

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
30 th March Lent 4 (Mothering Sunday)	9.30 Family Communion	I Samuel 16 vv 1-13 p287 John 9 vv 1-41 p1075
6 th April Passion Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
13 th April Palm Sunday (procession from hall)	9.30 Holy Communion	Matthew 21 vv 1-11 p988 (at hall) Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p179 Matthew 26 v14 & 27 p996
17 th April Maundy Thursday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Exodus 12 vv 1-14 p68 I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
18 th April Good Friday	10.00 Family Service Jesus Christ Superhero (Not!)	John 8 ¹⁻¹¹ . John 4 ⁴⁶⁻⁵⁴ . Matthew 10 ¹⁻⁸ . Luke 23 ³²⁻⁴⁶
20 th April Easter Day	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
27 th April Easter 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p72 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089
4 th May Easter 3	9.30 Family Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
30 th March Lent 4 (Mothering Sunday)	11.00 Family Communion	I Samuel 16 vv 1-13 p287 John 9 vv 1-41 p1075
6 th April Passion Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Romans 8 vv 6-11 p1134 John 11 vv 1-45 p1077
13 th April Palm Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 Philippians 2 vv 5-11 p179 Matthew 26 v14 & 27 p996
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 5 vv 1-7 p689 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
17 th April Maundy Thursday	9.30 Holy Communion	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 p1152 John 13 vv 1-35 p1081
18 th April Good Friday	12.00 Three Hour Devotion	tba
20 th April Easter Day	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 28 vv 1-10 p1000
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 31 vv 1-6 p791 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Colossians 3 vv 1-4 p1184 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
27 th April Easter 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p72 Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 Acts 2 vv 14-32 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 20 vv 19-31 p1089

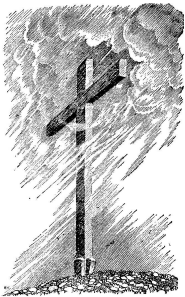
4 th May Easter 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
	11.00 Holy Communion	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 I Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061

Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 at St Michael's		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 at St John's	
2 nd April	Isaiah 49 vv 8-15 John 5 vv 17-30	3 rd April	Exodus 32 vv 7-14 John 5 vv 31-47
9 th April	Daniel 3 vv 1-30 John 8 vv 31-42	10 th April	Genesis 17 vv 3-9 John 8 vv 51-59
16 th April	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9 John 13 vv 21-32	17 th April Maundy Thursday	I Corinthians 11 vv 23-26 John 13 vv 1-35
23 rd April	Acts 3 vv 1-10 Luke 24 vv 13-35	24 th April	Acts 3 vv 11-26 Luke 24 vv 35-48
30 th April	Acts 5 vv 17-26 John 3 vv 16-21	1 st May S Philip & S James	Isaiah 30 vv v15-21 Ephesians 1 vv 3-10 John 14 vv 1-14

Copy Date May Magazine: 11th April 8.30 am Rectory
<http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Saints Alive! meet at St Michael's at 9.30 am on Sundays during school terms. The first Sunday of the month is a Family Communion.

All are invited to join us for lunch on the first Wednesday of every month in the church hall at 12.00.



A Good Question

“The question is: however much Christians feel called to speak confidently from Scripture to a pluralist world, is anyone outside the Church actually bothered?”

(Alan Le Grys, University of Kent).

What do you think? Is there anything at all interesting in the Easter story? Thinking about what happened to Jesus on Good Friday – mocked, struck, flogged and nailed to a cross – it reads like a horror story. Good Friday might be expected to appeal to the sort of people who enjoy those adult rated films in which psychopaths torture their victims to death. Well, what else is it, but torturing a man to death? We've become so familiar with the story that it no longer appals, but it ought to appal. Let's not forget that this horror story is true. Never become inured to suffering.

Or if we can overlook the horror (as we so often have to if we want to enjoy a good television programme or film, with an otherwise intriguing story), shouldn't the Good Friday story appeal to those of us who like legal sagas? After all, the

man they executed was innocent. The prosecution was corrupt and self-seeking. There were false witnesses willing to tell lies in evidence against him. Those who might have been able to give evidence in his defence had fled the scene or were too scared to admit they even knew him. The judge was more concerned about popular opinion than justice. The twist in this case was not, however, that Perry Mason produced some last minute evidence which exonerated the accused. The twist was that, having failed to achieve a guilty verdict on any plausible charge, they went ahead and executed him anyway. (Sorry for the spoiler if you haven't yet got round to reading the Gospels.)

Or do you prefer political dramas? *House of Cards* anyone? Or as Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest put it, *It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* Caiaphas and his cronies – the Jewish aristocracy – manoeuvre Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor – representative of the occupying power – into disposing of an innocent man, whose very innocence is a threat to their corrupt hegemony, and into taking responsibility for his death, while Pontius Pilate himself treads a

wary course between appearing disloyal to Caesar, risking a riot and looking like the tool of the people he is supposed to be governing. Pilate tries to offload the responsibility onto Herod, whilst his wife and his conscience refuse to give him any peace.

Or how about a buddy movie? Jesus and his twelve man entourage. The apostles accompany Jesus around Galilee and Judaea, ostensibly helping him, but often getting things hilariously wrong. An incredibly close fellowship, but none of them understands him. One of them betrays him. Another one denies him. None of them is of any use to him whatsoever in the greatest crisis of his life, except the one who makes a home for his mother. But they all (except one) prove to be pure gold in the end.

From another perspective, the story of Jesus is an amazing family saga – miraculously born into a humble family with royal ancestry, descendant of Israel's greatest King David, an ideal son, who apparently rejects all family ties when he is anointed and goes out to proclaim the Kingdom, is hailed as the Saviour of his people when he comes to the capital, and then, less than a week later, is hanging, dying on a cross under the ironic(?) superscription *the King of the Jews* and entrusting his mother to the care of his beloved disciple.

Are you more into historical legends perhaps? Jesus as Beowulf (or was it really Beowulf as Jesus), the Anglo-Saxon hero who suffers bravely and endures terribly and finally gives his life for the redemption of his people.

Curiously, the only film genres I can think of not represented in the gospel are westerns, war films, romance and sci-fi/fantasy. You'd have to go to the Old Testament for the first three (all right easterns, not westerns) and Revelation and Daniel for the last category. OK, there isn't much comedy in the bible, but that's partly because jokes don't translate very well across cultures and language barriers.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Good Friday, then, is a good story. What about the sequel? The story so far leaves our hero dead and buried in a cave, sealed by an enormous stone rolled across the mouth. Where can the divine scriptwriter go from here? The women go to the tomb. They find the stone is rolled away from the entrance. There is no body in the tomb, only the grave clothes he was buried in. Angels speak to the women. One of the women meets Jesus, though she does not at first recognise him, only when he speaks her name. Told to tell his disciples, the women run off in terror. But the apostles are summoned and find that it is true. The tomb is empty. Later, they too meet the Risen Christ. They eat with him. Specifically, they eat bread and drink wine with him. He opens the Scriptures to them. He commissions them to fulfil the task which God gave him to perform. They are to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. He is parted from them and ascends into Heaven. They are filled with the Holy Spirit and the rest, as they say, is history, or salvation history, as we theologians like to call it.

A good story, this sequel, but can you believe it? I suppose that depends on whether you know the Risen Christ yourself personally or whether you are least open to the possibility that He loves you. One strong piece of evidence in favour of this story being true is that it turned the world upside down. If you believe it, if you know Him personally, the knowledge of Jesus will transform your life. The Easter story will not be merely interesting; you will discover it to be life-changing. And that is why we Christians feel called to speak confidently from Scripture to a pluralist world, whether or not anyone is bothered, because it will transform your life. *He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* (John 1^{11&12}). See you in church Good Friday and Easter Day. Roger.

Dates For Your Diary

11th April: 7.30 Christian Aid Supper, S Philip & S James Upnor

16th April: 12.00 Lunch for Christian Aid, church hall.

21st April: 2.00 Easter Egg Hunt Rectory Grounds

26th April: 10.00 Vestry Meeting & APCM Church Hall

4th May: 9.30 Wedding Blessing at St Michael's Peter & Jane Joyce followed by open invitation reception in church hall

25th May: 9.30 Silver Wedding Celebration at St Michael's Ray & Buffy Maisey followed by open invitation reception in church hall

1st June: Big Lunch Cuxton Recreation Ground

14th June: Deanery Quiet Day Aylesford Priory

19th July: Parish Barbecue Rectory Grounds

27th July: 11.00 First World War Commemoration Service Halling

3rd August: 6.30 First World War Commemoration Service Cuxton

20th September: 7.30 Christian Aid Quiz, All Saints Frindsbury

5th October: 6.30 Harvest Praise & Harvest Supper St Michael's and Church Hall

25th October: 7.30 Quiz for Parish Funds Church Hall

2nd November: All Souls Services Halling 9.30 am & Cuxton 7.30 pm

30th November: 6.30 Evensong @ St Michael's followed by an open invitation to rector's 60th birthday celebrations in church hall.

Food Bank

There is a food bank in Medway (<http://medway.foodbank.org.uk/>) which exists to help people who find themselves temporarily without the resources to buy food. This might be because of a delay in getting paid, administrative problems with the benefits system, an unexpected bill (maybe, for example, the roof starts leaking or the washing machine gives up the ghost) or for a whole host of reasons. If you would like to contribute, you can bring packets or tins (with long sell by dates) to any of our services. We envisage a steady trickle of a few items at a time rather than a bonanza like harvest. You might have something over or buy something specially. It is also likely that during the course of the year other reception centres for goods will be set up. I'll keep you informed.

Confirmation 2014

We are not expecting to hold a confirmation service in the parish this year, but we have at least one candidate and I shall be running a class later in the year, probably leading to a confirmation service in another church in the Autumn. If you are interested in confirmation this year, please ask me. The commitment is the commitment you made at your Baptism – faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, repentance of sins and renunciation of evil. If you are not already a Christian and wish to become a Christian, you will be baptised at the confirmation service. You are also welcome to attend the classes if you are “just looking” at this stage. Please contact me if you are interested. You need to be at least twelve (or ten if you know what you are doing). There is no upper age limit. I've known people to be confirmed in their nineties. It's never too late. Roger.



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Halling WI

Yes we did have a W.I. meeting at Halling in January but I was otherwise engaged and couldn't do a report, but we had a really enjoyable evening, when we had time to talk to each other eagerly waiting for our soup and roll supper, produced by Ann and Jemma Graves. Ann made enough soup for everyone to try if they wished, minestrone and leek and potato, it went down well with the homemade rolls. Thank you girls.

Now to our February meeting, where have these two months gone? I arrived at the Jubilee Hall expecting to see Ann Carter who was going to tell us about the Shakespeare Globe Theatre and how and why it was made. Wrong again. That is for a District Meeting in a couple of months time. This month was all about Midwives, and it was going to be a man. The mind boggled. We all sang Jerusalem. Even though I say it myself, we can sing it very well. Jemma read the minutes of the January meeting and then the correspondence, not much this month, a couple of invitations, one or two outings, the Home Economics meeting at Ditton and the Annual Council Meeting in March at Tunbridge Wells.

In the meantime our speaker had arrived, I asked Margaret what his name was. She said, "He is Mr Porter," at which Mary Fennemore burst into song, but he didn't work for the railway. One of our girls called out to him "Come up to us, we won't bite you," as he was standing by the door with a big brown box. Margaret introduced him. I was wrong again. He wasn't a midwife. He was talking about "Call the Midwife", the television programme, how and where it was made. I would have called his talk, "A stroll around Poplar via Chatham Dockyard." Mr Porter started at one side of Poplar and told us where some of the scenes and buildings were used in the stories. He went around the docks and to some of the less savoury places. He told us, he went to talk to a woman's group somewhere and one old lady (not me)

St Michael's Draw: £10 each Dennis Hills, Elsie Horner & Andrea Harris; £5 Viv's Family – drawn by Francesca Fenton-Scott.

St John's Draw: £25 Mrs Mitchell (64), £0 each Mrs Burr (12) & Mrs Ballard (35) – drawn by Mrs Hayward.

A Supposedly True Story

Two rather pious teenage boys were on their way to a church meeting when they missed their bus. They knelt down at the kerb and prayed for another bus to come along, which they missed because they had their hands together and their eyes closed when it came. In later life one of them said they would have done better to do what the Bible says: *Watch and pray!*

shouted out from the audience, "It wasn't like that in the fifties". The stories were supposed to be set in the fifties. The majority of our girls can go back there, and it wasn't quite like that in the country. He then went on to tell us he was walking in the dockyard researching for another talk, and wondered why there was washing hanging everywhere. He soon found out. Another thing he told us which surprised me. No real babies are used in the birth scenes. They are all dolls. They are extremely life like.

Ann Hayward thanked Mr Porter and I must say it was very interesting even though it wasn't what I and a few others were expecting. We had our usual refreshments this month and Mr Porter judged our competitions. We had a lot of flowers for February and Sylvia Mitchell's little Antirrhinum was first. This one must have been left over from last year because Mr Frost hasn't caught up with them yet. Sylvia won the Flower of the Month cup for 2013. Well done for making the effort each month. I am not sure who won the competition for the best baby photo, perhaps Ann Hayward or Betty Head, maybe neither, found out it was Sylvia, she made a clean sweep this month.

Margaret then went on to the March meeting which is a speaker from the Royal Livery Companies. "What can we have for a competition?" she said and bright spark Mrs Ann Graves said "Let's have a liver pate", the best joke of the evening. The March competition will be, something to do with a uniform, any uniform, Royal Engineers, Grenadier Guards, Fireman, Sally Army or Grammar school blazer. Take your pick.

No report next month as I am off to get a bionic hip to match my bionic knee. I must apologise to my regular readers who missed me last month. As you can see you have got two episodes this month instead. If I can walk as well as Malcolm does after the surgeon has had a go, I will believe a miracle has happened. Wish me luck. Phyllis.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

19th February
2nd March
13th March

Jodie Riggall
Harvey Samuel Butlin
Ryan Daniel Roser

Charles Drive
Nine Acres Road
Larkfield

Funerals:

17th February
21st February
24th February
28th February
11th March
13th March

Emily Sarah Ann Yates (98)
Sylvia Florence Cowell (74)
Esme Hilda Cherrison (79)
Donald Martin MacDonald (65)
Alan John Bowman (54)
John Turner (67)

Vicarage Close
Stanford Way
Tovil
Allington
Gravesend
Wood Street

Parishioners will be sorry to hear of the death of Colin George Harris, formerly of Halling, who died on 20th February aged 85.

Cuxton & Halling Mothers Union News



At our meeting on 19th February, despite it being cold and also half term, we had a good turnout for our speaker from the Mission to Seafarers, who had already joined us for our mid-week Communion service at St Michael's. He

then had coffee and a chat with other members of the congregation before we started our meeting at 10.45am. John Attenborough was a lively speaker and told us about his work visiting seamen when their ships were docked at Tilbury, Chatham or at other ports in the area. Sometimes their stays are prolonged because of engine failure or bad weather (especially recently) or crew problems. As a chaplain, he said, sometimes all he needed to do was to go on board and there for a while and some of the crew would talk to him briefly, asking who he was, etc., and then news of him being there would travel around and then those with a real problem would come and talk it through with him. Some of us had knitted fingerless gloves, balaclavas, hats and scarves for him to take away with him. He said how much they would be appreciated by most of the seafarers he meets as they are often from warm climates and do not expect to be in northern latitudes in mid Winter. We were also able to have a collection of £75 to give to him for his work. John also brought us greetings from his mother's MU branch in Yorkshire which we hope to follow up as a link branch in the near future. We wish John well in his move to Southampton in a month's time. Shirley Crundwell.

If you would like to knit for the Mission to Seafarers, please see their website <http://www.missiontoseafarers.org> for patterns or get in touch with their head office by post at St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill, London EC4R 2RL, 020 7248 5202.



Christian Aid

There is a soup lunch in the church hall from noon on April 16th. This year's Christian Aid Supper with speaker is at S Philip & S James Upnor on 11th April – 7.00 for 7.30. Just turn up to the lunch, but please notify

Roger in advance if you intend to come to the supper. Christian Aid Week is from 11th May. We shall be glad to hear from you if you can help with the street collection and please give generously yourself. There is tremendous need in the world today which, by the grace of God, we are in a position to help to alleviate and to support people in getting their lives back on a firm footing so that they can become self-sufficient in the long run.

Annual Easter Egg Hunt: Once again we are hosting this popular event in the Rectory Grounds on Easter Monday at 2.00. Price £2.00 per child.

Three Hour Devotion Good Friday Halling.

On Good Friday we hold a service of devotion from 12.00-3.00 at St John's. The service consists of nine twenty minute segments of a hymn, a bible reading, a psalm, a short address and time for meditation. You are welcome to come and go during the service, staying for as many of the twenty minute segments as you feel able to.

This year the bible readings to help us to understand what Jesus accomplished for us on the Cross are the first nine chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This still leaves four chapters. So for completeness' sake I am summarising all the chapters of Hebrews here for you. I also intend to put the addresses on the parish webpage (under Teaching) <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>.

- 1) God Who is infinitely beyond our comprehension makes Himself known in various ways, including of course the Law and the Prophets, but supremely and finally He makes Himself known in Jesus, His Son.
- 2) We need to take God's revelation of Himself in Christ with the utmost seriousness. Jesus, as the Son of God, is infinitely above the angels and yet for us He became one of us, experiencing everything it means to be human, and yielding His life as an atonement for our sin, setting us free from sin and the fear of death.
- 3) Moses was a great man who liberated his people under God. But Jesus is actually God and liberates us from far worse than Egyptian slavery. Jesus sets us free from sin and death. The people Moses led out of Egypt rebelled against God and nearly all of them, therefore, failed to reach the Promised Land. They did not believe God. Christians must be careful not to make the same mistake.
- 4) The generation of liberated slaves who perished during the forty year wandering in the wilderness never entered into the rest God has prepared for His people because of their unbelief. There is a much more wonderful rest awaiting Christian believers. If you and I long for that heavenly rest, the only way to attain it is faith in the Word of God and trust in Jesus the great High Priest.
- 5) Jesus is a much greater priest than any of the high priests who offered sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple. His is an eternal priesthood. Even so, He accepted the lowliest of lives and suffered the worst that can happen to a human being. He therefore knows our every weakness and is the remedy for all our sin. The letter notes that we should be ashamed of ourselves if we don't even want to look more deeply into these eternal truths.
- 6) If we consider everything that God has done for us in Christ, our love ought never to grow cold. If we take in what Jesus has suffered and achieved on our behalf, we ought never to be indifferent or lazy in our Christian discipleship or even to be discouraged by trouble or persecution.
- 7) Ordinary human priests are merely human too. Their offerings are incomplete and unsatisfactory. Jesus is the only true high priest. His is the only worthy offering, His offering of Himself. Yet He is truly and fully human and understands us completely.
- 8) In Christ there is a new beginning. Living a good life is not a matter of obeying commandments inscribed on tablets of stone (or written on paper). Living a good life in Christ is being transformed by the Holy Spirit Who lives in the heart of every believer and brings us the gift of life eternal.
- 9) The things which God showed Moses on Mount Sinai regarding the holiness of God and the supreme sacrifice required of any who wish to come into His Presence are all true and are fulfilled absolutely and completely in Jesus, by Whose Blood the Kingdom of Heaven is opened to all believers.
- 10) Christ has saved us once and for all by His Death on the Cross. Can we, therefore, expect God to put up with backsliding on our part?
- 11) It is by faith that we know God and that we trust Him whatever He calls us to do in life.
- 12) We are very privileged indeed because we may come into the Presence of God. The Christian life is far from easy. But cleave to Jesus Who has been through it all for us.
- 13) Stick at it. Live pure, generous, faithful, hopeful lives in the light of Christ. Remain loyal to Him and His Church. Don't get discouraged. Remember how wonderful it all is. Trust God in prayer. Support one another in prayer. Don't lose sight of the glory. Live under God's Blessing, the only way really to live.

Good Friday at Cuxton

The principal Good Friday service at St Michael's is the family Service at 10.00, *Jesus Christ Superhero (Not!)*. All welcome. You are also welcome to join the rector in the office services at 8.45 & 5.00 – also on Holy Saturday.

DEANERY QUIET DAY AT AYLESFORD PRIORY

SATURDAY 14TH JUNE 2014: 10am – 4.30pm

This year the day will be led by Fr Peter Damian Masegill, a Franciscan brother. There is no charge for the day, only donations for teas/coffees. Bring your own packed lunch. We shall be using the Patrick Geary room, which caters for a maximum of 40 people, so please put your name down as soon as you can to avoid disappointment. Names to Rector, please.

Nature Notes February 2014

From "Ducks" by F W Harvey

When God had finished the stars and whirl of coloured suns
He turned His mind from big things to fashion little ones,
Beautiful tiny things (like daisies) He made, and then
He made the comical things in case the minds of men
Should stiffen and become
Dull, humourless and glum;
And so forgetful of their Maker be

As to take even themselves- quite seriously.
Caterpillars and cats are lively and excellent puns;
All God's jokes are good- even the practical ones!
And as for the duck, I think God must have smiled a bit
Seeing those bright eyes blink on the day He fashioned it.
And He's probably laughing still at the sound that came out
of his bill!

The first day of the month is one of sunshine and showers. The sun shines brightly from a blue sky brushed with wispy white cloud in the morning. In the afternoon the sun shines but the occasional shower falls and the wind is quite strong and cold. A handsome jay comes to the garden. The next day is bright and sunny with blue skies and white clouds drifting across from the west. I hear the rooks in the early morning as they leave their roosts for the day. I notice red berries which remain on the holly tree in the garden. I go outside for some fresh air and enjoy birdsong. The 3rd is a sunny day with winds from the west and white clouds drifting across the sky. The 4th feels like Spring as I listen to the birds singing. Bulbs are coming up in the garden. Later in the day, as darkness falls, grey clouds march across the sky. More rain is forecast. Floods remain on the Somerset Levels. Rain has fallen during the night, but the morning of 5th is dry. However, by mid-day, the skies are overcast and heavy rain is falling again when we drive to Larkfield for the dentist. Spray from other vehicles lashes our windscreen and large puddles have formed along the roadsides. Still more rain and strong winds are forecast. Heavy rain falls again on 6th. Bare branches of trees stand tall and dark against the grey sky. A great spotted woodpecker arrives in the garden on 8th when we drive to Bluewater with Murphy. As I walk round the lake with him, the sun shines but dark clouds are building up in the west and are drifting ever nearer in our direction. Just before we reach the car, heavy rain falls. The sun shines again

in the afternoon before more heavy showers fall in the late afternoon into the evening. Steady rain falls from a leaden sky in the morning of 10th. Puddles have formed on the grass in the back garden for the water is not soaking away. The rain continues to fall through the morning and into the early afternoon. There are a few rays of sunshine mid-afternoon which emphasise the silver trunks of the birch trees on the embankment, and the delicate twigs at the tops of the trees are pink. The embankment and our garden are lit up for a few minutes before billowing grey clouds envelop the sky as the sun sets behind the tall sycamores. As the light fades on 11th, I watch birds which have congregated on the electricity pylon. They are presenting their evening calls. On 13th, a beautiful jay comes to the garden. Flooding in parts of the country continues. The 14th is another stormy day with grey clouds scudding across the sky driven by strong westerly winds. Rain lashes the window panes and pummels the grass making it more sodden if that is possible. The slender silver birches sway in the wind as the light begins to fade in the late afternoon. Strong winds and heavy rain have battered the country overnight. The wind continues to rage in the morning but the sun is shining and westerly winds are driving grey and white clouds across the blue sky. Wood pigeons come to the garden to feed. The late afternoon sky is beautiful with grey and salmon pink clouds set against the pale blue. The wind is cold. A bright moon shines in a clear night sky. On 16th, in church, I see a peacock butterfly in the window

behind me in the choir stalls. It flutters back and forth. On 18th the morning is bright with sunshine. Birds come to the garden to feed. There is a heavy shower in the afternoon then when the sun shines again, a beautiful rainbow appears in the eastern sky. It is still light at 5.30pm. A golden sun rises over Bluebell Hill on 19th and the air is filled with birdsong. As I walk along the main road, up the narrow alley where I see red dead nettle, I reach Pilgrim's Road. Dog's mercury blooms along the verges. The 21st is a beautiful day with golden sunshine, blue skies and white billowing clouds. We drive to Bluewater where I walk round the lake with Murphy. Daisies, dandelions, speedwell, red dead nettle, snow drops and crocuses bloom. I see a tree covered in beautiful white blossom but I didn't identify it. More white clouds bank up in the sky. The night sky is starlit. The sun shines warmly on 22nd, lighting up the countryside. When I work in the

garden, I feel the sun's warmth on my face. Grey clouds, driven by westerly winds, drift across the sky. I watch marsh gulls as they circle overhead then watch song birds as they come to the garden to feed. On 24th I gaze at the beautiful daffodils on the banks of the lake at Bluewater. The sun shines from a clear blue sky. The next day, while walking there, a shower of rain falls, followed by the formation of a beautiful rainbow. In the evening, as the light begins to fade, billowing white clouds turn salmon pink from the setting sun. The night sky is clear and full of starlight. Hail stones fall in the afternoon of 26th. In the evening, I hear the melodious song of a blackbird. A jay comes to the garden looking for food on 27th. Unsatisfied, it flies away again. The last day of the month is dull with some rain in the afternoon, evening and into the night.

Elizabeth Summers.

Halling Historical Society

The next meeting will be held at the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling on Thursday 17th April at 7.30 pm. The speaker will be Mr Lower and the subject *Medway Tales from the Dividing River*. Visitors and new members always welcome.



Cuxton WI

We had a very informative and interesting evening with Mr Malcolm Withnail. He gave us lots of tips and ideas for our gardens. He was particularly into raised beds for vegetables especially as we are all getting older although he didn't say that! He also said that many "gardeners" either ignore or decry Grow bags but he felt that they were very useful especially where space is limited. With good feeding he had been able to raise 3 or 4 crops per season from a single grow bag. Business then followed our tea break. We have agreed to help people by having a "food box" at our meetings where members can contribute to this and Jeanne takes it up to the Church monthly. We have been asked to help at the Big Cuxton Annual lunch. We will do teas etc and possibly some good homemade cakes if you are lucky. All our in-house groups are doing well. We have interests in: Art, both water and china painting; Poetry where we find different poems to read and enjoy - not at all stuffy (we usually find some to lighten up the evening and have a good laugh); Cookery where all sorts of worldwide recipes are given a try (they all look pretty healthy; so the recipes must be

successful). Then there is Walking group which of course you should join after attending a cookery evening. We stroll very happily around the countryside and if farther afield then we either show our bus passes or go on the train. We also have reps who tell us about different events coming up in West Kent.

On Tuesday about a dozen of us went to Tunbridge Wells to the West Kent Annual meeting but really because Michael Portillo was one of the main speakers and he had us in fits of laughter and also told us that there are further editions of his railway journeys in the pipe line - so something to look forward to later in the year. Having read the above I am sure that you will realise that we are by no means a static bunch of ladies but always ready to try new things and have a good laugh together. So, if you ever feel like joining us you are very welcome and we shall be pleased to meet you.

Our next meeting is at the Church hall on Thursday 3rd April at 7 30 pm when Clarins the makeup firm are coming to talk and demonstrate. Anyone can come as a visitor. So team up with a friend and come along. Sheila.



The Background.

24 years ago I drove the first humanitarian aid shipment, which left Cuxton Infant school for the poverty stricken/socially deprived situation in Romania. Together with 11 other trucks we delivered desperately needed aid to Comanesti, in Eastern Romania. Back then conditions were horrendous especially in the orphanages, hospitals and other state institutes. Since then I have been involved with 'Meducaid Romania', Blythswood care, and now officially with Cry in the Dark, (CitD). CitD runs a fantastic residential care home for 22 physically and mentally handicapped young adults and a hospice for 108 children and young adults. Both projects are in the Comanesti area, things are getting better, but very slowly economically.

The ROMANIAN EVENING on 26th April at The White Hart.

As many of you will know the new landlords of The White Hart are originally from Romania. Thanks to Mihaela and Gabriel they are hosting a Romanian Evening on the 26th April. The evening will start with the Bio-degradable Balloon launch. 500 balloons costing £2-00 each will be released. The balloon which flies the furthest will entitle the purchaser to win £100.00. Tickets are on sale now at various locations including the White Hart and Cuxton Services. This will be followed by an amazing 2 course dinner, consisting of various delicious Romanian specialities. Your choice must be pre-ordered by the 20th April. Tickets pre-booked will cost £20-00 a head. Menu available from The White Hart, Cuxton Mini-market. In addition there will be a big raffle. All the money raised, including £5-00 from each meal will go towards the work of the CitD projects. Please support us. Contact The White Hart 01634 789 969 or Phil Shorthouse 01634 715314 to book. Phil, Mihaela and Gabriel.



The End of an Era.

After 15½ years the financial recession has finally caught up with Blythswood care. Regrettably the senior management team has had to make a difficult decision and has announced the closure of the Medway depot (end of May) and the Snodland shop (end of April). Discussions are being held with regard to the shop in Darnley road. As you can imagine the magnificent team at Medway and Snodland are very upset. With the amazing support from Churches, WI clubs, schools, knitting groups, etc, etc, thousands of people's lives have been saved and changed. The depot has supported numerous disasters in Kosovo, Haiti, Gujarat, the tsunami and hundreds of lorries to Romania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova and Serbia. A final lorry for Serbia will leave early April and the very last lorry going to Romania will leave shortly after (DV). It is proposed to employ a Regional Fund Raiser and that person would be responsible for coordinating the annual shoebox appeal. So on behalf of all the team THANK YOU and may God bless you. Phil Shorthouse.

This Year's Bellringers' Outing will be 14th June.

DEANERY SYNOD ELECTIONS

The elections of Deanery Synod members in 2014 are particularly important, in that they will determine the electors for the 2015 Diocesan and General Synods. It has sometimes been a struggle to enthuse people about these roles, particularly younger people. The General Synod House of Laity has produced a smart leaflet on the topic, just in time for the upcoming Annual Parochial Church Meetings. The leaflet may be found at <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1944524/deanerysynodleaflet.pdf> (or with less typing, via <http://tinyurl.com/deanery2014>).

Hymn Writers 13

*When I needed a neighbour, were you there? When I needed a shelter, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, I'll be there. (Sydney Carter)*

Last month I suggested that there was a void between the last true hymn writers, which John Rutter asserts is in the 1950s, and the worship song writers of the new millennium. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries between them saw many changes in the way religion was seen and accepted, between the upsurge of church-going and the establishment of new branches of religion in the Victorian age and the general downturn in church attendance especially in

the latter half of the Elizabethan. The two World Wars, fought with massive contributions in addition to that of the non-professional soldier, and the involvement and casualties of the civilian population must have had some impact on the way the ordinary people viewed religion. War was brought home to the very doorstep of the population and many were very frightened and lost their faith. A fall in the numbers of worshippers and inconsistency in visitor

numbers has meant that now our cathedrals, once the mainstay of music and hymns in our religious services, are finding it very difficult to afford to keep up with the times and, when times are hard, one of the first to go is the music generally and the choir schools in particular. The parish church, which depends on the weekly giving of the parishioners, is hard pushed to afford the upkeep of the building let alone the cost of the choir and organist as well as the upkeep of the organ. The supply of people available to play for Sunday services seem to be few and far between, especially when there is no money to attract them. People are on the move. Transport is more available and affordable so people don't stay in one place any more. They have more buying power and the weekend has become a busy leisure-time with many going shopping to spend the money that has accrued or enjoying the freedom of a day off. When I was a boy, Sunday was a quiet time and as the shops and other attractions were closed, we stayed at home and more of us seemed to go to church services. In the nineteenth century, as the population began to increase, many people began to move away from where they had been born or to look for more ways of improving their lot. In America, for example, people trekked miles to look for gold and silver, the open prairies and the wooded mountains of the unpopulated west to seek a better life, and they took their religion and religious music with them but without the accoutrements of the great cities. There was to be a more simple life and this meant taking just a few possessions. Just the Bible with them as they had no room for hymn books, and they would sing hymns from memory that they remembered from their childhood. In Europe, culture and language were factors in keeping hymns country specific whilst allowing the hymn books to bring in tunes and translations from across countries.

The twentieth century spoke of change – radical change – and music was no exception. Composers of Art Music were beginning to experiment with new structures where the conventional rules that had been a stabilising influence were just discarded. The good tune which was nurtured in the tonal music of the 'classical' was gone in the atonal music of the modern age, and the resulting sound was not good on the conventional ear. Music was becoming more mathematical in its structure and the eight-note melodic scale of related notes we had been used to was being replaced by a twelve-note chromatic scale of somewhat unrelated notes. Some composers resisted going too far along this road however, and composers such as Ralph Vaughan-Williams as

members of the established set had a duty to compose music in keeping with convention and expectation. If Rutter is right and Vaughan-Williams tune to 'For All the Saints' was the last conventional hymn tune for congregational singing, what happened after that and before the era of the worship song.

The popularity of folk music during the 1960s and 70s meant that a wave of folk musicians began to compose new and revive old idiomatic music. There was an increase in the number of church hymns that were based on folk music. Books of 'folk hymns' were produced most notably the 'Faith, Folk and Charity' series which contained music newly written plus hymns based on folk music tunes. Folk musicians such as Londoner Sydney Carter became popular using time in current affairs television programmes playing, and opening their music to a wide audience. Carter is probably most famous for writing 'Lord of the Dance' (1967) to an American Shaker song "Simple Gifts", 'Every Star Shall Sing a Carol', 'One More Step Along the World I Go' and 'When I Needed A Neighbour'. During a survey carried out in 1996, thirty years after they had been written, they were still popular in schools being in the top six of the most sung songs. In an interview with The Times newspaper, Carter says "They are songs sung in a Christian context but they all mean something to me because I was often on the edge of not believing.There are obviously problems with so many denominations in schools today but I had collective worship at school and I do not think it is a bad thing..." (The Times – Thursday, August 29, 1996). So although he considers that his songs are multi-denominational and multi-faith, he seems to advocate the corporate act of worship which many schools tend to ignore. He believes his music, and one presumes that of others, goes some way into bridging the gap in the widening cultural mix. However, these songs are not really hymns in the true sense of the word. Was anyone writing hymns at all in this period?

When I was running Bexleyheath's Scout and Guide Choir, quite a large group of people of all ages, there was a book we used that was a mainstay of material for anything from St George's Day at Christ Church to St George's Chapel, Windsor. Written mainly by clergymen or those closely linked to the church, the book "Thirty 20th Century Hymn Tunes" first published in 1960 and costing four shillings and sixpence contained thirty modern versions of hymns some of which are still widely popular today. The 20th Century Light Music Group, as this team of composers was called, aimed to bring fresh, and presumably more

“modern” music into church services. We regularly use ‘Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord)’, ‘At the Name of Jesus’ and ‘O Jesus, I Have Promised’. Providing new tunes for a modern (sixties) audience it was hoped would engender new interest in established hymns, words often from the Victorian era. The output of composers such as Geoffrey Beaumont, Michael Brierley, Patrick Appleford et al, became quite popular at the time, and we used this music, and subsequent offerings, quite often as they were easy to sing quickly with a relatively short rehearsal time. Another set of hymns tunes, aimed at the teenage group, was “Youth Praise” which came out in several volumes, again offering new tunes to older words. Sunday School was often being modelled as Junior Church and Youth

Praise provided a challenge of new music and words aimed at the younger church congregation but often they didn’t really catch on to the imagination of those it was aimed to encourage. These anthologies of new music for older tunes, old music with new words or just a stab at something new have their equivalent in Mission Praise and Songs of Fellowship.

I hope in the next issue to discuss a hymn-writer who quietly placed an output in the hymnbook that can be regarded as a hymn. A writer who used his poetry to write simple but heartfelt words for congregations and who did bridge the gap between, but did so in such a unassuming way that he could have passed by unnoticed. JGB

STAMPS – Thank you everyone who is supporting this on behalf of OCD UK. I was just about ready to send a consignment at the end of January when a very kind person brought me a carrier bag stuffed full of stamps with which I am currently dealing, and hopefully will get them off soon. Please bring your used (and even unused) stamps into us. We are still collecting them – they are appreciated and for a good cause!! JGB



Max’s Tail Piece

Don’t I look innocent in this picture? It was taken a long time ago! Master reckons it is my fault that he has a (slightly) swollen ankle. On a normal Saturday, I have mince for dinner, instead of plain old dog food. Master goes out for his run, picks up his paper, puts the mince on to cook and the kettle for tea. When the mince comes to the boil, he turns the gas down and goes and showers and, hopefully, he has finished just as the whistle blows, when he comes down stairs, makes the tea and pours the rest of the boiling water on to three eggs in a saucepan – one for him and two for me. By the time he’s made his toast, the eggs are ready, and, by the time we’ve eaten the eggs, the mince is cooked and can be left to cool in time for dinner. But last Saturday, when he came in from his run, I went and hid in the garden. That would be OK, he says, if he was absolutely sure that I would remain in the garden (which I nearly always do, to be fair). Anyway, he says it was worrying about me that led him to get under the shower before he had turned down the mince. Afraid that it would boil dry and burn, he came tearing out of the shower and dashed down our wooden stairs with wet feet. Well he came down rather faster than he intended, but it took him a while to get up off the landing floor. Fortunately, it was nothing to worry about. He did get up in time to save my dinner. I wish I’d seen it, but I was still out in the garden, where I stayed until I heard him filling my bowl! The swelling will go down.

After that enormous preserved tree came down in the whirlwind, our anxious neighbours have written to the council about cutting down the remaining dangerous or inappropriately located trees. They seem to believe that imposing a tree preservation order entails some sort of obligation on the part of the council and that they might therefore be able to look to tree officers for help. Master says that unfortunately they don’t seem to realise the meaning of the phrase *public servant!* The public doesn’t get to tell public servants what to, only to grovel to them for permission to do what we would like to do. He doesn’t think they’ll get much sympathy. Officers went through the motions of public consultation when they first imposed the order. Around sixty people opposed it and only one supported it. The single supporter’s representation was accepted seven weeks after the closing date and was submitted by a council officer, whose identity the council unsurprisingly, but illegally tried to keep secret. They showed similar contempt for our elected representatives when they published the council’s decision the day before the meeting at which it was supposedly taken. So Master isn’t hopeful for our neighbours getting any help from the council.

Next Monday we’re off to do a bit more North Downs Way with Mark – Lenham eastwards. It is wonderful that the weather has dried up and that the sun is shining. So it should be a good walk. Only he’s a bit of a hypocrite. I heard him tell some young pilgrims that they could easily do 20-25 miles a day and I think he’s got it in mind for us to do about seven miles just to Charing. Once he did Detling to Charing in one day and it came on to snow that night and it was April, but he was forty years younger then! I’ll probably tell you about it next time. Max, the Rectory Spaniel.