

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
30 th July Trinity 7	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	
Trinity 8 6 th August The Transfiguration	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 9 vv 1-5 p1135 Matthew 14 vv 13-21 p981	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 II Peter 1 vv 16-19 p1222 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040	
13 th August Trinity 9	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv 9-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	I Kings 11 v41 – 12 v20 p351 Acts 14 vv 8-20 p1109	
20 th August Trinity 10	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-32 p1137 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982	
27 th August Trinity 11	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983	
3 rd September Trinity 12	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 18 vv 1-16 p1114 Mark 7 vv 1-23 p1010	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 15 vv 15-21 p774 Romans 12 vv 9-21 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 21-28 p984	
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
30 th July Trinity 7	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 5-12 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980	
6 th August The Transfiguration	9.30 Family Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 II Peter 1 vv 16-19 p1222 Luke 9 vv 28-36 p1040	
13 th August Trinity 9	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	I Kings 19 vv 9-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981	
20 th August Trinity 10	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 56 vv 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-32 p1137 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982	
27 th August Trinity 11	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983	
3 rd September Trinity 12	9.30 Family Communion	Jeremiah 15 vv 15-21 p774 Romans 12 vv 9-21 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 21-28 p984	
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am @ St Michael's		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am @ St John's	
2 nd August	Exodus 34 vv 29-35 Matthew 13 vv 44-46	3 rd August	Exodus 40 vv 16-38 Matthew 13 vv 47-53
9 th August Mary Sumner	Numbers 13 vv 1-35 Matthew 15 vv 21-28	10 th August S Laurence	Numbers 20 vv 1-13 Matthew 16 vv 13-23
16 th August	Deuteronomy 34 vv 1-12 Matthew 18 vv 15-20	17 th August	Joshua 3 vv 7-17 Matthew 18 v21 - 19v1
23 rd August	Judges 9 vv 6-15 Matthew 20 vv 1-16	24 th August S Bartholomew Anniversary of 1662 BCP. Would you like a 1662 service that day?	Acts 5 vv 12-16 Luke 22 vv 24-30
30 th August John Bunyan	I Thessalonians 2 vv 9-13 Matthew 23 vv 27-32	31 st August S Aidan	I Thessalonians 3 vv 7-13 Matthew 24 vv 42-51

Copy Date September Magazine: 11th August 8.30 am Rectory

These two websites have some very good old pictures of Cuxton & Halling. Check them out.

Forthcoming Attractions

16th August: 2.00 pm. Teddy Bears' Picnic. All welcome. There will also be a bring and buy for Mothers' Union charities. Food and games provided. Admission free.

23rd August: 2.00pm. Afternoon Tea Party for Church Funds at 95, Pilgrims Road, North Halling.

14th October: 7.30 pm Quiz for Church funds in church hall.

4th November: Diocesan Gathering. Details to follow. Watch this space.

9th December: 10.00 Christmas Fair (nee Coffee Morning aka market) in church hall. ALSO evening Christmas music event.

August 23rd 2.00 pm

Tea Party For Church funds

At the home of Chris & Jenny Beaney
95, Pilgrims Road,
North Halling, ME2 1HW
All Welcome

August 16th 2.00 pm

Teddy Bear's Picnic Bring and Buy For Mother's Union Charities

Rectory Grounds
All welcome



Judgment at Nuremberg

I have just watched the excellent film *Judgment at Nuremberg*. The film was made in 1961 with an all star cast, but the action takes place in 1948. I can strongly recommend watching it if you have the chance, even though it lasts three hours! The subject is the Nuremberg Trials at which Nazi politicians and functionaries were tried for the atrocities committed in Germany under the chancellorship of Adolph Hitler – 1933-1945. Subtly, the film does not deal with the trials of the political or military leaders or the Gestapo or the people who ran the concentration camps, but with the judges, who under the Nazis, subjugated the

courts to the interests of the government. It deals, therefore, not quite so much with the obviously evil or insane, but with the problem of how good and dedicated public servants, ordinary decent people prior to the rise of that odious regime, noble even in some cases, could become the servants of such wickedness.

The film shows the devastation of Nuremberg and other German cities – the result of allied bombing during the war – and is sensitive towards the German people who were in 1948 living in great hardship. The film is positive about supporting the German people then and helping them to get back on their feet. Allied determination to punish Germany in 1919 for the Great War was one of

the causes of war breaking out again under Hitler. There is a tension between the complicity of ordinary people in a great evil and the fact that they are ordinary people like us. *There but for the grace of God go I?*

Counsel for the prosecution began his case by observing that the courts exist to guarantee justice. The judges on trial had therefore let down themselves and their profession by becoming the instruments of injustice. Counsel for the defence countered with the argument that the purpose of the courts is to enforce the law of the land. These judges were only doing their duty in enforcing the law as it was defined in Germany at the time. Hitler was the lawful Chancellor and his government was internationally recognised. It was the duty of all German citizens to obey the law and the duty of the German courts to enforce the law.

That raises a very interesting question. Are law and justice the same thing? If they are, how come different countries have different laws? Why do we think some countries' laws are better than others'? Why do we sometimes change our laws unless we think they can be improved? Why is it that *I was only obeying orders* isn't a defence in a war crimes trial? Surely, it is because we think that people have consciences which should tell them not to obey unjust laws.

But where does justice come from? Laws are made by parliaments or kings or presidents or even by local councils, but, unless we want to say that it is always everybody's duty to obey the law as it stands, against what criteria do we judge the justice of the laws our governments make? If we think that laws are sometimes unjust, how unjust do they have to be before we are justified in disobeying them? Obviously, there would be anarchy if we all individually and separately decided which laws we would obey. We should keep to the speed limit even if we personally think that it is unnecessarily low. I hope, however, that if there we ever had a Nazi regime in this country, many of us would have the courage to defy it.

Socrates (according to Plato) thought that justice was something which could be discovered by rational human thought. Plato suggested that we should be ruled by philosophers who would be

educated in such a way that they would seek (and, to some degree, find) the wisdom to rule justly. Nobody really has come up with a universally accepted understanding of justice based on human thought alone. If we had, we would have the same laws throughout the world.

Christians believe that justice comes from God. God is good and God has revealed to us the difference between good and evil. He has given us the Ten Commandments. King Alfred made the Ten Commandments the basis of English law, but to what extent are the Ten Commandments respected today? I believe that only *Thou shalt not steal* is really treated with any respect in modern Britain. Worshipping only God and condemning idols doesn't fit in with a multicultural society in which all religions and none are supposedly to be treated with equal respect (or, more often, equal disrespect). Taking the Lord's Name in vain is casual and almost universal. Hardly anybody keeps the Sabbath holy and those of us who do are thought odd. Honouring your parents and the idea of the close knit family this commandment represents are under constant threat from the growing demand for individualistic personal fulfilment. We've always found ways around the commandment not to kill – war, capital punishment, abortion? Adultery isn't any longer taken all that seriously. Yes, stealing is acknowledged to be bad, though personally I think that the way we are quite legally ripped off by financial institutions, energy companies and train operating companies is morally theft. Bearing false witness is a national pastime at least in the realms of politics and business. Our whole economy is based on covetousness for material goods we do not really need. Justice does indeed come from God, but how are people to recognise that fact if they don't love and fear God?

St Paul says that *we are not under the law, but under grace*. Law is for bad people. Good people don't need to be deterred by fear of punishment from doing wrong. Neither do they need to be incentivised to do good by promises of reward. Good people behave justly simply because they are good people. Law is an interim measure, needed only so long as there are bad people around. What matters is character. Human beings acquire character through faith in God by Jesus Christ.

Back to the film. It raised many other interesting points. Wasn't Hitler a good thing when he became Chancellor in 1933? The German economy was in ruins. There was a real risk that the state would collapse and anarchy ensue. The largest political party was the Communists and what they were doing in Russia was terrifying. Hitler brought order, a recovery of national pride, jobs and relative prosperity. Surely, it wasn't surprising that many Germans welcomed him. He had many admirers throughout the world, including in this country. Even Churchill, as late as 1938, had respect for what Hitler had achieved for Germany. It all went badly wrong, but surely it was understandable that many people initially were happy to serve the National Socialist government. It had taken Mussolini to make the Italian trains run on time. Hitler was doing something similar for Germany. Were the Nazis a lesser evil than a collapsed German state being taken over by the Communists? Many people in Britain and other western countries, as well as many Germans, thought so. Then again, even the Russians had formed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. Stalin and Hitler, supposedly the antithesis of one another and deadly enemies, formed an alliance. It's hard not to be cynical about politics!

On the other hand, however, Hitler had never made any secret of his true thoughts. His autobiography *Mein Kampf* was published in two volumes in 1925 and 1926 and enjoyed a worldwide circulation. In it he makes quite clear his theories of Arian racial superiority, his hatred of the Jews, his contempt for other races and his determination to expand Germany eastward. Anyone who had taken the trouble to study National Socialism and Hitler could have seen where all this was leading long before he came to power.

The defence also argued that the hands of no nation were clean in the war. Everybody had killed and maimed and destroyed. The prosecution showed authentic footage (which is harrowingly incorporated into this film) of what the allies found when they liberated the concentration camps, but the defence countered with the atom bombs dropped by the Americans on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which killed and inflicted unspeakable injuries on millions of

Japanese civilians. Were the atom bombs necessary? Was it necessary to drop two atom bombs?

What about people who naively supported Hitler in 1933 and supported and worked for the Nazi regime in the belief that it was doing something worthwhile? At what point did they realise how evil it really was? That is still a disputed point. After the war, not surprisingly, there could hardly be any Germans found who admitted to having supported the Nazis or to knowing about the concentration camps and the other terrible things which went on. Did they really not know? How could it happen that millions of people could be transported to the death camps and hardly anybody know about it? Or was it so awful that ordinary Germans couldn't believe the evidence of their own eyes? It was probably better not to know. If you did know, what could you do about it without the risk of yourself and your own family being arrested, tortured and murdered?

And what about those who did definitely know? What about people who were serving as policemen or soldiers or judges or civil servants in good faith in the early years of Hitler's chancellorship, but who gradually became aware of the developing horrors? At what point do you leave a good job, with all the consequences for your family of doing so, because your conscience is beginning to trouble you? At what point do you go into outright opposition if you live under a regime in which opposition leads to prison or concentration camp? Wouldn't most ordinary people keep their heads down and just get on with their lives?

Is it better sometimes to remain on the inside and to try to influence things from within than to walk away? Maybe, as a judge, you can't change the Nazi laws, but perhaps you can soften the way they are enforced. Isn't it better, if you are a civil servant, to remain in office and to argue for milder policies than it is simply to resign or to retire?

I sometimes try to imagine how I would have reacted if I'd been placed in any of these situations. I don't know. *There but for the grace of God go I.*

The presiding judge (played by Spencer Tracey) did everything he could to be fair to the defendants, but, finally, they were all found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. The best of the defendants insisted that he had never understood that millions would die; how could he be responsible for them all? Tracey's character replies, "You became responsible the first time you passed a death sentence on a man you knew to be innocent."

And yet, even though it's an American film, the Americans don't come out of it as pure as the driven snow, as unreservedly committed to justice and the highest of principles. In 1948, the Soviet Russians sponsored a communist coup d'état in

Czechoslovakia and tried to isolate Berlin from the allies, giving rise to the Berlin Airlift to supply the city and to protect the British, French and American sectors from being starved out. The Nuremberg tribunal found itself being put under pressure by the American political and military command to go easy on the Nazi defendants because the allies might need the Germans to join them to fight the Russians, which ironically was exactly what Hitler had wanted ten years earlier.

The final note was that none of those sentenced by the Americans to life imprisonment was still in prison when the film was made in 1961.

So make of all that what you will. I found it very thought-provoking. Roger.

Psalm 82: God standeth in the congregation of princes : he is a Judge among gods. How long will ye give wrong judgement : and accept the persons of the ungodly? Defend the poor and fatherless : see that such as are in need and necessity have right. Deliver the outcast and poor : save them from the hand of the ungodly. They will not be learned nor understand, but walk on still in darkness : all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods : and ye are all the children of the most Highest. But ye shall die like men : and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, and judge thou the earth : for thou shalt take all heathen to thine inheritance.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

A Different Perspective

A blind man was explaining how he could enjoy parachute jumping. He described how his friends guided him to the aerodrome, the technicians fitted his harness and got him onto the plane and the pilot told him when to jump. "But how," he was asked, "do you know when you're about to touch the ground?" "That's easy," he replied, "the guide dog's lead goes slack."

St Michael's Draw June: winning numbers 24 (£10), Gill Bogg, 10, (£5) Mary Pitt & 6, (£5) David Maxwell.

St Michael's Draw July: 30 (£10) Malcolm Curnow, 16 (£5) David & Dawn Gates, 13 (£5) Viv Balsom.

St John's Draw May: £10 each to Mrs B Head (1), Mr R Thorne (32) & Mrs A Watts (117) – drawn by Mrs Smitherman.

St John's Draw June: £5 each Mrs Warman (51), Mrs Fuller (78) & Mrs Smitherman (140) – drawn by Mrs Reed.

Flora and Fauna – Scents and Sensibility

We often don't comment on the aromas of the countryside, although they may do much to set the mood we are in. They literally are an aspect of the atmosphere we breathe in - or "inspire", to use the medical term for drawing air into our lungs. The parts of the brain which deal with smells are very close to the part where memories seem to be stored and emotions are processed. Maybe that's why scents are so often evocative.

Some smells, of course, are not very nice. Fertiliser may be very necessary, but it's not something we particularly enjoy inhaling when it's fresh. A rich, well-manured soil, however, especially when it's wet has a very satisfying tang to it, especially if you're a farmer or a gardener. Wood smoke is a good smell, so long as there isn't too much of it, when it becomes choking. Coal smoke not so nice, although for me it brings back memories of happy times when I was younger and most people had coal fires, OK in the country where there is plenty of fresh air, not so good in the towns where they generated the terrible smogs which reduced visibility to inches and killed thousands of people with weak chests, just as pollution from motor vehicles does today. I'm no petrol head and can find nothing to enjoy in motor fumes. Maybe, that will

change, however. I used to hate the smell of cigarettes. Now they evoke memories of family members long dead. Perhaps they wouldn't have been dead quite so long if they hadn't smoked!

I was really thinking, however, about the scents of flowers and other vegetation. There are the obvious ones, such as lavender and honeysuckle. The wild honeysuckle or woodbine has been very prolific this year, including in my garden. Some roses have wonderful perfume, especially the older varieties. As roses have been bred for appearance, disease resistance, etc., the genes for scent have often been accidentally bred out. Something similar seems to have happened to pinks or carnations (*Dianthus*), though the clove pinks smell just the way you would expect them to. *Buddleia* is another champion for scent and attracts all kinds of butterflies. Just now, there seem to be a lot of butterflies about, notably the little brown ones and some whites. I really must learn the names. I used to be quite good on the peacocks etc., which laid their eggs among the nettles at the corner of our road.

Then, there are the less obvious olfactory sensations. I am particularly fond of the smell of privet flowers, which, of course, you don't get if you cut your hedge regularly. I have a wildish bit of privet which I allow to flower. Years ago, when I first came here, I took some cuttings off it and created a short hedge. It's golden privet, but it turned green when woodland trees grew up to overshadow it. It turned back to gold when the trees were pruned. Elderflowers smell good. So does mock orange, but that was very short-lived this year. Flowering currant is vile. I used to enjoy seeing the flowers, but maybe it is not a bad thing that the *Hypericum* seems to have choked it to death. The smell of flowering currant is reminiscent of one of the less appealing features of our feline friends. New mown hay, new mown grass and wet vegetation generally are almost universally acknowledged as great smells. Have you noticed, however, the very different sharp smell of hot dry grass burnt up in the sun? Warm clover also has its own sweet, deep aroma. I quite like the scent of marigolds too. Planting them in your vegetable patch is supposed to put off the carrot fly and the onion fly which can't smell their prey (allegedly) for the marigolds.

Leaving the scents, I mentioned the dawn chorus last month. There has also been a lot of individual birdsong these last few weeks. As I admitted, I'm not good at recognising the song of the different kinds of bird and I find I can seldom see the bird I can hear singing – maybe my short sightedness, maybe because they are hiding in the bushes. I also remarked that the great swathes of flowers such as bluebells were over at the end of May, but now there are great areas of purple loosestrife and carpets of the pink form of the lesser bindweed. The big white bindweed or bellbine or bearbine is flourishing in my garden. We used to pick that on the way to school and pop the flowers out of the calyces with a pinch between finger and thumb. Some people call the plant, *Granny*, *granny*, *pop out of bed*. Bindweed can be a terrible weed in the garden to get rid of. I once saw a gardening book which suggested you need to dig down thirty feet to get rid of it. A better suggestion is never to let it see a Sunday. If you chop off the tops of most of these perennial weeds as soon as they appear, you can at least control them. Which brings me back to smells. Dandelion is a most peculiar smell and, I think, quite a nasty taste, though some people put it in salads, where it is claimed to have a particular medical effect. Nasturtiums similarly have a bitter smell and taste, though not so pungent as dandelions. Dandelion too is hard to get rid of, but, as I read recently, why do we try so hard to get rid of it? You can eat it. The flowers are attractive – beautiful in large numbers. The seed heads also look good and children enjoying blowing them as dandelion clocks. So why cast Nasturtiums? One evening, I took Tommy out as the sun was getting low in the sky and it side lit an enormous field of blue scabious and some white flowers I don't know the names of it. It was so beautiful that Tommy got take round further, back into the woods and home via the big open field he loves to run in..

Not much on fauna this month. The garden is full of squirrels. The badgers are regularly about. I still see bats if I'm quick enough at the end of the long light evenings. I did, one morning, see a fox with its breakfast in its mouth, just on the edge of the woods, quite a sight though I felt sorry for the poor rabbit. Better than rummaging through dustbins, however. I had a much better look than I might have done because Tommy didn't notice it at all. I don't know what scents he is following up. Dogs have an entirely different perspective on the world from humans. Roger.

From the Registers

Baptism:

11th June

Philippa Lindsay MacDonald

Rochester

Weddings:

16th June

Nicholas Judd and Stephanie Simmonds

St John's

16th June

James Jonathan Smith and Charlotte Ellen Hare

St Michael's

2nd July

Jeffrey Charles Michael Hill and Paula Elizabeth Savage

St Michael's

8th July

Peter James Croucher and Nicola Joanne McKenzie

St Michael's

Margaret Guest RIP

Parishioners were very sad to hear of the sudden death of Margaret Guest on 6th July, especially as it came so soon after that of her husband, Harry. Margaret had played a big part in the life of the village and the parish Church. Years ago, she was instrumental in setting up the Wheel of Cuxton and the annual firework display and maintained an interest in parish council. She was also involved in running a youth club for the village. For many years and until quite recently, Margaret led the team which so beautifully decorates St Michael's with flowers. For many years, she printed this magazine and arranged for its distribution and looked after the finances of it. She was still managing the magazine money when she died. [On a practical note, at least for the time being, please remit any magazine money to the Rector]. Margaret also supported the work to raise funds for the restoration of St John's after the two parishes were combined, especially by her attendance at the regular stall at which home made produce was profitably sold to a large and appreciative public. As well as all the things she did and much more importantly, Margaret was a good friend and a faithful Christian and I am sure now inhabits an even happier realm than this.

The Beauty of Holiness by John E. Wilson.

'Be holy: for I am holy,'

Says the Lord.

Holiness simply begets holiness:

Born in us by the Holy Spirit

Of the Father and His Son:

He in us; we in Him.

He in us:

With His Spirit within,

'Ye shall be holy. ..

For I, the Lord, am holy,'

Living out His holiness in us

In all its beauty,

As sure as day follows night.

'Be holy:'

Not so much a command,

Simply a word of prophesy

That soon becomes reality.

We in Him

Simply immersed in His Spirit,

Akin to a sponge in water:

Totally saturated,

Soaked through and through

With God's Holy Spirit,

And His whole nature.

Squeezed by the pressures of life

Only the sweetness and beauty

Of His nature comes forth:

Holiness, pure and simple,

In all its beauty.

Don't Be Too Sure

Sir Alec Guinness once lost his cloakroom ticket when eating in a restaurant. "Don't worry," said the attendant giving him his coat, "I'd have recognised you anywhere, sir." Rather flattered, Sir Alec gave a generous tip. Putting on the coat, however, he found a scrap of paper in the pocket, identifying the owner. It said, "Short, fat bloke with glasses."

Unicorns

I was asked to preach on the subject of unicorns in the Bible. There are seven biblical references to unicorns. רֶעִם (Re'em) is the actual Hebrew word and it could be translated *rhinoceros*, *antelope* or (most probably, perhaps) *wild ox*, but the traditional versions have *unicorn*. Anyway, this is what we found in the passages.

- 1) Devastating apocalypse is the consequence of our human failure to walk with God in His holy way of love.
- 2) God sets His people free from sin, the world and the devil and empowers them to overcome all the opposition of the Evil One.
- 3) God is awesome and so is His Creation. We should worship Him in spirit and in truth. We should respect our fellow human beings. We should maintain our own integrity. We should be good stewards of God's Creation and look after this world and one another.
- 4) Evil is very real and very powerful, but Jesus has overcome the power of evil by offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice of love on the Cross. He understands all our troubles and shares them. He understands when we pray, no matter how bad things are, and He prays with us and for us.
- 5) God anoints all believers with His Holy Spirit to set us free from slavery to sin and the fear of death. He gives us the power to offer our lives as a living sacrifice to Him. He fills us with the fullness of joy. Has anyone else in suggestions for sermons, preferably not about about mythical beasts – profitable (propheta?) as unicorns were.

Unicorns in the Bible

Is 34.7 And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

Numbers 23.22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Numbers 24.8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows.

Job 39. 9&10 Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?

Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee?

Psalms 22.21 Save me from the lion's mouth : thou hast heard me also from among the horns of the unicorns.

Psalms 29.6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf : Libanus also, and Sirion, like a young unicorn.

Psalms 92 9 But mine horn shall be exalted like the horn of an unicorn : for I am anointed with fresh oil.

Halling Bellringers

A peal was rung at Halling on April 15th, only the second in many years. The conductor had rung his first peal at Halling 50 years previously to the day. We also thank Cuxton ringers for a lovely day's outing to Suffolk churches on June 10th. Peter Silver.

From Our Other Canine Correspondent

Judy was chuffed to bits to see her letter in print. She has written a few words to let you know a bit more about herself. I wonder how many readers will notice that she has written the whole piece without using a single letter 'e'. Perhaps others would like to rise to the challenge of writing similarly?

“Hi, I am Judy. I am living with my humans in a building that is in a country location with woods and grasslands all around. Mornings I walk with my boss and on arriving back munch my way through dog biscuits. Following that I curl up on a couch in a sunny spot for forty winks until my humans do lunch. If a sandwich is handy I will join in. Now I go for a walk in woods or down by a flowing tributary. Lots of aromas and grass to roll in. Occasionally I may play with a toy or stick. Back indoors for a snack and to curl up and watch TV until I tidy up my fur, by having a groom, and go to my cushion for a night long nap.”
Judy.

Trees and Grass

Since I wrote last month about the trouble and inconvenience caused by Medway Council's anomalous imposition of a woodland tree preservation order on my garden, disregarding both government guidelines and the results of the public consultation, I have received two further communications. One was from a parishioner at Halling frustrated by the council's continued failure, despite her pleas, to cut back trees which are considerably diminishing the public amenity value of the area in which she lives. The other was from another neighbour of mine who asked me for permission to prune the trees in my garden which overshadow his very badly. I had to respond that, while you might expect that, in a free country, this would be a matter for the landowner and his neighbours, because of the TPO, if I gave my permission, both he and I could be fined or even imprisoned. While ordinary people like us do the work, pay the bills and live with the consequences, it is our masters in the council offices who get to make the decisions and our taxes pay their wages. So I told him to contact Medway Council and wished him luck, albeit with very little hope of a reasonable or compassionate response.

Then, ironically, I came across this article in the "Times".

A 120-year-old rare tree in South Yorkshire that came second in the Tree of the Year competition is to be felled. Sheffield city council has decided that the Huntingdon Elm tree in the Nether Edge area will be chopped down. Campaigners, wildlife organisations and residents have been fighting to save the tree, which is known to support the threatened white-letter hairstreak butterfly, since 2014. The Chelsea Road tree is one of only four mature elms in Sheffield to survive the Dutch elm disease epidemic of the 1970s and is believed to possess some resistance to the disease.

You might well ask why council officers put preservation orders on worthless scrub, but insist on cutting down important trees, beloved by the local communities councils claim to represent. You might well ask, but don't expect answers. There is almost no accountability in local government. That's why officers can get away with publishing councils' decisions before the meetings at which they are allegedly taken. I've similarly wondered why Medway Council advocated removing the sycamores from the Six Acre Wood because they regard sycamores as a nasty foreign weed, the presence of which is detrimental to the ecology of an English woodland, but put a preservation order on the sycamores on my side of the fence with the Six Acre. I'm fairly sure I know the answer to that and, if I'm right, it was nothing whatsoever to do with protecting the environment or preserving a public amenity.

Still, it could be worse. I've just discovered that Gravesham Council has banned people from lying down on the grass in the park. That might sound incredible even for a local authority. So here is the link to the relevant issue of the "Gravesend Reporter". N.B.: the date is not April 1st. You'd better believe it!
<http://www.gravesendreporter.co.uk/news/council-to-start-fining-people-for-lying-down-cycling-and-more-from-today-1-4654874>

How this can happen is explained at <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2016/08/05/the-council-which-banned-sleeping>
Behold the genius of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) – the little-known tool of choice for councils looking to sweep pretty much any inconvenience from their streets. Defy this new rule and you face an on-the-spot £100 fine. Don't pay, and despite the fact these PSPOs are just rules decided on by local authorities rather than debated and voted on in parliament, you're in line for a court appearance and a hefty £1,000 penalty. PSPOs may not form a formal part of the criminal law of the land, but you'll have to tell that to the judge. When they were created by 2014's Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, Liberty warned these powers were far too broad and vaguely-worded – letting local authorities ban absolutely anything they deem to have a "detrimental effect" on people in the area, with no need for external oversight. They were, in short, ripe for misuse and abuse – with the vulnerable and voiceless likely to suffer most.

While it is true that PSPOs are the fault of the Cameron government, the roots of the problem go back to the Blair government which effectively took away our Magna Carta right to a fair trial before suffering a penalty when they drastically extended the scope of the fixed penalty notice – in reality a fine levied by an official with an interest in imposing a penalty, instead of by an impartial court. While in theory you can contest the

FPN in court, you risk court costs and receiving a much bigger penalty. The art is to keep the penalty low enough that even innocent people will pay it rather than go to court but high enough to smart and to be a nice little earner in those cases in which councils get to keep the fines they levy – an incentive, if ever there was one, to fine as many people as possible. Roger.

More On Local History

Going back to Halling High Street in the 1950s, we were reminded that there used to be a fish and chip shop near the Homeward Bound and a shoe repair business run by Mr Roads.

I understand that, while Mr Foster ran his extensive fish business from a house at the top of what is now Wood Street, there was no shop there. He did also grow vegetables - as did Mssrs Bonneywell, Woolmer and Earl. Mr Ablett at Arrow Cottage also had an orchard and kept chicken. Much of this produce was sold at market and it was grown on land where 6&8 Wood Street now stand, also where the bungalows now are and on the site where the library now is. There is a photograph somewhere of all these gentlemen taken together in the 1950s standing with their accoutrements in Wood Street. Does anyone have a copy?

The story behind Tar Tank Lane goes back to the nineteenth century when Will Fletcher (who lived in a thatched cottage where the Social Club is today) saw the potential of dipping wooden stakes and poles to be set in the ground in tar to preserve them. There were three tar dips alongside the lane, now the footpath from Bush Road, across Ladywood Road, and up Whiteleaves Rise to the Barrel Arch. The track then runs up towards Cobham. There is a vague recollection of a sign in Bush Road pointing up this track and reading “Public Footpath to Cobham”. Does anyone remember this or have evidence of it?



Tommy's Talking Points

We made it. This is us at Farnham at the conclusion of the North Downs Way. It compares favourably with a similar photograph taken at the other end at Dover two years ago. It was Max who began this trek (from here to the Coldrum Stones and then from here to Canterbury) and I finished it. Master's friend took the picture. So all four of us deserve the accolade.

Two days before, we had met two young men carrying heavy packs at Upper Bush very early in the morning. They had started at Dover and were heading to Gomshall. Master thought they had come from the continent and looked like they were camping. They made a big fuss of me and said what a fine dog I am.

We had to start our marathon train journey to Shalford very early but we must have overtaken those young men. Gomshall is the station before Shalford. Even Southern trains is faster than walking. I got made a big fuss of at Redhill again. Obviously, a very friendly place.

We got lost soon after we set out from Shalford, but not seriously. The terrain was much less steep than we have been accustomed to. I saw no need to run off this time. Although it was quite a long section, even the men didn't get too tired. I was only half attending to their discussion about the nature of the soul. Is the soul that which animates a body? Is it the personality? Can it exist separately from the body? Is it generated by the brain? Is it immaterial? Is it another name for individual or self? Are souls, minds and spirits the same thing or something different from each other? Is the soul consciousness? Do animals have souls? If so which ones do and which ones don't? Well, how would Master and his friend know? Master said read I Corinthians XV, but I had other priorities – running, jumping and sniffing around. Play to your strengths, I say.

The end was near the station. “Hurrah!” they said. The nearby pub had an impressive menu, but it turned out that we were too late for lunch and too early for dinner. So a bit more walking to find a restaurant. Master had a treat – smoked haddock with a poached egg on top. I turned up my nose at the skin, which he offered me.

We parted from our friend when he changed trains. We went on to Waterloo, where it seems that Master can still run if there is only three minutes in which to make a connection. Then home to Cuxton.