

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
5 th June Trinity 2	9.30 Family Communion	I Kings 17 vv 17-24 p359 Galatians 1 vv 11-24 p1168 Luke 7 vv 11-17 p1035
12 th June Trinity 3 90 th Birthday HMQ	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	II Samuel 11 v26 – 12 v10 p315 Galatians 2 vv 15-21 p1169 Luke 7 v36 – 8 v3 p1036
19 th June Trinity 4	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 65 vv 1-9 p751 Galatians 3 vv 23-29 p1170 Luke 8 vv 26-39 p1038
26 th June Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Galatians 5 vv 1-25 p1171 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
3 rd July St Thomas	9.30 Family Communion	Habakkuk 2 vv 1-4 p941 Ephesians 2 vv 19-22 p1174 John 20 vv 24-29 p1089

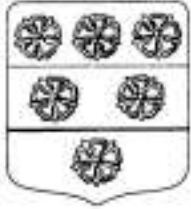
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling

5 th June Trinity 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 8 v15 – 9 v17 p9 Mark 4 vv 1-20 p1005
	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 17-24 p359 Galatians 1 vv 11-24 p1168 Luke 7 vv 11-17 p1035
12 th June Trinity 3 90 th Birthday HMQ	11.00 Holy Communion	II Samuel 11 v26 – 12 v10 p315 Galatians 2 vv 15-21 p1169 Luke 7 v36 – 8 v3 p1036
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 13 vv 1-18 p14 Mark 4 vv 21-41 p1006
19 th June Trinity 4	11.00 Holy Communion Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 65 vv 1-9 p751 Galatians 3 vv 23-29 p1170 Luke 8 vv 26-39 p1038
Friday 24 th June Nativity of St John the Baptist Preacher the Archdeacon	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Acts 13 vv 13-26 p1107 Luke 1 vv 57-66 & 80 p1027
26 th June Trinity 5	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Galatians 5 vv 1-25 p1171 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
3 rd July St Thomas	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	II Samuel 15 vv 16-21 p320 John 11 vv 1-16 p1077
	11.00 Holy Communion	Habakkuk 2 vv 1-4 p941 Ephesians 2 vv 19-22 p1174 John 20 vv 24-29 p1089

The 11th is St Barnabas' Day, HC at Cuxton at 8.00. 29th is St Peter & St Paul, HC at Cuxton at 9.30.

Holy Communion at Cuxton on Wednesdays at 9.30		Holy Communion at Halling on Thursdays at 9.30	
1 st June Justin Martyr	II Timothy 1 vv 1-12 Mark 12 vv 18-27	2 nd June	II Timothy 2 vv 8-15 Mark 12 vv 28-34
8 th June Thomas Ken	I Kings 18 vv 20-39 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	9 th June Columba	I Kings 18 vv 41-46 Matthew 5 vv 20-26
15 th June	II Kings 2 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 1-18	16 th June	Isaiah 63 vv 7-9 Matthew 6 vv 7-15
22 nd June Alban	II Kings 22 v8 – 23 v3 Matthew 7 vv 15-20	23 rd June	II Kings 24 vv 8-17 Matthew 7 vv 21-29
29 th June Ss Peter & Paul	Acts 12 vv 1-11 Matthew 16 vv 13-19	30 th June	Amos 7 vv 10-17 Matthew 9 vv 1-8

Copy Date July Magazine: 10th June 8.30 am Rectory.



St Barnabas

Our magazine covers are chosen roughly to match the time of year in which each issue comes out. Usually, but not always, they are on a religious theme. We had an idea once of getting local people to produce a suitable line drawing we could use for a particular month, but only one person was ever brave enough to try. The invitation is still there for 2017, however, if you would like to have a go. It needs to be monochrome and without too much shading.

This month's cover is a symbol of St Barnabas, whose feast day falls on the 11th June. It is made up of three rows of roses, though I can't find out why, even from the internet. Maybe it is just that roses are abundant in June and so available for a celebration!

What do we know about Barnabas? He was a Jew from Cyprus and a Levite. This was the tribe which supplied the religious ministers in Old Testament times. He was originally called Joseph and then named Barnabas, which, we are told, means son of consolation. In the very early days of the Church, the believers all shared their wealth and belongings, worshipped daily in the temple, broke bread in one another's houses and enthusiastically soaked up the teaching of the apostles. Barnabas was one of the thousands in Jerusalem who first received and acted on the Gospel message. It's a model of church life – mutual love, faithful witness.

Others, however, were antagonised by Jesus and the Gospel. (It's human nature to rebel against God.) They tried to suppress and exterminate the infant Church. One of the most active of these persecutors was Saul of Tarsus. He even travelled as far as Damascus in order to bring believers there back to Jerusalem to be punished. On the way, however, the Risen Christ appeared to Saul and Saul believed and was baptised. He began to preach the Gospel. When he returned to Jerusalem, however, not surprisingly people didn't trust him. They found it hard to believe that the persecutor was now a preacher. It was Barnabas who recognised what God had done in Saul's life and demonstrated to the rest of the Church that they could trust him. We too need the grace to discern other people's good qualities (and our

own) and to support and encourage them in what they are doing for God and for other people.

Believers in Antioch began to share the Good News with Gentiles as well as Jews. Many believed and the Church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to encourage and support them. He realised that Saul was just the man they needed and he went to Tarsus to fetch him from where he had been staying in relative obscurity. See how believers spontaneously shared their faith. See how the Church supported them in their witness.

Saul, shortly to be called Paul, and Barnabas were sent by the Church at Antioch on a missionary journey. Paul was the main preacher. They preached the Good News and performed many miracles. They established churches where people believed, but they also experienced opposition and persecution. At Lystra, the pagans even thought that Paul and Barnabas were pagan gods come down from heaven. The apostles soon stopped them from worshipping them, however, and told them to worship God alone. Barnabas' relative John Mark accompanied them on this trip, but went home early for reasons not given.

There are 15 men mentioned as apostles in the Bible – the original twelve, Matthias (who replaced Judas), Paul and Barnabas. Jesus is the first apostle. An apostle is someone who is sent by God. All Christians belong to the apostolic Church, founded on Christ and His apostles, and sent out into the world to proclaim the Good News in what we say, by what we do and, above all, by what we are.

After the huge success of the first Gentile missions, there was a dispute as to whether Gentiles had first to become Jews if they wanted to become Christians. After all, it was a new idea, that the promises were for all nations, not just the descendants of Abraham. They held a Council at Jerusalem. They listened to one another. They shared their experiences. They referred to the Scriptures. They attended to the Holy Spirit. In other words, they conducted themselves as a church meeting ought to be conducted. Barnabas and Paul, with certain other respected men, were given the task of telling the church at Antioch what had been decided. Barnabas (and Peter) did, however, lapse for a while on this issue and Paul had to put them right. The best of us can make

mistakes, but they're not necessarily fatal if we're prepared to listen. We are actually supposed to put one another right, but in a spirit of humility, not with any feelings of superiority.

They then embarked on another missionary journey, but Paul was reluctant to take Mark because he had let them down before. So Barnabas took Mark home to Cyprus and Paul took a new companion, Silas, on his second missionary journey. In this case, family loyalty

won out, but they all seem to have remained friends and Mark was a great help to Paul in his old age and imprisonment.

We're not told much more about Barnabas. Tradition has it that he was eventually martyred for his faith in Cyprus, but he is much loved and you will see him represented in stained glass on the northern side of the chancel at St John's. You can celebrate his feast with us at Cuxton at 8.00 on his feast day, the 11th of this month. Roger.

O Lord God Almighty, who didst endue thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost: Leave us not, we beseech thee, destitute of thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to thy honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Girlguiding

The Rainbow, Brownies and Guides are all members of Girl guiding and are aged from 5 years old upwards. We meet at Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling every week during term time. Our aim in girl guiding is to help girls and young women develop emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually, so that they can make a positive contribution to their community and the wider world.

Our girls would like to help our local community by doing a sponsored walk, summer fayre and other events to raise money to replace the windows in the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling. Our aim is to raise £4000 to replace the old single glazed windows with stronger double glazed windows. We would be grateful for any assistance you might be able to give us in achieving our aim. Please contact trudybarnowl@orangehome.co.uk / bluebellpalmer@aol.co.uk if you would like more information or if you can support us. Thank You.

Prayer Network

A group of us commit to praying for particular people and their needs. We keep in contact by 'phone or e mail and undertake to pray for those for whom prayer has been asked. It is wonderful to be able to support one another and to thank God for the answers we receive. If you would like to join the network, please contact Buffy Maisey. It's something you can do without even leaving your own home.

If you have a prayer request, please ask Buffy (elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk, 727126) or the Rector or leave a note in the box provided at the back of St Michael's Church.

Psalm 139: O Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me : thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed : and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue : but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether. Thou hast fashioned me behind and before : and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me : I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit : or whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there : if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning : and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there also shall thy hand lead me : and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me : then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day : the darkness and light to thee are both alike. For my reins are thine : thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My bones are not hid from thee : though I be made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect : and in thy book were all my members written; Which day by day were fashioned : when as yet there was none of them. How dear are thy counsels unto me, O God : O how great is the sum of them! If I tell them, they are more in number than the sand : when I wake up I am present with thee. Wilt thou not slay the wicked, O God : depart from me, ye blood-thirsty men. For they speak unrighteously against thee : and thine enemies take thy Name in vain. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee : and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? Yea, I hate them right sore : even as though they were mine enemies. Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me : and lead me in the way everlasting.

The Worst Possible Result in the EU Referendum

The worst possible result would be for one side or the other to win by a small majority on a low turnout. The effect of such a result could well be that the losing side felt that they were robbed and set about sabotaging whatever had been decided or else that they kept on demanding a rerun until they got the result they wanted. So please ensure that you vote on June 23rd so that it is clear that whatever is decided it is the decision of the whole country. I know it is very difficult to know for certain whether it is better to leave the EU or to remain within it. However, you aren't being asked as just one individual to decide. You are being asked to share the decision with millions of others. There is something called the wisdom of crowds. The idea is that one person or a small group of people may be wrong but a large number of people deciding together are more likely to get it right. I suppose that is a good argument for democracy. So, if we all sincerely do our best to decide and vote for what we really believe to be right, taking all the millions of votes together, there is a good chance that the country will make the right decision. You could do worse than to pray about it. RIK.

St John's Draw April: £5 each to Mr Head (4), Mrs Mattingly (65), Miss Crowhurst (158) & Mrs Clark (180) – drawn by Mr Hubbard. If you would like to join the draw, please contact Betty Head (240889).



Christian Aid

We may not have been able to collect in your road in Christian Aid Week this year. If you would nevertheless like to give to this very worthy cause, you can use the envelope supplied with your magazine and return it either to your local church or direct to Christian Aid. Thank you in anticipation of your generosity.

Forthcoming Attractions

9th June: 2.00 – 4.00 Tea with the Maiseys at 106, Charles Drive. All welcome.
12th June: Big Lunch 90th Birthday HMQ Cuxton Recreation Ground
24th June: St John's Patronal Festival 7.30 pm – preacher the Archdeacon.
9th July: Barbecue 6.00 pm Rectory

10th July: 4.30 pm Michael Hudson of the Bible Society will join us for tea and Evening Prayer at the Jubilee Hall and tell us about the Bible in Cambodia.
17th September: 7.30 Quiz for Christian Aid at St Nicholas.
29th September 7.30 pm St Michael's Patronal Festival – preacher the Rural Dean.

Garden Maintenance

All aspects of garden maintenance undertaken
RHS trained, fully insured
Competitive rates, references available

Phone Bev on 01634 717523 or 07837 159205

HAVE YOU COME ACROSS OUR CROSS?

The cross outside the URC Chapel in Bush Road was removed some time between the afternoon of Thursday 7th and the morning of Sunday 10th April. It is of no monetary value but is very important to us. We are feeling hurt and confused as to why anyone should have wanted to take it away so, if you know where it is, would you please let tell us – or, if you have it, better still, return it to the Chapel. We won't be angry we just want our cross back ! Contact Janet Greaves 719474.

Here's a Thought. If this has been broken up and thrown away, it's just two pieces of wood. If it's intact it's symbol of the most important event in the history of the universe.



Cuxton WI Report for 2016

We have had a very good and interesting year with 47 members. This is mainly because we have had a full and enthusiastic committee with everyone helping each other with jobs etc. Pat has been our fit and able President for the past 4/5 years and has earned our respect and friendship for all her hard work and commitment. However, she now feels that she would like to enjoy her years with Vic and go on holidays etc., without having to worry about extra WI duties. I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say how grateful we are to Pat for all the hard work and enjoyment you have shown in the "job".

Our year's activities started in June with a special meal in the White Hart to celebrate our own 70th birthday. As it was the year of the WI 100th this was quickly followed by a boat ride on the Thames during which we enjoyed an excellent lunch. Two members attended the Buckingham palace garden party and really enjoyed themselves even retaining their hats in the breezy weather. Several others went to the scarecrow exhibition at Lullingstone on a very hot day. Our speakers this year have ranged from talks about the history of Strood, Dogs for Medical Detection - amazing that one - belly dancing, early years at the BBC - fascinating stories of stars etc., poems, medieval housewives and a lovely display and tasting of Kent Fine Foods.

Five Pounds for Anyone Who Can Solve this Problem for Us

At our annual meeting on 30th April, the question was asked why (given that at £1,083 for the year) gas is one of the biggest costs to the church hall, the hall heating is run 24 hours a day every day of the year, Winter and Summer, and that the thermostat is set at a temperature which many hall users find uncomfortably hot. This is why you see the windows open even in quite cool weather when the hall is in use – though this just makes the heaters burn even more gas. By way of comparison, this year's hall profit was just £313.26, a third of the gas bill! We were told that it was far too difficult to alter the controls and that the only hope was that at some undefined future date someone might donate the money for an automatic clock to control the heating. A clock would not, however, alter the thermostat. More importantly, surely on a system only recently installed, there must somewhere be an on and off switch. Some time in the Spring the system could be turned off and in the Autumn it could be turned back on again. Maybe, even in the Winter, it could be turned off when the hall was not in use or at least turned down to say 5 degrees, the temperature necessary to prevent the pipes freezing. When the hall is in use in the Winter, surely, it should be possible to adjust the thermostat depending on the use. Martial arts and dancing classes probably do not need it as warm as a discussion group, say. Band practice would really appreciate a cooler environment.

If you, therefore, can come up with a way of controlling the hall heating and turning it off when it is not needed, I am willing to donate £5.00 to church funds in your name. You could save us hundreds. Roger.

Other activities have included our cake and teas stall at the Cuxton big lunch, Christmas Trees in the local Halling church, outings to see Wicked and Beautiful in London and The Witches of Eastwick at the Hazlitt in Maidstone. Members went to the Home Economics day at Ditton, the Art and Craft day also at Ditton and the really enjoyable Council Meeting at Tunbridge Wells. Our craft group have produced a lovely embroidered table cloth for our use. A wall hanging is now finished and will be hung locally. A workshop was successfully held in the church hall. Our other in-house groups have been busy as well; Poetry, Cookery, China and Watercolour painting, and the Walking group. Our trading stall is held monthly and brings in some much needed funds and Alma and Chris spend every spare minute knitting little souvenirs for us to buy for Christmas etc.

As I said at the beginning - a good Year and I notice when I read through my report how many times I have put in the word *enjoyable*, surely more important than anything else I can say. Thank you all. Sheila Underdown Hon Sec.

This is a copy of the annual report that the Secretary has to present at the AGM. I thought it would show you some of the different things that we get up to over the year. Our next meeting is our party for members only. but on July 7th however, we are hearing about the Medway Queen, one of the little Dunkirk boats. So please come along then.

Tea at the Maiseys

Ray and Buffy Maisey have kindly invited us to tea in their garden on 9th June, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm. All are welcome and we hope to see as many of you as possible there. The event is to raise funds for the church. Ray and Buffy's home is 106, Charles Drive, Cuxton.

Easter 7 (Sunday after Ascension) 2016 Prayer

Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868, Psalm 97, Acts 16 vv 16-40 p1112, Revelation 22 vv 12-21 p1250, John 17 vv 20-26 p1085

When I was a child and one of us complained that some electrical appliance wasn't working, my mother always used to say, *Is the plug in?* That's a good start! Nothing electrical is going to work without a source of power. In the same way, we human beings are powerless without God. Prayer is like putting the plug in. We connect with God. It's not a bad analogy. One word for a generator of electricity is *dynamo*. St Paul calls Jesus *the Christ the δυναμιν of God and the σοφίαν of God*, the power and wisdom of God. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we are plugged into God.

We can take the analogy further. Electricity powers the lights which lighten our darkness. Electric fires provide warmth. Electric motors are the motive force behind our local trains. Stationary electric motors make all kinds of machinery work. Vacuum cleaners suck clean. Washing machines wash clean. Electronic guidance systems guide us. All kinds of electronic devices are involved in the healing processes of modern medicine. You probably know the urban myth about the doctors who wondered why so many patients in one particular bed died unexpectedly. It turned out that the hospital cleaner regularly unplugged the ventilator so that she could plug in her polishing machine. Electricity powers radio and television, telephones, computers and other forms of communication and computation. These devices provide music. They speak the word. They inform. They keep records of our heritage. They enable us to calculate, prognosticate and generally to plan for the future. So light, comfort, motivation, work, cleansing, guidance, healing, music, preaching, education and edification, tradition, prophecy. Am I talking about electricity or the Holy Spirit? Whichever, you need to be plugged in, plugged into the mains socket or plugged into God in prayer.

But is it possible, to be plugged in all the time? Surely, the cables are too short to stay plugged in whatever you're doing. You can't be in church or even on your knees at home all the time. What about batteries? Well, there's the battery in your torch. It should really be called a dry cell. The chemicals in a torch battery generate electricity until they are used up. Then the light fades and dies. So it is with people who try to live their lives in their own strength without God. They use up their God-given resources. They fade and they die. Better is the battery in your mobile 'phone, better, but not perfect. You can recharge your 'phone. In the same way, you can come to church each week, keep a prayer time every day and so recharge your spiritual batteries for when you have to out into the world without God. Now that doesn't sound right does it? Where in the world could you be without God? Nowhere; that's where. Your spiritual life can't be like your mobile 'phone, running down between charges, useless when there's no signal. You need a constant source of power, like your landline, plugged into the BT system. Doesn't St Paul say, *pray without ceasing*, but how is that possible? Just as you can't use an electric mower to cut the rectory grass because the cable would be too short or else it would get tangled up in the trees and bushes which get in the way of an uncomplicated run at it, surely you can't be expected to be plugged into God all the time, whatever you are doing, wherever you go, no matter how busy and full your life is.

Let me change the analogy. Let's say your power doesn't come from a wall socket connected to the mains or a battery. How about being an electric train, picking up juice from a third rail, or a tram or a trolleybus, drawing current from overhead wires? The third rail and the overhead cables go everywhere the train, tram or trolleybus has to go. In the same way, God is with us wherever we go. It is possible for our lives to be a conversation with God. *He walks with me and He talks with me along life's narrow way*. If we are mindful of the fact that we are always in God's Presence, we may indeed *pray without ceasing*; we are always

connected to the source which sustains us and guides us and empowers us to do God's work in the world, so that His Name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, His Will be done on earth as it is in heaven, that we may receive our bread daily, that our sins may be forgiven as we forgive those who sin against us and that we may be protected from all temptation and evil.

One final thought from another childhood story. My grandfather told me that, as a young man, he used to wonder what would happen if the overhead wire which supplied the trams with electricity should break. One day he saw it happen in Dock Road, Chatham. and it was just what you would expect. There was a terrific blue flash and all the trams stopped. The Christian life is a corporate endeavour. We are all in this together. We depend on one another, the Church of God. If the infrastructure of the Church collapses because of lack of support, we shall all be cut off from the source of our power, but that's another sermon for another time.

Bush Road Traffic Lights

I have tried to keep out of the debate about the possibility of traffic lights at the Bush Road / Station Road / Rochester Road junction. This is because I really don't know what is for the best. I was a little bit concerned to read that the money promised can't be used for anything else as that might tempt us to install traffic lights for no other reason than to spend the money, which could be a mistake. One always has to beware of the politician's syllogism. "Something must be done. This is something. So we had better do it." This way of thinking infects the Church as well. Better to do nothing than to do the wrong thing.

There certainly is a problem. At some times of day it takes for ever to get out of Bush Road, especially if you are trying to turn right or if the whole line of traffic you are in is caught behind someone else who wants to turn right. I'm not quite sure why, but the council have ruled out a roundabout. So traffic lights look like an answer. (In these circumstances I have sometimes thought of asking my passenger to jump out and press the button on the pedestrian lights to stop the traffic on the A228!)

Traffic lights would also create problems, however. I am sure that they would cause delays on the A228. As traffic numbers continue to grow on the A228 with all the house-building going on and the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, the harder it will be to get out of Bush Road, but the longer will be the queues on Church Hill and Sundridge Hill.

There are, however, still quiet times of day and night when there is little traffic and lights will be unnecessary. You'll be stopping and waiting and starting again on the hill for no good reason. This is a consideration especially for HGVs and bikes. HGVs stopping and starting on the hill will increase noise and pollution levels. Some cyclists might be tempted to take a chance and not stop at the lights.

I have not seen an answer to the question raised by the council years ago. What happens if a heavy goods vehicle coming too fast down either hill can't stop in time at the red light?

So, I'm not sure whether traffic lights would make the situation better or worse. There have been other ideas like making all traffic coming out of Bush Road turn left so that those going towards Halling would have to turn at the roundabout near the M2. I think, however, that at busy times this would drastically increase congestion on the A228 and on the roundabout in question. The worst case scenario is when, as sometimes happens even now, congestion on the roundabout leads to queuing on the motorway slip roads.

A more radical solution is a Cuxton bypass. That is probably unlikely, given the costs involved. It is not something I would like to see either. A Cuxton bypass would mean the loss of yet more of our beautiful countryside. In the long run, it would just attract more traffic to the area. I don't know about you, but I feel that there is something almost sacrilegious about bulldozing woodland or agricultural land. Whenever I visit Hempstead Valley, I can't help remembering when all that was bluebell woods and farmland. It adds insult to injury to me that they imposed a tree preservation order on the worthless scrub in my garden when there

would be far more trees in the whole of the Medway towns if I had been in charge of planning policy over the last forty years! I signed the petitions against the destruction of so much of our environment. I didn't sit on committees nodding it through.

People do remind me, of course, of the economic gains created by development and the monetary costs of congestion. I have to accept that, but, on the other hand, I am conscious that the Bible says, *The love of money is the root of all evil.* (I Timothy 6¹⁰).

Which brings me to my proposed solution to the problems at Bush Road. Take away the car of anyone who has at least two legs!

Perhaps that would be going too far, but it might be worth pausing to consider at what point the disadvantages of mass transport outweigh the benefits? Or are we just going to carry on building more and more roads until there is nowhere left worth driving to? Shouldn't we be asking ourselves *Is your journey really necessary?* And, if it is, *Couldn't I walk, cycle or take public transport?*

There are the obvious health benefits of walking and cycling. You profit by the exercise. The fewer cars on the road, the less chance of accidents which kill and maim. The fewer vehicles, the less pollution and the less noise. If we walk or cycle or use public transport, we don't use up so much of the earth's reserves of fuel. Even if we use electric cars, the electricity has to come from somewhere. Coal, gas and oil fired power stations pollute. Nuclear power stations create dangerous waste we don't know what to do with. Renewables are unreliable and still have an impact on the environment. Do you like seeing fields of solar panels or hillsides covered in wind farms? Even hydroelectric schemes and tidal barrages present a threat to habitats. Obviously we need fuel. Obviously our need for fuel is damaging to the environment. The question is where should the balance be and we ought at least to give it some consideration before we thoughtlessly destroy everything in a frenzy of selfish overconsumption.

There are also social reasons why mass car ownership may not be desirable. Our towns and villages are cluttered with parked cars. It is seldom truly quiet anymore. There is always traffic noise. Residential streets are much less attractive than they used to be because pretty front gardens have been paved to provide hard-standing for the second and third family car. In some roads, it is not possible to walk on the pavement because of parked cars.

If we come straight out of our front door and get in the car, we don't meet our neighbours and have a friendly chat with them. We don't interact socially with anyone else on the journey. People are amazed when I tell them that I travelled to infant and junior school on the bus on my own. Children are capable of a lot more than we allow in this risk adverse age and its obsession with health and safety, but, to be fair, most people on that bus (including the driver) knew who I was and would have done something if I'd got into trouble or mischief or run into danger.

Incidentally, I sometimes wonder if this underlies some of the behavioural problems which are becoming so prevalent, especially among boys. Strapped into a car and driven to school, a teaching profession 74% female and therefore possibly regarding natural boyish high spirits as naughtiness, outdoor break cancelled at the barest hint of inclement weather, I'd have been crawling up the walls too and probably finished up being medicated with Ritalin.

Places like Cuxton and Halling used to have shops where you could buy everything you needed and reliable, frequent bus services into town. There is a good picture of Strood High Street in the 1950s in the *White Hart*. Note the paucity of cars, the large number of buses and the presence of flourishing businesses both sides of the road. When we started driving into town *en masse*, the village shops began to close and the buses became more infrequent, less reliable and relatively more expensive. The towns then seized up with traffic and councils redeveloped them, knocking down the old buildings with character to make room for

wider roads and car parks. But congestion continued to increase and the best shops and businesses moved out to out of town shopping centres, consuming even more countryside, creating vast volumes of traffic, and leaving historic town centres semi-derelict.

I'm sure people will say that they haven't time not to use their cars. People say they haven't time to go to church either. I just wonder what they spend their time doing? One interesting statistic is that most people are prepared to spend a certain amount of time travelling to work each day. For some, it's half an hour, for some an hour or two hours or even more. If you offer them faster transport, they just live farther away from the office!

As for leisure, even after nearly thirty years of walking, running and cycling, there are places within ten miles of Cuxton Rectory I have never been to. I expect you would have to say the same if you were honest.

I could go on to the amount of lorry traffic. Why, for example, can you buy Dutch carrots in England and English carrots in Holland? If that makes economic sense, I suggest that transport is already too easy and too cheap. Maybe we don't need that Lower Thames Crossing and its associated link roads at all? But if we don't want a rat run running through our community, we surely cannot support rat runs where other people live (We can't be NIMBIES.) and, if we don't want the disadvantages of heavy volumes of traffic on our roads, maybe we need to consider how to reduce our own dependence on vehicles. Roger.

Tommy's Talking Points



It's a beautiful day today, far too nice to be indoors, but I think Master is committed to quite a lot of desk work today. He ought to get out and get some exercise. I see he has just put on a treacle pudding for his dinner! To be fair, we did have a nice long walk in the woods first thing this morning, though it could have been longer still if he'd got up earlier. We went up through the woods to Upper Halling. He enjoyed seeing the last of the bluebells and the burgeoning wild garlic. I enjoyed chasing all sorts of scents which are beyond his comprehension. We met another dog I am very friendly with as well. So that was great. This afternoon a class from Cuxton School will be visiting the Church. That happened yesterday as well and was great. I'm looking forward to this afternoon, seeing lots of happy children and showing them around what one of them called the place where Master works. He maintains he hasn't worked since 1977 and that was in the open air, gardening at the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre, which he wishes wasn't there.

We did go that way this week, however. We went out into the country behind it to get some fuchsias for his pots. For once, he carefully put in the labels that tell him which variety they are. I've taken out some of the labels, however, and chewed them a bit. So he's not too confident now which is which. He was pleased to find his bonsai tree among the weeds. He'd more or less given up hope considering the treatment it had received last year from dogs and small children.

A few weeks ago, we completed our North Downs Way walk east of here walk, Etchinghill to Wye. We got the bus from Folkestone to Etchinghill, which was cheating really, but Master said it wouldn't be much fun walking that section of the route. From Etchinghill it was marvellous. I was allowed off my lead a lot of the time, except where there were sheep or the possibility of sheep. There were lots of new born lambs. The views from the Downs there are stupendous, not that I care as much about that as I do about the opportunity to run and jump for joy. We saw two llamas. Master was a bit anxious about them as they are notorious for attacking dogs. Fortunately they were behind strong fences. We got lost of course. Some sections were very steep, especially when we deviated from the correct pathway. It seemed to tire them somewhat, but it didn't worry me! All grist to the mill. There was a terrific peal of thunder, but it didn't really come on to rain till we'd nearly made Wye. We saw a man with a top hat which said Leave the EU! Then we found a pub happy to accommodate a wet dog, and they ate. Then it was home by train. Quite soon, we'll start on the NDW westbound. The plan is to set out from here. So, as far as Trottscliffe, it will all be familiar, but then we'll be venturing into the wilds of Wrotham. I'll let you know how we get on. Tommy.