

Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton			
3 rd May Easter 5	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083	
10 th May Easter 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Acts 10 vv 44-48 p1104 I John 5 vv 1-6 p1228 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083	
Thursday 14 th May Ascension Day	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1173 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062	
17 th May	Sunday After Ascension	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	Easter 7	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 12-26 p1092 I John 5 vv 9-13 p1228 John 17 vv 6-19 p1085
24 th May Pentecost	9.30 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 22-27 p1135 John 15 v26 – 16 v15 p1083	
31 st May Trinity Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
3 rd May Easter 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Revelation 3 vv 1-1 p1235 Mark 16 vv 9-16 p1024	
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 22 vv 1-18 p22 Acts 8 vv 26-40 p1101 I John 4 vv 7-21 p1227 John 15 vv 1-8 p1083	
10 th May Easter 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Acts 10 vv 44-48 p1104 I John 5 vv 1-6 p1228 John 15 vv 9-17 p1083	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Song of Solomon 4 v16 – 5 v2 & 8 vv 6&7 pp681 & 683 Revelation 3 vv 14-22 p1236	
Thursday 14 th May Ascension Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062	
17 th May Easter 7	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 12-26 p1092 I John 5 vv 9-13 p1228 John 17 vv 6-19 p1085	
24 th May Pentecost	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-14 p868 Acts 2 vv 1-21 p1093 Romans 8 vv 22-27 p1135 John 15 v26 – 16 v15 p1083	
31 st May Trinity Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 6 vv 1-8 p690 Romans 8 vv 12-17 p1134 John 3 vv 1-17 p1065	

1st May is St Philip & St James – Holy Communion at St Michael’s at 7.30 am.
Copy Date June Magazine: 8th May 8.30 am Rectory.

A Funny Story

Two men rode all night across the prairies. In the morning, they were starving and one offered to get some breakfast from the bacon tree which he thought was behind some rocks. When he returned, he had no breakfast, but three arrows in his back. “That wasn’t a bacon tree,” he said. “It was an ‘ambush!’”

Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am St Michael's		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am St John's	
6 th May	Acts 15 vv 1-6 John 15 vv 1-8	7 th May	Acts 17 vv v7-21 John 15 vv 9-11
13 th May Rogation Day	Acts 17 v15 – 18 v1 John 16 vv 12-15	14 th May Ascension Day	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
20 th May	Acts 20 vv 28-38 John 17 vv 11-19	21 st May	Acts 22v30 – 23 v11 John 17 vv 20-26
27 th May	James 4 vv 13-17 Mark 10 vv 32-45	28 th May	James 5 vv 1-6 Mark 10 vv 46-52

Diocesan Day

On 19th July 1pm -7pm we are holding the Big Diocesan Day out at Leybourne Castle. This is a day for all members of the Diocesan family of churches and will have something for all ages. The Dean of Jerusalem, the Very Rev. Canon Hosam Elias Naoum, will be one of our Key note speakers and we are delighted that Dr Rachel Jordan the National Mission and Evangelism Advisor to the Church of England will also be with us. They will be supported by a variety of speakers on issues such as healing, spirituality, discipleship and world affairs. Various workshops will be held based around learning new skills, current issues and taster sessions based on 'try it and see what you can do' themes.

As part of the wide range of activities and sessions taking place during the day there will be age specific activities for children & young people for the 0-18's. These activities include story telling, circus skills workshop, music workshop, holiday club, Godly Play, craft, rock traversing, BMX, survival skills and inflatable fun. These activities will be run and supervised by qualified adults however parents will need to remain with and supervise their children.

There will also be a battle of the choirs event, a Beer Tent for the soon to be famous Rochester Beer and hymns event, a *More tea Vicar tea* session where you can take tea with famous clergy or even treat your own. There will be a BBQ and opportunity to picnic and the event will be summed up in an intergenerational act of worship. Amidst all the fun there will be space in the church for quiet reflection and prayer

It is the Bishop's hope that as many people from the Diocese as possible will come along to this event. Booking is very simple. Either ring Sarah Cabella 01634 560024 or e mail sarah.cabella@rochester.anglican.org. You can either book in as a church giving approximate numbers of adults and children or people can book in as individuals. We want to make this event accessible to as many people as possible. So car parking will be free but entry will be by donation for which we suggest £1 per person.

Jean Kerr - Director of Mission and Community Engagement.

DEANERY QUIET DAY AT AYLESFORD PRIORY - SATURDAY 6TH JUNE 2015: 10am – 4.30pm

This year the day will be led by The Revd Callan Slipper, an Anglican priest, who lives in a community of the Focolare Movement, an international project to foster Christian unity. There is no charge for the day, only donations for teas/coffees. Bring your own packed lunch. We shall be using the St Therese Room.

To book a place please contact the Revd David Green by phone (**01634 719052**) or by email:

revdavidgreen@blueyonder.co.uk David will get back to you confirming a place. If by phone, please leave a message on the answerphone if he does not pick up.

Forthcoming Attractions

June 24th (Nativity of St John the Baptist) 7.30 pm: Holy Communion & Confirmation at St John's.

July 11th: from 6.00 pm *St Benedict's Day Barbecue in Rectory Grounds.

July 16th: 7.00 for 7.30 pm at St Michael's Prayer and Praise for Foodbank/CAP.

September 19th: 7.30 pm Christian Aid Quiz in Cuxton Church Hall.

September 29th: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist at St Michael's, preacher the Archdeacon.

October 4th: Harvest Festival. Harvest Supper to follow evening service at venue to be announced.

December 12th: 10.00 Christmas Coffee Morning in Church Hall.

December 16th: 12.00 Christmas Parish Lunch in Church Hall.

*The monks at Halling were Benedictine. As we are celebrating their founder's day, this counts as a religious occasion and is exempt from the strictures of the Licensing Act. We shall therefore be able to have music for the first time since 2009.

What is the world coming to? *Prayer could make the difference.* St. John the Baptist, Meopham, May 11th at 7.45pm. All are welcome to come and hear news of mission initiatives around the world, to get engaged and to pray; you will be stimulated! There are similar events in the other two archdeaconries in the same week, as we take up the challenge to pray for God's world. This is organised by the Diocesan World Mission Forum in conjunction with the Archdeacon of Rochester.



Christian Aid Week
10th-16th May

Jack Payne is the new parish coordinator. Please contact Jack if you can offer any help with the collection. Christian Aid Walk 13th JUNE.

A Brief Bible Study
(Romans 1-8)

- 1) Human beings ought to know God because there is so much evidence for Him in this wonderful world, because we also are His creation and because we have consciences.
- 2) In fact, however, we are all rebels without exception (except Jesus).
- 3) Any attempt on our part to justify ourselves is doomed. In our fallen state, we simply cannot attain the standards prescribed by God's Law – that we should be His children and therefore His image which is love.
- 4) Those who do attempt to justify themselves make matters worse. If they realise how far short they fall of what God requires of us, they despair. If they are foolish enough to believe that they are righteous, they look down on other people whom they regard as inferior.
- 5) We do not need to justify ourselves to God. God justifies us for no other reason than that He loves us. No matter how sinful we are, God loves us. In Christ, He washes our sins away. What is required of us is faith and God supplies even that requirement. Our faith is God's gracious gift. His grace is an aspect of God's faithfulness to us.
- 6) Because God loves us, we are inspired to love Him and therefore to live in accordance with His perfect law of love.
- 7) We don't conclude that because we are justified apart from the Law, it doesn't matter how we behave. On the contrary, because we are justified, because God loves us as we are, we continually seek His grace to live continually in accordance with His Law, summarised by love.

The best analogy I can think of is of children brought up in a good home. They don't try to be good because they are afraid their parents won't love them if they're bad. They know that their parents will love them come what may. On the other hand, they don't grieve the parents who love them by behaving badly. They behave well because they love the parents who love them and want to please them and imitate them. No human family, of course, is perfect and the above doesn't work out perfectly in any home – though some are much better than others! God is, however, the perfect Father. Jesus is the perfect Son and we dwell in Him and He is in us so that we may become more like Him. RIK.



Convictions

There was a poster. *If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?* Well, what would count

as evidence that someone, you or I, were a Christian? Only God really knows who is a Christian. A Christian is someone who has faith in Jesus Christ and you can't see faith. We should, however, normally be able to see the effects of faith. Faith changes a person. Faith goes with repentance. In the biblical languages, "repent"

means "turn" and "return". If we repent, we turn away from evil and we return to God. In the biblical languages, repentance is a complete change of mind. Belief in God is a transformative experience. It is the transformative experience. It is being born again. It is being born from above. It is dying and rising with Christ. It is being washed clean to start again. It is being adopted into God's family. It is being filled with the Holy Spirit. It is becoming an heir of eternal life. St Paul uses the same word, metamorphosis, for becoming a Christian as biologists use for a tadpole turning into a frog or a caterpillar turning

into a butterfly. Faith is invisible. Faith is the gift of the unseen God, but we ought to be able to see its effects in the lives of Christians. There is a kind of salamander in Mexico called an axolotl. It is effectively a giant tadpole. It never metamorphoses into a proper adult salamander because there is not enough iodine in the water where it lives to make the thyroid stimulating hormone which causes metamorphosis. Given enough iodine, axolotls do metamorphose into proper adults very like tiger salamanders. They are then no longer confined to the water and can walk about on land. People who do not know God are like axolotls, immature and confined to the material world they were born into. Faith, the gift of God, is like an infusion of iodine to the axolotl. Faith transforms human nature and sets us free from its limitations to live in a wholly different realm.

So, although we cannot know for certain whether someone is a Christian, if he or she is, there should be evidence. Now, you might expect that a Christian would be a good person. We do not become Christians because we are good. None of us is. But, if we are Christians, we should expect to become good.

A couple of problems about “good”. One is the paradox that if you think you are better than other people, you are not good. It is not our place to judge other people. Judgment is God’s prerogative. If we are good, we are good by the grace of God. It is God Who made us the people we are and the glory is entirely His. The other problem with the word “good” is that we define “good” so unambitiously. It is good to be kind to your family and friends. It is good to give back to people who give to you. It is good to work hard and to lead a decent, honest, sober life, to pay your debts and make provision for your children. It is good that you don’t go out and get drunk and commit acts of violence and vandalism. It is good to pay your taxes and to obey the law. It is good that you are faithful to your wife. All those things are good and it is hard sometimes not to feel superior to people who don’t live up even to these reasonable standards. But there’s nothing special about being good in this sense. It isn’t transformational goodness. It’s just ordinary human goodness, the goodness you would expect of any rational person, whether or not he or she

knew God. Transformational goodness is becoming like Christ, like God. Christian goodness is being good to the people who treat you badly. It is sacrificing yourself, not only for your family and friends, your community or your country; it is sacrificing yourself for your enemies. Transformational goodness is being betrayed and let down by your friends, subjected to a rigged trial, mocked, whipped and nailed to a cross and still praying, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*. Living in the world, as we do, this fallen world, there may well be times when a Christian has to maintain standards of goodness which other people don’t recognise as good, or even regard as foolish or wrong. Thankfully, being a Christian is being a work in progress. We don’t instantly become Christ-like when we are baptised. That only finally happens if, through His grace, we come to Heaven. We are not Christians because we are good, but, if we are Christians, it should be apparent to other people that we are becoming good, good like Christ, not just good like respectable Englishmen and Englishwomen. If that thought awes you, so it should. We ought never to be discouraged, because the work of our transformation is God’s work, but neither should we be complacent. We are responsible for what we do with what God has given us. We are responsible for living up to what He has made us.

I started with goodness because it is the obvious evidence that someone is or is not a Christian, but, then, it is not for us to judge. We might think that somebody else isn’t very good (especially if his sins are ones we find easy to resist) but only God knows what is in the heart and that is what matters. Christianity, faith, is not a moral code. It is relationship. God is our Father. Jesus is our Lord. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. God is love and God loves us unconditionally. In His faithfulness, He gives us the gift of faith so that we might know Him. To know Him is to love Him. To know Him is to have eternal life. All our relationships, however, need to be nurtured. If you never wanted to spend any time with your family, if you never spoke to them, could it really be true that you loved them? If you never did any thing for them or gave them anything, where would be the evidence that you loved them? If you never received anything from them and said “Thank you”, what sort of a relationship would it

be? I can't see how it would be a loving relationship. Even a baby gives you smiles to which you respond with smiles of your own. If you were never sorry when you let your loved ones down, could it really be said that you truly loved them? Being a Christian is relationship with God the Father, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. Being a Christian surely must include spending time with Him, time in simple straightforward adoration; time to talk to Him in prayer; time to learn more about Him through reading the Bible; time for thanksgiving; time for confession; time to be with the One we love. God loves us unconditionally. Our mothers (probably) loved us unconditionally. Our husbands or wives promise to love us unconditionally. But are we good children or spouses, if we take their love for granted; just take what they give us; spend little time with them; hardly talk to them and give them nothing in return? It is not hard to see where such human relationships are headed. Where is our relationship with God headed? Is it growing and maturing as we live our lives in fellowship with Him or is our side of the relationship withering and dying because we always have something better to do than to spend time with God or to do His Will? God is faithful, but He is not mocked.

I find this next section difficult, as you might think that, being your rector, I have an ulterior motive in writing it. However, the faithful pastor holds nothing back that is profitable for you (Acts 20²⁰). Being a Christian is a relationship with God. If we are in a relationship with God, we are in a relationship with the people of God. The Church is a family, the family of God. The New Testament uses even more intimate analogies. We Christians are the branches of one vine. We are the limbs and organs of one body. The vine is Christ. The body is Christ. We are all stones comprising a temple, the dwelling place of God. We are collectively (as well as individually) the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is true that you can be a Christian without going to Church – if you are marooned alone on a desert island or if you are housebound by infirmity or disease, and in that latter case, the Church should come to you with friendship, prayer and the Sacrament – but it is not normal to be a solitary Christian. If you are part of a family, you want to spend time with your brothers and sisters. You have fun together. You help and encourage one another. You mature

together. You support one another. Another point worth making is that you don't choose your family. They are the people God has given you. They have obligations towards you (whether or not they discharge them faithfully); you have responsibilities towards them. We should not look upon ourselves as religious consumers or customers, choosing first of all to become Christians, if we feel like it, and then choosing whether or not we join a church and, if so, which one suits us best. It is God Who chooses us, God Who calls us and, believe it or not, if we are Christians, we are members of His Church, whether we like it or not. Our fellow church members are our brothers and sisters. We didn't choose them and they didn't choose us, but we all belong to one family.

Living things grow. When the cells of our bodies cease to grow and renew, we die. They grow because they are programmed to grow by our DNA. They grow because they receive oxygen, glucose and other nutrients from our bloodstream. They grow in response to use and stimulation. To know God is to have eternal life. To live is to grow, to grow up into the likeness of Christ. We are programmed to grow by the Holy Spirit. We are nourished by the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and by the reading and preaching of God's Word and by prayer, individual and common. We are sustained and stimulated by the fellowship of other Christians. We grow as we are used by God to serve His world. It is hard to see how we Christians could grow without being active members of the Church (hermits maybe) and no local church can survive without its active members.

So, if you were accused of being a Christian, what evidence might help to convict you? Love would define you – love for God, love for your fellow Christians, love for the world which God so loved that He gave His only-begotten Son. Very likely you would be very far from perfect (We all are.), but you would be growing into a better person, a more Christ-like person: a fruitful branch of the vine, which is Christ; an effective limb or organ of the body of which you are a member; a sturdy stone in the temple, to which you belong. Something about you would make non-believers ask what is the reason for the hope that is in you, and you would tell them! Roger.

From the Registers

Baptisms

15th March
29th March

Tommy Neil Patrick Stanley
Joseph Martin Shaun Law

Chatham
Medway Gate

Funeral:

25th March

Hazel Jessie Brown (89)

Northfleet

Dorothy Jean Snow RIP

Parishioners will be sorry to hear of the death on 6th March of Dot Snow aged 88, formerly of Halling. She will be remembered by generations of Halling School children as a popular dinner lady.

It's All in the Pronunciation

A firm of builders working on a church roof put up a large banner advertising their slogan *Taking the Lead*.

St Michael's Draw: £10 each Mrs Taylor & Mr Dodge, £5 each Mr Jones & Mrs Crewe – drawn by Saints Alive.

St John's Draw: £5 each Miss L Thorne (24), Mrs Warman (56), Mrs Mitchell (67) & Mrs Gyde (133) – drawn by Mrs Acott.

NATURE NOTES MARCH 2015

The Thrushes Nest John Clare

Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush
That overhung a mole-hill large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound
With joy; and, often an intruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day-
How true she warped the moss to form a nest,

And modelled it within the wood and clay;
And by and by, like heath bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,
Ink spotted over shells of greeny blue;
And there I witnessed, in the sunny hours,
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as that sunshine and the laughing sky.

The 1st of March is beautiful with sunshine and blue skies and this continues into the afternoon. I walk to church in the morning. Crocuses and celandines are in bloom in the garden at home. Later, in the afternoon, when we drive along Bush Road, I see more celandines along the grassy banks. Eventually dark clouds cover the sky; then, in the early evening, heavy rain falls. The moon and stars light up a clear night sky. The next day is beautiful. In the garden a large bumblebee hovers over plants in pots on the patio. Birds come for seed and nuts. Later in the day, as night falls, there is a chill in the air and the sky is lit with stars and a bright moon. The next morning, a heron flies up river. Cold westerly winds blow. I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater. A carpet of daffodils adorns the grassy banks. Gulls wheel overhead.

On 4th, North West winds blow. I walk to the village and see celandines on the banks. The sunshine lifts my spirits. The night air is cold. The 5th feels like Spring and the air is mild. Birds sing heralding the new season. The skies remain bright with sunshine well into the afternoon. Another beautiful day follows. At Bluewater, hazel shrubs have burst their buds. More

daffodils have burst into flower and I hear birdsong as I walk beside the rippling water. Longtailed tits come to the garden. They are delightful birds. On 7th I walk up the church path to the fields where the grass looks lush in the early Spring sunshine. Tight buds are waiting to burst on the blackthorn and hawthorn bushes. Birds are singing, especially a great tit. I walk through Mays Wood, where paths are damp from previous rain. Bluebell plants have emerged through the leaves of the woodland floor. I walk down towards Dean Valley and find a woodland path parallel to the quarry road. I see two brimstone butterflies hovering small plants. Eventually I walk up Six acre field, now unfenced, to Six-acre Wood and home. Violets and celandines are blooming inside the churchyard gate. The 8th brings early Spring sunshine. I hear birds sing as I walk to church and by mid-day feel the warmth of the sun on my face. The next day I walk Murphy round the lake at Bluewater and the daffodils on the banks remind me of Wordsworth's poem. It feels quite mild for the time of year. Several sunny days follow and I notice that blackthorn is breaking into flower. Then on 15th, after early sunshine, the skies become grey and north easterly winds blow. I walk to the churchyard which is bright with pale yellow primroses and golden

celandines. Rain falls later and it becomes cold. The morning of 17th is grey and cold but eventually skies clear to reveal beautiful sunshine. We drive to Larkfield where the banks along the A20 are bright with celandines. On our way home, weeping willows near the Brookland lakes are faintly green as new leaves have burst from their buds. At home, the silver birches on the embankment stand tall and straight. Later, the setting sun sends rays of pink across the pale blue of the sky.

On 19th, when I walk Murphy round the lake at Bluewater, there is no glimpse of the sun and the air is cold. I hear Canada geese calling from the rippling water. The 20th officially marks the beginning of Spring, but it is cold. Clouds prevent us from witnessing the eclipse of the sun. Soon after 9am, the light is less bright. Later in the day, the sun shines brightly from a pale blue sky and I feel slight warmth on my face. The next day I see a solitary rose blooming on Sam's pot. He is never far from my thoughts for he was such a lovely companion on my walks. The 23rd is a beautiful day with light westerly winds blowing. The garden and surrounding fields and hills bask in the sunshine. A robin sings in the holly tree. Sunshine heralds the morning of 24th, when I walk Murphy round the lake Weeping willows have broken into leaf and daffodils continue to bloom on the banks. When we journey home, I see hawthorns that burst their buds. The late afternoon skies are a mixture of dark grey clouds, some patches of blue and

rays of sunshine as the sun dips in the west and lights up the garden and the embankment. Clumps of pale yellow primroses are now blooming in the front lawn and they look beautiful.

Rain is falling in the early morning of 26th. Murphy has an undercover walk at Bluewater. It becomes dry in the afternoon. The 27th is a spring day of golden sunshine and blue skies. We walk at Bluewater where I see a horse chestnut tree has burst its buds. A pair of Canada geese forage on the grassy banks. The sun shines right through the afternoon and I feel its warmth. I listen to the melodious song of a blackbird as it perches in the conifer tree. On 29th, the skies are overcast with low grey clouds being driven across the sky by westerly winds. Steady drizzle falls. I watch a pair of blue tits flying in and out of the nesting box on the garage wall. Heavy rain falls in the late afternoon. We are now in British Summer Time. The sun shines in the morning of 30th with westerly winds blowing white and grey clouds across the sky. Rain falls in the evening. The 31st is a blustery day with west winds driving grey and white clouds across the blue of the sky. As I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater, I watch wavelets on the lake looking like miniature white horses. Trees are bursting into leaf and clumps of cowslips join the nodding daffodils. The afternoon remains bright but with more cloud and a light shower falls. The moon and stars shine brightly in the night sky. Elizabeth Summers.

Please Vote on 7th May

There is a great deal of possibly justified cynicism about politics at the moment, but voting in a democracy is a duty.

1. We, the electorate, are entrusted with choosing our representatives in parliament and on the local authority and therefore of choosing our national and local government. You may not be impressed with democracy, but can you suggest any other form of government that you would prefer? Or as Churchill put it so much better: *Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.*
2. People have suffered persecution and fought wars so that you and I have the freedom to vote.
3. There is no *none of the above option*. There will be a parliament and a government and a local authority after May 7th whether we like it or not. So, even if you don't feel able to support any of them, you had better vote for the candidates or the parties you dislike least.
4. What about tactical voting? If you think that the candidates or the party you most favour have no chance of getting elected, do you still vote for them or do you vote for the party most like them which does have a realistic chance of election or do you, perhaps, vote for the party which you think is most likely to defeat the ones you really hate? That's a hard question. In the end it's up to you of course. On the one hand, voting for your true beliefs most obviously has integrity and does send a message which the successful candidate may feel unable to ignore. Also, there may be more voters out there who share your views than you think; your chosen candidate might win. On the other hand, you might think that the best way to make your vote count is to vote for a candidate with what appears to be a real chance.
5. Don't just vote selfishly for what you think is in your own interests and those of your family and those of people like you. Vote for what you prayerfully believe is in the interest of the whole country and of our place in the world.

Roger.



Cuxton WI

Spring is here at last and the gardens of our village are looking so joyful now the sun is shining and the flowers are in full bloom. My neighbours have just returned from a long cruise around the far and middle east. They are very glad to be home and put their "holiday" down to an experience rather than a rest. But seeing the cultures of other countries and the poverty, heat and dirt that most of them have to live with in their day to day lives made them appreciate what we have here ! Just walk out of Cuxton for a few yards and we are blessed with the most lovely countryside with views not costing us a penny !

The WI costs a little more than a penny - about £3.00 per month but you wouldn't get into the cinema for that, let alone a theatre. We have been so pleased to welcome several new members this year and now that the authorities are charged with looking into the plight of many lonely people we hope you will think about joining us. You will be made very welcome and there are lots of in house clubs that you can join as well. As you know we meet in the Church hall which could be difficult for some of you but if you would like to come along as a visitor please ring me and I will try to arrange a lift for you.

At our last meeting Mrs Barbara Stevens spoke to us about the trials and tribulations that she had endured as a speaker. It was surprising how warm and friendly most venues were and in contrast how uncooperative other places. However she made light of it all and gave us some good laughs during the evening. I think we were judged as a

kind venue as she has visited us before and came back a second time .

Several members had been to the Annual WI Council meeting at Tunbridge Wells. Helen Mirren would have approved of this meeting as we were entertained by two powerful women. Julie Stammers who has written several books had also written one called "Jambusters" about the WI in WW2 This has now been adapted called "Homefires" and will be shown on TV as a 6 part series in May. During the war the WI brought their skills to the fore and the government supplied them with sugar in large quantities to cook and make jam from locally grown fruit and vegetables for the people who were on the brink of starvation in many areas. The second speaker was Mandy Hickson who had been the first woman pilot to fly a Tornado war plane in both Iraq and Afghanistan. It had not been easy for her and she had failed many tests on the way but eventually she got there. Both women were excellent and made us realise how powerful women can be both in the past and in the modern world.

Next month we are having our AGM - people are not really keen on these in any society but we do need some new committee members this year and also it is interesting to hear about the resolutions which are put before the government every year and often our ideas do succeed. Also there is always a bit of cheese and wine to make the evening go along. This will be on Thursday May 7th at 7. 30pm Don't forget if you would like to come along and visit us and need a lift give me a ring. Sheila 716139 .

Riddle

What stays in one corner, but can travel to any place in the world?

A postage stamp.

Transport of Delight

I like the fact that one of the old peoples' homes I visit has pictures of public transport from the golden age (i.e. when I was young) on the walls. There is an East Kent Guy Arab bus with rear entrance and power operated doors – redolent of seaside holidays and trips to Canterbury. There are a Maidstone District double deck Bristol K6A such as I went to school on and an AEC Reliance single decker travelling through Tonbridge. Half cabs and open rear entrance platforms are magic. There are also pictures of early Southern Electric trains. I have just been given a book about Maidstone buses, sadly in the declining years when local buses ceased to be operated by the Corporation and Maidstone and District withdrew from Maidstone and was eventually taken over by national bus companies. This interest on my part might well seem weird to you, but it has an interesting corollary. I was given a DVD of the Belfast trolleybus system, the largest outside London in the whole of the UK. (For those of you who don't know, a trolleybus is a bus which runs on electricity picked up from wires suspended above the street by means of two poles. They were more

flexible than trams, quiet in operation and much cleaner than motor buses, but also more expensive to operate when oil became cheaper than electricity.) The commentator on the DVD made the point that the guy who filmed the Belfast trolleybuses just before their demise in the 1960s also coincidentally made a record of what a beautiful city Belfast was before it was spoilt by terrorists and town planners. Thankfully, we have had much less terrorism in Britain, but I was reminded of Prince Charles' remark that the Luftwaffe (in the Blitz) had done less damage to London than modern architecture. Certainly, our town planners have a lot to answer for!

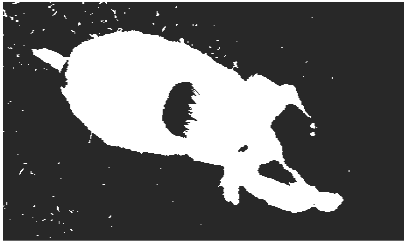
Looking at photographs and films of classic buses, trolleybuses and trams, creates an opportunity to see what Britain was like before town planners and architects gained quite so much power to develop and homogenise our towns and countryside. I have suggested to people wanting to be reminded of beautiful Bournemouth before the ring road that they Google Bournemouth Trolleybuses. If they do, they will find a tour of the town in its 1960s splendour. There is also some fascinating footage of how a trolleybus was turned round at the Christchurch turntable. The driver drove on to the turntable. The conductor took down the poles. Then the whole thing was turned right round by means of a manually operated handle. Aged ten or eleven, a coastal ride on an open top bus to from Fisherman's Walk to Hengistbury Head, a miniature steam train to Christchurch Harbour, a ferry across the harbour, and a trolleybus from the turntable home was a real treat – as, I confess, it still would be at age sixty if it were possible today. Similarly a photographic record of the RT – the London bus of the 1950s – covers the whole of London, its suburbs and that part of the home counties served by London Transport's green buses. I have a DVD also of RTs and their successor, the classic Routemaster. If you are nostalgic about wartime Croydon, as was one of my friends, Google Croydon trams and trolleybuses. There are also some great pictures of Strood and Chatham as they used to be in the *White Hart*, complete with Chatham Traction and Maidstone and District buses.

It all looks so much nicer in those pictures than it does today. You get the same effect watching Norman Wisdom films! There are very few traffic jams in the towns. Urban roads are not cluttered and obstructed by parked cars and the relatively few drivers have no trouble parking where they want to. There are children playing in the street and plenty of cyclists, wearing ordinary clothes with not a trace of lycra or a helmet to be seen. High streets are occupied largely by small local businesses. It's worth going to Maidstone or Dartford if you want something special because the shops there are different from the shops in Gravesend or the Medway Towns. (I liked the fact that they were closed on Sundays and Wednesday afternoons, that some days were different from the usual grind.) Since those days, our town centres have been remodelled time after time, old buildings demolished, residents relocated to out of town estates, fast ring roads cutting town centres off from their hinterland, ugly multi-storey car parks, the same shops in every high street, and still congestion and high parking charges and fines so that all the trade eventually drains away to out of town shopping centres with good access roads and acres of free parking or else to online traders who deliver to peoples' homes as shops used to in the 1950s, leaving the old town centres semi-derelict.

Out in the suburbs, every house in those old pictures has a pretty front garden, not hard standing for two or three cars. There is much more open countryside and what there is is not defiled by motorways. People go for walks to amuse themselves even if they haven't got dogs. There's not much litter. There are very few aeroplanes in the sky.

But what about the downside of all this? A lot of those inner city homes were very poor, slums even. It took forever to get anywhere. There wasn't the convenience of having what you wanted when you wanted it. What about the terrible smogs of the 1950s and polluting factories located near to homes and schools? Well, it isn't straightforward. We're back to having smogs. We take just as long to get to work. If we travel faster, we live farther away, but a half hour walk to work would do you more good than a half hour drive. As for more exotic holiday destinations, isn't it less the place you go to on holiday than the spirit in which you go that makes a holiday? George Orwell in the 1930s drew attention to the danger that slum clearance breaks up communities. Could the planners have done better with their enormous powers of compulsory purchase and all that public money? Maybe, had they been prepared to listen to ordinary people. Roger.

Tommy's Talking Points



Isn't it great to be allowed to write for the parish magazine, especially when I am so young, ten weeks on copy day? To be honest, I'm sitting on Master's lap while he types this up for me, but the thoughts are all mine.

I was born on 30th January in a house in Walden Bay, Leysdown. There were eight of us puppies, two boys and six girls. I first met Master when he came down to see us when I was only three weeks old. We were very small then and spent most of our time in a squirming heap of puppyhood. Our mother was still feeding us then. Master wanted a boy puppy and was first attracted to my brother, because he came out on his own first, but then Master saw my beautiful markings and noticed that I was just as lively and I had made my first conquest, the first of many, I hope. Master liked the way my mother was so friendly and let people pick us up and play with us. He says that my dad in the photograph he saw was just like Max. So he visited again at five weeks and took some photographs. He came back to take me home a couple of days after I hit six weeks. It turned out that he could have had me a day earlier if he had not cycled down to Tunbridge Wells for the diocesan synod meeting. These church meetings must be really thrilling to stand in the way of picking up a puppy. Oh! Master says that he didn't know that he could have picked me up when he went to the synod. Otherwise priorities might have been very different! Anyway, the bike ride was fun, he said.

So home we came in the car that Sunday afternoon. I saw that I've got a lovely big garden to play in and a lovely big house. At first, I ran indoors as soon as I was taken out in the garden. Master says that Max was an outdoor dog from the first and always wanted to be outside playing, but I pointed out that Max came home in the Summer, whereas I came home in a chilly March. Master does like sitting out in the garden almost whatever the weather. So I am getting used to it.

He has been very pleased with me because only one night did I not sleep through without waking him up and I usually manage not to make a mess of the kitchen overnight.

It is such fun being a puppy. I've lost count of the hugs and kisses I've had. Master says that he read in a magazine that a puppy should meet a hundred people in his first hundred days. Then he won't be afraid of strangers in later life. I've certainly exceeded that. People are always picking me up and holding me. I reckon I don't really need to get my paws dirty at all.

There wasn't much I could do when I first came home. Eating and sleeping didn't prove too difficult. Oh, and I'm very good at chewing. I can chew towels and handkerchiefs. Until he stopped me, I chewed electric cables. Best of all, I like chewing him and whatever he happens to be wearing. I've discovered that, at tea time, when he's got a cup in one hand and a plate in the other, there's very little he can do about it if I nip his ankles!

The breeder, the vet and the pet shop owner all say that I should be fed exclusively on dried puppy food. Apparently this is specially formulated according to scientific formulae, to give me all the nutrients I need. The only other thing I need is plenty of fresh water to deal with the terrible thirst I get from eating all that dried food! How would you like it if you had to eat the same thing every day, a specially formulated diet of dried food, washed down with nothing but water to drink? You might be healthier, but would you be happier? Master read an article in a magazine at Christmas by a dog reminding humans that we, like you, are omnivores, which means we eat and enjoy everything. Anyway, scientists don't know everything. They've changed their minds about what's good for humans over the years. Master was brought up to believe that eggs, butter, cheese and cream were good for you. Then they were supposed to be a threat to your heart. Now apparently, they're OK again – in moderation, but then everything should be in moderation.

So, fortunately, Master takes what has been called an "old school" approach to feeding puppies. I do have dried puppy food. I think I've got to have it today, unless I can melt his heart with my tender brown eyes,

which isn't usually too difficult. Max always had two eggs for his breakfast and Master started me on one. Bobby also had his breakfast egg when he was a puppy, though he went off it in later life. Well, the one egg went down so fast that I'm now up to two – fried on Sundays, boiled on Mondays and Saturdays, scrambled on Tuesdays and Thursdays, poached on Wednesdays and Fridays. Apparently, Max liked poached eggs the least, but I like them all the same and find it hard to wait while they cool on the window sill, but Master says that I mustn't burn my tongue.

Then, if it's not dried food, I have a tin of puppy food at dinner time. For my tea, I might have a sausage or some corned beef or spam or fish. It depends on what he's having. Master says that there wasn't special puppy food when Bobby and Max were young and they did all right. His mother used to point out that the dog she had during the war (Spot) had to have the same as the humans. There wasn't any special dog food at all. So I'm eating nearly as much as Max already, but then I am growing fast. When I first came home, I was compared to a guinea pig! But I'm growing very fast indeed. He won't be able to call me Tiny Tommy for much longer.

I can't go out of the garden without being carried until I've been immunised, he says. That should be in just over a week. He says that then we shall have some lovely walks in the woods and fields as well as along the lanes. For now, he has to carry me everywhere when we go out. He can still manage me under one arm. So I've been to the post box and the church hall and St Michael's Church. I haven't been to St John's yet because Master says that, light as I am, it is too far for him to carry me. I enjoyed the Good Friday Family Service because I was allowed to stay in church and be petted by the children. For more formal services, I'm learning, like Bobby and Max had to, to stay in the vestry. At the moment, however, he has to dog proof it, removing or covering things I'm not allowed to chew and unplugging any electric cables just in case. He's looking forward to the time when I'm too big to get under the chest of drawers.

I do know that there is a difference between what I am allowed to chew and what I am not. I've inherited lots of dog toys. Max got lots of presents and hardly ever played with them. The toys I am allowed to chew, but I get more attention when I chew what I'm not supposed to! I like playing tug of war with the ropes and loops. I like playing football with the balls. I am just learning to fetch, which I'm told that Bobby and Max would never do. He also tells me that I have got to learn to come when I'm called before I get too fast for him to catch. Otherwise I shan't be trusted off my lead in the woods. There are places he followed Max thirteen years ago where he might not be able to get at his present advanced years. So, he tells me, I have to learn to be responsible! Freedom and responsibility go together.

I am learning to walk on my lead in the garden, but I much prefer to be free. Every day I get more adventurous. I managed the stairs for the first time today. Until now, he has been carrying me upstairs. He's very patient (I don't think). When he's shaving, washing, dressing and making the bed, I have great fun helping. I seize the ends of towels and sheets in my teeth. I run off with his socks. I jump up on him when he's got his trousers half pulled up. He says it's wonderful having a dog in the Rectory again. Things are back to normal.

Probably the most exciting thing to have happened so far is the Easter Egg Hunt in our garden: all those children to make a fuss of me; all that running around; playing with the people hiding the eggs, helping to find them! So I'm well over my target for meeting a 100 people. I'm also supposed (according to the puppy book) to meet all the different kinds of animal I might ever meet in the first six months. So we're off to the zoo tomorrow. Not really. That's his idea of an April fool. I'm looking forward to seeing you all soon in church and out in the countryside. Tommy, the Rectory spaniel.

Easter Thanks

Thanks again to all those who made our Easter celebration the joy it was from the Passover meal and organising all the services, to preparing the churches liturgically, cleaning and polishing them, and decorating them with flowers, for music and bells, and the Easter Egg hunt. Thank you, everybody. Roger.