

### Nostalgia Isn't What It Used To Be

TV programmes set in the past seem to be remarkably popular. There's *Call the Midwife*, *Mr Selfridge*, *Mad Men*, *Downton Abbey* - just finished - and *Game of Thrones* - which seems to belong to a fantasy Middle Ages, not that I've seen it. Why this fascination with the past? After all, many of us, if we had lived years ago, would probably (depending on the era) have been below stairs in the big house, hard-working manual workers in the fields, factory fodder or private soldiers, sent out onto the mediaeval battlefield without armour and with only agricultural implements for weapons. Even for the rich, life wasn't so great. It goes without saying that previous generations didn't have mobile 'phones or home computers, but we forget that, within the memory of many people alive today, lavatories were outdoors, many homes did not have an electricity supply and central heating only became common in the 1970s. Do you remember your grandmother putting on her coat to clean upstairs? Well into the twentieth century, the poor in this country could still go hungry and, even for the rich, there was nothing like the year round variety of foods that most of us enjoy today. Until the NHS came into being in 1948, those who couldn't pay might not get to see a doctor. If you were to go back to the days when physicians thought that blood-letting was a good idea and surgeons used neither anaesthetics nor antiseptics, you probably would have had a better chance of surviving most diseases if you didn't see the doctor than if you did. Until the early 1900s, cities like London depended on migration from the countryside to maintain their population because the death rate in towns was so much higher than the birth rate. Someone said that modern dentistry was enough to make him thankful that he hadn't been born any earlier than he was.

So why the fascination with TV programmes set in the past? Partly, I think it is because we like to see how much better off we are today – at least in material terms. I also suspect, however, that there is a feeling that we have lost as well as gained. I do enjoy seeing films made in England in the 1950s and 60s (when I was a boy) when there was so much more unspoilt countryside, there were far fewer cars on city streets and children could play freely in the woods and fields and the streets outside their homes. I think we have this feeling that, in a possibly mythical past, there was a greater sense of community, that families were stronger and that the big issues we face in life were much less complicated. Knowing your place cuts two ways. On the one hand, it defines and confines you; but, on the other hand, you know that you belong and where you belong.

There are three things I really dislike about C21: the growth in motor traffic; the disappearance of the countryside under housing estates and motorways, etc.; and the growing intrusion of government (especially local government) into our personal lives. I hope I get my bus pass before they get around to making cycle helmets compulsory! Sometimes, I wish I could have missed all that by having been born a decade or two sooner. But then I would have had to live through the war and rationing. I wouldn't have had my appendix out on the National Health. I wouldn't have had the chance to go to university. I would quite possibly have been working in one of those major industries which collapsed at the end of the C20 making thousands of people redundant. I probably wouldn't now be playing with my own personal computer. You might think I would lament the decline in organised religion. I do, but that is in God's Hands and I know that we can trust Him for His Church, however badly people let Him down.

Which, I suppose, brings me to my point. There is no perfect age in which to live. Life on earth has its good points and its bad. We should be thankful to God for the good times. We can trust Him in the bad times. We ought always to acknowledge our need of Him. But what really matters is not this world of time and space. What really matters is eternity. Our eternity depends on God and our faith in Him, which is His gift to us. Roger Knight, Rector of Cuxton and Halling. The Rectory, 6, Rochester Road, Cuxton, Rochester, Kent, ME2 1AF, 01634 717134, [roger@cuxtonandhall.org.uk](mailto:roger@cuxtonandhall.org.uk), <http://www.cuxtonandhall.org.uk>

### Easter Services in the Anglican Parish of Cuxton & Halling.

Good Friday (25<sup>th</sup> March): 10.00 Family Service at St Michael's; 12.00-3.00 Three Hour Devotion at St John's.

Easter Day (27<sup>th</sup> March): Holy Communion 8.00 Jubilee Hall, 9.30 St Michael's, 11.00 St John's.