

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
4 th June Whitsun	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 John 15 vv 26 -16 v15p1083
	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 John 15 vv 26&27 p1083 John 16 vv 5-15 p1084
11 th June Trinity Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Ezekiel 1 vv 1-28 p830 Revelation 4 vv 1-11 p1236
18 th June Trinity 1	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen!	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 2 Corinthians 5 vv 6-17 p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006
Saturday 24 th June St John the Baptist	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 Galatians 3 vv 23-29 p1170 Luke 1 vv 57-66 & 80 p1027
25 th June Trinity 2	11.00 Holy Communion	Job 38 vv 1-11 p538 2 Corinthians 6 vv 1-13 p1161 Mark 4 vv 35-41 p1006
July 2 nd Trinity 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Romans 13 vv 1-10 p1140 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
	11.00 Holy Communion – preacher Max Homewood of Mission Aviation Fellowship	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 2 Corinthians 8 vv 7-24 p1163 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007
July 9 th Trinity 4 Sea Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 2 Corinthians 12 vv 2-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Jeremiah 20 vv 1-11 p779 Romans 14 vv 1-7 p1140
Wednesday July 12 th Silver Jubilee of Rector's Priesting	7.30 Holy Communion	Ephesians 4 vv 4-16 p1175 John 17 vv 1-26 p1085
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
4 th June Whitsun	9.30 Family Communion with laying on of hands for Christian healing.	Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 John 15 vv 26&27 p1083 John 16 vv 5-15 p1084
11 th June Trinity Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065
18 th June Trinity 1	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 2 Corinthians 5 vv 6-17 p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006
25 th June Trinity 2	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Job 38 vv 1-11 p538 2 Corinthians 6 vv 1-13 p1161 Mark 4 vv 35-41 p1006
July 2 nd Trinity 3	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism – preacher Max Homewood of Mission Aviation Fellowship	Lamentations 3 vv 22-33 p826 Mark 5 vv 21-43 p1007
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Copy Date July Magazine: 9th June 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a Mother & Toddler service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45

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

After School Club, Thursdays @ St John's from 27th April.

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

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



Why the Excitement?

There has been a lot of interest lately in the novel *The Da Vinci Code* and in the discovery of an ancient document which puts a different perspective on the character of Judas Iscariot. These form part of a family of revelations or discoveries which allegedly shake the foundations of Christian belief.

The pattern is something like this. It is assumed that Christians believe that the Bible came directly from God, at one time, as a monolithic document. Some evidence then comes to light (maybe an ancient scroll or an archaeological artefact) which seems to cast doubt on what the Bible says. It is then deduced that the Christian Church must have suppressed this evidence in defence of a lie about Jesus and Christian origins. The Church is, therefore, shown up to be afraid of the truth and Christianity can be dismissed as based on lies and the oppression of those who hold contrary views. Those of us who cling on to our Christian faith then appear to be simple people who cannot do without their comfort blanket even when it is found to be moth-eaten and worthless.

This account of the way things were sells books and newspapers and gives some comfort to those who do not want Christianity to be true, but it is not a fair description of the historical situation.

Unlike Mormons and Moslems, Christians have never maintained that their Scriptures were given by God to one man over a relatively short space of time. The Christian Bible is a collection of books, written over several centuries by a variety of authors. The books we call the Old Testament come from centuries before the time of Jesus. The books we call the New Testament were all written roughly within a century of His Death and Resurrection. It took a couple of centuries after the time of Christ for the Church finally to agree which books should be included in the New Testament and there is not complete agreement, even today, about which books constitute the Old Testament. There is a number of books which Protestants call the

Apocrypha* and Catholics call deuterocanonical, which are worth reading, but may or may not have the status of Holy Scripture. No serious Christian group doubts the scriptural status of the books which Protestants call the Old Testament, Roman Catholics call primo-canonical and Jews simply the Scriptures (Law, Prophets & Writings).

The books which are included in the Christian Bible are the books which the Church believes the Holy Spirit specially inspired their authors to write. That is not to say that the Holy Spirit does not inspire other writings in a different way. Nothing holy is ever accomplished without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Neither is it to say that the books of the Bible give a complete, easily understood account of God and the human condition. On the contrary, the enormous variety of perspectives you find in the Bible points to the awe-inspiring magnitude of their subject. So long as we are on earth we can only begin to understand. The Word of God, even more importantly than the Bible, is the Word made flesh, Jesus.

So, in the couple of hundred years after Jesus ascended into Heaven, there were lots of things written about Him, lots of discussions, lots of different opinions. There were plenty of scrolls in circulation. Some of these were effectively put to one side. Many have probably been lost for ever. Occasionally, some of them turn up in archaeological digs or are found in ancient libraries. They may only be fragments of much larger documents. Often they are translations from one ancient language to another. (The early Christians used Latin, Greek, Coptic and Syriac etc.) Centuries before the invention of printing, they must be hand-written copies, which may or may not be accurate. All this means that it can be quite hard to work out what the original meaning was and any uncertainty can easily be exploited by those with an axe to grind or a book to sell.

There were certainly, however, documents with a different perspective on Jesus from those which were eventually included in the

* We read them for example of life and instruction of manners, but not to establish any doctrine (6th Article of Religion)

Christian Bible. Do you think that the Church deliberately excluded these documents in an effort to suppress the truth? Or do you think that the documents which were included in the Bible got it right and the others were neglected (and perhaps sometimes suppressed) because they got it wrong? How would you make up your mind?

Who was right? Those who came to be regarded as orthodox (Greek and Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholics and all the major Protestant denominations) or those who came to be regarded as heretics (Arians, monophysites, Gnostics, Ebionites, Docetists, etc.)[†]?

As we understand it, the essence of Christianity is that Almighty God takes human flesh and becomes one of us, that He dies a human death for us and that, by so doing, He makes us one with God (if we repent and believe) so that we have eternal life in Him. The books which made it into the Bible bear witness to this, as do the other sacred texts, sermons and liturgies, which have been passed down from those times. The other texts – the ones which were disregarded and sometimes suppressed – have a different take on Jesus and God. They tend to separate God from His Creation. God is seen as too pure to have anything directly to do with us and the world is essentially irredeemable. It is only the enlightened, who are translated out of this bodily existence by their special understanding, who can be saved. This approach is near enough to Christianity to be confused with it, but it is not Christian. We believe that when God made the world it was very good. We believe that God so loved the world that He sent His Son. We believe in the resurrection of the body.

The books which were included in the Bible bear witness to this Christian faith.

[†] Arians believed that Jesus was not God, but a created being. Monophysites believed that Jesus was not human and divine, but a mixture of the two. Gnostics believed they had some secret knowledge about the way a completely and exclusively pure God related to an essentially corrupt creation. Ebionites seem to have believed that Jesus was just a very good man. Docetists believed that Jesus was wholly divine and only seemed to be human.)

As Christians, we believe that the Church was guided by the same Holy Spirit Who inspired the biblical writers when she recognised these particular books as belonging to Holy Scripture. The books of the Bible are part of a living tradition. They have spoken to the Church in every generation. They speak to us today. There is a three-fold cord of the Bible, the Church and God-given human reason. They are all inspired by the Holy Spirit. They support and interrogate one another.

You and I experience God's Word in the Bible because we are part of the community of faith and we are members of the community of faith because we have received God's Word in our hearts.

If you want to, you can read these other ancient manuscripts and make of them what you will, but, if you are part of the worldwide Christian Church, the Spirit-filled Body of Christ, with its millions of members all over the world in every generation, you will recognise the authenticity of the Bible, just as the Bible confirms the authenticity of the Church.

If, on the other hand, you are looking for reasons not to believe, you may well feel that the discovery of these ancient manuscripts gives you one more reason to doubt the Gospel.

We shall not receive final proof till the Day of Judgement – and then it will be too late!

Roger.

25th Anniversary of My Ordination to the Priesthood.

I am celebrating this on the 12th July this year with a service of Holy Communion at 7.30 pm at the Church of St John the Baptist Halling. The preacher will be the Venerable Paul Wright, Archdeacon of Bromley.

After the service, you are invited to partake of refreshments with me in the south aisle. I am looking forward to welcoming friends and family from other areas, people whose friendship I have valued for many years. I hope too that friends from the parish will join this celebration, not only regular worshippers, but all my friends in the two villages. Roger.

Eightieth Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen

We joined the nation in celebrating this happy occasion by ringing the church bells at both Halling and Cuxton on Friday 21st April.

O Lord our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth; and so replenish her with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that she may alway incline to thy will, and walk in thy ways: Endue her plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant her in health and wealth long to live; strengthen her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies; and finally, after this life, she may attain everlasting joy and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Easter 2006

As always, Easter was a wonderful celebration this year and I would like to thank all those who contributed in any way to making it so. The flowers were beautiful. We had bells, organ music and singing. We came together in good numbers to hear the word of His Death and Resurrection and to encounter the Risen Christ in the Breaking of Bread. Well done all of you.

This year, on Good Friday, we put on our own Passion Play. Thanks again for the support. One element of this play was a time in which people were given the opportunity to receive the laying on of hands with prayer for Christian healing. I sensed that this opportunity was very much valued and I am trying to think how we could provide further similar occasions. We could have such a time in our Sunday morning services, but we really cannot let them get much longer, given the constraints. Maybe we could offer an opportunity for healing at an additional Sunday service or on weekdays. Has anyone any suggestions?

In the mean time, please do remember that you can always ask to be prayed for in church or privately, that I am pleased to visit at home, if requested or invited, and that those unable to come to church may have Communion brought to them by me in their homes. I sometimes suspect that people are waiting for me to make the first move, but, help me here; if you would like a visit, please let me know.

Roger.

Quizzical

September 15th teams are invited from all over for the Strood Deanery Area Christian Aid Quiz. This will take place at Frindsbury. On October 14th, we are holding our next Parish Quiz in the Church Hall. Again, all comers welcome!

For Children

St Michael's Angels are babies, toddlers and pre-schools who meet with their parents and other carers for a brief children's service at St Michael's followed by fun in the Church Hall at 10.45 on the last Wednesday of each month.

St John's After School Club is similar for primary school age children and parents, meeting every Thursday at St John's after school till 4.30. This follows Thursday's Children for the pre-schools which meets at 2.00. [Families may attend both if they wish.]

Sunday School meets in the Church Hall term time at 9.30 every Sunday except first in month. The first Sunday in the month the 9.30 service is Family Communion and children are specially encouraged to attend with their parents.

The Life of Christ

We are trying to find out if there is enough interest to get up a trip to the open air Passion Play at Wintershall this year. It is a really marvellous production. Ober Ammergau, but in English! If there are enough people interested, we could get a minibus or even a coach. The performance lasts 4 hours and Wintershall is just outside Guildford. So we are talking about a full day. Most likely, we would go on 27th June, but the production takes place every day up to 2nd July. If you are interested, please tell Phyllis Chidwick asap.

Social Events

July 1st: Barbecue in Rectory Grounds, Cuxton.

Bookings call 717134.

August 1st: Coffee Morning, 15^H, Foxglove Row, Vicarage Road. More details, call 240889 or just turn up.

August 8th: Barbecue Lunch at 95, Pilgrims Road. Contact 241599.

August 16th: Afternoon Tea, 73, Charles Drive. Details 724997 or just turn up.

August 24th: Cheese & Wine Evening at

Rectory, 7.00. Details 717134 or just turn up.

September 15th 7.30 Deanery Area Quiz for Christian Aid at Frindsbury Parish Hall. Bookings 243223.

October 14th: 7.30 Parish Quiz, Church Hall. Bookings 717134.

December 9th: Christmas Coffee Morning Church Hall 10.00. Details 724997 or just turn up.

Also on December 9th we are hoping to have a **Homespun Evening Entertainment**. This is your opportunity to use your talents. They might be hidden talents. You might even not know you have them. If you think you might be part of this, please speak to the Rector, John Bogg or Peter Crundwell. We'll arrange a few get togethers to plan the event at times to be announced.

Family Day at Rochester Cathedral

August 9th: 10.00-4.00. Children's Activities and Picnic Lunch. Sponsored by the Mothers' Union.

A Prayer For Tourists

Heavenly Father, look down on us your humble, obedient tourist servants who are doomed to travel this earth, taking photographs, mailing postcards, buying souvenirs and walking round in drip-dry underwear. We beseech you, O Lord, to see that our plane is not hijacked, our luggage is not lost and our overweight baggage goes unnoticed. And if, perchance, we skip an historic monument to take a nap after lunch, have mercy on us; our flesh is weak. We pray that the telephones work and that the operators speak our tongue, and that there is no mail waiting from children which would force us to cancel the rest of the trip. Lead us, dear Lord, to good inexpensive restaurants, where the food is superb, the waiters friendly and the wine included in the price of the meal. Grant us the strength to visit the museums, the cathedrals and the castles listed as *musts* in our guidebooks.

(Husbands): Dear God, keep our wives from shopping sprees and protect them from *bargains* they don't need or can't afford. Lead them not into temptation, for they know not what they do.

(Wives): Almighty Father, keep our husbands from looking at foreign women and comparing them to us. Save them from making fools of themselves in cafés and nightclubs. Above all, do not forgive them their trespasses, for they know exactly what they do.

(All): And when our voyage is over and we return to our loved ones, grant us the favour of finding someone who will look at our home movies and listen to our stories, so that our lives as tourists will not have been in vain.

Easter Egg Hunt

We had a lovely day for our Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Monday. Cllr Ken Webber (Mayor of Medway) and Mrs Webber joined us for the afternoon, opening the event and judging the Easter hats and we all had a marvellous time. Pictures duly appeared in the Kent Messenger. Thanks to all the organisers. Next year will be our 10th.

A Personal Perspective on Easter 2006 by Thelma Partridge.



What a wonderful Easter weekend we all had. For me it began with 7.30 pm Communion at St Michael's on Maundy Thursday. There were not too many of us. So we gathered in the choir stalls which was cosy and friendly[‡], particularly during the passing of the Peace.

I was unable to attend St John's on the Saturday evening for the 11.30 vigil service because of illness. However I understand this was lovely and 15 attended. On Sunday morning we

[‡] We moved the communion table into the middle – more like the Last Supper.

had a full church for 9.30 Communion at St Michael's during which there were some wonderful hymns and an excellent sermon (as always). The choir had worked very hard and sang beautifully for us. Of course, as the Rector mentioned, the flowers, brasses, etc, were looking their best. We must not forget to thank everyone who kindly welcomed us with tea and coffee at the Church Hall afterwards.

Easter Monday dawned and the Rector had been told that the weather would be good. Indeed it was and at 2.30pm his worship the Mayor of Medway, Cllr Ken Webber, and Mrs Anita Webber, the mayoress, duly opened our Easter Egg Hunt. A lot of people came and there was a long queue to pay the entrance fee and collect a basket to put eggs in. It was so warm in the sun that it was a pleasure to sit in the Rectory Garden. In addition, there were tombola, raffle, egg painting and a picture painting competition as well as Malcolm's fruit machine. Phyllis Chidwick won the competition for the best decorated Easter bonnet in the adult category. It was a difficult decision because there were so many entries and they were all beautiful.

I have left the Passion Play on Good Friday until last as I feel it needs a special mention. It was well supported and wonderfully done. Members of the congregation had volunteered to take part and everyone presented their slot extremely well. Once again we had very many hymns which we all joined in heartily.

Those who did not join us during the Easter services and celebrations missed a treat. If only the large number of people who came to the Easter Egg Hunt would join us on a Sunday morning! We would need to build extensions to our churches. What a thought!!

Barbecue

Saturday 1st July

Cuxton Rectory

From 6.30.

Bookings 717134.

School Centenary

Cuxton School is 100 years old this year. At the beginning of the last century, it was realised that the old national school next to the Church was likely to be too small for the growing population of Cuxton and the site was too constrained for expansion. So the bold decision was taken to build a new Council School on a new site in what is now Bush Road. The new building was opened with a prayer said by Canon Toone and things have just grown from there – expansion, new buildings and the separation into Infants and Juniors. We now have a happy school community with committed teachers and parents, well-behaved children and good academic results. Something to celebrate indeed.

We had an open afternoon at the Infant School (the original building) on April 28th at which we were delighted to welcome Deputy Mayor Cllr Stephen Kearney and Mrs Sheila Kearney, representing the Borough. The current rector opened proceedings with a prayer. Then there were opportunities to see old photographs, the school log books and the punishment books and to tour the classrooms to see what the children are achieving in the present. There were also two fine cakes. The only disappointment was that Miss Sandra Jones, the current headmistress, was prevented by illness from joining us. We wish her a speedy recovery.

The old National School buildings survived another sixty years and were used as a Sunday School, for dancing classes and various other village events. So far as I know, the last surviving pupil of the National School was Miss Lettie Woolmer.

Roughly where the present Church Hall is, there was a hut used for scouting activities. The scouts built their own hall on Rectory land over 50 years ago and Sunday School and social events now take place in the Church Hall.

Roger.

Halling WI



Good evening ladies and gentlemen, an unusual start for a W.I. meeting, but Mary welcomed a smattering of husbands and guest to our April meeting, it being open to all this month. We omitted Jerusalem much to the disappointment of at least one guest and myself. It is one thing that makes W.I. different from the other organizations and really gets the meeting going. We had our usual business, minutes, matters arising etc, and then on to our speaker. Andrew Lingham, our local farmer, came to speak to us on Farming in Halling, from way back to the present day. How things have changed. Andrew had some very interesting old photographs of Upper Halling kindly supplied by Mr Ted Gowers. They caused a great deal of interest. Imagine Pilgrim's road (top road to most of us) with giant elm trees either side, a little row of white cottages where the solitary farm cottage stands today and one or two of us can remember who lived in every one of them, the cowman and the wagoner to name a couple. Crabbes Corner, I'm glad they don't call it that these days; I live there. St Lawrence's church, sadly now gone we now have the Jubilee Hall on it's site. Andrew told us how his family have farmed the land around Court Farm for generations and he hopes to do so for many more years, but "it ain't what it used to be". I can vouch for that having worked for Andrew's dad for a long time, and enjoying every minute of it, almost. It was my pleasure to thank Andrew for kindly giving up his time to come and talk to us once again.

The Parish Walk to Coldrum

There were five of us in the group who took part in the walk on Sunday 30th April; Rob, Matt, Roger, Max and I left the churchyard at 11.30am walking through the gate and up onto Church Hill towards Mays Wood. It was good walking weather, sun with a light breeze, and the view was good in all directions. Having successfully manoeuvred around a herd of bullocks at the Cuxton beacon, we plunged into the woods and followed the ancient track way. There were other walkers on the way taking advantage of the balmy conditions, some with dogs (Max investigated of course), others with children and several with walking boots with map, compass and rucksack.

At Halling Warren, the North Downs Way long-distance path comes up from Dean but by the time we had walked through Wingate Wood and were beyond the path up from Halling Court Farm on our left, very few walkers manifested themselves although some riders from the local horse event were seen on paths parallel to ours. However we saw no horses at all in Horseholders Wood!! A lone cuckoo called from Ten Acres like the first of spring, but Roger assured us that he had been hearing them for weeks. We crossed the open field above Great Buckland and into Greatpark Wood which unusually was not dank and, having passed by Holly Hill House, arrived on the scarp slope of the Downs by the lodge.

We could have stopped to admire the view from here but alas, no! We plummeted 250 metres down the scarp to the bottom, soon picking our way across to the Pilgrims' Way above Birling Park Farm. Max was still running to and fro but the path needs much maintenance here, being far from a level track and in some

After our usual refreshments, Andrew judged our competitions, *Flower of the Month* was won by Evelyn with her Black Widow iris. Something beginning with D was won by Ann Hayward's Didgeridoo. At least it had come along way to our competition. Ann's husband, Brian was invited to give us a demonstration. He managed to get one moan from it but they are not easy to play. I nearly lost my false teeth down the pipe when I tried to blow one in Alice Springs some years ago.

Six of us attended the Malling District concert held at Larkfield. There were funny sketches, good singing and some laughs from King Hill W.I. Ann Hayward wrote a melancholy little poem and Ann Seagar wrote a ghost story which she read by candle light. All in all it was a good £3 worth, with an excellent supper.

Next month, Resolutions, neither of which are very inspiring, thought provoking maybe, if we can understand them. Who on earth chooses them leaves me and a lot of other members speechless, but Betty Head, Ann Hayward and myself will hear the outcome when we go to the Annual Council Meeting of the National federation in June. Competition next month, E and it must be an item, not an event or just a word. Get your chicken out of their Eggs, or your Elephant out of it's stable, perhaps you could find an Earwig. There's a few ideas. Why not come and spend a fun evening with us? You would be very welcome.

Phyllis.

places the hedgerow and trees had fallen over the way, so caution was needed. The view from here across the valley towards the sandstone ridge in the distance was very pleasing to the eye as long as one is able to ignore the white edifice which is the paper works at Aylesford. There were a few walkers and a family on bicycles but the route was not really meant for the pack of motorcyclists that suddenly needed to share our road. I did venture to comment to Roger that if we continued to walk at this speed, we would be in Winchester by nightfall but our luncheon stop was in view now so we (quickly) continued on.

Coldrum Longbarrow is one of the western Medway group of Neolithic (New Stone Age) chambered tombs and lies beneath the North Downs and below the Pilgrims' Way near to the village of Trottisclyffe on a path now part of the Wealdway. Other monuments of this group are south-west of Coldrum in the village of Addington.

There is a rectangular mound, built on a natural terrace and originally retained in situ by forty-one sarsen stones (glacial sandstone boulders). Part of the eastern end has been damaged over the years making interpretation difficult but four large sarsens of the burial chamber itself can clearly be seen, the eastern end of this chamber is probably destroyed. The tomb was excavated in 1856, 1910 and in the 1920s. The 1910 excavation revealed twenty-two bodies of both sexes and of a wide age range. The occupants of the tomb had long skulls, were short in stature and possibly related. Pottery was also found in the tomb and some of this is preserved in Maidstone museum and some skeletal material in Trottisclyffe church.

People from the New Stone Age settled in the valleys of our area from about 5000 years ago and were Britain's first farmers who cleared the land and planted barley and wheat. They very probably used the spring water that occurs near the foot of the scarp slope of the Downs and obviously buried their dead here.

Having eaten lunch with the warm sun on our backs next to these prehistoric megaliths, and after too short a digestive rest, we launched ourselves back towards the Pilgrims' Way turning east towards the Medway. With the Downs rising high above to our left, views of Kent came and went through the hazel and beech. Max ran along the path and back with great gusto, but this kept the wildlife away from the Way and its accompanying hedgerows. There were finches, blackbirds and thrushes in evidence, and the occasional sparrows, but I was unable to hear nightingale which, I am told, sing night and day hereabouts. With little cloud cover, the weather was warm and skylark wheeled high in air singing incessantly over some fields next to the track.

As we approached Holly Hill, the North Downs Way turns left and north up the steep Downs but we stayed on the way of ancient travellers keeping to the east. Soon an old track branches towards Snodland, where some mediaeval pilgrims may have tried to ford the Medway, but we stayed on the way toward Upper Halling. To our right was a cluster of farm building at Paddlesworth encircled by yellow-flowering oil-seed rape. The little church of St Benedict, almost hidden amongst the barns, stands by the Snodland track once giving peaceful solitude for those wishing to give thanks for a safe journey in those primordial times. Chapels-of-ease were common along such roads and we encountered another at Halling although this is now converted to domestic use. St Lawrence, Upper Halling, succumbed to the same fate as the pubs here – use it or lose it!! I was forced to ponder whether our own St Michael's, also on the Pilgrims' Way, may one day in the future experience the same fate as so many Kent churches are "lost".

Our intrepid party were not lost however, and on tarmac now, we strode with heavy feet through North Halling, over the bridge at the entrance to Bores Hole and so to St Michael's where Roger and I bade farewell to Matt and Rob, and Max knew he was home for a good sleep. I have estimate that the whole trip was about 12 miles in total length and Roger and I together can expect £220 in sponsorship, so not a bad day's walk!

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Swatton (6), Mrs Knott (44), Mrs Cheeseman (135), Mr Gardner (12), & Mr Pratt (98) – drawn by Mr Silver. If you would like to take part in the St John's Draw, please contact Betty on 240889.

From the Registers

Baptism:
30th April

Jamie Luke Holder

Riggall Court

Funerals:
13th April
24th April

Margaret Elizabeth Chandler (91) formerly of Vicarage Close
Doris Hilda Crowhurst (81) Meadow Crescent

Doris Crowhurst RIP

Doris will be very much missed at St John's and the Jubilee Hall services, where she assisted with greeting people and handing out books. Doris was always pleased to help in any way she could and brightened our lives with her kindness and sense of humour. We held a memorial service for Doris on 7th May at St John's.

Nature Notes April 2006

The 1st of the month was beautiful with warm sunshine, southwest winds and billowing clouds marching across the sky. The lilac buds in the garden were almost ready to burst. As I surveyed the garden, a peacock butterfly settled on a leaf. In the afternoon, I drove with Murphy to the other side of Halling from where we walked by the river, across the heath and down the track back to the river. Buds on some shrubs had burst into leaf. The Nature Reserve was waterlogged and the ponds glistened in the bright sunlight. I found a clump of lesser celandines and patches of red deadnettle. We made our way along the dyke where last year's straw coloured reeds swayed in the wind and where the grassy areas down the bank contained puddles of water from which Murphy drank. I watched the flowing river before returning along the dyke and beyond. Murphy thoroughly enjoyed himself and it was a joy to watch him. The sun shone brightly in the early morning of the following day, then showers developed falling from billowing grey clouds marching across the sky in strong westerly winds. In the afternoon, I took Murphy across Church Fields where red deadnettle, buttercups, chickweed and shepherds purse bloomed. In Mays Wood celandines and clumps of wood anemones were in flower in all their delicate beauty. We made our way down the edge of the copse where hawthorns had burst into leaf and along Purtys Shaw the catkins had turned brown. I found some white and mauve violets. Peeping from the grass were the tiny heads of daisies. We climbed up the hill of Six Acre Field, along the top path and up to the fields again where we experienced a shower. I felt that spring had come at last. The wind blew from the northeast the following day bringing cooler temperatures. After an overnight frost on the 5th, the next day was sunny and quite warm. During the morning, I took Murphy along Pilgrims Road then down the alley where pale mauve and deep mauve violets, red deadnettle, celandines and primroses bloomed along the edges of the footpath. I also saw a seven spot ladybird on a goosefoot plant. The 7th was chilly because of the northeast wind and there was more cloud than in recent days. A blackcap alighted on a garden lilac bush where I found a clump of lesser celandines. Later, in the wood, I found white and mauve violets and wood anemones. I crossed Church Fields where some hawthorn buds had burst into leaf. In the shelter of the wood, young saplings were in full leaf.

The following day I took The Countryside Group on a spring walk. The sun shone beautifully from a bright blue

sky brushed with some billowing white cloud and the wind blew from the southwest. We walked through Six Acre Wood where dog and sweet violets, celandines and red deadnettle bloomed. From there we climbed up to Mays Wood where we found laurel spurge, wood spurge and ramson plants the leaves of which were garlic scented. We continued down into Dean Valley, now restored, and up into North Wood where butchers broom grew. It was prickly and a few red winter berries remained. We crossed over the fields, the verges of which were bedecked with speedwell, to Upper Bush then back up the hill and over to Dean Valley. Buckthorn blossom bloomed. Ian pointed out female catkin flowers on hazel twigs some thing I had not noticed before for they are very small. We walked down to Purtys Shaw where, at last, I found coltsfoot flowers. We concluded up Six Acre Field and along the top path where I heard the songs of a chaffinch and a great tit.

It was cold on the 10th and snow fell in some parts of Kent. In the afternoon I noticed diamond droplets of moisture on the grass. Ominous dark clouds crept across the sky but no rain fell. On the 11th we took Murphy to West Malling Country Park where a few hawthorns had burst their buds but other trees' buds remained tightly closed in their winter sleep. Celandines' half closed petals, through lack of sunshine were to be seen in the grass. Wildfowl glided on the lake below the path where we walked. The green lilac buds burst into leaf the following day. I took Murphy to the heath land beyond the marsh the next day. He enjoyed running and was a joy to watch for he so sleek and fast. Some much needed rain fell on the 15th. On the 16th I noticed a tiny ladybird crawling on a grass blade in the garden. As we drove towards Addington on the 17th, I gazed at the beautiful weeping willows, which had burst into leaf. They looked so delicate. Horse chestnuts revealed their bright green leaves, hawthorns bore bright green leaves and buckthorn blossom appeared as a carpet of snow. Catkins hung from slender branches of silver birch trees. In the evening, over Bluebell Hill, a high bank of cloud appeared like a large snow-covered mountain. It was beautiful. Eventually it disappeared, leaving a pale sky as the light began to fade.

Sycamore buds on the trees beyond the embankment were beginning to burst on the 19th. We visited Cyril Godding's garden on the 20th. It was a sight to behold for it was full of cowslips. It took me back to my childhood with my

grandmother in Loudwater near High Wycombe. We used to play in the meadows and the third meadow was always full of cowslips in the spring. Snakes fritillary flowers also bloomed in Cyril's garden. On the afternoon of the 21st, a bright, warm day, I took Murphy across Church Fields. Buttercups, cow parsley, red deadnettle, speedwell and chickweed bloomed. In Mays Wood primroses, lady's smock, celandines and carpets of wood anemones were in flower. White and mauve violets raised their tiny heads from among clumps of fresh green grass. As I came down the path towards Dean Valley I found the first bluebells. Early blackthorn and wild cherry adorned the hedgerows. I noticed the fresh green leaves of the beech and the tiny new leaves of the hornbeam. They were so beautiful. A fox ran ahead of us in the wood.

Several weeks ago, after grooming Murphy, I had put the ball of fur into the ivy on the fence post. On the 22nd I watched a blue tit gathering some of it for nest building. In the afternoon we walked through Mays Wood to Wingate Wood and to the path leading to Court Lodge Farm. I sat on the log for a while and listened to the birds. Hornbeam catkins hung from their fine twigs. As we returned, I heard a woodpecker hammering against a tree trunk. There were plenty of sycamore saplings growing among the tall ash trees and hornbeams. Ancient beeches, the buds of which were tightly closed, reached up tall to the sky. Wood anemones, violets, lady's smock, celandines and a scattering of bluebells bloomed with a few clumps of primroses. There were some dull days and also, I was unable to take Murphy out as he had picked up fox mange, which entailed numerous visits to the vet. As I write, we have one more visit to make.

On the 27th, quite warm with some periods of sunshine, I went with a friend to Ashenbank Wood, where bluebell plants and a few bluebells were to be seen. Ground ivy, lesser celandines, dandelions and dogs mercury bloomed. Clumps of lady's smock and carpets of wood anemones brought their spring brightness among tall trees and sycamore saplings. An ancient hornbeam's trunk looked just like latticework, and dried fungi clung to some silver birch tree trunks. Brambles were putting out young green shoots and new ferns were uncurling. Dog violets peeped out from among fresh grass stems and clumps of pale yellow primroses were to be seen. Looking closely to the earth's floor, we watched a ladybird and two hunting spiders. Near the end of the walk, we heard, in the distance, a cuckoo's call. The next day, while at Addington, Murphy attempted to chase a grey wagtail fortunately to no avail. Rain had fallen during the night of the 29th and the next morning was grey and damp. The sun eventually broke through to give a bright day. In the afternoon, I walked to the alley in Bush Road and made my way up to Mays Wood where a few clumps of bluebells bloomed. Celandines, dog violets, red and white deadnettle and ground ivy bloomed. In Church Fields golden buttercups and dandelions raised their heads to the sky and along the sided of the footpaths tiny blue speedwell flowers were to be seen. I noticed that flower buds had formed on elder and hawthorn bushes and a blackthorn shrub was in full bloom. Doves foot cranesbills flowers peeped from among the grass. By the time I came home, grey cloud had covered the sky. Another month had passed. Elizabeth Summers.

AU REVOIR

Someone special is leaving the parish: Cuxton & Halling will be the poorer for that. Pat Chambers has been part of our worshipping community for longer than most of us can remember. But time moves on and Pat, carer of all and special 'auntie' to many children, past and present, now needs more care herself. We hope, as she moves to Scotland in order to be near Tina and family, that she knows how much her thoughtfulness will be missed. Pat – enjoy the sanctuary of new intimacy with daughter Tina, her husband Sandy and your grandson Tom – and know that we will reflect with much pleasure on the joy that you have spread throughout our community. There have been sad and testing times, but your fortitude bears witness to your unwavering faith. Of course, we will want to hear from you – so go forward with a full heart to new beginnings – and take with you some very well established friendships and memories! Remember, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4 v 2). The example you have set is exemplary.

Love from us all. Di and Dave Maxwell

[On behalf of the congregation, a presentation from the choir will be made at Pat's last service (date, as yet, unconfirmed.)

PS The choir will miss your sherry trifles and Tic-Tacs!



Cuxton WI

As usual, we had a good attendance for our **April** meeting. Everyone was pleased to get there in daylight.

We welcomed back June Hanrahan, whom we missed for a couple of months as she has been in hospital. After the usual business, we were pleased to welcome Marianne Martin, who recited many humorous poems, mostly written by herself, although she did include a couple by Pam Ayres. The poems were about all kinds of subjects – mobile phones, husbands and barbecues, birds and

romance. So many of her poems had a marvelous punch line which had us in fits of laughter. She is a very talented poet and is also extremely good at different dialects, which only added to the humour. A very enjoyable speaker, and some of us had heard her at last year's Annual Council Meeting. So we knew we were in for a good evening.

The Walking Group went to *the Tickled Trout* at Teston on a beautiful sunny day, although with a very cold wind blowing. We walked from the pub across fields, over the bridge and along by the

river past some lovely old cottages, back over the fields and again to the pub, where we were very glad to have a warm up and lunch. The walk was 3 ½ miles and some of us felt a bit weary towards the end, but we all enjoyed it.

Although it was the Resolutions meeting, there was a very good attendance in **May**. It was a beautiful warm and sunny evening and it was so nice to be able to have the windows open in the hall instead of them being shuttered. The new windows have made such a difference! After the usual business, the Resolutions were presented and explained by the President and another member and were discussed and voted on. The Resolutions this year were *Renewable Energy* and *Sports For A Healthy Population*. After the tea break, a tombola was held and made a good sum for our funds. Items brought by members were chosen for the District Conference competition, which has an African theme. Our next meeting on June 1st is our 61st Birthday Celebration.

Cuxton took part in the Spring Event held at Larkfield, singing songs and reciting poems with a Red, White & Blue theme. Other WIs entertained

with sketches and more songs and poems. The enjoyment of the evening was completed with a very nice finger buffet supper.

The Walking Group took the bus to Bluewater on a cold but sunny day and walked around the lakes, hoping to see the thousands of bulbs reportedly planted there. However not one spring bulb was to be seen, only cowslips and two or three daffodils. We all agreed that it was still a worthwhile outing, much enjoyed and especially as the bus was free!! The next walk will be on 23rd May to London by train from Cuxton and then walking around the South Bank area, wherever the mood takes us.

The weather smiled on us again when ten members traveled to Tilbury to have lunch with our West Tilbury WI friends. We almost did not get there as there was an incident in Gravesend which caused traffic gridlock and we only just made the ferry in time. We walked along the river to the *World's End* pub and enjoyed a super lunch and caught up with all our latest news. We hope they will visit us at the end of the Summer. Ann Harris.

Owing to the early copy date of the May Magazine, April and May reports have had to be presented together. Apologies for any inconvenience caused. RIK.

30th Strood (Cuxton) Scoutana

2pm Saturday 24th June at the Scout Hall, Bush Road, Cuxton.

All the usual attractions, including Tunnel of Terror, Tombola, Bouncy Castle, Swing Boats, Plants, Win a Day Out, BBQ, Win a Football, Refreshments and much much more. Donations of prizes, bottles, tombola etc. always welcome. The Scouts will be selling programmes throughout the village during the week prior to the Scoutana. Please support your local group by purchasing a programme and coming along on the 24th.

The **Atlas Cub Group** now has vacancies for boys and girls aged 8 - 10.5 years. They meet at the Scout Hall on Wednesday evenings from 6.40 - 8.30pm. Recent activities have included tree planting and conservation work, crafts, obstacle course, cookery, Korfball, martial arts and road safety for badgework. First attendance is FREE ! For more details, please call Carrie Payne on 01634 241206.

Mayday Playschool

Summer 1 newsletter

As this magazine entry is written, there should be some very tired Mayday children, tucked up sleeping happily in their beds, dreaming of chickens, piglets, tractor rides and cuddly rabbits! Today, we visited Nepicar Farm and what a lovely day we have enjoyed! The sun has shone beautifully and our day was jam packed with looking at the animals we have been learning about on the farm, exploring the farm on a tractor, driving the play tractors and enjoying the play equipment and finally tucking in to an ice cream before weary children were driven home on the coach! This will certainly be one of the highlights of our year!

In addition, we have enjoyed a visit to the Church this half term. Reverend Roger Knight kindly greeted us and talked to us about the St Georges flag and the Union Jack, which we were learning about in a week

concentrated on our Patron Saint. The children were very interested in what Mr Knight had to say to them and our grateful thanks go to him for giving of his time and making us so welcome.

To date we have enjoyed two visits to the Infant school where we have enjoyed the facilities of the school hall to extend our Physical Development curriculum. The children have loved this new experience and we extend our thanks to Miss Jones for this opportunity.

Thanks to the generosity of Parents and friends at our sponsored bunny hop event, we have purchased a lap top computer for the use of our children. They love this and most give us Aunties instructions! It is our hope to extend this provision in the foreseeable future.

We have welcomed some new children in to our playschool community. We hope that they and their families will be very happy with us at Mayday Playschool.

Our week's holiday will soon be upon us. We are closed from Monday 29th May, for the week, returning to playschool on Tuesday 6th June. This will be another busy half term for us. Our 'Rising fives' will start their visits to the infant school and we shall be learning about 'Summer Holidays' and celebrating Independence Day.

That's about all our news for now. Don't forget, if you have a child aged two and a half years old, we are here for you. Do by all means pop in to see us at any time for a coffee and a chat, to see what we are all about and pick up some information to take away with you. We are open from 9am-12 midday daily during school term time and meet in Cuxton Social Club, Bush Road Cuxton. We pride ourselves on being a 'family centred environment'. Our main achievement is that in addition to our qualifications, we are all Mums, Nans or both! We think that this lies at the heart of our dealings for the children in our care. We are a strong, happy team, who have worked together for a good number of years. We look forward to welcoming you.

In the meantime, we hope that this beautiful weather continues and that you enjoy the warm sunshine

Mayday Aunties

Toxic Trees & Churchyard Grass.

You might have noticed that Cuxton Churchyard has got very long. This is partly because of the suddenly warm and wet weather, but also because we are a bit short of donations to pay for its cutting. Any further support would be gratefully received. Please give them to the rector or wardens and any cheques should be made payable to *Cuxton & Halling PCC*, with a note on the back to say what the money is for.

We are grateful not only for donations, but for any work people can do to keep our three areas for burial tidy. Please remove dead flowers and rubbish and remember you need the rector's permission for any monument and that all monuments have to comply with the Chancellor's regulations.

There seems to be some confusion about Halling Cemetery this year, though it is nice and tidy at the moment. Legally, it is the responsibility of the PCC. However, the PCC has very limited resources and Halling Parish Council have paid to keep it cut for many years now. It is after all the case that while only a minority of villagers actually attend church, anyone who lives or dies in the parish has the legal right to be buried there. Halling Parish Council, however, now find that their resources are stretched and are talking about ceasing to pay for cemetery maintenance. I am not sure what actually is happening and I think the PCC paid for one cut and the Parish Council paid for the other so far this year.

You may have seen that Bristol City Council have ordered the removal of yew trees from a public open space because of *health and safety* concerns about the toxic leaves. This seems excessive to me, but, the way the Law works nowadays, it is only too easy for individuals, voluntary organisations or small businesses to be prosecuted over trivia and any mishap can lead to devastating compensation claims. So I asked Medway Council's permission to cut down the yew trees in my garden and whether we should cut down the yew trees in the two churchyards. So far, Medway officers have visited the rectory, pointed out that a whole host of common garden plants and weeds are poisonous and advised me that *health and safety*

questions needs to be approached proportionately and with common sense. I am waiting to hear their advice on the removal of the trees.

Under the Local Government Act 1972 section 215, when Halling Churchyard was closed in 2000, the PCC passed responsibility for maintenance on to Halling Parish Council, who in turn, I thought, passed it on to Medway. Medway seem to have accepted this because they have cut the grass for several years now. However, when I pointed out that, if the yew trees have to be removed for *health and safety* reasons, they will have to pay for the work, they suddenly decided to query whether in fact the Parish Council and the PCC had correctly filed the paperwork and, if not, whether this constituted a loophole through which they could get out of their responsibilities. Watch this space.

Anyway the cubs have very kindly promised to weed the flowerbeds either side of the path to Halling Church. Roger.

The Effects of Prayer

There are 200 witnesses to the following, none of whom are likely to forget because of the sheer horror of the event. In 1883, during the explosion of the volcanic island of Krakatoa, the only escape from the devastation was by sea. The *Batavia Queen* had just unloaded her cargo and the master, Captain George Christopherson, was naturally anxious to get away into deep water before the fall out from the volcano and the tsunamis resulting from the eruption could sink the ship. He delayed, however, to pick up a group of nuns who were caring for 30 orphans. The *Batavia Queen* was in very great danger and the nuns asked what they could do to help. The captain asked them to do what they were best at and pray. He said afterwards that the last thing he heard before the waves struck was the nuns praying not for themselves but for the children. Tens of thousands of lives were lost. Waves 70' high swamped the *Batavia Queen* and beached her, but not one life was lost on the ship. Captain Christopherson remained convinced to the end of his life that it was the selfless prayers of the nuns for the children which saved his ship and everybody aboard.