

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
February 5 th Fourth Sunday Before Lent	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1003
February 12 th Septuagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	2 Kings 5 vv 1-14 p373 Mark 1 vv 40-45 p1003
February 19 th Sexagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Proverbs 8 vv 1-36 p641 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
February 26 th Quinquagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	2 Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 2 Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
March 1 st Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970
March 5 th Lent 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Thursday February 2 nd Candlemas	9.30 Holy Communion	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 p961
	2.00 Thursday's Children	Luke 2 vv 22-40 p1028
February 5 th Fourth Sunday Before Lent	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Philippians 2 vv 12-28 p1179 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 1 Cor 9 vv 16-23 p1150 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1003
February 12 th Septuagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	2 Kings 5 vv 1-14 p373 1 Cor 9 vv 24-27 p1150 Mark 1 vv 40-45 p1003
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Numbers 20 vv 2-13 Philippians 3 vv 7-21
February 19 th Sexagesima	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! [RIK]	Proverbs 8 vv 1-36 p641 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
February 26 th Quinquagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	2 Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 2 Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
March 1 st Ash Wednesday	9.30 pm Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
March 5 th Lent 1	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 2 v15 – 3 v7 p4 Luke 13 vv 31-35 p1047
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 1 Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002

Copy Date March Magazine: 10th February 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler service at Halling at 2.00.

Sunday School is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays).

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> and
<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Log on to our home pages for up to date information on what is happening in the parish. In addition to notices etc, other items such as Proceedings of the PCC and sermons are from time to time displayed on the web page. Daily Bible notes are available electronically if you send me your e mail address. These too now appear on the web page.

Tree Preservation Orders – A Clarification

I recently gave a neighbour permission to tidy up the part of my garden which overshadows his. Somebody else saw what he was doing and reported him to Medway Council for allegedly violating a Tree Preservation Order! An officer (Alan Prior) visited and my neighbour was left with the impression that, under the TPO, he could not cut back any vegetation at all without the Council's permission. This, however, turns out to be quite untrue. A TPO covers only living specimens of the trees specified in the Order. No permission is required to cut down dead or dying trees, bushes or shrubs. Whether or not seedlings are covered by a TPO is unclear and would have to be decided by a court in any individual case. If in doubt, please see the Government publication *Listed Trees* or look up the legislation on the web. Roger.



CANDLESTICK

“We are getting richer and richer as a nation, but less happy. The Church in England must rediscover her self-confidence and self-esteem. (Dr John Sentamu, the new Archbishop of York, at his enthronement.)

Dr Sentamu has already made quite a splash. He was born in Uganda, where he trained as a lawyer and became a high court judge. Then he retrained and became a priest. Having stood up to Idi Amin’s wicked régime, he came to England in 1974 where he has made a respected contribution to our national life. He must have been a highly gifted young man to qualify both in Law and in Theology and he has expressed his deep appreciation for the opportunity given to him by missionaries from England to develop that natural talent. He must also be a very courageous man to stand up to Amin who was responsible, among many other atrocities, for the murder of the Archbishop of Kampala, Janani Luwum, in 1977. John Sentamu said he would take his friend’s place as a priest in God’s Church. Shamefully, as a black man, the new Archbishop has been subjected to racist abuse in this country, yet he himself has been generous and forgiving as, of course, was his Master, and he has urged us to take a pride in all that is best in English culture, especially our heritage as a Christian country and our role in world-wide mission.

I was very taken with those words he used at his enthronement. I don’t think anyone could disagree with the first statement. We do not seem to be getting any happier as we get richer. Quite the reverse. Have you noticed how often we see pictures of very poor people in parts of the world where life is extremely harsh (including many parts of Africa) and they are smiling and laughing whereas crowds in this country always look miserable?

But what about the Church recovering her self-confidence and self-esteem? We are sometimes a gloomy lot, thinking that decline is inevitable and that all the good times for the Church in England are in the past. We sometimes feel

like an elderly and declining minority, doomed to extinction in a few decades. If we feel like that about ourselves, why would we expect anyone to join us?

I have been asked what is the new Archbishop’s churchmanship? Is he evangelical, high church, charismatic? To be honest, I don’t know. I hope he is all three, because, in the true meaning of those three terms, all Christians ought to be evangelical, high church and charismatic!

“Self esteem” might be a problematic concept for Christians, particularly English Christians. When I was a boy, my grandmother used to tell me that I should take more pride in myself and I used to answer her back by reminding her that pride is a sin. So, what do you think? Is pride a sin or should we take pride in ourselves? Pride can be allied to vanity. Vanity is emptiness. A proud person may be making a lot of fuss about what really doesn’t matter, like appearance, power or the display of wealth. A proud person might feel superior to other people and look down on them. Proud prelates hardly have a reputation for holiness. A proud church might scorn those of other beliefs and be indifferent to the concerns of the poor. Surely humility is more a Christian virtue than self-esteem. Pride comes before a fall. Triumphalism is an abominable trait in those who claim to follow the Suffering Servant.

But self esteem is surely allied to self respect. There is a proper pride, if by pride, we mean a proper regard for our own talents and status. If people are so humble about their abilities that they hide their light under a bushel, we are all the poorer. It’s no use having great musicians too lacking in self confidence to play in public, artists too shy to exhibit, leaders too meek to rule. If we cannot love ourselves, it is doubtful that we can love other people. If we have no self-esteem as a Church, we will lack the confidence to carry out our Gospel mission and no-one would want to join us anyway. Who wants to join a bunch of losers?

Our self-esteem as Christians does not come from thinking how good-looking we are, nor how talented, nor how dedicated, nor even how

good we are. Our self-esteem as Christians comes from our knowledge of how much we matter to God. We know we are sinners. We know we are unworthy. We know that none of us is good enough. We also know that God loves each one of us so much that Jesus died for each one of us. We esteem ourselves, because we are esteemed by God. That does not make us feel better than other people. They are esteemed by God as well. Jesus died for everyone. We esteem ourselves and we esteem other people equally because we are all esteemed by God. There is no reason for feelings either of superiority or inferiority.

What it means to be high church is not necessarily to dress the clergy in fine vestments, to put on elaborate ritual and to use incense. (The phrase “high church” is often used to mean that and then people claim to be “low church” if they don’t like that sort of thing. “High church” really means highly valuing Christ’s Church and, in that sense, no Christian should ever claim to be “low church”.) High Church recognises that the Church is Christ’s Body. It is a spiritual entity. Every member is highly esteemed by God. Christ died for each one of us and each of us has his or her part in God’s work. Having that sense of self-esteem for ourselves and for the Church, makes us feel infinitely valued. It gives us confidence in Christ’s promise that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against His Church. The Church is not a dying organisation; it is the only human organisation which is fully alive. Unfruitful branches might wither and be removed and cast into the fire. That is their fault if they do not abide in the vine, but the vine, which is Christ and His Church, lives eternally.

In the words of the hymn, “We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for men in all the earth”. That is what it means to be evangelical. There is no necessary connection with particular styles of hymn singing or vestments

or church buildings. The evangelium is the Gospel. Every true Christian believes the Gospel, lives by the Gospel and longs to share the Gospel with the world. We must all be evangelicals if we are Christians.

The charismata are the gifts God gives us by the Holy Spirit. Charismatics are not uniquely those who praise God with their hands waving in the air and speaking in tongues. God is more interested in where your heart is in worship than where your hands are. Speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit, but it is the least of the gifts. The greatest gift is love and all the other gifts God gives us are in order to enable us to express that love in faith and hope, in praise and worship, in caring for people in any kind of need, in taking responsibility for the society in which we live, in sharing our faith with others. All true Christians are charismatics – receptive of and thankful for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, without which it is impossible even to be a Christian.

We can be confident. The Church is Christ’s Church and He won’t let us down. We can feel wonderfully privileged to be members of the Church, Christ’s Body. We have an enormous task to perform – the completion of Christ’s Work on earth – but we can also be confident that we have the resources, because, as the Gospel says, He is working with us. We need to be bold, to try new ideas, to find fresh ways of presenting the faith, but we never need to be ashamed of the faith. It is the same faith for ever new and its guarantor is Christ. We don’t need to water down the message or to conceal it. Our task is to proclaim the Gospel as it best may be understood. Then we leave the outcome to God. People may hear or they may forbear; that is up to them and the Holy Spirit. But Christ will not let us down as we live in Him and He is us and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, fulfil His command to go out into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all nations.
Roger.

“Science no longer describes nature as a machine. Darwin destroyed the metaphor in biology with his theory of natural selection – the least mechanical of causes. Quantum theory wrenched the metaphor from physics. Moreover, although science once portrayed matter as passive, hard, and comprehensible, it now describes matter as active, hazy, and mysterious. Indeed matter today resembles classical spirit and, because it does, science might be used to connect God tightly with the cosmos.” (adapted from Patricia A Williams).

Presentation Evening

2005 was the centenary of the Fire Service in Halling. This was commemorated in a number of ways, including the event in the Recreation Ground on 26th August and the Centenary Calendar. Taken together with other fundraising, including the amazing pantomimes, these put our firefighters in the happy position of being able to make some very generous gifts to village organisations at a presentation on 19th November. St John's Church was most grateful to receive a cheque for £250.

We are all conscious of the great work our firefighters do (sometimes at risk to themselves) in putting out fires and rescuing accident victims. They are also a great asset to the community. You do not have to wait till you need to dial 999. On request, firefighters will visit your home to advise about fire safety and install a free smoke alarm. This goes for Cuxton as well as Halling.



Halling WI November Meeting.

Our November meeting started off on a sad note as Mary had to announce officially that our National Federation Chairman, Mrs Barbara Gill had died very suddenly. Barbara was a very lovely lady dedicated to the aims of the W.I and will be sadly missed, as she was in her prime.

Minutes of the October meeting were read and signed, and the correspondence was dealt with, mostly kind invitations from other institutes in the District for their Christmas parties. Names were taken for the District Carol Service at West Malling and lifts arranged so that as many members who wished to go, could. Christmas lunch was finalized. About 20 of us will be going to the "George" at Trottscliffe, a new venue for us this year.

It was the last chance to return the Blythwood boxes. (Since this meeting I have taken over 100 boxes from our two churches and W.I.'s). Well done everybody, there will be many happy faces in Serbia this Christmas

Mary then introduced our speaker for the evening, Mr Peter Shiran, a well known figure in the Gravesend-Rochester area as he treads

Cuxton WI Christmas

We had a full house at our December Christmas meeting, which started as usual with the singing of *Jerusalem*. Ann Saunders then read out a few notices and welcomed the entertainers, who were having supper with us. We sat down to a very appetising meal of chicken casserole with chunks of bread, and this was followed by profiteroles with

the boards at various amateur dramatic clubs and the Dickens Festivals. He told us how he started in Amateur Dramatics, acting and singing in operettas (musicals) then on to Shakespeare and straight and not so straight plays. Poetry reading isn't everyone's cup of tea but Peter, assisted now and again by his wife, made it a very enjoyable evening.

After our usual refreshments, Peter judged our competitions, and considering the recent very freezing weather we had a goodly lot of flowers to choose from. Jean Mattingly won again this month with a little white rose. The competition, T for Tommy, was won by Margaret Sutherland with her little brown Teapot, a good choice by Peter as it is something used by every W.I. in the country at every meeting. I don't know of any WI. who has resorted to putting one Teabag into every cup. That is very extravagant, even if the Teabags are given to us by Yorkshire Tea for free.

Next month the Christmas Party. Sorry I won't be able to make it. God willing, I shall be in sunny Australia, but MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all the same, and a HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Phyllis.

chocolate sauce, coffee and mints. Only trouble with this kind of meal, it generated a lot of washing up!! Still, everyone mucked in and it was all soon done.

Next we held the raffle, and the prizes were all wrapped in Xmas paper. So winners had to take pot luck! Some of the table decorations were also raffled. Our entertainers were then introduced, called *That's Entertainment*. There

were six ladies, one of whom used to belong to Cuxton WI, and a husband who took charge of the music. They started with a variety of well-known music hall songs, which we all joined in with. Their costumes were beautiful, colourful and with much detail. I think we were all impressed. Then followed a comical duet of one of Joyce Grenfell's songs, and then a very energetic tap dance by two of the ladies. Next was a hilarious performance of an item from *Cabaret*. The group finished with a selection of London songs and wore very authentic pearly queen costumes. Everyone enjoyed their performance and we shall definitely have them again. The evening ended with much clearing up and some members dashing home, as they were going to Germany next day for the Xmas markets. A really great evening to get us in the mood for Xmas.

The walking group went to Maidstone in November and walked to the Museum. After a roundabout walk, via the shops, they ended up

having lunch in the Civic Centre. It had been intended to walk along the river from the *Malta*, but the weather was wet and miserable. The next walk will be round the lakes at Bluewater if fine and round the shops if not.

Those of us who went to Preston for the weekend had a good time, although the weather was terrible, rained most of the time. The hotel was good, especially the breakfast apparently! They went on a Ghost and Witches walk one evening (Guy Fawkes Night) which was interesting, and they saw a lot of fireworks! The stop-off at Stratford-on-Avon on the way home was spoilt because of wet weather.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 5th January 2006 and the speaker is Claire Auger on Beauty, Complimentary Therapy etc. We welcome anyone as a visitor, and, if you like us, perhaps you would think of joining.

Ann Harris. (Please see p12 for January WI)

THE SAD PASSING OF COMMON SENSE RIP

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm, life isn't always fair, and maybe it was my fault. Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you earn) and reliable parenting strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a six-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate, teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student only worsened his condition. Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job they themselves failed to do in disciplining their unruly children. It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer Panadol, sun lotion or a sticky plaster to a student; but could not inform the parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband, churches became businesses and criminals received better treatment than their victims. Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar can sue you for assault. Common Sense finally gave up the will to live after a woman failed to realise that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife, Discretion, his daughter, Responsibility and his son, Reason. He is survived by three stepbrothers: I Know My Rights, Someone Else is to Blame and I'm A Victim. Not many attended his funeral, because so few realised he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this on. If not join the majority and do nothing.

Councillor Maisey and PC Dave Crompton, Cuxton's community police officer, are at Cuxton library on the second Saturday of the month. Residents who would like to talk to Cllr Maisey or PC Crompton are welcome to drop in between 2.15 to 3.15pm. Surgeries also at Halling Community Centre 12.00-2.00.

Proceedings of the PCC 15th December 2005

We began with the **Collect** for the week – Advent 3 – which asks God to make His ministers like John the Baptist in preparing His people to receive His Son.

After correcting one error (maybe the result of an overzealous spell-check) the **minutes** were accepted. Under **matters arising**, in answer to a question, it was explained that there would be microphones in St Michael's for the Sunday School Nativity Play and the Nine Lessons and Carols.

The only **correspondence** was a longish list of apologies for absence – probably the result of holding the meeting in the busy period before Christmas.

The **Treasurer's Report** was terrifying. We have had to cancel the standing order for the stipend payment because there are insufficient funds in our account to cover it. We have decided to attempt to bring our books into balance by not paying next quarter's instalments into the diocesan repair fund for either of our buildings. In these circumstances, we can see no way in which we can pay £5,000 owing on the 2005 quota, let alone commence paying 2006. If we were a business, we would be looking at bankruptcy. Thank God we are not a business, but the money will still have to come from somewhere.

We then discussed **Christian Stewardship**. The principle of Stewardship is absolutely right. Everything we have comes from God. We therefore ought to be truly thankful and to offer back to God everything He has so freely given us – time, money, talents, our very being. We did not feel, however, that a stewardship campaign would be right in this parish at this time. Our core members have probably considered very carefully what they can give and are therefore giving as much as they can, whereas an invitation to stewardship, if extended to people who are still exploring their commitment to Christ, might be interpreted as an off-putting appeal for money.

We thought about having a **Friends of Our Church** scheme where people, including those who are not regular worshippers, might undertake to make a regular contribution, perhaps in return for a newsletter and maybe the opportunity to take part in various social events or talks. We were quite indecisive about this and I would be glad to hear readers' views.

We commended the activities of the **Social Committee**, laying on events which both raise money and give us all a good time. We spoke about the pudding party at St John's on 29th January, the likelihood of a concert at the Jubilee Hall in February, the probability of a quiz evening in the Spring and the possibility of some sort of sponsored run, walk and/or cycle ride on 30th April.

The **church buildings** are in good condition with a new heater at St John's and some minor repairs at St Michael's. Our **hall** is in good shape and is a good money spinner. We may have space for further bookings if some of our longer-standing users close down. We ought soon to receive our entertainments licence thanks to a great deal of hard work and expense on the part of our hall manager. (Why government imposes these burdens on voluntary organisations makes absolutely no sense to me!)

Deanery Synod had not met since our last PCC. No-one from here had attended the last **Diocesan Synod** meeting, but, since it was discussing the budget, it seems fair to surmise that members were as usual debating how to fund a quart of expenditure with a pint of money.

Our **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** is arranged for 29th April at 10.00 in the Church Hall. RIK

A Miracle?

Speeding in his new sports car, a man was mortified to run over a rabbit. While he was contemplating the corpse, a blond drew up, wound down her window and sprayed the animal. Up it leapt and ran off down the road, frantically waving a fond farewell. What did the label say on the spray can?

Hair Restorer! Imparts Permanent Wave.

Christmas Cheer

A big thank you to everyone who worked so hard over Christmas, bell-ringing, singing, flower arranging, church cleaning, Christingle making, play rehearsing, crib setting up, tree decorating, being present, everything that makes our Christmas worship so wonderful.

Roger.

Carol Singing

On 21st December Halling Choir, Bell Ringers and friends went carol singing around Lower Halling. Joanne accompanied us on the flute. The weather was kind and nineteen of us ended up at the church for a drink and nibbles afterwards. The sum of £190.08 was collected and, with further donations, reached the grand total of £205.08 which has been divided equally between the church and Demelza House. A big thank you to all who participated and to all who donated so generously. A special thank you to Betty and Norman Head who, despite illness, made sure we had a welcoming cup of tea on arrival at the church.

Thank you all, Janice Ballard.

Christmas at St Michael's

As a member of the congregation, I would like to thank the choir at St Michael's for the wonderful carol service they arranged for us on 18th December. There is always a feeling of wonder at this service and one feels that, after all the preparation and shopping of the previous weeks, at last we can relax and let the true meaning of Christmas begin to wash over us. Before the service starts, I like to sit and reflect on Christmases past when such services have taken place at just the same time. Somehow the years fall away and one thinks of family and friends who have been part of this service and now, for various reasons, have moved on, but are still very much in our thoughts. After the service we all enjoy mulled wine and mince pies in the hall and exchange cards and presents to put under our trees and to relate to each other our hopes and plans for the big Christian Festival that Christmas is.

Maybe those of you who are reading this that have not been to the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols might like to put the date in your new diaries now and try to make a point of being there at the Carol Service 2006. You can be sure of a warm welcome.

Thank you also to our Rector for all our Christmas services from our toddler's services, our crib and Christingle services and, of course, the Midnight Service, beginning on Christmas Eve, perhaps the most wonderful of all Christmas services and to hear a sermon* to make us think and remember. And what a lovely surprise we all had to see the wonderful manger scene that Mary Morren had put together for us. Thank you Mary for all those weeks (even months maybe) of hard work. Thank you also to the flower arrangers, who decorated the church, and Doris and Malcolm for the Christmas tree, and to all who made our Christmas so special.

Shirley Crundwell.

Gift Services in December

We received a nice thank you from the Strood Family Centre for the gifts we brought to our Gift Services on 4th December. Our donations of toys and food for Christmas were much appreciated.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY NEWS: I would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the Children's Society during 2005. Although the coffee morning (when we usually empty the boxes and count the contents) did not actually take place, money from boxes was counted up over several days and the splendid total of £371.06 was eventually reached. This means that we have again exceeded the previous year's total so well done everyone and please keep collecting! Many thanks to Thelma Partridge for her help. If anyone is interested in having a collecting box at home, please contact me on 727424. Julia Wells

* Available on <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

From the Registers

Baptisms:

18 th December	Lacie Chloe Bourner	Strood
18 th December	Benjamin Louis Alexander Hoad	Nine Acres Road

Funerals:

9 th December	Eleanor Phoebe Culmer (94)	formerly of Bush Road
12 th December	Albert Garrett (86)	Vicarage Close
20 th December	Terrence Edward Harding (71)	Bush Road
21 st December	Ronald Arthur William Bailey (84)	Meadow Crescent
22 nd December	Marjorie Dartnell (77)	British Legion Village
16 th January	Dawn Joan Coomber (80)	formerly of Vicarage Close



Mothers' Union News

Please note we have invited a speaker from the Kenward Trust to our morning meeting on February 15th at 10.45 (following Corporate Communion at 9.30 & coffee) in the Church Hall. The Kenward Trust helps people with drug and alcohol dependency problems. It would be appreciated if all members could try to be there and any of their friends who would like to be there will be warmly welcomed.

I would like to thank those members who attended the *Feast for Advent* meeting in December. Although we were few, it was a meaningful meeting and the lunch together was a time of true fellowship. Thanks to all.

Shirley.

Disappointed in the London Marathon?

At least two of us from Cuxton were disappointed not to get places in this year's London Marathon. We'll miss the pleasure of taking part and the sponsorship that I hoped to raise for the Church and our link Mission Partner, Andrew Daunton-Fear in the Philippines. I am thinking about a sponsored event on Sunday 30th April (starting after church!). This could be a marathon type run, or a fun run, a walk or a cycle ride. We would be looking for sponsors for the causes mentioned above. It would be a low key event with participants taking responsibility for themselves. I am in no position to carry out risk assessments, provide medical assistance, food and water or take out insurance for you. If you would be interested on that basis in being part of a small group using public footpaths and highways, please speak to me.

Roger.

Nature Notes November 2005

On the first day of the month, the sun shone brightly and there was a fresh westerly breeze, making it cooler than previous days. In the afternoon we went to the park at West Malling and walked round the orchard so that Murphy could run free. Pears, which had been left from the harvesting, lay beneath the trees, which were looking autumnal. Some pears had been partly eaten by animals, but this crop was being collected. Dandelions bloomed in the grass and a woodpecker called from nearby woodland. It was dark by 5 pm.

The following day brought gale force westerly winds, which brought a chill to the air. As we drove along the Snodland by-pass, I watched a skein of Canada geese flying overhead. The next day, which brought some sunshine, I planted some winter pansies to accompany summer flowers, which are still in bloom. We went over to Wouldham on the 7th. to begin training sessions with

Murphy. A fresh westerly wind blew and the sun shone brightly from a clear blue sky. The newly sown fields were a fresh green and the river sparkled in the sunlight. There is still a hosepipe ban in the South East because we have had so little rain.

The following day I started to walk along Pilgrims Road with Murphy but a fox came out of the hedge and stood in the middle of the road, which caused Murphy to erupt, so we went home! The following day was more successful. On the 12th, while I was gardening, I watched a beautiful red admiral butterfly hovering over, then perching on, red valerian blooms.

Early in the morning of the 13th, the sky was aglow with the rising sun but it soon became overcast, rather misty and decidedly chilly. It was dry, however, for the Remembrance Service. While watching the highlights of

the service from the Cenotaph on television, I saw a gull wheeling overhead calling as it flew and breaking that special silence. I took Murphy along Pilgrims Road the next day and the sun, which was so low in the sky, shone in our faces. Maples displayed beautiful golden leaves and the sky was a beautiful salmon pink in the west as the sunset and a misty moon was rising in the east. The next day, in Six-acre Field, I found ragwort, white deadnettle and a floret of feverfew. Damp leaves were strewn over the paths and some of the ash trees had almost lost their leaves. Some frosty days followed and in places where the sun did not penetrate the frost remained all day. On the 19th, I watched a redwing devouring holly berries from the garden tree then a great tit came to the bird feeder. In the afternoon, I walked with Murphy along Woodhurst Close where the road and pavements were still covered in frost. We went up into Six Acre Wood and into the churchyard. As we returned along the main road, smoke from a bonfire filled the air. The ash trees had lost their leaves and the sycamore leaves had shrivelled and turned brown. The lilac leaves were still green.

On the 20th, I walked alone through the churchyard, which was white with frost. The skies were bright with sunshine. I walked through Six Acre Wood, skirted the field of young rape plants then made my way down to Purty's Shaw. Scarlet spindleberries glowed in the sunlight, while in the hollow and along the paths, where the sun's rays had not penetrated, frost lay white and crisp and crunched beneath my feet. So many trees still bore their leaves of dull green, yellow and orange. I heard the fluttering of birds' wings in the copse, and a

pheasant flew up in front of me. Fog formed in the evening of the 21st, creating its particular eerie atmosphere. Some heavy rain fell on the 24th. Cold weather brought a few snowflakes on the 25th. A squirrel raided the bird table and a robin ventured onto it. I took Murphy to the village then back through part of Six Acre Wood where brown and yellow leaves were strewn along the paths. The skies were grey and darkness soon fell after we had returned home. There were biting northerly winds on the 26th. The next two days were dull but dry. On the 28th, a great tit came to the bird table and a redwing perched in the holly tree. Maples on the embankment still bore coloured leaves and I found more beautiful maples when I walked Murphy along Pilgrims Road. On the 29th, the sun shone but it remained cold and frosty. I walked with a friend and Murphy along Pilgrims Road to the path leading to the blue lake. I found white dead nettle among the tufty grass and deep red hips along the hedgerows. The sun was setting as we walked back along the main road and the sky was a purple haze.

On the final day of the month we awoke to a frost-filled garden with the golden sun rising above Bluebell Hill. In the middle of the morning, David, Murphy and I went over to Addington to a friend's paddock where Murphy was able to run free and chase a ball. The trees along the Halling by-pass still bore golden leaves, which were bright in the pale sunlight. After our return, I raked up dead lilac leaves, which were lying on the grass. Grey cloud covered the sky and this remained for the rest of the day.

Nature Notes December 2005

The first day of the month was mild and damp with rain during the latter part of the morning. I put out fresh Niger seed to attract the gold finches but none have so far put in an appearance. In fact, few birds have been visiting the garden. The following morning was also grey and mild as I walked Murphy down to the station. Clouds scudded across the sky and a few glimpses of sun appeared. During the afternoon, the wind became stronger and there were some squally showers. Heavy rain fell later in the evening. In the afternoon of the 4th, again mild, and as the sun was setting and lighting up the west with a deep pink against a very pale blue sky, I took Murphy down to the village and along to Six Acre Wood where damp leaves were strewn over rain soaked paths. In the churchyard, a silver birch and an oak still bore some golden leaves. I could hear the calls of starlings. In the churchyard, the large yew tree's deep green, furry branches were standing guard by the path. The way they hung reminded me of a gigantic spider's legs. (I had recently been watching "Life in The Undergrowth" on television.) The light was fading as we made our way home. On the 6th, I noticed a song thrush busying itself by the greenhouse. The winter pansies brought some brightness to the garden. The 8th was dreary and damp until the middle of the afternoon when the skies cleared to reveal the sunset and the rising moon and a large star twinkling brightly.

Fog and frost greeted us on the 9th. Greyness hung over the garden and surrounding countryside. We drove to Addington where the fog had cleared and the sun shone from a very pale blue sky, but everything was immersed in fog when we returned home. In the garden, heathers, roses, cornflowers red valerian and Japanese anemones bloomed, while the flowering currant bushes bore golden leaves. The fog eventually cleared and the sun shone. A dunnoek, a song thrush, a pigeon and a collared dove came to the garden on the 10th. Frost lay on the churchyard grass the following day and it was very cold. Murphy was fascinated by a wood pigeon which was pecking at the dying leaves of an elm tree on the embankment.

The early morning of the 12th was grey and damp, but while we were over at Wouldham training Murphy, the skies cleared and the sun shone. A northeast wind blew bringing a definite chill to the air. Gulls circled over the fields and river where wavelets broke on the mudflats, a food haven for wading birds. Murphy has found a small piece of a conifer branch and he has great fun chasing round the garden with it.

The day of the 14th became bright and it was pleasant for a morning walk, which we took to the village, along Bush Road and up to Six Acre Wood. Leaves were strewn along the path as we made our way to the field where the tufted grass was wet and shiny. The

occasional leaf drifted to the ground. Magpies chattered. We then climbed up to the edge of Mays Wood to cross the fields where horses grazed. A pale sun cast its watery rays across the river and the hills beyond. On the 15th, I watched a blackbird, its golden beak gleaming against a background of ivy leaves, surveying the scene. By the 16th, the holly tree had lost all its berries to the redwing. A brisk north-westerly wind sent the clouds scudding across the sky. On the 17th, before attending a carol concert in The Royal Albert Hall, I walked with a friend in Kensington Gardens where large maple leaves were strewn over the grass. The various trees were silhouetted against the pale blue winter sky and there was a beautiful sunset in the west. As we made our way to the Serpentine, where swans, mallards and tufted ducks glided, I watched a magpie hopping in the branches of a small tree.

At lunchtime, on the 19th, a small egret came into the garden. Its feathers were snow white. After surveying the pond, it flew off over the garage. That afternoon, I walked with Murphy down to the footpath between the river and the railway line. The brown seed heads of teasel and buddleia lined part of the way and old man's beard straddled the fences. The grass tufts were thick and wet after frost had melted. As we made our way home, the sun had almost set leaving a salmon pink glow in the sky. Yarrow was still in flower as we walked by the lakes at Snodland on the 21st. The skies were overcast but it was not cold. Wildfowl glided on the ink-black rippling water of the lake. I heard no birdcalls. Murphy was able to come off the lead and he enjoyed his freedom as he galloped backwards and forwards taking in all the new smells. Darkness was falling as we made our way home. I could imagine that spring was not far away the next day because it was sunny and quite mild. The sun shone brightly on the morning of Christmas Eve as I walked across Church Fields where I observed the blue of the sky and felt a faint breeze blowing from the northwest. We made our way along the leaf-strewn paths of Mays Wood to bring us to the top of Dean Valley where I could hear birdsong and birdcalls. Spindleberries, hips and haws and old man's beard straddling the hedges were to be seen. Young grass was growing along a verge in the wood. We went down to Purty's Shaw where catkins were tight on their twigs and new buds slept within their sheathes. We climbed up the hill and returned home via Six Acre Wood and the churchyard where I heard the great tit's song. As I walked along the road in the late afternoon when the light was fading, I marvelled at two silver birch trees,

their delicate branches and twigs silhouetted against the pale blue of the sky.

Christmas Day began with a fiercely golden sunrise over Bluebell Hill. When I opened the back door, I heard some birdsong. Northerly breezes blew the cloud away leaving a sky of pale blue and golden sunshine. We walked with Murphy by the lakes at Snodland. Gulls and moorhens glided on the rippling water. I found a single daisy, a dandelion, and a single floret of red deadnettle, white deadnettle and yarrow. Murphy enjoyed himself. Later in the afternoon, the setting sun lit up the bare branches of a hawthorn and a sycamore on the embankment tuning them to gold. Cloud moved in from the north as darkness began to fall. It became very cold on Boxing Day when we crunched our way over brown leaves in Mays Wood. The setting sun cast a golden glow in the sky. Snow fell the following day. We awoke to a white world on the 28th. And, as the sun rose, its light caused the snow-laden branches to glisten. The pond had frozen and the winter pansies were hidden under a blanket of snow. Blackbirds, a song thrush, a wood pigeon and our resident robin came to the garden for food. The sun's rays began to melt the snow on the branches and it dripped onto the undergrowth. Murphy enjoyed galloping around the garden. The snow still lay on the fields and hills the following day and it was very cold. I took Murphy down the road but had to be careful of the slippery patches on the pavement so we did not venture far. Blackbirds, dunnock a great tit, a robin and a jay came to the bird table.

The morning of the 30th was grey with falling snow turning to sleet. Long tailed tits came briefly to the garden then flew into a sycamore tree on the embankment. A blackbird hopped among the branches of the lilac bush. The sleet eventually turned to rain and a westerly wind drove grey clouds across the sky. Late in the afternoon, I walked Murphy down to the station. The light was fading and the rain continued to fall. The last day of the month and year was bright and quite mild with westerly breezes. The snow had melted on the fields and hills. In the afternoon, I took Murphy across Church Fields where he was aware of many scents. We walked through part of Mays Wood where I noticed fallen twigs and branches and the hollowed-out trunks of previously coppiced trees. We walked down the path between the oilseed rape plants to Purty's Shaw where I found a few patches of snow; then we climbed the hill up to Six acre Wood and home. The year 2005 departed.

Elizabeth Summers.

30th Strood (Cuxton) Scout Group Jumble Sale Sat. 11th February 2pm at the Scout Hall, Bush Road.

Scouts will be collecting jumble throughout the village during the week before the sale, but please call either of the following to ensure that your jumble is collected. Pat Catchpole 01634 240480 Matthew Wells 01634 727424. Items can also be brought to the hall on the morning of the sale. Thank you for your support.

St John's Draw: November: £25 each to Mrs Knell (31) & Mrs Fuller (58) & £10 to Miss Thorne (14) – drawn by Mrs Hickling. December: £5 each to Mrs Head (20), Mrs Shaw (102), Mrs Hesketh (119), Mrs Garrot (123) & Mrs Chapman (164) – drawn by Mrs Court.

Cuxton Community Infant School News

I would think that many of us have begun the year by making some New Year Resolutions and apart from the diet, gym etc Mine is to write each month in the Cuxton News. Shock horror I know. The truth is it was during one of our events at the end of last term, the Christmas Fayre, to be precise, that one of our ex very supportive, parents, made me feel very guilty. Actually it was lovely to see her and catch up with the news of her children, but she did say she liked reading about the infants in the magazine and hearing our news, so here we are.....

Last Summer holidays we had major boiler work at the Infant school. Our boilers were converted from oil to gas, and we have recently been reaping the benefits of a very, very warm school during the recent cold spell.

In September for the first time, we were able to take in forty children in one intake. Under LEA changes, the governors and staff had decided that we would take into school the older Foundation stage and the younger Foundation stage children. Therefore our classes, Mays and marina have children who when they joined us were just 4 and some nearly 5. The youngest children, Mays were part time until 2 weeks before Christmas. All of the foundation stage children settled into school very quickly and found their feet! I think this is partly due to the comprehensive induction system we run in the Summer term. This was made more apparent to me recently when my godson Jack started school at 4 years at a primary school in Essex. He had just one visit and on that same day his mum met the class teacher.

Our current school role is 128, and we have five classes, each with a teacher and teaching assistant, or in some cases two teaching assistants. We are very lucky to have such hard working and dedicated staff, who I hope you will agree, those of you that know us, are all very approachable and friendly. Do remember if your child is due to start school in the academic year of 2006-2007 you need to return their forms to us or come and see us to look around our school.

Harvest festival came around very quickly and was followed by Global Week, organised by Mrs Shorthouse, which culminated in a lovely assembly to parents. This year we collected for Medicins sans Frontiers.

Christmas activities were upon us in no time, and back in December 'The little angel' was a great success, the children had a lovely Christmas dinner and party, and Mungo the clown entertained us once again. The Christingle did not quite go as planned and enough said about that for the moment, but Father Christmas did manage to visit us. It was lovely to see so many village folk and friends of our school. The children in year two particularly enjoyed their visit to Downsland House, especially when they were asked if they would like cups of tea! I think lemonade shandies were mentioned at one point but we quickly settled for orange squash and kit Kats! My thanks to all the folk at Downsland House who were so hospitable.

The next few months are equally busy- parents evenings, class assemblies to parents, the Medway schools music festival, Mothers day assembly and the Guild hall museum are visiting us as part of our centenary year. We still have some porcelain mugs with Cuxton Community Infant School embossed on them and a calendar of our school if you would like to purchase these from the office.

We hope this year to work more closely with the Beehive and Mayday playgroups. The breakfast club and after school care facility on site, which run from 7:45 – 8:45 and 3:15-6pm, do a splendid job, and have been nominated for an award because of their successful summer holiday scheme they ran, and are applying for the Quality mark in play work.

To end with, something I read to the children in assembly today:

This year I will act as if everything I say or do can make a difference, I will do one thing to help at home every day, I will say one kind, true thing to someone who needs my help every month, I will recycle everything I can throughout the year, so that I will make a difference to the world.

Have a peaceful month, from all of us at the Infant School,

S Jones.

Klub Xtra

Cuxton Community Infant School, Bush Road, Cuxton

Klub Xtra is an Out of Hours school club, providing good quality child care for children aged 4-11 at competitive prices. We are lucky to be ideally located, leasing a building at Cuxton Infant School, by kind agreement of Miss Jones, her staff and governors. During term time, Klub Xtra runs a breakfast club, opening at 7.45am. The staff then see the children in to either the Junior or Infant school. Breakfast is provided. The cost is £2.50. After school care is provided from 3.15pm, when staff pick children up again from either school until 6pm. Tea is provided. The session cost is £7. Activities are planned for the children to take part in on a daily basis. This always involves an art / craft activity or similar e.g cooking and the opportunity for outdoor play, which the children love. We have trouble getting them in, even when it is pitch dark!! Even if your child/children do not come to Cuxton village schools, but you are in need of after school care, then please do not hesitate to come and see us. Our numbers are booming and the children enjoy their time with us.

Klub Xtra is also open in the school holidays (other than Christmas). We provide a number of child care packages: 8am – 6pm £20, 10am – 4pm £12. In addition, we are trialling a new package: Hourly child care@ £3 hour. It may be that Mum has an appointment that she needs to keep in the school holidays or wants to get the groceries in peace and quiet. Or it may simply be that your child / children is interested in the activity that is taking place on a certain day and would like to come down and be involved. This service is available to all in our village community for whatever purpose it serves.

We are open half term week beginning 13th February 2006 and on **Monday 20th February**, as it is a teacher Training Day at both schools. As previously mentioned, your child does **not** have to be attending either of the village schools to enjoy the benefits of the above activities. Advanced bookings are advised to guarantee a place for your child / children. However, should the unexpected arise, then there is no harm in 'phoning us on the day / a few days before to see if we can help you.



Cuxton WI January

Considering the very cold weather, we had a good attendance at our January meeting, which was encouraging for our new President, Dorothy Drew. Because of the Christmas period, there was not a lot of business and this was mostly dates and plans for future events in 2006.

Our original speaker for January had cancelled at the last minute, but we were fortunate in being able to book Mr Cyril Baldwin at short notice. He gave a most entertaining and amusing talk about the auctioneering trade, having had his own business for many years in Chatham. Some of his anecdotes were hilarious and had us all laughing, besides giving an interesting insight into the dos and don'ts, rules and regulations and pitfalls of the auction room. We will all watch *Flog It* on the telly in a new light from now on!!

Since our last meeting there has not been much happening, except perhaps for the Poetry Group's Christmas meeting, when we watched a video of Christmas poems recited by various celebrities. To complete the seasonal feeling, we drank mulled wine and ate mince pies and shortbread!! We had a lucky dip present to round off the evening.

Cuxton Walking Group's planned trip to Bluewater was cancelled due to the Christmas shopping rush and instead went to West Malling, walked round the park by the lake and back into the town, looked round the shops and had a very nice lunch at the Craft Centre Tea Rooms. The next walk will be to Bluewater at the end of January.

So, all the festivities over, getting back to normal, and Cuxton WI are looking forward to another busy and Happy New Year!

Ann Harris.

Silver Jubilee Celebration

On 12th July 2006 I celebrate 25 years of being a priest in the Church of England at a service of Holy Communion at St John's at 7.30 pm at which the preacher will be the Archdeacon of Bromley, with whom I was at college. You are all invited to the service and the party afterwards and I hope to see as many of you as possible.

Looking back, there is a big debt to all the people who, from childhood, taught me the ways of Jesus and encouraged me to put my faith in Him. I wonder if people realise at the time how important it is to bring up children and young people to have a real, personal faith.

When I was sending my Christmas cards this year, I mentioned the forthcoming anniversary (and extended the invitation) to many old friends, including Mr & Mrs Brian and Jessie Butcher who now live in the frozen north of England, but who used to run a Christian club for teenagers and young adults at Rainham Mark, which had a huge influence on me and a number of other young people. They replied telling me that, apart from dwelling in the frozen north, they also run a holiday home in Normandy and asked me to advertise it to my friends here. Log on to www.gites-normany-brittany.com if you are interested. The picture looks lovely.

Another formative influence was Ven Peter Lock, now Archdeacon of Bromley, then curate at Wigmore where I was a member of the youth club. He cannot make 12th July, but he is preaching at Cuxton at 9.30 on 12th March. Come along and meet him.

Roger.

The Name of God (from a sermon for New Year's Day)

In Exodus Chapter 3, Moses asks God His Name. God replies, "I am what I am. Tell the Israelites I am sent you." God adds that His Name is YHWH (which probably derives from the Hebrew verb "to be"). God is the One Who exists in Himself and causes everything else to exist) This is called the Tetragrammaton. The Name could also be spelt in English JHWH or JHVH. It was only ever pronounced by the high priest when he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. We use it in the acclamation Hallelu Jah (Praise the LORD). When reading the Bible in Hebrew out loud, instead of saying YHWH, the word Adonai (Lord) is spoken. So the Greek translations of the OT have Kyrios (Lord) and most English versions use the LORD. The vowels of Adonai with YHWH give us the word Jehovah.

The Name Jesus is a Greek version of Joshua and means something like "The LORD saves". Jesus is often called Kyrios, lord, in the NT. It usually is simply a human term of respect, but, for Christians, the tetragrammaton is in the background. Similarly, when Jesus begins a solemn statement about Himself with the words, "I am." El and Elohim are Hebrew words for God. Immanu means "with us". So Immanuel is "God with us."

St Paul tells us that God exalts the Name of Jesus above all other Names. As CHRIST ians, we bear the sacred Name of Jesus the Christ – Christ meaning anointed (Messiah). As He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at His Baptism, so are we and that is why we join with Jesus in calling God, Father, and bearing the holy Name.

Mayday Playschool Spring Term

Many of you know Glenda Burren and the fact that she has worked at Mayday playschool for the last 30 years. On Friday 9th December, Glenda retired and we surprised her with a special lunch in honour of her hard work and dedication and the support she has given to numerous families in our village community over so many years.

So what happens now? We continue! It will be strange for us all over the next few weeks and, boy, what a hard act to follow. However, for those of you who do not know about Mayday playschool, we meet daily in the Social Club, Bush Rd, Cuxton, 9.00-12.00. We provide pre-school education for children aged 2 ½ till their entry into school in a happy, safe and friendly environment. We are lucky to be able to make use of the large grounds owned by the Social Club on a daily basis. In addition, we have a very close relationship with the Infant School. This half term we are finalising arrangements with Miss Jones to use the ICT suite, outdoor play area and library within her school. This will be an ideal opportunity for our children to gain valuable new experiences as well as familiarising themselves with the school environment, which will reap great benefits when the time comes to make their transition into school.

If you would like to know more about us, come and see us! Our doors are always open and a warm welcome awaits you and your child. Half term dates 9th January – 10th February. If you would like to contact and speak to someone *out of hours*, please phone Lesley 715988. We are looking forward to welcoming some new faces very soon.

CEMEX (formerly Rugby Cement) Site Redevelopment

Housing and office building plans for the large site at the A228 Halling roundabout will go on show for public consultation and comment on Saturday 4th February between 10am - 2pm; and on Tuesday 7th February between 3pm - 8pm.

A free minibus will operate a regular circular route serving Cuxton and Upper/Lower Halling to the exhibition. Timetable information will be on display at local shops and Parish Noticeboards or ask parish clerk.

??? Quiz Evening ???
Saturday 18th February
7.30 pm Jubilee Hall

Teams 6-8, £5.00 per person (includes supper, but please bring own drink). Please contact Rector on 717134 if you would like to take part. Proceeds to Church Funds.