

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
3 <sup>rd</sup> June Trinity 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 5 vv 12-15 p184 II Corinthians 4 vv 5-12 p1160 Mark 2 v23 – 3 v6 p1004	
10 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 2	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 3 vv 8-15 p5 II Corinthians 4 v13 – 5v1 p1160 Mark 3 vv 20-35 p1005	
17 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP Trinity 3	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 II Corinthians 5 vv 6-17 p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006	
24 <sup>th</sup> June Nativity of S John the Baptist	9.30 Holy Communion Bernie Pinner of MAF	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 57-66 p1027 Benedictus (All) Luke 1 v80 p1027	
1 <sup>st</sup> July Trinity 5	9.30 Holy Communion	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 II Corinthians 8 vv 1-24 p1162 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
3 <sup>rd</sup> June Trinity 1	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 Luke 16 vv 19-31 p1050	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 5 vv 12-15 p184 II Corinthians 4 vv 5-12 p1160 Mark 2 v23 – 3 v6 p1004	
10 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 3 vv 8-15 p5 Mark 3 vv 20-35 p1005	
	5. 30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Judges 5 vv 1-31 p247 James 2 vv 1-26 p1214	
17 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 3	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen! Bernie Pinner of MAF	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 II Corinthians 5 vv 6-17 p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006	
24 <sup>th</sup> June Nativity of S John the Baptist	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Luke 1 vv 57-66 p1027 Benedictus (All) Luke 1 v80 p1027	
	5.30 Evening Prayer @ St John's after tea at 4.00.	Malachi 4 vv 1-6 p962 Matthew 14 vv 1-12 p12	
1 <sup>st</sup> July Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Peter 3 vv 8-15a p1219 Luke 5 vv 1-11 p1032	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 II Corinthians 8 vv 1-24 p1162 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007	
Holy Communion @ St Michael's Wednesdays 9.30 am		Holy Communion @ St John's Thursdays 9.30 am	
6 <sup>th</sup> June	II Timothy 1 vv 1-12 Mark 12 vv 18-27	7 <sup>th</sup> June	II Timothy 2 vv 8-15 Mark 12 vv 28-34
13 <sup>th</sup> June	I Kings 18 vv 20-39 Matthew 5 vv 17-19	14 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> June I Kings 18 vv 41-46 Matthew 5 vv 20-26
20 <sup>th</sup> June	II Kings 2 vv 1-14 Matthew 6 vv 1-18	21 <sup>st</sup> June	Isaiah 63 vv 7-9 Matthew 6 vv 7-15
27 <sup>th</sup> June S Cyril, Ember Day	II Kings 22 v8 – 23 v3 Matthew 7 vv 15-20	28 <sup>th</sup> June S Irenaeus	II Kings 24 vv 8-17 Matthew 7 vv 21-29

29<sup>th</sup> June is St Peter's Day: Holy Communion @ St Michael's @ 7.30 am.  
Copy Date July Magazine Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June 8.30 am Rectory.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mr Thorne (32), Mrs Mattingly (65), Mrs Bridges (82), Mrs Cheeseman (134) – drawn by Mrs Chidwick.

St Michael's Draw: £10 to Mr & Mrs Gates (16), £5 each to Mrs Booth (21) & Mr Hills (31).

Christian Aid Sponsored Walk 30<sup>th</sup> June.



### Strawberries and Cream

Apparently, after the last war, a vicar was offered a whole field of strawberries. He decided to get some cream and invite the whole parish to a strawberry tea. The afternoon arrived and all the people gathered in the village hall. The embarrassed vicar had a difficult speech to make. Unfortunately, the cream hadn't come. Neither had the strawberries. He did say, however, that all was not lost. He had obtained enough prunes and custard for everyone to have instead.

I'm fascinated by people's reaction to that story. A few react by congratulating the vicar on finding an alternative and think that the people were lucky to be getting a free tea, even if it wasn't what they were expecting. Most people, however, seem to think that the villagers had every right to be disappointed. They had been cheated.

I think, I am afraid, that the point of the story was that people are likely to be disappointed in the Church. In a way, that is inevitable. The Church is God's creation, but it is also a human institution. The prospectus of the Church is a wonderful fellowship of people who love and care for one another, worshipping God and serving the world. The Church is where you find God. The Church is where you experience human fellowship and support. In the Church, your sins are forgiven, you join in the worship of Heaven, you talk to God in prayer and He hears your prayers, you hear His Word read and preached, you are nourished by Christ the Bread of Life in Holy Communion, you are blessed on your journey through life, especially in Baptism and marriage and at your journey's end.

On the other hand, the Church is made up of people like you and me. So the Church is bound to disappoint. Forgiveness requires repentance, which we don't always want to do. The splendid buildings we like to think of as the places where God dwells especially, need a great deal of expensive care and maintenance and hard work on the part of cleaners, gutter cleaner outers and so forth. The delightful churchyard, where we commune with nature and think of our departed loved ones, may be thought of as God's acre, but

the grass needs cutting and the rubbish needs taking away. Our love for one another is less than perfect. We can all be selfish, self-seeking and grumpy. The heavenly music depends on musicians and choristers giving up their time and effort, sometimes when they don't feel like it. God's Word can make us uncomfortable. Preachers may be boring or hard to understand. Along with some of the most profound characters in the Bible and in Church history, there may be times when you wonder whether God is really attending to your prayers. Are you really attending to Him? Prayer and even Holy Communion may seem like a dull, repetitious routine from which we derive little benefit. Blessed we may be, but we may not feel blessed. We may not be profoundly thankful for the blessings we receive and we may treat christenings, weddings and funerals simply as rituals to be gone through and sometimes the Church presents them as though they were.

Would it be unfair to claim that the Church of God combines the sublime and the ridiculous?

The story about the strawberries and prunes comes from a book "*Small Boat, Big Sea – one year's journey as a parish priest*" by the Rev'd Peter Owen Jones. The year in question is 1999 on the threshold of what everybody wrongly celebrated as the dawn of the new millennium. I found it a frustrating and compelling book to read. The author's basic thesis is that the old ways of being Church don't work anymore, but he doesn't seem to have much hope for most of the proposals that are around for new ways of being Church. Where He and I would definitely agree is that it all depends on God, not on us, thankfully. The Church disappoints in every age and generation because God chooses to use human beings like you and me to build it. But He is God. It is in His Wisdom that He entrusts us with His Church and His world and God is the ultimate Guarantor of everything. We are conduits of His grace. *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* (I Corinthians 4<sup>7</sup>). We are the earthen vessels. The treasure is God's grace. Actually, we too are God's treasure and that's a topic for another time.

It ought to be that people experience God in us, in His Church, as people experience God in Jesus. We know from the Gospels that some people

responded to the authentic Presence of God in Jesus by finding in Him everything they needed – forgiveness, healing, direction, purpose, peace, joy, love – but that some responded to the authentic Presence of God in Jesus by rejecting Him and bringing about His cruel death. But they had a fair choice. They encountered God in Him. They were free to choose the way of life or the way of death. It was honestly presented.

So it should be in people's encounters both with individual Christians and with the Church. Such encounters should be an authentic meeting with God, Whom they are then free to choose or to reject, to choose life or not. God will never give up on them or us, but we and they are free to give up on Him. Freedom is His gift to us.

The horrible thought, though, is that both individual Christians and the Church may put people off God. If what people see in us is not of God and they may refuse to draw near to Him because their picture of God is based too much on what they see of our failure to reflect His love. The conduits are blocked. The frail earthen vessels fail totally.

Jones' point is that the Church, especially the village Church, can no longer be what it used to be when one vicar looked after one Church and a village community of a few hundred souls, most of whom were at least nominally members of the Church of England. For one thing, the vicar with several churches couldn't possibly have time to do what his predecessors did. For another, that role is fast fading in an increasingly secular and multicultural society. If most parishioners do not describe themselves as "Church of England", the vicar can't expect to have the influence and power that his predecessors had and maybe people have come to expect less of their vicar than they used to. The Church itself has changed with more opportunities and even demands for us to be involved beyond the parish and, like most human organisations, it is bogged down with more and more red tape, bureaucracy and paperwork.

The state has taken over quite a few of the functions the Church used to exercise – welfare, education, health care, etc. – and it can quite often do these things better. The state can raise money from taxation. It has powers of compulsion to

make people do what is considered to be in their best interests. With all the opportunities we enjoy in the modern world, there is no need for the Church to organise the village social life or sports calendar. Some people might say, "Then do we need the Church at all?" Isn't the Church irrelevant in a multicultural, secular, mainly wealthy country with a welfare state and the NHS?

Actually, the Church does still have a large role in education. There are all those church schools. The Church is very much involved in health care and in all sorts of pastoral situations such as prisons. We fill in some of the gaps left where the state can't or won't help enough – food banks, homeless shelters, street pastors, dementia cafes, youth clubs, overseas aid.

It is also very important to say that the work of the Church is very far from limited to what the clergy do or to what is done under the auspices of synod or of some diocesan board or of the parochial church council. Wherever Christians are doing good, whether in their career, in voluntary or charitable work, in local or national government and community engagement, in their home life, in their leisure activities, there God is working through His Church. It doesn't have to be official and often it is better if it isn't. And of course doesn't work only or even mainly through His Church. Nothing happens without God.

However, more importantly still, you could say that the Church, if no longer needed to organise schools, hospitals and poor relief, is to some extent set free to pursue its core activities – its "unique selling point". We exist first and foremost to worship God. Our experience of God in worship transforms our lives, transforms us into people of love, whose concern it is to share God's love with the world, through prayer on behalf of people, through telling them the Good News, through offering practical support, through transforming the secular community into the Kingdom of God.

Just recently, the cry went up that doctors now find themselves being asked to do what priests used to do for people. As doctors, of course, they can't. They can't speak of what gives meaning to

this life nor of what comes hereafter. Christians can. That is our calling – yours and mine.

There's a lot more to the book. I think he works too long and too hard. I think he takes too much on himself as a minister of religion. The work of God's Church is the work of all God's people, all the baptised. He talks about meetings and people's expectations, visions that are not shared by all, the hurt that can be caused by unreasonable and unkind people, the difficulty that a Church (like a family!) can have dealing with disagreement and wrong-doing in a body in which we all try to love one another, how to meet the very different needs of very different people, some

of which seem to require mutually exclusive answers, like being open to change without being disloyal to what you already have. That book was published more than a decade and a half ago and I'd be interested to know what the author has done since and whether he has come to any conclusions.

That's enough from me for now. It is God's Church. It is God's world. He is the ultimate Guarantor of everything. *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* He's chosen to use us. Roger.

### **Psalm 115.** *Non nobis, Domine*

**N**OT unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give the praise : for thy loving mercy and for thy truth's sake.

2. Wherefore shall the heathen say : Where is now their God?
  3. As for our God, he is in heaven : he hath done whatsoever pleased him.
  4. Their idols are silver and gold : even the work of men's hands.
  5. They have mouths, and speak not : eyes have they, and see not.
  6. They have ears, and hear not : noses have they, and smell not.
  7. They have hands, and handle not; feet have they, and walk not : neither speak they through their throat.
  8. They that make them are like unto them ; and so are all such as put their trust in them.
  9. But thou, house of Israel, trust thou in the Lord : he is their succour and defence.
  10. Ye house of Aaron, put your trust in the Lord : he is their helper and defender.
  11. Ye that fear the Lord, put your trust in the Lord : he is their helper and defender.
  12. The Lord hath been mindful of us, and he shall bless us : even he shall bless the house of Israel, he shall bless the house of Aaron.
  13. He shall bless them that fear the Lord : both small and great.
  14. The Lord shall increase you more and more : you and your children.
  15. Ye are the blessed of the Lord : who made heaven and earth.
  16. All the whole heavens are the Lord's : the earth hath he given to the children of men.
  17. The dead praise not thee, O Lord : neither all they that go down into silence.
  18. But we will praise the Lord : from this time forth for evermore. Praise the Lord.
- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. **Amen.**

### **Memories of Halling in the 1940's by Ron Underdown**

(We are serialising Ron's memories in this Summer's magazines. You can see his whole article online on our webpage under magazine. <http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/Memories%20of%20Halling.pdf>)

Articles concerning shops that existed in Halling years ago, which appeared in issues of the church magazine during 2017, have prompted a trip down memory lane for some of us. I was born in Halling and five years old at the outbreak of the second world war in September 1939. The following is a collection of my childhood memories of life in Halling in the 1940's.

### **Welcome to Halling in 1940**

Imagine a view from the church along the High Street towards the railway bridge without a vehicle in sight. A line of mature elm and sycamore trees in some of the larger front gardens and ornamental iron railings on

the retaining walls. It wasn't long, however, before the war began to take effect on surroundings. The railings, together with others in the village, and a small field gun from the First World War (1914-1918) positioned by the church lych gate as a memorial to Sgt Harris VC, were removed for scrap early in the war. Small squares of metal are still apparent in some of the coping stones on the walls.

Gas was used for street lighting, except during the 'black-out' in the war of course. A pilot light in each lamp was left on and a man using a long pole with a hook, to reach inside the lamp, activated a rocker-arm to turn the gas on or off.

Halling, with a variety of shops, was quite self-sufficient but bread came from Gammon's bakery in Snodland – first by horse-drawn, then a motorised van. Orders could be placed with Harris the grocer and Ashby the butcher for delivery by errand boys riding bicycles with large baskets in front. Milk was delivered by handcarts from local dairies with churns of milk which was served by half-pint scoops poured into a customer's jug, a practice replaced by milkmen delivering bottles of milk. School children were issued with a small bottle each day. Although milk was delivered almost daily, keeping it usable and to prevent waste, particularly in hot weather, was a problem. Bottles would be stood in cold water or, as a last resort, the milk would be boiled. Not particularly appetising in tea!

Allotments, necessary to provide food for the table and help with families' budgets, became important during the war when people were asked to 'Dig for Victory' to help ease food shortages. The main allotments were located between the cemetery and chalk pit (the sandstone parapet of the nearby railway bridge shows areas of wear where gardeners sharpened their knives); another was adjacent to the railway line, where the road leading to Howlsmere Close and the school is now; the houses in Britannia Close occupy another; there were others between houses in the High Street and the 'Institute's' sports field; another opposite the Vicarage and one adjacent to Stake Lane, part of which is still in use.

The village by-pass did not exist and neither did the lake as we see it today. The area was created by the excavation of a chalk hill and the depth by dredging. The source of water, from springs, is part of the local water authorities' supply. The hill was significantly higher than the remaining cliff face would suggest. The slope towards Kent Road made a great toboggan run!

Halling Working Men's Club (the 'Institute'), was an impressive and imposing building in the centre of the village. It had bars for members, a family room and meeting rooms downstairs while upstairs there was a snooker room and a large hall with a stage, back-stage facilities and drapes (curtains) used for dances and wedding receptions. The plus side for children was a superb central banister on the stairs to slide down. During the war, shows were put on by the Follies' Concert Party here in the Institute and in other local villages often supporting fund-raising activities. The photograph was taken during a show in aid of the prisoners of war benevolent fund which appeared, with an article, in the South Eastern Gazette on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1941.



The Institute's sports field (the 'Rec'), had a pavilion built of wood with separate changing rooms for teams, a storage room for kit and a viewing veranda. Viewed from the pavilion, there were tennis courts in the bottom left hand corner of the ground. Already deteriorating (chain-link fencing rusting and broken), with lack of maintenance during the war, the courts were never used again.

Children were allowed to use the goal-posts for a kick-about and could play cricket off the playing area. Travelling fairs with chair-a-planes, roundabout, swings etc. would sometimes use the non-playing area of the ground.

Home entertainment included playing cards and board games, reading or listening to the wireless/radio which required a large battery pack and an accumulator (like a small, glass car battery) which had to be recharged, to provide power and an external aerial to pick up the signal. A wire from the radio to a copper strip set in the ground outside, provided an earth.

Externally, going to the pictures or cinema was popular. Programmes normally included the main film, a 'B' film, Pathé news, advertisements, trailers of forthcoming films and, sometimes, a film 'short' or cartoon. There were cinemas in Snodland, Malling, Strood, Rochester and Chatham served by regular bus services (last bus from Chatham around 10:15pm) and to those in Maidstone by train. The Wardona in Snodland was a favourite since one could walk if necessary and with 'rolling' programmes one could see the main film twice.

One could go roller-skating at the Casino in Rochester and see a live variety show at the Empire in Chatham.

Halling had its own resident 'Bobby' or policeman, complete with bicycle and once, albeit briefly, its own purpose-built police house (1950's).

The Marshes were prone to regular flooding when the sea (river) wall was breached or overflowed. Soil/Clay was excavated and used to raise the height and build a more substantial wall from what is now the step-stile at Low Meadow around to the Elm Haven boat yard at North Halling. Italian prisoners of war provided the labour. The dykes, formed when the soil was excavated, helped to drain the marsh although these are now quite silted-up.

The Ferry, even when the bridge was built, provided an important link with Wouldham, particularly for some residents who needed to get to work on this side of the river. Some caught a bus or train while others brought their bicycle with them. It says much for the skill and strength of the oarsmen, who sometimes rowed standing up to combat the strength of the tide, to get the boat with its occupants to a small landing area the other side of the river.



From Our Tonbridge Correspondent - Billy Graham

In the April magazine, mention was made of the evangelist Billy Graham, who died in February this year. I had the privilege of attending two of his rallies, one at the Westminster Central Hall and another at Wembley Stadium. (I cannot recall the years of the rallies.) Whenever we sing or I hear sung *Just As I Am, Without One Plea*, it brings back moving memories of those occasions. As he made his appeal, after his moving exhortation, a huge choir in the background would quietly sing that hymn. Quietly and gradually, at first in ones and twos, and then like a growing tide, more and more would rise from their seats and go down to the stage or arena, where they would be met by trained counsellors who would talk and

pray with them. You could feel the almost hypnotic pull to go down and join them.

I later met one of the young men who was converted at one of the rallies. With his pointed shoes, tight trousers and bouffant hairstyle, there was no doubt about his previous interest - a teddy boy! However, his conversion was sustained and he continued to serve the Lord for the rest of his life. How? The one way I know of was that, when he was older, he bought and opened a Christian bookshop in Tonbridge. It is still there and still giving service and help.

Many people were moved by Billy Graham's message. They were referred to their local church or area. I suspect that their continuing conversion experience prospered or not according to how much prayerful support they received from their local church. The previous teddy boy must certainly have received much support from Tonbridge Christians.

Does anyone else have memories or experience of Billy Graham's missions?

#### Forthcoming Attractions

30<sup>th</sup> June: Christian Aid Walk

12<sup>th</sup> July 7.30 pm: Cantium Singers @ St Michael's.

11<sup>th</sup> November: Centenary of Armistice which ended fighting in the First World War.

#### Disabled Lavatory for the Church Hall - Your Help Needed

The Coop are giving us a grant for this from their community fund. If you would like to help and are a Coop member, please register by calling 0800 023 4708 or on

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/register>

Then, every time you spend money on Coop goods at the Coop, they donate something towards our fund. The work is complete, but we've still got to pay for it!

#### Makes You Think

A little boy was sitting in church and the visiting minister explained, "I'm taking the service today because the vicar has 'flu.'"

"Where's he flu too," came a little voice from the back.

There's nothing that will succeed like a toothless budgie.

Patient: Doctor I can't get the song *The Green, Green Grass of home* out of my head.

Doctor: You've got Tom Jones Syndrome.

Patient: Is Tom Jones syndrome very common?

Doctor: *It's not unusual.*

## The Pilates Element

Pilates is a body conditioning exercise programme suitable for all ages and abilities. My classes are friendly, fun and enjoyable.

Emily Pollington, member of FHT, qualified instructor.

Pilates classes are held in the church hall on Tuesdays from 7.00-8.00 pm. For more information, please contact instructor Emily Pollington, 01634 256942, 07940233296, [emilypollington@btinternet.com](mailto:emilypollington@btinternet.com) Also on Facebook.

#### Prayer Group Halling

For details, please contact Rev'd Ruth Bierbaum on 01622 722180.



## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

15<sup>th</sup> April  
22<sup>nd</sup> April  
6<sup>th</sup> May

Callum Simon Winter  
Charlotte Leigh Mitchell  
Charlie George Fearn

Thomas Harris Close  
Scholey Close  
Howlsmere Close

### Funeral:

26<sup>th</sup> April

Lois Ruth Underdown (82)

Sheerness

## Quotations

“The most important muscle is the one between your ears.” Iron Man Champion Guy Leech.

“Keep your eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground.” Theodore Roosevelt.

mothers  
union  Christian care for  
families worldwide  
[www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org)

### Mothers Union Meeting April Meet the Midwife

Pippa MacDonald gave a wonderful talk on her work as a midwife. She described her training programme and we had a display of reference books and equipment to look at. It was enthralling to hear of some of the scenarios of women giving birth and her work with home births within the community.

When a birth is imminent another midwife is called for but they do not always make it in time! Fathers also needed support and wanted to know how they could help. The hours were very unsociable but were joyfully accepted because of the excitement of new life. Pippa had quite a variety of different homes to visit and it was occasionally quite challenging carrying heavy equipment up flights of stairs. Pippa would talk through a birthing plan with the mother, who would have a say in how she wished to give birth. This was rather different from the experiences of some of us older ladies! Water births are now a popular method of giving birth and work well for many mothers. What a fulfilling career Pippa has had and listening to Pippa's talk made us realise that every birth is a little miracle from God. Jenny.

### House Group Cuxton

We shall meet at the church hall or Rectory at 11.00 on the first Wednesday of each month to pray together and to discuss the things which concern us in the light of our faith. All welcome.

June 6<sup>th</sup>: How People Come to Faith (Psalm 19).

September 5<sup>th</sup>: How Christians Decide Issues

July 4<sup>th</sup>: When Life Shakes our Faith (Psalm 88).

(Psalm 1).

August 1<sup>st</sup>: Angels (Psalm 148).

(The psalms are for context, not, on these occasions, for bible study.)



### Emmet's Garden

As the beautiful yellow daffodils fade and die so the bushes and trees spring into leaf and the

majestic bluebells carpet the woodland floor, it seems that this year is special because the bluebells in every woodland and glade that I have visited have been quite abundant and lush. In



early April I noticed the first flowers in the woods around Cuxton. I find that the sight of these delightful flowers makes me feel renewed as they are a sign that warmer and sunnier weather is on the way and the worst of winter has gone.

One of my favourite places of interest and to view bluebells (and other spring flowers) is Emmett's Garden at Ide Hill, Sevenoaks. Emmett's Garden is approximately a half hour drive from Cuxton. The garden, shop and refreshment point all open at 10.00am so that gives time for our local rush hour traffic to subside leaving me to drive peacefully to Ide Hill. On arrival, my first point of call is the refreshment facility for coffee and a cheese scone. I aim to consume these whilst seated outdoors enabling me to view a small section of the gardens and surrounding woodland. One of the excellent features of Emmett's is that you have to stroll through well appointed borders, pass by the Discovery Cabin, Rock Garden, Rose Garden, Tulip and Cherry Tree Garden and then the Alpine or North Garden before reaching the refreshments and outdoor seating area. This helps me to focus upon my location and plan my visit. During my refreshment time there is a chance to study the Welcome leaflet, the map, the Garden & Information leaflet and the Spring Colour 2018 leaflet which highlights the planted and the picnic/play areas as well as giving information to help preserve the delicate landscape. For example: visitors should keep to the designated pathways in order to avoid damaging the bluebells which once damaged could take 4 years to regrow. English native



bluebells are a protected species. It is prohibited, by the law, to pick the flowers or remove the bulbs.

My main target for this visit is the Bluebell Banks. They are glorious. On the upper paths you are hit by the most amazing bluebell aroma drifting upward. When you walk along the lower paths the vast numbers of flowers is a feast for your eyes. Amongst the blue heads there are random white bells and magnolia trees. The Bluebell Banks cover a large area. From there pathways lead off into the surrounding woodland and farmland. There are well signed footpaths directing circular walks around the estate and others for longer walks that may go all the way to Chartwell or some which lead to the nearby village of Ide Hill where there is an interesting church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin.



Wandering around Emmett's Garden, there are many azaleas and rhododendrons. There seems to be a huge variety featuring many different shapes, sizes and colours. Fortunately most are labelled to help identify their species. The Tulip Meadow contains some 4,000 tulip bulbs generating colours of pink, yellow, red and black. Apparently the local badgers particularly enjoy eating the bulbs of the red tulips! The Rock garden is very colourful. It has many different plant species between the carefully positioned rocks and small ponds which flower throughout the year.

A lovely day out and one to recommend.  
Holly Croft

Photographs taken by me but published with kind permission from the National Trust.



**St John the Baptist's Day**  
**24<sup>th</sup> June**  
**Holy Communion 11.00 am @ St John's**  
**Tea & Evening Prayer 4.00 pm**

## The World Cup - A Sermon from Trinity 4 2010

I Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361, Psalm 16, Galatians 5 vv 1-25 p1171, Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040

*Psalm 147 v10: He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse: neither delighteth he in any man's legs.*

Fifteen million believe proclaim the posters on the railway stations. Fifteen million believe in a red cross on a white background. You have to admire their faith, hope and love. World Cup fervour has seized the nation. Thousands of fans have spent thousands of pounds travelling thousands of miles on a pilgrimage to be there in person. Millions more watch on television, wherever possible with groups of fellow believers in homes and pubs and even school assembly halls. You can watch on your own, but supporting a team really has to be a shared experience. No expense is spared in the desire to participate. World cup barbecues unite groups of friends in a common meal. In bars, rounds of drinks, bought for one another, shared with one another and downed together are both a sign and a seal of belonging to that body of faithful fans who will follow England to the final whistle. People so much want to show their support, to be numbered among the faithful, that all kinds of merchandise with a world cup theme just flies off the shelves. Money is no object. Older fans might grumble that it costs a lot more to go to football now than it did when they were young, but they know that they have to be realistic. It costs what it costs and, if you think it is worth it, you pay what the clubs demand.

Fans loudly and unashamedly proclaim their identity as England supporters. Flags fly on homes and cars. People pay any price to purchase the strip and wear it on every occasion they can get away with. They even paint their faces with the Cross of St George. The popular tide is so powerful that 10, Downing Street is flying the England flag on match days and only a few curmudgeonly councils are left still trying to limit displays of this symbol of the nation's faith. There is a wonderful fellowship among supporters. Wherever you go as an England supporter, you are guaranteed acceptance and friendship from other supporters anywhere in the world.

Football has priority in supporters' lives. On match days, offices, factories and schools close or provide space to watch the game on TV. Even managers and head masters who think football is irrelevant know that it is pointless to resist. Too many believers put the game before work or school for it to be practical to carry on as if nothing of vital significance were going on. Some things matter much more than making money or even than making your way in life. Ecstasy is an England goal. To win the World Cup would be the final consummation, a beatific vision. The sharp pain of defeat is almost too much to bear, but it is a shared pain. We are members one of another. The team on the field may disappoint. They may deserve to be booed. But we are still England. We can criticize, bitch and moan, but we won't give up on them. We shan't change and support another team. We're not apostates from the national side and never could be.

And the great thing is that anyone can be an England fan. You don't have to be a particularly good person or even to be good at football. You don't have to deserve to be an England supporter. You only have to believe. Obviously, however, once you become a supporter, you're totally committed. You can't claim to be an England fan if you only support them in the good times. It is meaningless to say you support England if you don't trouble about the score all of the time. Anyone can become an England supporter, but you're not a real supporter unless you remain faithful through thick and thin, unless football really matters in your life.

Many fans are what you might call cradle supporters. Their dads passed on the faith to them. They took them to matches, explained the rules, encouraged them to play themselves. Weekends at home were structured around the match – either going to the game or watching it on TV. Members of the family who were not football supporters knew better than to expect fans to be happy about being asked to give up their football so that they could wall-paper the hall, go shopping at Bluewater or have Mum over for dinner. Fans like these grow up in the faith and often remain loyal till their dying day. Other fans are converts. They might have grown up in homes where football wasn't important, but they've picked up the faith from their friends. They've watched it on TV with their mates. They've been talked into going along to matches. They've been converted not only by the action on the pitch, which, quite honestly, sometimes seems

uninspiring and difficult to understand. What has really converted them has been the experience of belonging to a vast movement, a fellowship of mates, dedicated in a common cause and full of enthusiasm. A very few supporters are perhaps people who have wondered why football is so important in so many people's lives and have gone along to a game on their own and somehow picked up on the buzz. And, possibly, some fervent fans started their pilgrimage with solitary research into the rules and history of the game – but I doubt it. Faith is a mass movement and is generally caught from other faithful people.

In conclusion, football is a wonderful phenomenon. Fandom is open to all. It gives people the sense of a higher purpose in their lives. It unites communities. It takes its devotees to the highest summits and lowest depths of emotional experience. It provides an escape from the mundane and the humdrum. It demands total commitment, but the paradox is that it is in making that absolute commitment that the true fan experiences utter release from the limitations of his humanity.



#### Tommy's Talking Points

Spring sprang rather suddenly this year. We had all that snow. Then it kept on raining. Then, all of a sudden, it was like Summer. Blankets came off Master's bed. The early Spring flowers, like daffodils and Forsythia, gave a magnificent final display and then expired until another year will have passed. And then it got cold again, but by now the later flowers were in full force. There were forget-me-nots in the garden, to complement the Pulmonaria (lungwort). The cemetery, churchyard and everywhere else seemed to be carpeted with primroses. Master was pleased to see old-fashioned flowers in an old cottage garden, Solomon's seal and Bleeding Hearts or Dutchman's breeches (Dicentra). The field behind St Michael's glowed with buttercups. Elsewhere there were dandelions shining in the sun. Blackthorn (sloe) lined the paths with what looked like snow on its bare branches and the white and red may followed in its footsteps. Try not to get pricked by the blackthorn. It always becomes inflamed. In the woods there were aconites and anemones. I can't find words (and Master can't help me) to express the wonder of swathes of bluebells lit by a rising or setting sun. Save to say, if you are looking for a glimpse of heaven on earth, you won't go far wrong in an English woodland in Spring. On our morning walks, we just miss seeing badgers, catching only the tail end. We have more luck with foxes and squirrels and magnificent pheasants. We hear the drumming of woodpeckers and sometimes the late hoots of owls. We also meet doggy friends and their companions and more of them in the afternoons. In the gardens, the bluebells are also white and sometimes even pink. I wonder why?

We had a real adventure on St Mark's Day. Master didn't trust the pockets of his aging shorts. So he wrapped his house key in his handkerchief. Inevitably, he lost it (the key, not the handkerchief) in the woods. We retraced our steps and couldn't find it. We were already late for church. So we had to hurry down the hill. After church, we retraced our entire walk with a kind friend who helped us look for it. So I got an extra hour to run around in. It was great, but how would we get in for tea?

This was where the fun really started. Master brought the ladder down from the church, but it wasn't long enough. So he had to go back up there and get another section. It was a good thing he didn't need all three because he can't really pick up more than two. He set the combined ladder against the window of the smallest room and ascended only to find that he couldn't bend his knees enough to get in through the little window – even after shifting the vase and the spare roll of you know what. So he had to try again and get in the bathroom window. This was a success and he let me in through the patio doors. Tea was secure. Then he had to carry both ladders back to the church and change quickly for an important meeting. He put the bolt on in case any ne'er-do-well should find the key – unlikely in the extreme – and we used the patio door to get in and out. He wondered whether he should get the lock changed. Well, next morning, do you know what? We found our key in the woods. Maybe, the sun glinted on it from a different angle. So we're back to what passes for normal in the Rectory.

Speaking of which, he got quite worried about the mowing. During the mild spell early in the year, he thought he'd give it its first cut on a certain date. When he got up, the grass was covered with snow. Then it rained and rained and rained and the grass kept growing till we nearly couldn't see out of the windows (I exaggerate.). Then it became warm and sunny and dry and he discovered that neither mower would start. One mower was repaired and then it rained again – torrentially. At last, he's made a start and you'll be able to enjoy parish functions without wondering what might be lurking in the undergrowth. It will only be me!

It was a perfect Bank Holiday Monday when we completed the next section of the Saxon Shore walk – the hottest ever for the early May holiday. We had had our doubts about how much fun it would be to walk from Strood to Rainham through the five towns, but we were pleasantly surprised. Over Rochester Bridge, past the Bridge Wardens' chapel and chamber and round the castle to Kings School and the beautiful old Archdeaconry, which is now being converted into a hotel. Master hopes that the wonderful gardens will be maintained. Then, the length of the Vines to Restoration House, where Charles II stayed on the way to his Restoration and the home of Dickens' Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*. On the last section, we had seen Cooling churchyard where the novel begins. We walked down Crow Lane, the old Rochester Maidstone Road, to the High Street and then up Star Lane to Jackson's Fields, passing the Elim Pentecostal Church which nearly fell down a couple of years ago and where Master preached (and sang!) one Sunday after Easter over forty years ago. Subsequently, the minister there was the son of a neighbour and friend of Master's mother, born on the same day as your own rector. In Jackson's Fields, I was set free to run and met up with some of the other dogs and people who were out on that marvellous day. There would be literally hundreds more people and dozens more dogs out enjoying the break and the sunshine.

We cut down Hammond Hill and took a look at the old St Bart's chapel, now a physical fitness centre (ignoring St Paul's warning that *bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*) and Sir John Hawkins' Hospital, which Hawkins founded with Sir Francis Drake for the relief of sick and elderly mariners. Thence, down to the River, past the Paddock to the Command House with much off lead time.

We had to leave the river there and head up past Fort Amherst and the Kitchener memorial to Brompton, where there were plenty of pubs but still closed at that time. On then, the back way to Gillingham where the sports grounds are, and through the back streets to Gillingham Station. From there it was, across the old dockyard railway line and down to the Strand. We got lost, missed Gillingham Green (the original Gillingham) and St Mary's Church and had to walk along a horrible main road for a bit. We did see a mosque, however, which looks relatively new, new to Master anyway. There were crowds of people at the Strand all enjoying themselves in the sunshine and Master and his friend had an ice cream. Master says that the atmosphere at the Strand is quite different since the closure of the adjacent gas works. From there, we again followed the River to Motney Hill and near there we heard our first cuckoo of this Summer. Master was astonished at how many people there were out and surprised at how much the path has been improved

since he last went that way. He and his friend were hot and tired by this time. So they were glad to find that they could get a drink and a meal at the *Cricketers*, which Master thinks he last went to when he was still at school or university anyway! After a late dinner, we came home by train and he couldn't eat any tea! Tommy.

#### And Finally

While it isn't likely that the Maidstone & District bus pictured on the right was used at Halling, the comparison shows how much shorter our low bridge buses were than standard double deckers of the time because they had to pass under the railway bridge at West Malling.

