of Britain's wealth at the time depended on the slave trade and colonial exploitation, stopping the trade and ceasing to exploit other lands seriously reduced our ability to pay out large sums of money for any reason, no matter how virtuous, and this idea was quietly dropped. After all, how far back would you go? Should modern Italy be compensating us for enslaving our English forebears? [Actually the story is that Pope Gregory saw some good-looking young slaves on sale in the market at Rome. He asked who they were. When he was told that they were Angles. He said "Angels, not Angles" and later sent St Augustine to proclaim the Gospel to the English. So maybe we owe them!]

Should modern Egypt pay reparations to modern Israel for what happened under the Pharaohs? Should all those statues of Norman knights and bishops who oppressed my Saxon and Viking ancestors be toppled and removed from our cathedrals?

Anyway, inspired by our missionary physicists, Britain not only abolished the Slave Trade but stopped trading in goods generated by slave labour. This led to an acute shortage in Britain of tobacco and sugar (which was good for public health) and cotton (which was good for the woollen and linen industries, but disastrous for employment in Lancashire). What would happen to our comfortable way of life if we in the twenty first century stopped buying goods, including cotton garments and microchips, produced in conditions of forced labour or sweat shops abroad and even sometimes at home?

Child labour was another issue on which it wasn't hard to gain contemporary support. It was obvious (when people stopped to think about it) that little boys shouldn't be sent up chimneys, where some got stuck and asphyxiated, and many suffered horrendous testicular cancer caused by excessive contact with soot. It was quickly agreed that children shouldn't be working in dirty,

dangerous factories or even performing agricultural labour, but rather that they should be in school until they were eighteen and then go to college. It was hard to find enough teachers, however, children's wages were important to poor families (as they still are in parts of the world today) and, before mechanisation, children were needed to help with tasks such as getting in the harvest. The compromise was a long summer break from school, during which children could earn their keep and, in the distant future, migrant labour to do the jobs English young people would come to regard as beneath them.

There was a difference of opinion between our intrepid time travellers and nineteenth century reformers about women going out to work. The latter were horrified by the spectacle of women working long and hard hours in dangerous conditions, sometimes having to bring young children to work with them and keeping them quiet with a mixture of treacle & opium. Paternalistic Victorians thought that mothers should be at home looking after their children in pretty cottages with roses around the door. The twenty-first century students believed that women ought to have the same rights as men to earn a living and thus to enjoy independence from their husbands and the freedom to walk away from any manifestations of toxic masculinity.

More radically, of course, it was recognised that working conditions for men too should be improved. There should be no heavy lifting or other strenuous labour. Nothing should be undertaken without a risk assessment. Hours shouldn't be excessive. There should be paid sick leave and holiday entitlement.

Under the influence of our students, all these measures were implemented and productivity and profitability plummeted. How could it be otherwise without mechanisation and how could you mechanise without men (and women?) performing the heavy manual labour and taking the perilous chances on which early industrialisation depended?

Our twenty first century cohort of idealists were quite rightly concerned about animal rights. Horses were not to be overworked. So no horse buses, heavy carts or express mail coaches.

Canaries were no longer to be taken down mines. There were to be no pit ponies.

On reflection, they realised, that human beings too ought not to be expected to work in an environment where work was hard, there was the constant peril of explosion or collapse and the probability of developing industrial diseases such as silicosis or very painful forms of rheumatic disease.

On further reflection, it occurred to our band of scientists that we shouldn't be mining and burning fossil fuels anyway. They knew about the consequences of global warming in their own time.

So no coal, gas or oil. Homes and other premises were cold in the winter. You can't burn too much wood or peat without severely damaging the environment. Moreover, you can't make much iron or steel if you only have charcoal with which to smelt your iron ore, another reason why there could be very little mechanisation - no railways, no polluting industries, poor roads and nothing moving faster than a man could walk or a horse could trot without over-exerting itself.

Our students were able to offer some help with the shipping industry. The people they were helping would still have to rely on wooden sailing ships, there being very little iron to build any other kind and no coal or oil to provide an alternative source of power. The physicists did, however, teach clockmakers to produce a reliable marine chronometer a hundred years before you and I were taught it was invented, improving navigation and cutting the risk of getting lost. They were also able to tell mariners to drink citrus juices in order to avoid scurvy and suggest better ways of preserving food on long voyages, despite there being no refrigeration. Even so, voyaging across the sea continued to be perilous and compulsory risk assessments before setting sail scuppered most voyages before they even began. There always might be a storm or rocks or enemy action or they might get becalmed and run out of food and water before the wind blew again.

The twenty first century guys were able to advise on agricultural improvements, but no artificial fertilisers or pesticides were available and our

generation of young scientists wouldn't have allowed them anyway. The Victorians had in real life already discovered that it is just about possible to produce fresh food all the year round in this country without imports, but only to support a much smaller population than we actually have and even those people would go hungry in poor years. There was also the problem that improvements such as the three field system which made possible scientific crop rotation necessarily involved displacing the peasants from the land and, at least initially, impoverishing them. But you and I already knew that, didn't we? Our idealists were divided as to whether it was better to improve farming efficiency to the ultimate benefit of the majority or to protect the ancestral rights of the poor who would be the ones who would suffer the adverse consequences of making such changes.

There wasn't much international trade, given that shipping seldom satisfied the demands identified by risk assessments, but our time travellers thought it important to introduce former ages to the precautionary principle. No novel food was to be offered for sale until it had been proved to be safe. Citrus fruits were OK. Bananas were initially suspect. Potatoes were banned. They belong to the Solanaceae, the same plant family as deadly nightshade (and tomatoes) and they are in fact poisonous if eaten green.

Our modern day idealists quickly realised that, in order to be sustainable, we needed a much smaller population, who would need less food and less fuel. On a trip back to the seventeenth century, they persuaded young adults like themselves that it was selfish to bring children into an overpopulated world, that there would be no future for their offspring as essential supplies ran out and nations went to war over what little there was left. Moreover, they themselves, by remaining childless, would have much more fulfilling lives of work and leisure without the inconvenience of progeny.

Travelling onto the eighteenth century, however, the students found a world in which everybody was old and there was nobody to do any work. They quickly returned to the previous century and reversed their previous counsel.

The team from today were able to offer some help in the field of medicine. Because of the lack of an industrial base, it was not possible to produce many of the modern drugs from which we benefit, nor, obviously, could they use X rays or build scanners. These things would never be possible in a society which studiously avoided running the risks and facing the real horrors associated with the early stages of industrialisation. The team could, however, teach our ancestors a few things about bone setting and the scientific (as opposed to the superstitious) use of medicinal herbs. They introduced our forebears to anaesthesia and antiseptics centuries before Elijah Pope and Joseph Lister, usually considered to be pioneers in these fields, came on the scene. They began experiments deriving antibiotics from moulds. Most significantly, they helped the people they were patronising to reduce the scourge of infectious disease by properly isolating cases and by improved hygiene measures such as not allowing drinking or bathing water or river systems to be contaminated with sewage – a lesson for our twenty first century too. no doubt.

Using double blind trials, they demonstrated that the ancient practice of blood-letting was more likely to kill than to cure and that leeches had a very limited utility in medical practice. By insisting on double blind trials before the use of any proposed treatment, they considerably slowed the pace of medical advance. No aspirin or quinine, no cod liver oil or calamine lotion until these had been proved to be both safe and effective, which held up progress somewhat, but patients were also saved from the ill effects of various other preparations which were neither safe nor effective. though frequently prescribed by doctors in the pre-scientific age.

How much difference all this made is hard to say. Most things clear up on their own. So if there wasn't much wrong with you, you were probably better off in those days not seeing a doctor, whereas, if you were seriously ill, they probably couldn't do much for you anyway. People were generally healthier, under the regime imposed by our science students than we are for eating less meat and doing without so much sugar and getting much more exercise and breathing cleaner air. The population was, however, generally younger than ours is today for obvious reasons.

There was a division of opinion regarding religion among our group of modern scientists. Some were awestruck by the sheer wonder of the universe. Surely such an amazing mechanism must have been created by an infinitely great Creator. Intellectually, it makes much more sense that God exists than that He doesn't. Emotionally too, in those preindustrial days, when nature had not been defiled by roads and railways, polluting factories and all the ugly works of man, it was so much more obvious that this world is the workmanship of a benevolent Deity. The majority of the group, however, declined to believe in what they couldn't see or touch or measure with their instruments. There was also a disagreement as to whether or not religion was a good thing. For some, faith means hope and love, social cohesion and charity. To others religion is the cause of division – persecutions and religious wars – pie in the sky when you die, the opium of the people. On balance, our scientists decided that you can't beat humanity's bent towards God, so you might as well join it.

What did this experiment in time travel achieve? The world was cleaner and purer. There was much greater bio-diversity. There were even

wolves in Willoughby Chase. There were many fewer people on the planet – but younger & fitter than in our modern world. Under the influence of our idealists, society had become fairer, more egalitarian, but, by our standards, most people were poorer, untraveled, living without luxury goods or even many of the things which we have come to regard as necessities – like phones, TVs and fridges. I like to think that they were more content than we are, but that we shall never know. Most of them went to church on Sundays. There was nothing else to do.

Their work complete, our time travellers returned to the place where they had left their machine with the intention of coming back permanently to the present. But their craft wasn't there. What had happened to it? Had it been stolen or somehow lost? Maybe they had the wrong co-ordinates?

The truth then dawned on them. They were, after all, extremely intelligent. There was no time machine, there never had been a time machine and there never would be. The society which they had created would never evolve to the point of being able to build a time machine. They had made their bed and now they would have to lie in it.

### The Tale of the Tomb of John Buttyll....

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century "Victorian Restoration" of St. Michael's saw long-overdue repairs made to the church, as well as the building of the western nave extension and many other timely changes. This all came at a considerable cost - and one that was not just financial. The work was also to result in the relocation, covering, or even destruction of many of the interesting and historical ledger stones, altar tombs and wall monuments that were once present inside St. Michael's.

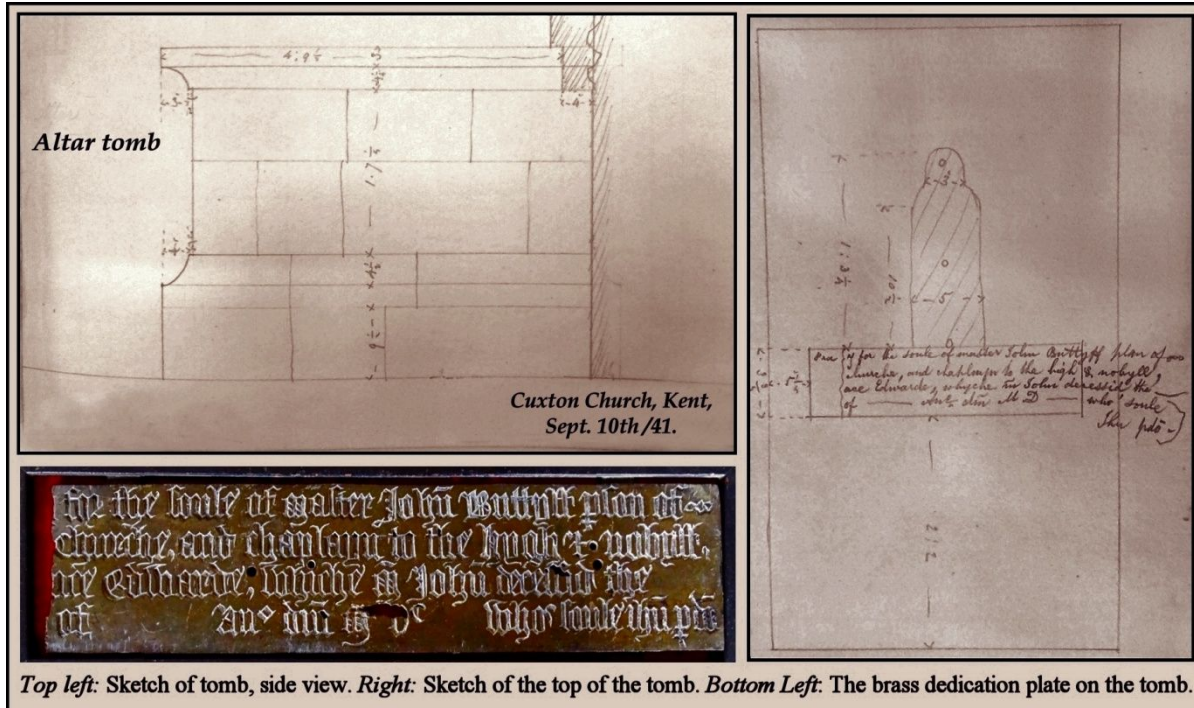
We are fortunate to have two records that give us an idea of the nature of these lost memorials. The first of



The tomb of John Buttyll (Rector of St. Michael's 1522-1576) as it is today...

these is the *Registrum Roffense*, which was published in 1769, the work of Georgian antiquarian and Rochester resident John Thorpe. The book contains accounts of ancient charters, monumental inscriptions and other historical material. Further information can also be found in the surveys undertaken by William Pettit Griffith, a Victorian architect and antiquarian, who recorded descriptions of some seventy Kentish churches between 1838 and 1856. Both St. Michael's of Cuxton and St. John's of Halling were visited by Griffith, on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1841 and September 15<sup>th</sup> 1841 respectively. One item of particular interest is the description of the altar tomb of St. Michael's longest-serving Rector, John Buttyll, who held office from 1522 to 1576. As part of the Victorian church modifications, this tomb was removed from inside the church and placed outdoors, close to the south-eastern wall of the chancel. Griffith recorded its exact original location, which was under the arch between the chancel and the Lady Chapel, abutting the base of the

northern side of the arch. He also made rough sketches of the tomb, my own tracings of which are shown below:



Top left: Sketch of tomb, side view. Right: Sketch of the top of the tomb. Bottom Left: The brass dedication plate on the tomb.

Griffith describes it as “a bold and plain altar tomb of Purbeck stone”. From the drawing it appears that only the top slab and underlying middle section are visible in their current position, with the base seemingly lost or buried. Both Thorpe and Griffith also noted an inscription which, according to Griffith, ran “around the North, West and South sides of (the) top stone of (the) tomb as follows: ‘HIC JACET JOHANNES BOTYLL RECTOR HVQVS ECCLESIAE QVI OBIIT ULTIMO DIR JVNII ANNO DOMINI 1568’...” which translates as: “Here lies Johannes Botyll Rector of this church who died on the last day of June in the year of the Lord 1568...”

As noted earlier, John Buttyll is recorded as holding the position of Rector of St. Michael’s from 1522 until 1576. It seems that the Rochester diocese was in no hurry to appoint a formal successor to John Buttyll as Rector after he died. In 1572, it is recorded that a stipendiary curate from the Deanery of Shoreham by the name of John Hore (who was Rector of St. Mary’s at Hayes) was looking after the spiritual needs of the parish of Cuxton. Buttyll’s successor, Richard Carter, was not to be appointed for another four years. Both Thorpe and Griffith noted the presence of two brass plaques that were left lying loose on top of the tomb. Whilst one was not related to the tomb itself, the other bore an inscription which read:

[PRAY] FOR THE SOULE OF MASTER JOHN BUTTYLL PARSON OF  
 [THIS] CHURCHE AND CHAPLAYN TO THE HIGH AND NOBYLL  
 [PRI]NCE EDWARDE, WHICHE Mr JOHN DECEASED THE [ ]  
 OF [ ] ANNO DOMINI M V [ ] WHOSE SOULE JESU PARDON

For many years after the tomb’s relocation, this brass (along with the other unrelated one) was displayed on the north wall of the nave. Concerns over their security saw them taken down and put in the vestry until they were finally transferred to Rochester Guildhall for safekeeping in 1995. A photograph of them is currently mounted on the screen of the bell tower arch. The sketch by Griffith shows the original position of the plaque on the tomb. Its left side is partially missing and from Thorpe’s notes it may well have been lost long before he made his description of it in the 1760s. The plaque was clearly prepared before Buttyll’s demise, as it was never updated with the year of his death.

The “Pray For The Soule” exhortation was a common one up until the Reformation. It was a tenet of the Catholic faith that prayers for souls in ‘purgatory’ (a place where departed souls await the purging of minor

sins prior to admission to heaven) could aid their remission. This was anathema to Protestant reformists and the concept was condemned during the reign of Elizabeth I, who was Queen when John Buttyll died. Perhaps the inscription on the plaque is evidence of a lingering Catholicism in St. Michael's at the time? Griffith noted that *"above it was formerly an effigy, now gone"*, the sketch detailing the remains of its leaden base.

John Buttyll remained Rector of St. Michael's throughout the tumultuous time of the English Reformation, seeing out the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary I. It is said that he was Chaplain to Bishop John Fisher of Rochester, whose unwavering Catholic principles led to his incarceration in 1534 and subsequent beheading for refusing to acknowledge Henry VIII as head of the English church. The brutal treatment meted out to Bishop Fisher served as a stark reminder of the consequences of disobedience to the Crown. Most of the clergy of the Rochester diocese were to subsequently sign the formal declaration required by the 1534 Act of Succession, renouncing papal authority over the Church of England - including John Buttyll. I do not believe that he signed the declaration out of fear, however. Many of those clergy may well have genuinely believed that a "foreign" Pope should have no authority over the English Church given that at the time, England seemed to be constantly at war with other European countries.

As the brass plaque on his tomb relates, Buttyll was also chaplain to Henry VIII's son and successor, "the high and nobyll Prince Edward". Despite his unfashionable Catholic credentials, John Buttyll was still obviously respected and trusted by his peers. The choice of Buttyll as chaplain to Henry VIII's young son may seem strange, however, given the Protestant reformist fervour of the time. It has to be remembered that Henry VIII himself remained a devout Catholic until his death in 1547 and so the appointment of a Catholic chaplain for his son would have been, to the King at least, quite natural. Henry's last wife, Catherine Parr, was of a "reformist" nature however and perhaps it was her influence that saw the six year-old Edward's education placed in the hands of Richard Cox, the Lutheran-leaning Bishop of Ely, in 1543.

Quite why and when the removal of the effigy and the breaking of the plaque on John Buttyll's tomb took place is uncertain. Although the subsequent reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I saw the removal or defacing of many artefacts from churches that were deemed to be "idolatrous" or "papist" (such as statues or wall paintings) this iconoclasm did not extend to memorials for the dead until the rise of the Puritans in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

The year 1648 saw the start of the Second English Civil War, where both Rochester and Maidstone were hotspots of a Kentish Royalist uprising. Lord Thomas Fairfax and a division of the newly-conscripted "New

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**\* Article XXXVII. Of the Power of the Civil Magistrates.**

The Power of the Civil Magistrate extendeth to all men, as well Clergy as Laity, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual. And we hold it to be the duty of all men who are professors of the Gospel, to pay respectful obedience to the Civil Authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.

*The original 1571, 1662 text of this Article reads as follows: "The King's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England, and other his Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction. Where we attribute to the King's Majesty the chief government, by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended; we give not our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.*

*The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.*

*The Laws of the Realm may punish Christian men with death, for heinous and grievous offences.*

*It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars."*



Model Army” were sent by Parliament to suppress it, with troops being stationed in several local churches - including St. Michael’s. I think it was then that the tomb of John Buttyll was most likely to have been vandalised, by Puritan zealots in the ranks of the billeted Roundheads, although we cannot be sure of course.

What we can be sure of is that John Buttyll’s tomb was never meant to be placed outdoors. Subjected to the elements, its inscriptions and markings have inevitably weathered away. Country-wide, the Victorian Restoration was a movement that was, amongst other things, intended to partially restore the sense of wonder and majesty to English churches that was lost during the Reformation period. It is therefore ironic that this particular historic memorial has suffered far more damage as a result of the Victorian Restoration than it ever did during the English Reformation. I think the memory of our longest-serving Rector deserved better.

**Post Script:**

John Buttyll:	Rector of St. Michael’s 1522-1576 (54 years)
Caleb Parfect:	Rector of St. Michael’s 1719-1770 (51 years)
Robert Shaw:	Rector of St. Michael’s 1831-1874 (43 years)
Roger Knight:	Rector of St. Michael’s & St. John’s 1987-2024 (38 years)

I thought that these notes about John Buttyll, the longest-serving Rector of St. Michael’s<sup>†</sup>, would be appropriate given the imminent retirement of the fourth-longest-serving Rector of St. Michael’s in its 900-year history. Given that the modern clerical fashion seems to involve moving parish priests around every five years or so, Roger’s 38-year unbroken tenure is quite an achievement.

In times gone by, our rectors and vicars usually got to choose their own time to move on (unless religious politics intervened) sometimes staying in post until the Good Lord Himself enforced His ultimate retirement package. These days, the Church has a compulsory retirement age of 70<sup>‡</sup>, although many other organisations seem to take a more flexible view of things and are happy to let their employees choose their own retirement date given no obvious impediment to their service - particularly if there is a dearth of personnel available for the position.

History teaches us that all life is but change. Doubtless some things will change as a result of Roger’s enforced retirement and it will be interesting to see what happens in this next chapter in our church’s history. I don’t think that there is anyone in our parish who has a greater respect for the history of our two churches of St. Michael’s and St. John’s than Roger. I’d like to take this opportunity to wish him all the best for the future and I hope that he will be able to continue to contribute to the life of our local community, if he so wishes, for many years to come.

Keith Hodges.

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<sup>†</sup> Buttyll died in 1568. He did not, however, actually serve as Rector posthumously. What happened was that the Rectory was left vacant for a period and the pastoral care of our parish was entrusted to the Rector of another village miles away. My fear is that this historical anomaly could be repeated very shortly.

Inspired by Keith, I checked the Halling record and ascertained that I have served considerably longer than any Vicar of Halling – some of whom served for no more than a couple of years. The reason is probably that they were appointed by the Benedictine monks at Rochester in the Middle Ages. That is why they were vicars, not rectors, who would have held the parish in their own right, which is also the reason why Rochester Cathedral has a chancel repair liability for St John’s, the monastery having enjoyed the income from the living.

<sup>‡</sup> The legislation under which I am compelled to retire is the anachronistic Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975 which would not have survived in its present form had the Church not been exempted from the Equality Act 2010. Even so, the Bishop had the discretion to allow me two more years under the terms under which I currently serve and a few more years after that under different terms. This discretion he declined to exercise.

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

28<sup>th</sup> September

2<sup>nd</sup> October

Spencer Jude Langridge

Moses John Mead

Wendover Close

Hartlip

### Wedding:

20<sup>th</sup> September Christopher David Williamson & Samantha Jane Renhard Low Meadow

### Transition

I have had to accept that there is no escape from my having to retire on my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday – the 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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. Please refer any queries after 30<sup>th</sup> November to churchwardens.

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

In addition to the service and celebration on 30<sup>th</sup> November, there will be a buffet in the White Hart at Cuxton from 12.00 noon on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November with an open invitation to everyone who would like to wish me well as I transition to a next phase of my life here on earth.

This is the penultimate magazine, at least for the time being, and the December issue will be the last. Thank you to all our subscribers, contributors, those who deliver the magazine and all who have supported this publication over many years.

Roger.

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

Good day to you all. I hope you are all well and enjoying the late autumn, though as I write it is rather wild. Philippa and I are regularly to be found pecking outside the library and the schools. Our titbits aren't just sausage rolls or Cheesy Wotsits however. For instance, from our research, did you know that -

*In 1855 the renowned scientist Charles Darwin took up a new hobby - training and breeding pigeons! He built dove cotes in the gardens of Downe House and began selectively breeding them. Today's fantail pigeons and long legged pigeons are entirely due to him!*

I know that many of you are very interested in your own ancestors. We have seen several of you in the graveyards, peering at stones with magnifying glasses, taking photos and writing in notebooks. It is almost impossible for pigeons to trace their ancestors. We have to rely on each other's markings. As you know our family name is Vere. I know we had a famous cleric ancestor, Rev and the Spanish cousin Sev. Our squabs fly off to their own lives and we sometimes meet them as they don't venture too far away. I know that Peter, Patsy, Philomena, Primrose and Phillip are all in Six Acre Wood somewhere.

I note that you are making preparations for your Christmas celebrations already. Cakes are baked and regularly fed. We haven't seen your decorations and lights yet but we shall know Christmas is very close when we hear all that glorious music.

Although it is still officially autumn, there is still quite a bit of colour in the gardens, and quite a few berries - is that a sign of a harsh winter to come? Avians will be pleased of the berries but please don't forget to put out your crumbs and crusts too. In the winter we hope for nuts and seeds so we can store energy although we do less foraging and flying in the shorter days. When winter comes, Spring won't be far behind. Just don't forget to eat and heat. Nothing warms you like a bowl of hot soup with a slice of bread, followed by a hot cup of tea with a couple of biscuits - with crumbs scattered in your garden please. One lady actually buys pigeon food for us! It contains seeds and dried corn. That is a great luxury and we only have it once a week. Of course we'd welcome your sweet corn too!

Keep warm, keep dry, keep smiling.

Coo coo.

#### Humility

Harold Macmillan visiting Assisi in June 1945 (cited in the *Times* 21/9.24): "With all his power of evil, his strength, his boasting, Hitler lasted twelve years, whereas in contrast, St Francis did not seem to have much power, but here in this lovely place one realises the immense strength and permanence of goodness – a rather comforting thought.

#### Your Role in God's Church

Professor Paul Avis has a particularly pertinent article in the journal *Theology* July/August 2024 *Reclaiming Synodality*. It is very relevant and deserves a wide circulation. I expect this journal can be found on line.

In summary, Professor Avis' point is that all the people of God (all the baptised) have a right and a duty to participate in the governance of the Church. All Christians are inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is in fellowship with one another under the Headship of Christ in that same Holy Spirit that we should deliberate on God's Will for His Church. Synods and other church meetings should not be like secular politics – antagonistic debates leading to votes taken and people being divided into winners & losers. The aim is consensus and even where this is not possible all involved ought to be heard and treated with respect. Biblical models of the Church – Body & Bride of Christ, Temple of the Holy Spirit – are to be stressed in preference to regarding the Church as a human institution.

*The Church is brought into being by the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, through which the living Christ is present and active by the power of the Holy Spirit.* The local Church is primary. The "higher" layers of the Church exist to serve the "lower". All Christians are equal. Some have the grace of orders or particular forms of expertise, but these are gifts of God given to individuals in order to enable them to serve God's people, not to domineer over them. Pope Francis describes what we might call hierarchy as an inverted pyramid. The pope is at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Avis specifically condemns as an abuse the C of E's tendency to use synodical processes to promote the centralization of the Church & to marginalise critical voices – the very opposite of what synodical government is for.

#### Friends of Kent Churches Ride & Stride

This year, I headed southwards through Halling, Snodland and Leybourne to Mereworth and back via Maidstone. It was a bright sunny day, cold at first, but warming up as the day wore on. Most of the churches I visited this year had friendly teams of welcomers whom it is always a pleasure to meet. Somewhat poignantly, a couple of the churches I visited, Wateringbury and Teston, were places where I had led worship and preached when I was beginning my training for the ministry nearly fifty years ago. The then Rector was Donald Bish who had been curate in my home parish of South Gillingham. Cycling, as always, was great fun. Thanks to the generosity of my sponsors, I was able to raise £255 which will be divided equally between FKC and this parish.

The following Saturday (St Matthew's Day) saw the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FKC at All Saints Maidstone. There was choral Evensong. There were dignitaries from both the county and the borough. The service was led by the Very Rev'd John Richardson, Vicar of Maidstone. Sir Paul Britton, chairman of FKC, gave the address and Bishop Michael Turnbull gave the blessing, as well as writing a piece "Historic Churches, Human Values & National Stability" for the programme notes, which so inspired me that it formed the basis of my sermon the next day. It was good to talk to Bishop Michael and former Archdeacon of Rochester & South Gillingham curate Peter Lock. And there was the joy of cycling to Maidstone and back.

Roger.



### The Art of Calligraphy

Mary Morren is our gifted Calligrapher. For many years, Mary has been writing the names of our loved ones in the Remembrance Books of St. Michael's Church and St. John's Church. At the September Meeting, members of the Mothers' Union were privileged to enjoy a wonderful talk from Mary on the history of writing up to the present day. She demonstrated the art of Calligraphy by writing on paper on a sloping board with a special pen. We all had a go at writing with our own sloping board and pen and certainly appreciated the skill involved. Thank you, Mary, for a lovely meeting and carry on doing your wonderful work for us.

Jenny.

### **On The Ropes – September 2024.**

Support for Sunday service ringing started off well in September. Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> (Trinity 14) saw ringing with full teams of six at both St. Michael's and St. John's. At St. Michael's, Churchwarden Hugh even lent a hand, meaning that yours truly had the luxury of a little break from tugging on the tenor. The rest was appreciated, as it is good practice to treat the bearing on the bells of St. John's to a little bit of oil before use, as they are "plain" bearings and don't retain lubrication so well. This involves climbing over the bell frame with oil can in hand, a task that gets no easier with advancing years (gets out violin to go with sob story). The following Sunday (Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) also saw a "double header" at both of our parish churches. Once again, we had the luxury of seven ringers at St. Michael's, but only four were available afterwards for St. John's. After some "umming and ahing" about the practicalities of only ringing four bells, we decided to "go for it" as there was the christening of Hope Alexander scheduled for the service that day and it was also (as our Rector also reminded me later) the second anniversary of the accession of our "new" King Charles III. To us ringers, we thought that it sounded rather odd (the bells, not the King). It can't have been too bad however, as our Tower Captain (who had an unavoidable appointment with a boat on St. Andrew's Lakes at the time) heard the ringing and complimented us on our striking, completely oblivious to the peal being two bells short! Four bells does rather limit you in terms of method ringing, but "Clan McDonald" bravely called some clever (and quick!) changes to break up what would have otherwise been a rather monotonous peal of four-bell rounds. Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> (Trinity 16, and also Battle of Britain Day) once again saw a "double header" at both St. Michael's and St. John's, mercifully with full teams of six for each. I can report that the usual stand-bys of Bob Doubles, Grandsire and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place (which takes nearly as long to type as it does ring) were performed without too much clangery. We were also delighted to ring in celebration of the wedding of Chris Williamson & Samantha Renhard held at St. John's on Friday 20<sup>th</sup>.

'April Day'.

### Poetry Corner.

Judge Charles Bowen:  
The rain it raineth on the just  
And also on the unjust fella;  
But chiefly on the just, because  
The unjust hath the just's  
umbrella.

Harry Graham:  
In the drinking-well  
(Which the plumber built her)  
Aunt Eliza fell, --  
We must buy a filter.

Anon: I say, Mama, what is  
that mess which looks like  
strawberry jam?  
Hush, hush, my dear; it is  
Papa, unfortunately run over  
by a tram"

### Tommy's Talking Points



I had hoped this month to tell you about another walk from Ightham Mote with our friends. This has, however, had to be postponed. It rained all the previous night and was still raining when we went out on our morning run to Dean & Bush Valleys. In fact Master slipped over. The advantage of being on steroids is that he could get up again. It had left off and the sun was coming out when Master sat down with his paper and we were hoping soon to make a start, but the telephone rang. The rain was torrential where our friends were and the forecast indicated that it would continue so all day. Although there was some sunshine here for most of the day, it did rain again at lunchtime. So we should have got wet again if we had gone out. I had to be content with a second walk at 4.00pm, much the same as the one I had earlier, but the sun was shining this time! We have provisionally booked another

date, but I am not sure how hopeful I should be. It's the same day as the feast day of the patron saint of lost causes.

I have had a bit of an ear inflammation. The vet didn't have my usual medication in stock and someone suggested we should look online. Master's trying to find a site for sore ears.

We are getting rid of what we no longer need or want in preparation for our departure from the Rectory. Master decided to use this damp day to do just that. He was able to give away some stuff to a neighbour who wanted it and to take some clothes, towels and blankets to the Salvation Army collection point in the Co-op car park and to put some useless bits & pieces in the dustbin. He also tackled the question of his tape recorder. It was a 16<sup>th</sup> birthday present, but it hadn't been used for years. Did it still work? Were the tapes still playable? What was on them if they were? He'd never thought to label them. It turned out that the answers to the first two questions were in the affirmative. So we had an afternoon and evening listening to classical music. It's not as much fun as running through the woods, but it was quite pleasant relaxing indoors for a bit. The early selection was what you would expect of a teenage boy – Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini. He rather thinks that there is also some von Suppé<sup>s</sup> yet to come – the man, who like Master never knew when to stop. Master is still really a teenage boy at heart and his tastes have hardly matured. So he had a very enjoyable afternoon. He failed the Sophistication Test, which is this. You are musically sophisticated if you can listen to the William Tell Overture without thinking of the Lone Ranger. I distinctly heard him say *Hi ho Silver!* We had Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture the next day!

He hears the pop songs of his youth on Co-op Radio when he buys his groceries. He did once ask a staff member why so many of the songs were so miserable – all about unrequited love and disappointed hope. She asked him what he suggested they might play instead? He offered a selection from *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. Faith makes you so much more positive about life – not only *love to the loveless shown*, but also hope to the hopeless.

Master seldom listens to music. Background music gets on his nerves, but he lacks the patience to sit still and listen properly, especially in overheated concert halls where the rows of seats are too close together. Concerts in churches are far superior. Churches are seldom overheated, the acoustics are better and you can get up and wander round a bit (if you're wearing a dog collar, like him or me).

He enjoyed this afternoon's selection so much that he wondered if he might try listening some more when he's retired and has more leisure, especially as, fed up with the programmes, he's cancelled his Netflix subscription and not renewed his TV licence. Rossini was, however, followed by some choral music which he didn't recognise or remember recording or enjoy much. He thought it was probably religious because it finished with the choir singing *Amen*. There were then three organ pieces. The organ is always magnificent, but the tunes we hear played on it in Church are easier to comprehend. So he's not so sure about taking up listening to music in a big way now. Maybe he should get out of his comfort zone and open himself up to the possibilities of new experiences!

Tommy.

St John's Draw (September): £5 each to Sam Head (16), Jean Mattingley (65) & Charles Mitchell (72).

<sup>s</sup> The guy who recorded Von Suppé was obviously no fan. He preceded *Poet & Peasant* and *Light Cavalry* with the remark that my listening to this was an ordeal for which I was being sponsored for the church building fund.. Actually, I really enjoyed them. RIK.