

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
22 nd June Trinity 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 20 vv 7-13 p779 Romans 6 vv 1-11 p1132 Matthew 10 vv 24-39 p975
29 th June S Peter & S Paul	11.00 Holy Communion	Zechariah 4 vv 1-14 p952 Acts 12 vv 1-11 p1106 II Timothy 4 vv 6-18 p1197 Matthew 16 vv 13-19 p983
6 th July Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Samuel 24 vv 1-17 p296 Luke 14 vv 12-24 p1048
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Romans 7 v15 – 8 v1 p1134 Matthew 11 vv 16-30 p976
13 th July Trinity 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 10-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	II Samuel 7 vv 18-29 p311 Luke 19 v41 – 20 v8 p1054
20 th July Trinity 5	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979
27 th July Trinity 6 Bishop of Tonbridge presiding & preaching.	11.00 Holy Communion 100 th Anniversary of the Great War	I Kings 3 vv 1-15 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-33 & 44-52 p980
3 rd August Trinity 7	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Kings 10 vv 1-13 p 348 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-5 p742 Romans 9 vv 1-5 p1135 Matthew 14 vv 13-21 p981
10 th August Trinity 8 (S Laurence)	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv1-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall Special for St Laurence's Day	(Psalm 11) Isaiah 43 vv 1-7 p728 II Corinthians 9 vv 6-10 p1163
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
29 th June S Peter & S Paul	9.30 Holy Communion	Zechariah 4 vv 1-14 p952 Acts 12 vv 1-11 p1106 II Timothy 4 vv 6-18 p1197 Matthew 16 vv 13-19 p983
6 th July Trinity 3	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Zechariah 9 vv 9-12 p955 Matthew 11 vv 16-30 p976
13 th July Trinity 4	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 10-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978
20 th July Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 5
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 44 vv 6-8 p729 Romans 8 vv 12-25 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 24-43 p979
27 th July Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 3 vv 1-15 p338 Romans 8 vv 26-39 p1135 Matthew 13 vv 31-52 p980
3 rd August Trinity 7	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	I Kings 10 vv 1-13 p 348 Acts 13 vv 1-13 p1107 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070
	6.30 Evensong to Mark the 100 th Anniversary of the Great War (preacher the Archdeacon).	Isaiah 55 vv 1-5 p742 Matthew 14 vv 13-21 p981
10 th August Trinity 8 (S Laurence)	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv1-18 p361 Romans 10 vv 5-15 p1137 Matthew 14 vv 22-33 p981



From the Rector

Occasionally, I am asked to take services at St Nicholas Church, Strood. When I look at their Great War Memorial, I think about the probability that some of the men commemorated on that

memorial went to school with my grandfather. He went to St Nicholas School and would have been in school around about 1900. I know almost nothing about his wartime service except that he was stationed at Crowborough Camp and that he was on semaphore duty. I know that his unit did not know about the Armistice because they could not see the next semaphore tower for the November fog and they only heard about the end of the fighting on the BBC. A lot of people did not speak about their experiences in either war.

I do think, however, that it is very important to remember that these are not just names on a war memorial or even a service record. They are people just like us, with lives in many ways similar to ours. They had hopes and fears, loves and losses. They did their best for themselves and for their families. I don't suppose they were all saints. No doubt there were rogues among them. But they all had their own lives to lead, their own plans and ambitions, their own sorrows and disappointments.

Then came the Great War. My grandfather used to say that we could not imagine how different life was before the War. War brought many changes. It advanced the cause of science and medicine and technological change. It brought men of different social classes together in a common cause and promoted equality. War brought women into employment in what had been thought of as men's work. It made the authorities more aware of the unfitness of a large proportion of the population owing to poverty, malnutrition and disease. It thus advanced the cause of the welfare state. It also undermined confidence in the ruling classes and shook up traditional notions of deference. And of course all those women who became young widows and all those women who never had the chance to marry and all those fatherless children and all those limbless beggars on the streets after the War. Then there was the lasting trauma of fighting in the trenches. When I was a curate in the 1980s, a dear, sweet, old man told me that he still dreamt about it. A lovely Christian man like him should never have been asked to

fight. As a trainee clergyman in the 1970s, I spoke to an elderly woman in a retirement home who was crying for her husband. He had died in 1916.

My grandfather used to talk about the boys from what were then tiny places like Wainscot, who had never been out of their home villages until they were taken out to France where many of them died, some within a few days or weeks of deployment. It is a bitter irony that many of these young men were never so fit in their entire existence on this planet as just before they were killed. It was only when they joined the army that, for the first time in their lives, they were properly fed and clothed, given any medical treatment they needed and experienced proper physical training. I used that slightly odd sounding phrase *their entire existence on this planet* because I do believe in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. The lives of those young men are in the hands of God and no bullet or shell or gas attack can ultimately thwart His purposes. Evil does not triumph in the end. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, but destroyed it will be. No human life is insignificant. No human life is wasted.

In 1918, the Armistice. Twenty-one years later we were at war again, this time my father's generation, rather than my grandfather's. My father didn't talk much about his wartime experiences either, though he must have seen some terrible sights, landing in France just after D Day. My middle name is after one of his closest friends who was killed in France. I think his great fear (and the fear of many men like him) was that my generation would have to go through what his generation and his father's generation had been through, only this time with nuclear weapons, which would have made the slaughter even more horrible and complete. Thank God that that has not happened. My great uncle, and many men like him, served in both the 14-18 and the 39-45 conflicts.

What happened in both world wars and in all wars is wicked. It is wicked that there was such terrible poverty before and between the two world wars. It is wicked that there is such poverty in the world today. There were boys who went to St Nicholas School barefoot, some of them walking from Higham. Some of the kinder masters might buy them boots. I believe one of them was Bartley Trimble, later Vicar of Halling. Children queued

up at the soup kitchens for a barely nourishing hot meal. Nothing could be done, they said, but my grandfather also frequently pointed out that, when there was a war on, the government could always somehow find the money. Naïf? Or maybe a shipwright with only an elementary school education had more sense than some of the top people in the country. It's wonderful what experiencing a problem like poverty for yourself does to make you take it seriously and really apply yourself to solving it.

So, writing this, I'm feeling quite militant. Sin, the world and the devil wreak so much suffering on human beings and indeed on the rest of creation. We ought to be fighting them with all our might: fighting poverty, fighting disease, fighting for peace, not only in this country but abroad, fighting ignorance, fighting oppression, fighting lawlessness, fighting with all our might. We are so complacent, indifferent to religion,

obsessed with trivia, materialistic, self-centred. When I say fighting, I don't mean fighting with weapons of war. We ought to be praying for peace and justice. We ought to be digging deep in support of missions and charities, financially supporting them, supporting them with our time and talents. We ought to be absolutely committed to our communities and to the welfare of our neighbours, all of them. Beginning at home, our charity, our love, ought to be all embracing. We should be working and praying for the transformation of society, for the time when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Would it take another fighting war to galvanise us and our nation in the cause of peace? I hope not. There is quite enough to do in the world today as it is to require our wholehearted commitment in His service, the service of Him Whose service is perfect freedom. Roger.

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariots of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight;
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Centenary of the Great War

Halling: Sunday 27th July Holy Communion at 11.00 am – president and preacher the Bishop of Tonbridge, the Rt Rev'd Dr Brian Castle. Cllr Ray Maisey, the Deputy Mayor, and Mrs Maisey, the Deputy Mayoress, and other civic dignitaries will represent the wider community. There will be a buffet after the service and an exhibition of First World War artefacts, medals, letters, news reports, etc., which people are prepared to lend for the occasion. All welcome.

Cuxton: Sunday 3rd August Evensong at 6.30 pm –preacher the Archdeacon of Rochester, the Ven Simon Burton-Jones. Cllr Ray Maisey, the Deputy Mayor, and Mrs Maisey, the Deputy Mayoress, and other civic dignitaries will represent the wider community. There will be a buffet after the service and an exhibition of First World War artefacts, medals, letters, news reports, etc., which people are prepared to lend for the occasion. All welcome.

We should be very glad to hear from you if you have anything which you could lend us for the exhibitions, please. We should also be glad to have any stories you might be able to share about the people commemorated on our two war memorials. Some of these have already appeared in the parish magazine. If there are sufficient, we might compile a commemorative booklet. Please contact Rev'd Roger Knight, The Rectory, Cuxton, Rochester, Kent, ME2 1AF, roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk.

From the Registers

Baptisms:

31st May
31st May
8th June

Nicola Clear
Peter Jonathan Anthony Chatwell
Owen Thomas Reynolds

Salisbury
Bush Road
Rochester

Funerals:

5th June
10th June

Ronald John Holland (92)
Una Edna Betty Murphy (88)

Rogers House, Wigmore
formerly of Upper Halling

Halling Cemetery

We're sorry that Halling Cemetery got so out of hand this year. It is really stretching the resources of the church to the utmost limit to maintain this facility for the whole village, and it generally has been over the last hundred or so years, judging by back numbers of the parish magazine. It is, however, distressing for the relatives of those who are buried there and we apologise. The good news is that some of the scores of people who expressed their concerns on social media sites banded together and went and tidied up much of the cemetery. I don't know who you are, but thank you all of you, and thank you everyone who does anything to keep graves tidy, to tidy up generally, or who donates money to enable us to hire help. We are currently investigating getting the Probation Service to take on the regular maintenance of the cemetery.

The Two Churchyards

Medway Council continue to look after St John's churchyard (sometimes needing a reminder from the churchwarden) and generally keep the grass cut. We would be pleased, however, if they came and removed some of the trees which hide us from the road. To be fair, they did remove very quickly one specimen which fell over in the storms earlier in the year.

We continue to pay for a professional to cut Cuxton churchyard. He is doing a fine job, but we continue to be grateful for donations towards the cost of grass cutting which we would not be able to afford otherwise. Cuxton Parish Council have been especially generous this year. As at Halling, thanks to all those of you maintain family graves and to those who do a bit more than their own plots. It would be very helpful, however, if dead flowers and especially wreaths could be taken away, please, by the people who put them there and please do not mix non biodegradables like plastic and wire with compostable waste such as flowers, leaves and a small amount of paper.

Dates For Your Diary

19th July: Parish Barbecue Rectory Grounds
27th July: 11.00 First World War Commemoration
Service Halling
3rd August: 6.30 First World War
Commemoration Service Cuxton
10th August: St Laurence Day Celebration 4.30 in
the Jubilee Hall
13th August: 12.00 Barbecue for Church Funds at
Chris & Jenny Beaney's House – 95, Pilgrims
Road, North Halling

20th September: 7.30 Christian Aid Quiz, All
Saints Frindsbury
5th October: 6.30 Harvest Praise & Harvest Supper
St Michael's and Church Hall
25th October: 7.30 Quiz for Parish Funds Church
Hall
2nd November: All Souls Services Cuxton 9.30 &
Halling 11.00
30th November: 6.30 Evensong @ St Michael's
followed by an open invitation to rector's 60th
birthday celebrations in church hall.

A Cynical Derivation and Definition

Politics: from poly, meaning "many", and tics, meaning "bloodsucking parasites."

A Question of Definition

What do you call a dominant male hippy?

An alfalfa male

Annual Rectory Barbecue

Saturday 19th July

Cuxton Rectory Grounds

From 6.00

Tickets £7

St Laurence Day (10th August)

There have been two churches in Upper Halling dedicated to St Laurence – the old mediaeval pilgrim’s chapel, now converted into cottages, and an iron building which used to stand roughly where the Jubilee Hall is now. As St Laurence’s Day falls on a Sunday, we thought we would celebrate this heritage at our tea (4.30) and Evening Prayer (5.30) in the Jubilee Hall. If you would like to speak about St Laurence Church or if you have any photographs or artefacts of either building that you would be prepared to show on that occasion, please let us know. Also if you would like to choose a hymn for this occasion, please tell me. Any other ideas? We are eager for your suggestions in order to make this occasion really special.

August Barbecue

**Malia
North Halling**

**Wednesday 13th August
Noon**

**BBQ in aid of church funds at Jenny and Chris Beaney’s House,
95, Pilgrims Road.**

Great War Vigil

There is to be a Vigil at Westminster Abbey on Monday 4th August from 10pm to 11pm – the hour leading to the moment when the ultimatum expired and war began. Our Cathedral will be holding its own Vigil at the same time; this will be attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent and civic leaders; the Cathedral would be delighted to welcome people from our parishes as well.

The Created Order: The Sun serves us as much as possible, and more than we could imagine. The Clouds and Stars minister unto us, the World surrounds us with beauty, the Air refresheth us, the Sea revives the earth and us. The Earth itself is better than gold because it produceth fruits and flowers. And therefore in the beginning, was it made manifest to be mine, because Adam alone was made to enjoy it. Thomas Traherne.

A Thought Provoking But Unattributed Quotation: The Church is needed, but not wanted.

Soren Kierkegaard: A sermon is not a play written by God, acted by the preacher and observed by the congregation. It is much more that the preacher is the playwright, the congregation is the company of actors and God is the audience.

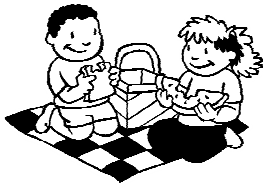
St John’s Draw: £25 to Mrs Potter (120), £10 each to Mrs Garrot (123 & Mrs Brunger (159) – drawn by Mrs Watts.



Cuxton WI

In May we had our AGM with wine and cheese and in June our annual party with buffet including cream cakes. So we will all be watching our waist bands for a few weeks ! After our usual business we had the official AGM along with Maggie Vidgen who is a WI advisor. We had asked her to attend as there was a new committee and also a new President to be appointed. We have an excellent number of people willing to serve on our committee but, although there were five nominations, for president nobody wanted to take on the job. Pat said that she would be willing to do it for one more year and everyone was very grateful for this. Both the Secretary and the President gave their yearly reports and the Treasurer gave written details of the accounts which at the moment are quite healthy, thanks to efforts by members to raise funds for us all.

In June it was the party and everyone had a good time listening to a very jolly bunch of singers from the Rainham RATS. The buffet was



Teddy Bears' Picnic

This will take place on 20th August this year. (I'm not sure whether we agreed to use the Rectory Grounds or the Church Hall lawn this year, but no doubt I shall be told!) It will be in the hall in the extremely unlikely event of rain. All children are invited. Food and drink will be provided. They may bring their teddy. In fact we encourage them to do so. They must bring an adult carer.

Nature notes May 2014

"The Dragonfly" Alfred Lord Tennyson

Today I saw the dragonfly
Come from the wells where he did lie
An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk; from head to tail

Came out clear plates of sapphire mail
He dried his wings; like gauze they grew;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living Flash of light he flew.

We are still in Wiltshire on the first morning of the month. The sheep are lying down in the field above us. The trees are still. A magpie and jackdaws come for the bread put out for them. Crows join them, swooping down from the trees. Rain is falling by the middle of the morning. A very large beetle flies into the back porch. I have never seen one like it before. Heavy rain falls in the afternoon when we drive to Erlestoke to see a friend and some of her family. We drive through the beautiful countryside where the views are breath taking. The rolling Plain, green fields and cow parsley lining the verges paint a delightful picture. A lamb had been born in the field that morning. The next day , we travel home. Along the route May blossom adorns the hawthorns like snow.

The 3rd is a beautiful day of blue skies and golden sunshine. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy. Oxeye daisies adorn the banks; they are simple but beautiful flowers. The fresh greens of Spring are highlighted by the bright sunshine. Easterly breezes bring a chill to the air. A thrush in the garden sings into the evening. The next morning the thrush sings lustily and is joined later by a chiffchaff. The early afternoon skies become hazy but clear again later. The sun shines brightly from a blue sky in the morning. The trees at Bluewater are in full leaf and a hawthorn is bedecked with deep pink flowers. Vetch, lucerne, and sainfoin are blooming and the green plants are growing in profusion bearing more flower buds. Each morning I hear the call of the chiffchaff.

delicious with both savoury and sweet food. After such a long wet winter and spring, it was just the sort of atmosphere that was needed and lifted everyone's spirits There was a table quiz, which everyone said was hard, but they all managed to get a lot right, and the winners each received a small prize. We ended with the birthday cake made by Joan and cut by three members whose birthdays were rather special ones this month.

Several members had made cakes and helped at the Cuxton Village lunch day. The weather was warm and sunny and the cakes and cups of tea and squash disappeared quickly. The WI made a healthy profit which helped to fund our party buffet etc..

Our next meeting is on Thursday July 3rd at 7.30 pm at the Church Hall. This will be a Dabble Evening when members can have a try at all sorts of crafts. Do come along if you would like to have a go. You may discover a hidden talent ! Sheila.

Billowing white clouds drift across the sky on 7th. The garden is filled with bright sunshine and birdsong fills the air. A heavy shower falls in the afternoon. The 8th is a grey day. On 9th the sun is shining in the early morning when billowing clouds are marching across the sky driven by westerly winds. A shower falls before we take Murphy to Bluewater but it does not last long. All the trees look so fresh and green and May blossom blooms. The 10th is a blustery day with sunshine and showers. The wind strengthens in the afternoon and the branches of the trees bend and bow as though they will break. Dark clouds drift across the sky bringing some rain and, eventually, a rainbow appears. The 11th is fine and warm with billowing grey and white clouds. In the afternoon, I make a visit to the white pit off Pilgrims Road. Beautiful silver birches grow on the slopes of the cliff faces and saplings of the same species grow on the grassy area where we walk. Bugle blooms in profusion. I also see wild strawberry, buttercup, dog rose, herb robert, creeping jenny, forget-me-not, wayfaring tree, May blossom, speedwell, primrose, dog violet, bird's foot trefoil, sanicle, dog's mercury, ferns, garlic mustard. I also see a badgers' sett. The warm rays of the sun filter through the trees. On 13th, golden sun beams down from a blue sky brushed with billowing white clouds driven by fresh westerly winds. I walk up the church path where garlic mustard, herb robert, hawkweed, elder flower and red dead nettle bloom. And into Church Fields. Forget-me-nots bloom in the grass and bristly ox tongue grows on the edge of the brambles. Golden buttercups bloom in two of the fields; white frothy cow parsley adorns the other two. There is a combination of perfumes emanating from cow parsley, May blossom and elder flowers. Bird song fills the air. I hear a pheasant, a chiffchaff, a blackbird and a thrush. Dog roses bloom near the elders. The wych elm between the two fields has grown magnificently having taken the place of the one damaged in the storm of 1987. Some red hips from the previous Autumn remain on their twigs. I walk up the narrow path adorned on either side by cow parsley. It reminds me of Laurie Lee's descriptions in his book "Cider with Rosie". Ash trees are in full leaf.

In Mays Wood cow parsley covers every space for about fifty yards and its bitter sweet perfume fills the air. There are broken twigs and small branches lie on the woodland floor. A few late bluebells are to be seen and yellow archangel blooms. I also see beautiful beech trees, herb robert, woodruff, speedwell, vetch, and helleborines. The fields have been ploughed. I sit on a seat overlooking Bush Valley and watch insects dancing on the air. The white clouds look like mountains. I re-cross the fields and make my way home. On 14th a bright moon hovers in the night sky. The next day, I listen, in the garden, to vibrant calls of a chiffchaff. A blackbird sings its beautiful song in the evening as the light fades. This is repeated the next evening. A jay comes for food on 17th. The 18th is beautiful with warm sunshine and blue skies. A chiffchaff takes centre stage in the choir of bird song. The 19th is another lovely day when we walk round the lake at Bluewater. Sainfoin, vetch, Lucerne, knapweed, ox eye daisies and hawkweed bloom in profusion. A warm westerly wind blows and the temperature rises. A great spotted woodpecker perches on a tree trunk near the car park. It is such a handsome bird. The next day a pair of shelduck glides on the water. I walk to the village on 22nd. Then, on my way back through Six acre Wood, a slow worm appears across my path. Cow parsley blooms and clumps of herb robert peep out from among the parsley flowers. Much needed rain falls on 23rd and 24th. On 27th on my way home and approaching the RSPCA centre I see a pair of greylag geese with six offspring on the grass verge on the side of the road. They are an engaging sight. The last day of the month is warm with blue skies flecked with white clouds. I walk to the village, passing privet flowers with their bittersweet scent. I return through Six acre Wood where cow parsley plants have now lost their flowers. I walk up the slope where I see dove's foot cranesbill, to the fields where pink clover, buttercups, daisies, dog roses, elderflower and upright hedge parsley bloom. The fields are beautiful in the sunlight and the river sparkles. I find a clump of purple vetch while listening to bird song. Elizabeth Summers.

Multilingual Humour

An Englishwoman is learning French. Gaining in confidence, when the telephone rings, she answers, *Bonjour*. The voice on the other end replies, *This is the coalman. Do you want it a la carte or cul de sac?*

During the occupation, two German officers are in a Parisian cafe. One demands champagne. *Oui, Monsieur*, the waiter replies. *Dry? No, you fool, says the German, zwei.*

Same cafe after liberation, two British officers. A fly lands on the table and, showing off, one of them says *un mouche*. *Non, Monsieur, says the waiter, une mouche.* The Englishman responds, *Dashed good eyesight, these frogs, what?*

Max's Tail Piece



Tomorrow (14th June) I shall be 13. That's 91 in human years. You may say I don't look it, but, to be honest, this is a very old picture. I was almost a puppy when it was taken! Master's excuse for not substituting a more recent photograph is that it is hard to find one which comes out properly on the page, given the reprographic system we use for the magazine. That is why there are so few pictures in it. Only black and white line drawings really work. Even so, some people who meet me in the flesh, so to speak, tell me that I am very good for my age. To what do I attribute my youthful good looks and continuing athletic prowess? Plenty of exercise in the fresh air; a sufficiency, but not an excess, of sensibly, but not fanatically, healthy food; and a sunny disposition. Rather like Master really, although it is perhaps more doubtful to say that he has a sunny disposition. He tells me that I do not have to face the strains and stresses that he does. [He is wont to tell people that everyone else in the room including me would chair the PCC better than he does, but they won't let me do it, even though he offered to cut the cemetery and churchyard grass in exchange, to do a job he can do, rather than to attempt one he can't. I can't push a mower but I can win people's hearts. Master is the exact opposite to me.] Oh and cod liver oil. A daily spoonful of that keeps my joints relatively supple, except for when I first get up in the mornings. I admit I can be a bit slow coming downstairs, but, as Master so wisely points out, I don't have to go up them in the first place. However, if he goes for a run in the early morning, he takes me round the garden first. Then I go back upstairs to watch from the landing to see if I can see him coming back or the paper girl arriving. If he cuts things a bit fine, he has to wash, shave and dress in double quick time and then we have to run up to church. By 7.00, I am more than up for it. He gets stiff joints too, but he won't take cod liver oil himself. He only believes in taking medicine as a last resort. Otherwise, he says, as you get used to it, you need bigger and bigger doses to have the same effect, you might find that you can't live without it, and side effects are not unlikely to kick in with any chronic drug usage. At the first Pharmacology (study of medicines) lecture Master ever went to, the professor reminded the class that the word pharmacology comes from the Greek word for poison, and, at one of the first Anatomy lectures he attended, the professor (a different professor) pointed out that most things clear up on their own anyway, and that therefore the doctor needs to get his medicine in quickly if he wants the credit for curing what nature would have cured anyway. So Master never takes patent medicines and only goes to see the doctor as a last resort. In fact, twice the NHS have written to him asking whether, seeing as they haven't seen him for so long, he still wishes to be registered. Maybe they thought he was already dead!

Coming back to me, good for my age. I can still enjoy long walks. One of my favourites is up through the woods to Upper Halling on the second Sunday of each month. Last Sunday, someone asked Master whether he could still walk as far as Upper Halling. He wasn't impressed! As the months pass by, we see the trees come into leaf and the different kinds of wild flower, the bluebells being the most spectacular. We see all sorts of birds and squirrels and rabbits, the occasional fox, and, very rarely a badger or even a family of badgers. Dawn is the best time to see badgers. Probably dusk as well, but this time of the year Master is enjoying his cocoa long before dark and the farthest we are likely to go at that time of night is the garden. I always have been a bit reluctant myself to go out for that last walk round the garden, even when I was a puppy. Master singing *Come into the Garden Max*, to the approximate tune of *Come into the Garden Maud*, isn't really an incentive. He insists, however, on the grounds that I might otherwise need to go out into the garden in the early hours of the morning. So, it's garden before bed, says Master, or learn to use the water closet. Badgers. There probably are badgers in our garden though we have never seen them. There is quite a clearing in the Rose of Sharon and an enormous stone has been moved and a hole dug. Some kind of flying insect was coming out of the hole and Master thinks that a badger had probably tried to get into the nest to eat the eggs or grubs. If you've ever tried pulling out Rose of Sharon, you'll know it must have been something quite strong that effected the excavation. Having said that, the yellow flowers, which are just coming out, are extremely beautiful. The plant spreads like wildfire and suppresses almost every kind of weed. Planting Rose of Sharon is a good bet for an otherwise infertile space in the garden. Letting it take over is far better than watching the slow death of the more delicate plants he optimistically put in a quarter of a century ago. Rose of Sharon is of the same family as St John's Wort – well known for the anti-depressant medicine which can be extracted from it. Again beware. Anyone other than an expert

attempting to synthesise the drug from the plant is likely to create a poison. Even properly prepared, the medication is not without side effects. It is a great mistake to assume that herbal remedies are any safer or more effective than medicines produced in the laboratory – which have probably been more thoroughly tested and manufactured to a much higher standard of purity. Badgers. One day, running up Bush Road, Master actually had a badger run into him as it crossed the road. He came off better than badgers usually do when they are hit on the roads. In fact some people say that they have only seen dead badgers, but there are plenty of living ones around Cuxton and Halling. Just ask the people whose lawns they dig up.

Where was I? Walking to Upper Halling. Why do I particularly like second Sundays? We have tea in the Jubilee Hall at 4.30 before Evening Prayer at 5.30. Healthy eating goes into abeyance: sausage rolls; sandwiches, egg, ham, salmon, other kinds of fish, cheese. He doesn't give me the cheese straws. He doesn't usually feed me cake, but sometimes I get lucky and someone else does. Well it's only once a month and you can feel my ribs. So I am not obese. I do tend to spit out the salad on the hall floor. Master doesn't like this, but there isn't much he can do about it, except pick it up, hopefully before someone slips on it.

My fans say that they like reading about my walks in this magazine. Some dogs are jealous. And so are some people. I might be going on the Christian Aid Walk on 21st June. Master hasn't decided yet whether or not to take me. It could be too far. Also I am somewhat prone to embarrass him in company. On my lead, I keep pulling. Off it, I get into places I possibly ought not to get into. Mind you, the man who threatened me with his stick for trying to be friendly shouldn't have complained because I then barked at him. I was frightened as well as offended that my love was not only unrequited but repaid with threats of violence. Still it takes all sorts.

I think it's a good bet that I shall join Master and his friend for the next stretch of the North Downs Way, Charing to Wye, in a couple of weeks' time. We shall go on the train to Charing, get up on to the downs somewhere and resume where we left off a few weeks ago. Hopefully there will be a pub at Wye which both serves food and welcomes dogs.

As I'm slowing down a bit, he no longer feels obliged to take me for a walk every day, if he has been for a run, and there are plenty of other opportunities for me in the day. So once every few weeks, I might have the odd walkless day. When people are coming calling, especially, if they have dogs, Master thinks that might be enough excitement for me. Likewise if we go to a church function where I have lots of human friends.

In these last few weeks, Master has been battling the garden. Although he is entitled to time off, it can sometimes be difficult to get it, and looking after the garden often gets neglected at this time of year, just as everything is experiencing a spurt in growth. In this enormous garden, jobs usually take a whole morning, afternoon or even day. He doesn't like leaving them half done and if he has to stop even for a brief official function which requires him to shower and put on clean clothes, he tends not to go back to the hot and dusty job he was doing before. So he's been catching up, cutting all this grass, hacking back the edges, cutting the hedges, weeding the flower beds. He may not have enough time or energy left to take me for a walk, but that, he thinks, doesn't really matter if I can spend a lot of time outdoors with him in the garden. When I was younger, I wasn't trusted to stay in the garden, as I so much enjoyed exploring. Now he thinks I am too old to go far. I'm certainly not going to jump the bottom wall. After a mike round, I like to lie in the sun until, it gets too hot, when I disappear into the shade. Master is rather sad that he can only give me my freedom now that I am too old to make full use of it. I'm happy just sleeping in the sun, however. The vet told Master that I can use sunlight to synthesise vitamin D just as he can. That must be a good thing. He read in today's paper that a lot of middle aged people will die prematurely from vitamin D deficiency. This may be caused in part because people are afraid to eat the dairy products which contain it because of cholesterol and fat and because they are afraid to expose themselves to the sun in case they get skin cancer. Perhaps they should take cod liver oil. It would be nice to think that there was a perfect amount of exposure to sunlight which enabled you to make the vitamin D you need with no risk of causing cancer, but there isn't. We're all going to die of something, no matter how careful we are, no matter what we eat, no matter what exercises we perform, no matter what medicines we take. Master says that what happens after death is of much greater and indeed eternal significance. So, for results that last, time invested in the church is likely to be more beneficial than time spent in the gym, the doctor's surgery or the nutritionalist's clinic. Max.