

December Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
1 st December Advent Sunday Year A	9.30 Family Communion & Gift Service	Isaiah 2 vv 1-5 p686 Romans 13 vv 11-14 p1140 Matthew 24 vv 36-44
8 th December Advent 2 (Bible Sunday BCP)	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
15 th December Advent 3	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-11 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976
22 nd December Advent 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 (please read from KJV) Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1128 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p966
	6.30 Nine Lessons & Carols	
24 th December Christmas Eve	5.00 Crib Service, Christingle & Nativity Play	
	11.00 Midnight Mass	Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 p739 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-4 p1063
25 th December Christmas Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 p693 Titus 2 vv 11-14 p1199 Luke 2 vv 1-20 p1027
29 th December Christmas 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 63 vv 7-9 p750 Hebrews 2 vv 1-18 p1201 Matthew 2 vv 13-23 p966
December Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
1 st December Advent Sunday Year A	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 13 vv 8-14 p1140 Matthew 21 vv 1-13 p988
	11.00 Holy Communion & Gift Service	Isaiah 2 vv 1-5 p686 Romans 13 vv 11-14 p1140 Matthew 24 vv 36-44
8 th December Advent 2 (Bible Sunday BCP)	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 John 16 vv 16-33 p1084
15 th December Advent 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-11 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976
22 nd December Advent 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 (please read from KJV) Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1128 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p966
	3.00 Carol Service, Christingle & Nativity	
25 th December Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
29 th December Christmas 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 63 vv 7-9 p750 Hebrews 2 vv 1-18 p1201 Matthew 2 vv 13-23 p966
January Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
5 th January Christmas 2	9.30 Family Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 John 1 vv 10-18 p1063
6 th January Epiphany	9.30 Holy Communion followed by Brunch	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
12 th January Baptism of Christ Epiphany 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p11-4 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967
19 th January	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP

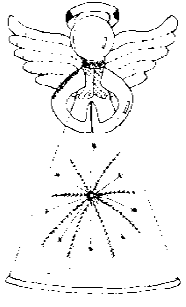
Epiphany 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 p1064	
26 th January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-7 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-25 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-25 p968	
2 nd February Candlemas	9.30 Family Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028	
January Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
5 th January Christmas 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 4 vv 8-14 p1131 Luke 2 vv 15-21 p1028	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 John 1 vv 10-18 p1063	
12 th January Baptism of Christ Epiphany 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p11-4 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 52 v13 – 53 v12 p740 Acts 7 v35 -8 v4 p1100	
19 th January Epiphany 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 p1064	
26 th January Epiphany 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-7 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-25 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-25 p968	
2 nd February Candlemas	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 p1202 Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028	
Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
4 th December	Isaiah 25 vv 6-10 Matthew 15 vv 29-37	5 th December	Isaiah 28 vv 14-29 Matthew 7 vv 21-27
11 th December Ember Day	Isaiah 40 vv 25-31 Matthew 11 vv 28-30	12 th December	Isaiah 41 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 11-15
18 th December	Jeremiah 23 vv 5-8 Matthew 1 vv 18-24	19 th December	Judges 13 vv 1-25 Luke 1 vv 5-25
25 th December Christmas Day	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 Titus 2 vv 11-14 Luke 2 vv 1-20	26 th December S Stephen	Acts 7 vv 55-60 Matthew 23 vv 34-39
1 st January Circumcision & Naming of Jesus	Romans 4 vv 8-14 Luke 2 vv 15-21	2 nd January S Basil & S Gregory Nazianzus	I John 2 vv 22-28 John 1 vv 19-28
8 th January	I John 4 vv 7-10 Mark 6 vv 34-44	9 th January	I John 4 vv 11-18 Mark 6 vv 45-52
15 th January	I Samuel 3 vv 1-20 Mark 1 vv 29-39	16 th January	I Samuel 4 vv 1-11 Mark 1 vv 40-45
22 nd January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	I Samuel 17 vv 1-51 Mark 3 vv 1-6	23 rd January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	I Samuel 18 v 6 – 19 v7 Mark 3 vv 7-12
29 th January	II Samuel 7 vv 4-17 Mark 4 vv 1-20	30 th January Charles King & Martyr	II Samuel 7 vv 18-29 Mark 4 vv 21-25

We'll keep St Thomas on 21st December and the Conversion of St Paul on 25th January with Holy Communion @ 8.00 am @ St Michael's. Copy Date February Magazine: 10th January 8.00 am Rectory

Messy Church @ St John's

Saturday 21st December 2.00 – 4.00

Children with their parents and carers are invited to meet for informal worship and to prepare for the Nativity, Christingle and Carol on Sunday 22nd at 3.00.



Everlasting Life

Have you ever wondered what Heaven is like? I expect most people do wonder from time to time. The problem is that Heaven is beyond our imagining. You might think of harps and choirs or verdant pastures or perpetual partying or just being

with the people you love for ever, but what we can envisage is bound to fall far short of the reality.

Worship probably gives us the best idea of heaven. We can think of cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels worshipping before the Throne of God. We can think of the saints in heaven (all Christian people who have departed this life) joining in their praises. We might think of Jesus, the Son of Man, representing the people of God before the Ancient of Days and of God's seven fold Holy Spirit sent forth into the earth and abiding eternally in Heaven – God the Holy Trinity, ever to be worshipped and adored.

Worship is the surrender of self to God. You become what you worship. God is perfect love. To worship God is to become perfect love. That is why St John can write in his first letter, ³¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

To know God is to have eternal life. St Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 13, ¹² For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. *Charity*, of course, here means love.

So what is Heaven like? In Heaven, worship is perfected and thus we are perfected in the eternity of love.

Of course, we can and do worship God on earth, imperfect as our worship is. In what way is our

worship imperfect? Insofar as we do not love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and our neighbours as ourselves, our worship is imperfect. For all that, our worship can be genuine – offered in spirit and in truth – and, imperfect as our offering is, it is acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. We can therefore experience something of Heaven while still here on earth. We participate in the worship of Heaven when we worship God on earth. Our worship on earth is a foretaste of the worship of Heaven. It's a bit like licking out the mixing bowl when you've made a cake and smelling the cake baking in the oven. You're already enjoying the cake, but the cake is yet to come.

This is the first part of one of the oldest Christian hymns – Te Deum Laudamus. We praise thee, O God : we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting. To thee all Angels cry aloud : the Heavens, and all the Powers therein. To thee Cherubin and Seraphin : continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy : Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty : of thy glory. The glorious company of the Apostles : praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets : praise thee. The noble army of Martyrs : praise thee. The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge thee; The Father : of an infinite Majesty; Thine honourable, true : and only Son; Also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.

But how do we get from here to there? How is it that the worship we offer here on earth mingles with the worship the angels offer in Heaven? How is it that we may come into the Presence of Almighty God? How can we possibly hope to dwell with Him in all eternity, now and for ever? Why should we expect that, when our time on earth is over, we shall go to Heaven and be in God's Presence for evermore? The answer is Jesus. This is what we shall celebrate at Christmas. Jesus is the bridge between Heaven and earth. Jesus spans the great gulf between God and humanity, between the Creator and the whole of creation. It is through Jesus that we may come into the Presence of God, through Him alone in fact. God is infinitely holy and just and, therefore, sin (which is the failure to love) separates from God. It is our failure to love which results in our behaving unjustly, selfishly, unholily. What we

deserve for our sins in punishment, not God's gift of eternal life. But Jesus bridges the gap. Jesus is God reaching out across the gulf in love for us. Jesus is the Way by Whom we can return to God. What is required of us is that we put our faith in Him, that we repent of our sins and that we are baptized in His Name. God does everything necessary in Jesus. All we have to do is to accept Jesus, everything He has done for us. This is what Christmas is really all about. If we give our lives to Jesus, we will live in the true spirit of Christmas (the Holy Spirit) throughout the year.

The Te Deum continues. Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man : thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death : thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father. We believe that thou shalt come : to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants : whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy Saints : in glory everlasting.

And what of the here and now? How do we live eternal life here on earth? How should we live while we wait for that final consummation in Heaven? The answer is that, here on earth too, we live out our lives in Christ, He in us and we in Him. We worship in Him and through Him all the days of our lives on earth. We seek His grace that we may always live in accordance with His Will for our lives. We look to Him to protect us in the here and now. We look to Him to take care of us for ever and to bring us home to be with Him in all eternity.

The Te Deum, therefore, ends with these verses appended from the Psalms. O Lord, save thy people : and bless thine heritage. Govern them : and lift them up for ever. Day by day : we magnify thee; And we worship thy Name : ever world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us. O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in thee. O Lord, in thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Roger.



Cuxton's Own Charitable Trust

The Thomas Stevens Trust. This trust was founded more than 100 years ago by the Reverend Thomas Stevens to provide 'Bread and Coal for the needy of Cuxton'. The present trustees interpret that to mean we can provide funds for **Food and Heating**.

We need your help: We are asking for villagers who would like to become involved in taking this charity forward. New ideas - new perspectives. The present trustees have been involved for several years and during that time we have helped many residents of Cuxton.

We have provided assistance with electricity and gas bills; bought coal and gave one family a Christmas food hamper. We replaced a condemned gas cooker for an elderly resident and very recently gave funds to help with children and their school lunches. It would be a real shame if this local charity has to fold – which may well be the case if we cannot find new trustees to take over from us.

Please contact any one of the trustees if you are interested and we can explain what is involved. We don't want Cuxton to lose this historical charitable trust!

The Trustees: Malcolm Curnow 4 Pilgrims Way Cuxton ME2 1LQ, Tel: 01634 719585; Flick Foreman Whornes Cottage 43 Rochester Road Cuxton ME2 1AD, Tel: 01634 718480; Roger Savage Forge Cottage Lower Bush Cuxton ME2 1HF, 01634 723027.

There are still funds available for distribution, so if you know of someone who could use some help, tell us - *in confidence*. We never publish the names of those we donate to.

Jokes

President Trump's bodyguard saw a would be assassin training his rifle on the president's head. "Mickey Mouse," he shouted. Everybody (including the assassin) fell about laughing and Trump was bundled safely away.

"Why did you shout 'Mickey Mouse'?" he was asked.

"Well, I meant to say, 'Donald, duck!'" he responded.

An elderly couple attended the county show every year. The old man really wanted to take up the chance of a flight in a helicopter, but his wife always pointed out that, at £50, it cost far more than they could afford. Finally, there came a year when the pilot overheard their discussion and offered to take them up for free if they could keep absolutely quiet for the whole of the ride. They promised and he took them up, performing every manoeuvre possible for a helicopter. Not a sound from the passenger seats! "How come you kept quiet when we flew upside down and performed the loop de loop?" he asked the old man.

"Well," the old man replied, "I nearly said something when the wife fell out but £50 is £50!"

The Cantium Singers

Present...

A Christmas Concert

**at the Church of St John the Baptist,
Halling**

at 7.30pm on Thursday 5th December

Light refreshments available, including mulled wine & mince pies

Donations welcome in aid of Church funds

Christmas Fayre & Coffee Morning

Cuxton Scout Hall

Saturday 7th December 10.00 am

Stalls, Activities, Christmas Fun and Santa Claus.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

13 th October	George James Donald Twidale	Haywards Heath
27 th October	Oliver Ray Hedinburgh	Gillingham
27 th October	Ruby Lily Hedinburgh	Gillingham
27 th October	Ivy Louise Hedinburgh	Gillingham

Gift Service 1st December

At this service we shall be collecting toys and other small gifts such as toiletries for families and small items of clothing such as socks, gloves or scarves, who might not otherwise have Christmas presents. Gifts should be new and unwrapped, please.

Past Cases Review

It is shameful that children and vulnerable adults have experienced abuse at the hands of clergy and church officers. It is also shameful that this has been too often covered up or that victims of abuse have not been believed. The Diocese of Rochester is now conducting a review of past cases as a matter of justice for those who have been affected by such cases and to fulfil our safeguarding responsibilities. If you have been a victim or a survivor of abuse by clergy or church officers in the past or if you know of such cases, you are requested to make them known. If anything like this might be going on now, this too should be reported.

Contacts include: the Rector, the Parish Safeguarding Adviser (Anne Abraham 2, Reservoir Cottages, Upper Halling, 07511 915238, anne.abraham.3@hotmail.com) and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Janice Keen, 01634 560000 or M: 07787445032, Email: janice.keen@rochester.anglican.org). The NSPCC has also set up a helpline if you wish to contribute to the past cases review, but would rather not do so through church channels 0800 802020.

If appropriate, contact Social Services Office hours 01634 334466, Outside office hours 03000 41 91 91, for children or vulnerable adults. Or contact the police if criminality is suspected. In an emergency, dial 999. The number for Childline is 0800 1111. Elder abuse, call 080 8808 8141. NSPCC child protection is 0808 800 5000. In cases of domestic violence, call 0808 2000 . The number for the Samaritans is 116 123



CUXTON AUTO SERVICES
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Yusuf Oomar
Workshop Manager/MOT Tester
Malcolm Petts
Service Manager/MOT Tester
1 Sundridge Hill
Cuxton
Rochester ME2 1LH
01634 717987
www.cuxtonautoservices.co.uk

Forthcoming Attractions

5th December: Cantium Singers
St John's at 7.30 pm.
7th December: 10.00 Christmas
Fair Scout Hall.
6th January (Epiphany): 9.30
Holy Communion @ St
Michael's followed by brunch in
church hall.
26th February (Ash Wednesday):
HC Halling 9.30 & Cuxton
11.00, lent lunch in church hall
12.00.
24th June 2020 (Nativity of St
John the Baptist): 11.00 Holy
Communion St John's followed
by pudding party.

New Year Thoughts From Ecclesiastes (3)

To every *thing* there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.



Clergy Discipline Measure

Back in 2003, the Church of England introduced the Clergy Discipline Measure to deal with clergy who went seriously astray. It does not appear to be working very well. It is sometimes misused to deal with relatively minor issues. Clergy accused of wrong-doing have reason to believe that they are unfairly treated and people making complaints are often dissatisfied with the outcome. There is therefore a review being undertaken nationally called the Sheldon Project. Please feel free if you wish to contribute – especially in the light of our experience in this parish.

What is wrong with CDM?

There appear to be some serious problems with the Church of England's Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM). Recurring themes and issues are

highlighted by some of the hundreds of Anglican clergy who belong to the Hub or visit Sheldon.

- Clergy find themselves caught up in a process in which they are more vulnerable than professionals in any other discipline and which has no ombudsman-style oversight.
- Bishops are potentially compromised by being asked to fulfil mutually incompatible roles of Investigator, Prosecutor, Judge and Pastor.
- Many Archdeacons dread having to administer the process.
- Clergy families are unfairly vulnerable with regard to their home, community and finances.
- Complainants seldom seem to get the remedy they seek.

The quality of pastoral and working relationships between clergy and senior staff can be eroded in ways that go well beyond the people involved in any particular case. At every level, time, energy and money are being drained and there are no real winners. Anecdotal evidence is all we can work with at this stage because data collection is inadequate on both process and outcomes. Anecdotal evidence includes:

- Delays in processing cases leave people in limbo for many months or even years.
- Serious impacts on short and long-term mental health – especially anxiety and depression, but occasionally suicide.
- Ruinous costs from legal fees when specialist ecclesiastical lawyers are needed and the church's legal aid does not always cover fully.
- Clergy leaving ministry because of inadequate support to either rehabilitate in the parish or move to a new post.
- A legacy of poor physical and mental health and marital relationship stress.

In 2018 Sheldon commissioned Aston University Business School and Department of Psychology to undertake independent academic research into the effects of CDM. A major survey is now live and the results will provide much needed evidence base to assist the church going forward.

The aims of Sheldon's Project CDM are

- To improve support for Respondents, including information and signposting of resources
- To improve the handling of cases through improved education and accountability
- To make recommendations for the repair or replacement of the Measure, based on sound evidence of current practice
- www.sheldonhub.org/cdm (or email hub@sheldon.uk.com).

See also CDM - a harsh Discipline? Church Times article 18 Oct 2018

This is what the Archbishop of Canterbury said about the Clergy Discipline Measure in General Synod. “My own experience in dealing with people who may have gone wrong is the CDM process has often contributed very, very badly indeed to their well-being. The process has been the punishment, not the outcome.” This received a “Hear, hear”. It is astonishing that a minister can be tried under a procedure which the Primate of All England denounced in General Synod as unfair to respondents. It is as if you were awaiting trial in the magistrates court on false allegations of shop lifting and the Lord Chancellor had stated in parliament that the justice system was biased against defendants.

Darnley Trail

The Darnley Trail was named after the Earls of Darnley who owned Cobham Hall and much of the surrounding area. The trail, which can be up to 14.5km, takes in many highlights of the local countryside and is designed to accommodate walkers, cyclists and even equestrians. It links Shorne Woods Country Park with Cobham Park,



Ranscombe Farm Reserve, Ashenbank Wood and Jeskyns Community Wood. There are many entry points within this circular walk as well as

short cuts to allow for variation.

Today my walk begins in The Street at Cobham. I walk down the Street and pass the Cobham Village Store, St Mary Magdalene's Church, the Meadow Rooms and then on to the National Trust property, Owletts, where I turn right. The Darnley Trail pathway is well marked with its own distinctive white and black logo.



The enclosed pathway is quite idyllic and takes me through Jeskyns Community Woodland and Chambers Hill Wood then over the Channel Tunnel Rail Line. It is sunny, quiet and tranquil punctuated only by occasional dog walkers and cyclists. The path becomes tarmac and leads to the road and bridge over the A2 at the top of Thong Lane beside the Inn on the Lake Hotel. From the



bridge I can see the QE2 bridge in the distance.

After crossing over the A2 I discover a footpath which I have never noticed before. It leads into Shorne Woods Country Park. At a point a little further my path meets other marked routes which lead into and around the country park. Today I follow only the Darnley Trail which snakes round the south section, at times passing close to the A2 then Brewers Road. I could make a detour before leaving the park in order to visit the eco-friendly

cafe but it is afternoon and the sun will soon be setting. I exit the park, cross Brewers Road at Pegasus Crossing and enter Brewers Wood. This is a lovely meandering route through woodland. The path is strewn with dead leaves and chestnut shells as well as fallen branches and even a fallen tree. There is a display board giving information about 'Veteran Trees'. Apparently, these are trees which have reached their maturity and started to decline in health. There are 209 veteran trees in the park and they can be identified by silver tags.

The footpath leaves the wood and I walk along a seldom used lane to Park Pale Bridge. The bridge crosses the noisy A2 and the Channel Tunnel Rail Line. At the end of the bridge I turn left. The footpath runs parallel to the rail line and is rather muddy in places due to the recent rain. The undergrowth is lush. At the top of the hill I turn right and walk along the bottom of the equestrian centre just outside Cobham Woods. This is a long clear path with fencing on both sides. The clear and enclosed path gives way to more open woodland covered in bracken, which is dying back, and many trees, including Silver Birch, Oak and Chestnut. The footpath undulates before reaching the gate into Cobham Park, the Darnley Mausoleum and the Highland Cattle. The Trail carries on ahead, skirting around the fencing for Cobham Park but due to the lack of available daylight hours I need to deviate from the Trail so I turn right through the gate. This pathway leads

directly to the Darnley Mausoleum and then winds its way through to Lodge Lane.



I am not keen on cattle but I know that these Highland Cattle are docile and are far more

interested in eating the greenery than paying any attention to me. To the side of the mausoleum is a calf with its mother. What a gorgeous sight. Further along the path there is a group of seven cattle quietly grazing. Only one looks up at me then returns to its grazing. At the far end of the park there is a gate leading to a concrete path and on to picturesque Lodge Cottage with its thatched roof and white walls. Beyond the cottage is Lodge Lane and the road back to my starting point at Cobham.

I would have preferred to have stuck to the Darnley Trail but I feel that walking through woods in the dark is not wise and not for me. Perhaps another day I will set out a little earlier

and complete the whole trail in daylight. None the less, a most enjoyable afternoon walk in our local countryside. Holly Croft.

St John's Draw (October): £5 each Mrs Chidwick (180), Mrs Hayward (80) & Mrs Cheeseman (134) – drawn by Mrs Watts.

St Michael's Draw: £10 to Mr Wells (17), £5 each to Mrs Nunn (28) & Mrs Cheesmer (14).

If you would like to participate in either of these draws, please ask Betty Head or Mary Pitt.

Christmas Dinner

The parish lunch on 4th December will be a Christmas Dinner. 12.00 church hall Cuxton. All welcome.

A message from Bishop James and Bishop Simon on the General Election

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As Advent and Christmas appear over the horizon, so now we face a General Election on December 12. We are writing to encourage church members to engage with all three in a way that bears witness to the coming Kingdom of God. Around the Election, specifically, to pray for generosity in debate, wisdom in policy forming, and to show hospitality in offering our buildings as places for hustings so the democratic process can be enabled.

The way we discuss issues of local and national importance has become bitter and divisive. It is tempting to think this is a function of the impasse over Brexit, but there are signs it goes deeper and wider than this. Social media has opened up a vista of nastiness where public servants are being threatened in the ordinary course of their duties. We are also slowly waking up to the way those who want to undermine our democracy are using social media to set people against one another and to confuse and demoralise all. Both may be evident in this Election. Meanwhile, trust in the institutions that glue us together and help build community is being eroded at just the moment we can ill afford this.

We are called to seek the common good in our witness, as the prophet Jeremiah eloquently expressed when he encouraged the Babylonian exiles to 'seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you' (Jer. 29:7). For the exiles, this would have been a hard pill to swallow, and it sets us a goal of praying for the welfare of all people, including those we disagree with and may also dislike.

As time passes, it feels like there is less of a coherent set of ethics with which to shape our common life. The language of community is routinely deployed, but it feels evanescent, like the echo of a voice in a cave, rather than the voice itself. Our prayer is for the development of a vision in the UK which is rooted in the character of God and will stand it in good heart for the changes that lie ahead. The local church is well placed to help in the necessary process of healing and reconciliation that we face; to encourage true community where the voiceless and the most vulnerable have their role.

Shortly after the Election, the Church will be into the season when it celebrates the Word made flesh. Words are sacred because they find their origin in Christ. The best witness we can make to God's salvation in Christ is to live in truth ourselves, to reflect openly, honestly and with integrity on our own lives, that they may shine more brightly with the light of Christ.

Later on in the letter that Jeremiah sends to the exiles in Babylon, the Lord says: 'For surely I know the plans I have you...plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope' (Jer. 29:11). This is our prayer for the UK and we would ask you to join us in this.

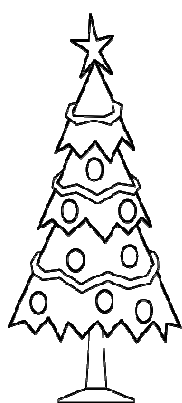
Joke

Did you hear about the Liverpool man who enrolled in a course to study Urdu? He wanted to be a barber!

Mothers' Union Meetings

We have been fortunate to have had very interesting talks for our MU meetings in September and October. In September our own Reverend Roger Knight gave a most enlightening talk on the history of the Church of England up to current times. After the tours of St. Michael's Church which were given on St. Michael's Day, we invited Dave Maxwell and John Bogg in October, to give us their own personal talks on the history of St. Michael's. Dave Maxwell is a specialist on stained glass windows. He was able to go into great detail on the stained glass in St. Michael's and also enlightened us with details of the stained glass in St. John's Church, Halling and in Rochester Cathedral. John Bogg kept us enthralled with his anecdotal and potted history of St. Michael's from the times of early settlements up to present day. Everything was so clearly explained. A big thank you must go to Roger, Dave and John.

We are looking forward to our November Meeting Wednesday, 20th November, when Matthew Wells will be talking about "Keeping Bees". If you would like to join us for our MU Christmas Lunch on Wednesday, 18th December, in the White Hart please let me know. Jenny Beaney.



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH HALLING

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL – Saturday, 21st December 10.00 – 4.00 pm

Sunday, 22nd December 11.00 – 4.00 pm

Refreshments provided. No charge but donations welcome.

Trees decorated by individuals, local groups, schools and businesses. If you would be willing to decorate and exhibit a tree, please bring it along on the Friday morning.

Trees to be brought to Halling Church on Friday, 20th December from 9.00 a.m. – 12.00 noon. (We can collect your tree if needed. Please contact Jenny 241599)

Tommy's Talking Points



We've been having Lolly, Master's niece's dog, to stay while her family are on holiday in the Lake District and Blackpool. This is something of a bitter / sweet experience for me. I enjoy walking with her in the woods. I like playing with her in the garden. But, although Master disapproves, I am afraid that I am also jealous of her. He has discovered that we are all much happier if we are not fed in the same room. And, whereas he had thought that it would be nice to place our beds side by side in the kitchen, he has now decided that it is better that we sleep in separate rooms. One thing he has learnt, however. When walking in the woods in the dark, he

finds it helpful to follow the dog who knows where he is going, but a black dog which stays close turns out to be more useful than a white dog which runs off. Sorry, Master.

Yesterday, all three of us joined Master's friend for the next instalment of our coastal walk. The day did not really start too well. The weather forecast had been showers, clearing later, with a possibility of afternoon sunshine. When we went out for our early, pre long train journey walk, it was raining and dark. Then, when we were getting ready to head for the station, one of our wasps stung Master on the nose. It was still raining, but we got to Strood as planned, only to find out that there were long delays for the London trains. The cold wet platform was packed with families having their first day out of half term week. The children made a fuss of Lolly and me. So it was not all bad. We caught up with Master's friend in the coffee bar at Ashford. Still raining, we took another train to Ham Street where we finished up last time.

Then we walked down to the Military Canal and headed west. The route isn't hard to follow, though we got lost once where either the sign was misleading or someone had deliberately blocked the path. Sometimes the drizzle eased off a bit, but it never really went away. However, Lolly and I were able to enjoy plenty of

time off our leads. Lolly really loves chasing sticks while I like exploring my surroundings. A good time was had by all, though there were some slippery, muddy bits where having four legs was a considerable advantage over having only two. The track was quite rough in places, but always passable and we saw a couple of other dog walkers and their canine companions, with whom we made friends and played for a bit. We passed sheep and cows, boats and caravans. So it was all quite interesting.

Crossing the water back into Rye, we found a dry enough spot to consult Master's friend's mobile telephone which gave us the route to the Globe Inn, Marsh, just on the edge of Rye. We were all pleased to find somewhere dry and warm with roaring fires. The staff were very welcoming, even though some of us were covered in mud. The men had excellent dinners of vegetable soup, skate and green vegetables and, in Master's case, a very satisfying dessert of crumble and custard. We recommend the establishment, which is quite near to Rye Station from whence we boarded the first of four trains to come home, on which Lolly and I made a few more friends.

The following Monday saw much better weather for walking – very cold and frosty but bright sunshine – and we had put the clocks back the night before. Just me now, we took in Dean and Bush Valleys (the sun lighting up the Autumn colours of the leaves on the trees which had just turned brown and red and yellow and lime) before breakfast and went to Church because it was the Feast of S Simon and S Jude. The frost seems to have killed most of the wasps and Master isn't grieving for them. We took the car this time because the railway timetable looked dire for Sturry. Last October, we had tried walking from Minster to Plucks Gutter over the marshes and failed to find a way to cross the River Stour. So this year we thought we'd start the other side, park at Plucks Gutter or Grove Ferry and walk to the other one. Both have dog friendly pubs for lunch. As it was, Master couldn't find a parking space in either village. We did, however, chance upon Stourmouth Church, which was open, but sadly no longer used for services. We drove onto Westbere where we found a spot that even Master could park in and set out over the railway crossing to Westbere lakes and the path to Plucks Gutter. In fact there were two paths to Plucks Gutter, both of them blocked by nettles. So we walked to Fordwich (the smallest town in England) instead, another very nice walk by the river, on which we met a number of other dogs and their human companions. Lunch in yet another dog friendly pub – the George and Dragon. Then we got lost again going back to the car, nearly reaching Sturry after all, but it was a very pleasant walk, and we made it back to the car in time to be home for tea.

Round here, we have been taking advantage of the newly enlightened mornings to enjoy early morning walks in the woods, though even the afternoons are closing in and we may have to change the routes we take before Evening Prayer. Master says the dark evenings are cosy and add to the sense of anticipation because Christmas is coming. The Light shines in the darkness.

It has been another good year for fungi. Did you see the almost complete fairy ring of mushrooms just off the path which leads from Cuxton Church to Upper Halling? It was not quite complete because the footpath cut off one edge. Very impressive, however. Master has been trying to decide what colour the beech trees in our garden are when the sun shines on them. Yellow doesn't do them justice, but they are not really gold either. This morning was frosty and bright, but what was really impressive was that the river valley was filled with mist. You could only see the tops of the electricity pylons poking out above the fog. What Master doesn't see is what I chase when we have our late evening walk in the garden. He hears something running at great speed and sees a white dog in hot pursuit. I'll let him speculate on that one. The choice is badger, fox, cat. Good luck, Master. Merry Christmas to all our readers. Tommy.

A Good Story

Three men went to the Olympics and were turned away because they had no tickets. One went off and found a pointed stick, said he was in the javelin team and got admitted. The second picked up an old hub cap, claimed to be in the discus team and got let in. The last one collected a few posts and some chicken wire. "I'm in the fencing team," he said!