

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> September Michaelmas		7.30 pm Holy Communion Fr Dobromir Dimitrov	Genesis 28 vv 10-17 p30 Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 John 1 vv 47-51 p1064
1 <sup>st</sup> October Trinity 16 Harvest Festival		9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
		6.30 Harvest Praise followed by Harvest Supper in Church Hall	Psalms 8 II Chronicles 36 Luke 5 vv 1-16
8 <sup>th</sup> October Trinity 17		9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 5 vv 1-17 p689 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
15 <sup>th</sup> October Trinity 18		8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
		9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 25 vv 1-9 p708 Philippians 4 vv 1-9 p1180 Matthew 22 vv 1-14 p990
22 <sup>nd</sup> October Trinity 19		9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 45 vv 1-7 p731 I Thessalonians 1 vv 1-10 p1186 Matthew 22 vv 15-22 p990
29 <sup>th</sup> October Last Sunday after Trinity Bible Sunday		9.30 Holy Communion	Leviticus 19 vv 1-18 p121 I Thessalonians 2 vv 1-9 p1186 Matthew 22 vv 34-45 p991
Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November All Souls		7.30 pm Holy Communion	I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 6 vv 37-40 p1070
Services at St John the Baptist Halling the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
1 <sup>st</sup> October Trinity 16	Trinity 16	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I John 2 vv 22-29 p1226 Mark 9 vv 38-50 p1013
	Harvest Festival	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Philippians 2 vv 1-13 p1179 Matthew 21 vv 23-32 p989
8 <sup>th</sup> October Trinity 17		11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 5 vv 1-17 p689 Philippians 3 vv 1-14 p1180 Matthew 21 vv 33-46 p990
		5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Proverbs 2 vv 1-11 p636 I John 2 vv 1-17 p1224
15 <sup>th</sup> October Trinity 18		11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 25 vv 1-9 p708 Philippians 4 vv 1-9 p1180 Matthew 22 vv 1-14 p990
22 <sup>nd</sup> October Trinity 19		11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 45 vv 1-7 p731 I Thessalonians 1 vv 1-10 p1186 Matthew 22 vv 15-22 p990
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Holy Communion 9.30 am Wednesdays @ St Michael's		Holy Communion 9.30 am Thursdays @ St John's	
4 <sup>th</sup> October S Francis	Nehemiah 2 vv 1-8 Luke 9 vv 57-62	5 <sup>th</sup> October	Nehemiah 8 vv 1-12 Luke 10 vv 1-12
11 <sup>th</sup> October	Jonah 4 Luke 11 vv 1-4	12 <sup>th</sup> October	Malachi 3 vv 13-4 v2 Luke 11 vv 5-13
18 <sup>th</sup> October St Luke	II Timothy 4 vv 5-17 Luke 10 vv 1-9	19 <sup>th</sup> October	Romans 3 vv 21-30 Luke 11 vv 47-54
25 <sup>th</sup> October Ss Crispin & Crispinian	Romans 6 vv 12-18 Luke 12 vv 39-48	26 <sup>th</sup> October Alfred King & Scholar	Romans 6 vv 19-23 Luke 12 vv 49-53

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> is the feast of Ss Simon & Jude – Holy Communion 8.00 am @ St Michael's

Copy Date November Magazine 8.30 am Rectory 13<sup>th</sup> October



### When's Harvest?

That's quite a good question. In my last parish, I remember reading in somebody else's church magazine that the harvest was all in, while I knew from crossing the road that the golden corn still waved fair in Ramsgate's pleasant land. It depends on the weather. It depends on the varieties planted. To some extent, it depends on when the farmer can hire the combine harvester and the labour. We used to keep harvest at Halling on the last Sunday in September and at Cuxton on the first in October. That used to offend my excessively logical mind. Either *all is safely gathered in* or it isn't! So we now keep harvest in both villages the first Sunday in October and the harvest supper for all of us together is held after the combined harvest evening service – which, this year will take place at St Michael's at 6.30 pm (pun intended).

The date of harvest also, of course, depends on the crop. Some of you with vegetable gardens or allotments might still have been harvesting last year's parsnips and leeks in February this year. Quick crops like radishes, beetroot and early potatoes will have been ready from early Summer onwards. Throughout the Summer, peas, broad beans, onions, and, later, runner beans, were ready to pick. In the fruit gardens and orchards, there were rhubarb, strawberries and raspberries, the various kinds of currant and gooseberries, cherries, plums, damsons, bullaces, pears and apples. I mention bullaces because some people didn't know what they were (a kind of plum). Earlier on you might have had asparagus. I think somebody told me that you shouldn't cut it after Derby Day if you want the plants to thrive. Neither should you let the flower ladies have the fern if you expect to eat the shoots next year. And this year, from July onwards, there has been an abundance of blackberries. So there are plenty of reasons to be thankful for the harvest throughout the year. August Bank Holiday Monday used to be the first Monday in the month (as it still is in Scotland) in order to be close to Lammas Day (1<sup>st</sup> August), which was traditionally celebrated as the beginning of the grain harvest. Unlike this year, the weather is generally far poorer in the last week of August than the first. So it might have been unwise of the government to change it, but it was

part of a programme of secularising the calendar. Where we used to have Easter and Whitsun (the Jewish Passover and Firstfruits of the Harvest, respectively, and the Resurrection of Jesus and the Birthday of the Church, the Firstfruits of the Holy Spirit), which always come seven weeks apart, the late Spring Bank Holiday was fixed at the end of May and we were given an extra holiday on the first Monday in May in respect of Labour Day. Hence the congestion of bank holidays in Spring and the desire to make the Summer one later in order to spread them out a bit.

Older people remember when much of the land around here and Kent generally was devoted to the cultivation of hops. These come slightly later than most other crops, which pushes Harvest Festival back a bit. People seem to have fond memories of hop picking. My grandmother used to talk about hop picking mornings - chill starts to hot, bright days, from late August through September into October. Her mother would put a pudding on the stove to cook slowly while they were out in the fields all day, sustained by cold tea. Many local families took part in hop picking. School holidays were adjusted to allow children to work in the hop gardens and some children took the time off unofficially anyway if they were still wanted during term time. Personally, I can't help feeling that children's lives are now too regulated and dominated by the demands of a formal education and the acquisition of certificates. We are meant to be educated for life, not to live to go to school. We can spend our whole lives preparing to live and then never get round to living them.

Large numbers of people also came down from London for what was a very labour intensive activity. It was hard work. Some of these transients had very poor accommodation and there were charities and missions dedicated to improving their welfare. Nevertheless, for many, it was a welcome holiday from the slums of the East End and a valuable opportunity to earn some money for winter clothing and so forth. Travellers (then more often known as gypsies) also moved their caravans from place to place, obtaining casual employment in seasonal jobs. One of the reasons for the tension between travellers and the settled population today is that this seasonal work has largely disappeared. Much of the countryside has been built on and there are so many more regulations. You can no longer expect a friendly

farmer to let you park your caravan, tether your horses and make camp in a meadow while you work for a few weeks on his land. The council would be breathing down his neck.

Although it was hard and dirty work, people who remember it are generally very positive about the joys of hop picking. Apart from anything else, there was the heavenly aroma of the hops drying in the kilns. My father told me that, in his day, the children were allowed to roast potatoes in the fire and sleep in the oast houses.

Hop picking died out in West Kent in the 'sixties. It always seems slightly odd to me that this labour intensive industry was mechanised, obviating the need for hundreds of workers, and then a very few years later was given up altogether. I wonder whether the farmers ever got back their investment in the machinery? Rural housing is a similar irony. Most farm labourers used to live in tied cottages. These were often very poor places to live – large families cramped into a very few rooms, repairs neglected if the boss was mean or short of cash himself, an earth closet at the end of the garden. If you became too sick or too old to work or if you upset your employer, you could find yourself both jobless and homeless. After the two world wars, there was a great effort to build council houses for working class people in the villages – good quality homes with big gardens and plenty of open space, bathrooms and lavatories (inside!) and, very importantly, security of tenure and affordable rents. But again, a very few years later, the mechanisation of agriculture and better wages in the towns led to many working class people moving away from the countryside and much better off people buying the council houses and the remaining cottages, doing them up and using them as homes to commute from or retire to. I saw my first combine harvester around 1960 and it was nothing like the size of the behemoths we see now in the fields. In many villages, young people who were brought up there can't afford to live there any longer.

Where I grew up (Betsham, near Southfleet), apart from the hops, there were mostly orchards and market garden crops. When I was nearly nine, we moved to Wigmore, which was then still quite rural. There were bullocks in what is now the Kings Frith playing field behind our house and

Wigmore Road petered out into a cart track. There was a farm near where the Hempstead Valley shopping centre now is, but much of the land was still wooded and, as far as I can remember, there were sheep and cattle in the fields nearest us, rather than crops growing.

Anyway, back to Betsham around 1960. Given the nature of the crops, probably most people in the village worked on the land at least some part of the year, planting and weeding, as well as harvesting. My great grandfather, years previously, used to start very in the early morning and take a cart loaded with produce for sale in the Covent Garden market. Apparently, the horses knew the routine so well, that the men could go to sleep on the cart and the horses would find their way to the transport cafe on Shooters Hill, where both men and horses were fed. There must have been less traffic on the roads then than now. From Cuxton, local farmer Jim Cogger, so he told me, would send produce on the stopping goods train from Cuxton Station.

Fruit in those days was grown on large standard trees. Cherries grow tallest, I believe, of the common fruits. Apples can grow twenty to thirty feet. The orchards were even more spectacular at blossom time than they are now, but the fruit had to be picked from specially shaped ladders and broken bones were not uncommon.

So most people were involved in the harvest. If they didn't work on the farm, they probably had gardens or allotments. People kept chickens or rabbits for eggs (not the rabbits) and for food, even a pig. But life was tough. There were still some very poor people in the countryside when I was growing up. It was much more obvious that you depended on the success or otherwise of agriculture. In days not so long gone by, you could go hungry or starve if the crops failed or if you lost your job.

Go back a couple of hundred years and the rector too was intimately concerned in how the crops did. His income depended on fees (not a great source of income), on his glebe land (which he might have farmed himself if he were poor, or else employed labour to farm if he were richer or let out to tenants) and tithes – a proportion (not necessarily a tenth) of everybody else's crops.

Tithes were paid in kind and quite often resented if people didn't have much for themselves or were not members of the Church. It helped when tithes were paid in cash rather than in kind but it was never a satisfactory system.

So harvest was a big thing. The community depended on the harvest to survive the Winter. Bringing in the harvest was a tremendous effort and a great achievement which involved the whole community. So, a vital part of the harvest celebration was for everybody to come to church and to thank God for the harvest. Harvest Festival in its modern form was a Victorian development and we all enjoy our harvest services very much. Special harvest hymns and anthems have been written and are much loved. Traditionally, we bring some of what we have grown to decorate the church so beautifully and to give to other people who might themselves be in need.

But maybe the traditional harvest festival means less to people in a much less agricultural society. Most of us don't depend on a good harvest in order to survive. We buy all or most of our food from the shops. If the harvest is poor, prices might go up, but most of us will still have enough money to buy food even if we have to cut back on inessentials. We don't have the satisfaction of seeing all the produce set out and thinking, *I had a hand in that.*

We do know (although it's hard to understand why in a rich country like ours) that some people don't have enough money to buy food. That is why there are food banks. We ask for tins and packets (not too close to their *use by* date, please) as harvest offerings. It's not the same as bringing something you've grown yourself and it doesn't look so good on the church window sills, but it is much more practical in helping people who are in genuine need. We can also support organisations such as Christians Against Poverty <https://capuk.org/>, which help people in this country to sort their finances out and Christian Aid which mainly helps overseas. We shall be collecting money for the annual *Poverty and Hope* <http://www.rochester.anglican.org/diocese/poverty-and-hope/> appeal also in envelopes provided in church.

So, we don't need to be thankful anymore because it's all given to us on a plate. We can forget about God. Everything we need we can get at the Co-op! I hope that sounds as wrong to you as it does to me. Of course, we should thank God. *All good gifts around us, are sent from heav'n above. Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all his love.*

Harvest Festival might also mean less to us than it did to people in the past because we're not most of us engaged together in growing things. Those of us who are neither in education nor retired, work in different jobs in different places. Mostly, we don't work in the same places as our neighbours anymore. There have been attempts to include other things in harvest festivals like coal or fish or things made in factories. There are also industrial festivals celebrating work in industry and commerce. But they've never been so popular as harvest. They don't have the magic of a traditional harvest festival. And many people's jobs aren't making things any more than they are growing things. What you do might be very important, but you've not made anything which you can bring to church or show to other people. We should still be thankful for the skills we have and the opportunities God gives us to serve other people in our employment and we should still respect what other people contribute to our well-being by what they do, but how do we celebrate them? Maybe in our daily prayers and the way we treat other people every day?

What might we think about in a modern Harvest Festival? First of all, worship, praise and thanksgiving. Building on that foundation, concern for people who don't have enough. Can we pray for them? Are there other ways in which we can help them? Thinking about farmers. One consequence of mechanisation leading to very few people working on the land is that those who do work on the land can be very lonely. There is a high suicide rate among farmers. There are all the added stresses of bureaucracy in modern farming and possibly anxieties about what might happen with Brexit. We might also remember farmers in countries where crop failure still can mean famine and death, people who farm in war zones or where the climate and the soil are tough. We can open out our areas of concern to remember people in other essential occupations, especially those whose work is hard, and those who can't find

work. As we give thanks, so we bless and are blessed and, if our thanks are sincere, we become a blessing to other people.

Finally, and I'm told that preachers don't mention this often enough, every harvest is a reminder of the final Harvest. It is no coincidence that Death is often portrayed as the grim reaper, wielding a scythe. That was the first thing young people

1 Come, ye thankful people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home;  
all is safely gathered in,  
ere the winter storms begin.  
God our Maker doth provide  
for our wants to be supplied;  
come to God's own temple, come,  
raise the song of harvest home.

2 All the world is God's own field,  
fruit as praise to God we yield;  
wheat and tares together sown  
are to joy or sorrow grown;  
first the blade and then the ear,  
then the full corn shall appear;  
Lord of harvest, grant that we  
wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord our God shall come,  
and shall take the harvest home;  
from the field shall in that day  
all offenses purge away,  
giving angels charge at last  
in the fire the tares to cast;  
but the fruitful ears to store  
in the garner evermore.

4 Even so, Lord, quickly come,  
bring thy final harvest home;  
gather thou thy people in,  
free from sorrow, free from sin,  
there, forever purified,  
in thy presence to abide;  
come, with all thine angels, come,  
raise the glorious harvest home.

Roger.

Psalm 65: Thou, O God, art praised in Sion : and unto thee shall the vow be performed in Jerusalem. Thou that hearest the prayer : unto thee shall all flesh come. My misdeeds prevail against me : O be thou merciful unto our sins. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and receivest unto thee : he shall dwell in thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Thou shalt shew us wonderful things in thy righteousness, O God of our salvation : thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea. Who in his strength setteth fast the mountains: and is girded about with power. Who stilleth the raging of the sea : and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth shall be afraid at thy tokens : thou that makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise thee. Thou visitest the earth, and blessest it : thou makest it very plenteous. The river of God is full of water : thou preparest their corn, for so thou providest for the earth. Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof : thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness : and thy clouds drop fatness. They shall drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness : and the little hills shall rejoice on every side. The folds shall be full of sheep : the valleys also shall stand so thick with corn, that they shall laugh and sing.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.



**2017 Poverty and Hope Appeal** The 2017 Diocese of Rochester Poverty and Hope Appeal was launched on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Bishop James said ‘The Bible challenges us to think beyond our own needs and to look to the needs of others. The Poverty and Hope Appeal is one way we are responding as a diocese, believing that it is our privilege and responsibility to stand in solidarity with communities in need wherever they are found.’ The annual Poverty and Hope Appeal raises funds to support projects overseas and in Kent that aim to tackle the causes of poverty. Projects are usually supported

for three years, to provide stability and to help them grow and become self-sustaining. This year the Appeal focuses on

- **Argentina** - supporting marginalised people and protecting the land on which they live and depend from deforestation and exploitation
- **Burkina Faso** - improving food security and alleviating hardship in the face of an increasingly unpredictable climate by helping communities develop their agriculture.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo** - helping members of marginalised communities understand their rights and work with local authorities to secure resources and assistance.
- **India** - funding a round-the-clock helpline that helps disadvantaged women experiencing abuse and injustice obtain justice through dialogue and reconciliation before community councils.
- **Kent** – helping young people of all ages and abilities explore global issues of injustice, poverty, sustainability and peace-building.

Last year, the Poverty and Hope Appeal was supported by over 70 churches across the Diocese of Rochester. We hope that you will also be moved to join in the Appeal this year. Visit the Poverty and Hope web pages <http://rochester.anglican.org/diocese/poverty-amp-hope/> for more information about the Poverty and Hope Appeal and how you can support it, or contact the Appeal Coordinator, Debbie Cooper [povertyandhope@gmail.com](mailto:povertyandhope@gmail.com), from whom you can get copies of the Appeal brochure, posters, and gift aid envelopes, or to arrange a speaker.

*"Shout with Joy to God, all the earth. Sing the Glory of His name; make his praise glorious"* (Psalm 66:1-2). We can praise the Lord with words and deeds. Through the Poverty and Hope Appeal we can change mourning into dancing, to stand in solidarity with both God and our brothers and sisters around the world.

#### Forthcoming Attractions

1<sup>st</sup> October: 6.30 Harvest Praise at St Michael's followed by Harvest Supper in Church Hall

14<sup>th</sup> October 7.30 pm: Quiz in Church Hall for church funds.

4<sup>th</sup> November: Diocesan Gathering. Details to follow. Watch this space.

9<sup>th</sup> December: 10.00 Christmas Fair (nee Coffee Morning aka market) in church hall. ALSO evening Christmas music event.



# QUIZ NIGHT

SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

CHURCH HALL, CHURCH GREEN, FRINDSBURY, ME2 4HE

- TABLES of 6 – 8

**7 for 7.30 start**

- £7.50 includes Ploughman's Supper. Please bring your own drinks & glasses
- These evenings are always popular so please book early to secure your table by contacting Lesley Wright on 01634 725635 or Sue Jones on 01634 296050 or Rector 01634 717134.

#### The Biter Bit

A traffic warden woke up from a very deep sleep to find that he was in his coffin and about to be buried. He managed to shout out that he wasn't yet dead. "Too late," said the vicar; "I've completed the paperwork!"

#### Who Wears the Trousers?

"I've made up my mind," said the husband, "We're not going out tonight."

"I've made up my face," said the wife. "We are going out tonight."

### From the Registers

#### Baptisms:

13 <sup>th</sup> August	Theodore Daniel Edward Chubb	Bush Road
13 <sup>th</sup> August	Jessica Ann Melford	Kent Road
27 <sup>th</sup> August	Olivia Mena Stanley	Scholey Close
3 <sup>rd</sup> September	Harvey Anthony Trevor Leach	Pilgrims Way

#### Funerals:

15 <sup>th</sup> August	Rita Ethel Swain (93)	Rochester Road, North Halling.
21 <sup>st</sup> August	Grace Elsie Pearce (96)	formerly of Cuxton

### Vicar Quiz

Can you identify these religious figures?

Which Black Adder actor played the part of a vicar in the film Keeping Mum?

In which BBC sitcom would you find The Rev Timothy Farthing?

Which character did Dawn French play in a BBC sitcom?

Who wrote The Vicar of Nibblesworth?

Which actor played Brother Dominic in O Brother, and Rev. Mervyn Noot in All Gas and Gaiters?

In which Channel 4 sitcom was Mrs Doyle the housekeeper?

Which Vicar did Oliver Goldsmith write about?

Ellis Peters wrote about this monk

This vicar was once in the Communards

Which vicar wrote about a tank engine called Thomas?

Rowan Atkinson
Dad's Army
Vicar of Dibley
Roald Dahl
Derek Nimmo
Father Ted
Vicar of Wakefield
Cadfael
Richard Coles
Rev W Awdry

## Grand Quiz for parish funds

14<sup>th</sup> October 7.30 pm Church Hall

Tickets £7.00 from Rector. Includes ploughman's. Please bring own drink.

01634 717134, roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk

### The Management Virus

This a story told by the late Tony Benn. The NHS (It could have been any government or local government body, any of several major corporations, or, alas the good old C of E as she becomes increasingly infected with the management virus.) entered a boat race against a Japanese crew. After Japan won by a mile, a working party discovered that the Japanese had eight oarsmen and a cox, whereas the British had eight coxes and one oarsman. The British team spent £5,000,000 on management consultants and, on their recommendation, adopted a new structure for the crew – four assistant steering managers, three deputy managers and a director of steering services. The oarsman was offered an incentive to row harder. This time Britain lost by two miles! So they sacked the oarsman for poor performance, sold the boat and used the proceeds to pay a bonus to the director of steering services.



**CUXTON AUTO SERVICES**  
 Servicing/Repairs/MOT Centre

**Yusuf Oomar**  
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*Brainteaser set by an academic for his students at Essex University: "Which is the odd one out — 6, 22, 40, 54, 71 and 87?" The pupils grappled with this all weekend, seeking a pattern, but had to give in. In fact, the answer was simple. He explained: "It's No 40. All the others come with rice."*

#### Local History

We still have copies of Lilian Bennet's *Cuxton Remembered* and the Centenary of Halling School available at £1.00 from

the Rector. There are also brief guides to both churches available in print and on line at <http://cuxtonandhalling.org.uk/>

St John's Draw (August): £10 each to Mrs Chidwick (9), Mrs Burr (12) & Mrs Smith (49) – drawn by Mr Badman.  
St Michael's Draw (September): £10 to Mr & Mrs Gates (18), £5 each to Mr & Mrs Beaney (5) & Mr Crundwell (14).

#### Flora and Fauna

In terms of actual plants and animals, there is not much to report this month. The flowers described last month are, many of them, still flourishing and there are few new ones. There are lots more hips around now, however, to go with the haws. The old man's beard is rampant. Slightly disappointingly, the nettles continue to grow, but they don't sting at this time of year anything like so viciously as they do in the Spring. Also, as one gets older, one's skin becomes less sensitive to nettle stings. My great niece was quite impressed at my insouciance when stung on our walk at Upnor. None of us chanced paddling, however, as the river was alive with jelly fish. The children were fascinated by the medusae stranded on the shore. They



were also interested in the passion flower in the pub garden. The "Passion" in "passion flower" refers to the passion of Jesus in Christian theology. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Spanish Christian missionaries adopted the unique physical structures of this plant, particularly the numbers of its various flower parts, as symbols of the Passion of Jesus and especially his crucifixion. The picture is a blue passion flower (*P. caerulea*) showing most elements of the Christian symbolism. The pointed tips of the leaves were taken to represent the Holy Lance. The tendrils represent the whips used in the flagellation of Christ. The ten

petals and sepals represent the ten faithful apostles (excluding St. Peter the denier and Judas Iscariot the betrayer). The flower's radial filaments, which can number more than a hundred and vary from flower to flower, represent the crown of thorns. The chalice-shaped ovary with its receptacle represents a hammer or the Holy Grail. The 3 stigmas represent the 3 nails and the 5 anthers below them the 5 wounds (four by the nails and one by the lance). The blue and white colours of many species' flowers represent Heaven and Purity.

Technically, I suppose jellyfish count as animals (or Cnidaria, along with sea anemones, corals and the Hydra you may have had a tank of in school, if you're being biological). Otherwise, I have seen a few dragonflies in my garden. Having a dog with me, I carefully note where the cattle, sheep and horses are. I wonder why they are moved around quite so much. It is true that it is better to confine them to one area to graze and then to move them on than it is to let them range freely. They use the grass more efficiently that way. I understand too that the cattle north of the Victoria line at Bush have a job to do. They keep the pasture in a suitable condition not only for various kinds of grass but for wild flowers as well. I try to keep



Tommy apart from them; though, when they did meet, he paid them no attention and they took no notice of him.

September seems to be the time when spiders are most in evidence. Their webs are everywhere and I find I have to brush myself off and comb my hair when I have been down the garden. Spiders' webs are very beautiful, especially when glistening with water droplets and spiders can be beautiful too if you take the time to look at them. When I was hoeing the rose garden, quite a number of wild bees (or possibly wasps) were buzzing round what I took to be a subterranean nest. Discretion being the better part of valour, I left that bit for another day. I've been caught several times before accidentally disturbing the nests of wasps or bees in my garden.

What really has struck me these last few days has been the incidence of mist and fog and cloud. Some mornings, the mist hangs about low in the valleys. The River Medway wends its way through silver grey cloud which climbs the banks to a different heights depending on the temperature of the air and land. On such mornings, tendrils of vapour may swirl or simply hover in Dean and Bush Valleys. On other days, the situation is reversed. The fog is really low cloud and, while the valleys are clear, moist gloom invests the woodland higher up the hills. Where the sun breaks through the mist, wonderful shive light gleams golden rays through the trees. As one walks in and out of the mist, the temperature falls or rises several degrees and clothing has to be discarded or recovered. On other mornings, the cloud is far up above in the sky with all its different shapes and formations. Everybody loves the sight of puffy white clouds in an azure sky, but, one day recently, on two occasions, the cloud quickly covering the blue was almost black and even more beautiful, while the sun still shone brightly. The first time, I had just started to cut my grass and I assumed that the heat spots falling from the sudden appearance of dark cloud would very soon blow over, but the cloud turned to grey, filled the sky and rained persistently for an hour or so while I struggled on to cut the grass on the afternoon allocated for this task. Eventually, it stopped and the sun returned, but, later the sky again turned black, the thunder rolled and we just made it home from Evensong before the cloud burst and the gutters were overflowing, unlike another poor lady we had met with her dog who got soaked.

Soon, the leaves will be taking their Autumn hues. The best weekend is said to be the first in November. We shall see. Roger.

#### Tommy's Talking Points



I told you all last time that we were thinking of walking the Saxon Shore from Cliffe to Gravesend. This came to pass on 14<sup>th</sup> August. We took the train to Strood, where we met Master's friend and boarded the bus to Cliffe. Master enjoys going to places he remembers from childhood and reminiscing over family stories attached to them. In my opinion, he's a bit too keen on pointing out how much nicer things were when the roads were less busy and there was a lot less development. Where does he think people are going to live and work and how does he expect them to get about? Mind you, I also prefer open countryside, freedom to run and the absence of traffic.

Anyway, we alit at Cliffe Church – a large building, reflecting the importance and prosperity of Cliffe in the early Middle Ages, when the church was built, and, later on, as a port, which flourished until C16. (It was probably a lot busier and noisier than it is now, as it was in Victorian times, when there was a thriving cement industry.) We walked through the churchyard, asked directions and set off towards the Cliffe Pools nature reserve. There was a family with a dog and a man picking the abundant blackberries. We didn't see many people, but nearly all the people we did see made a fuss of me. I am a very friendly dog, though I was a bit unsure of the gravel path. Soft grass is much more comfortable to walk on.

The walk was totally different from our North Downs Way walks. It's all flat for one thing. But the men enjoyed the wide open sky and the views across the Thames. The tide was coming in and we saw lots of ships, entering or leaving probably Tilbury. There was a lot of wildlife. They saw egrets and an avocet and

three herons and, close up, a small sparrow shaped bird with what appeared to be a thrush's breast. There were also butterflies, including a vivid yellow one, much deeper than a brimstone.

After Cliffe Pools, we had to negotiate an industrial site with railway lines and roads and quarries. That was very different, but we came back out on to the Thames sea wall, with all those lovely views again. There were very many horses on the grass near the sea wall, some of them with cute little foals. Master is pleased that I pay very little attention to farm animals.

They carried on their discussion about animals, our consciousness, and our rights if any, but, beyond agreeing that it would be wrong to cause any sentient creature to suffer, there wasn't much they could be certain about. They did mention an interesting conundrum. It is obviously very difficult to live without animal products. Even if you didn't eat animals or drink milk, there's still leather and other things derived from animals. That being the case, is it more ethical to raise animals at home so that you know that they are well looked after and humanely slaughtered when the time comes (but then you might be eating creatures which had become pets) or is it better to eat meat you buy in the shops, not knowing if it has had a miserable life on a factory farm and an unpleasant death in a commercial abattoir? At least in the countryside, most people used to live with animals – rabbits, chickens, pigs, maybe – which they eventually intended to eat. Those of you who only keep animals as pets are called post-domestic.

Anyway, back to the walk. We past the old National Sea Training College, which is now a Metropolitan Police College. Gravesend used to be the biggest sea training college in the world. We then entered an area of small industrial premises and crossed over the lock at the Gravesend end of the Thames and Medway canal. The section in tunnel from Higham to Strood was long ago taken over by the railway and filled in, but Master remembers when the canal basin at Strood was still there and there were lock gates at the end of Canal Road – an exciting place for a small boy, with railway sidings, the canal, interesting business premises and access to Strood Pier (from whence you get on a boat for Southend and even more exotic destinations such as Margate and Ramsgate).

Then we came out into some nice gardens and, just before we came to the ferry terminal, the Clarendon Royal Hotel. Master was disappointed that the ferry to Tilbury is now only a small boat. Before the Dartford Tunnel was opened, it was a car ferry. On one occasion, much more recently than that, Master turned up on his bike, just as it was pulling out. The man on deck said "Throw the bike and jump" which Master did, not having time to think better of it!

We discovered that the Clarendon had a lovely grassed open space where we could sit and look out over the river while the men enjoyed a sumptuous repast and I had a rest. Then back to Gravesend station, where we got straight on a train we should have missed had it not been late. At Strood, however, there would have been a long wait for a Cuxton train. Master has no patience. So we walked, only to be overtaken by the train we could have waited for. He says that walking is better for his blood pressure than hanging about. We did, however, establish that the path alongside the railway line from Roman Way to Cuxton Station is now open and clear. I'd never been that way. Master seldom does. In the past, it has been choked with nettles. There used to be a section through an old quarry which had become a landfill site, with jets of burning methane at intervals. It was frequently blocked around Brickfield Cottages. But somebody has worked hard on it and it's well worth using if you are going that way or just fancy a walk.

When we got home, we sat in the garden till it was nearly dark, disturbing a frog when Master watered the plants. Lucky for it that none of those herons was about. Then indoors and the ordeal of having the burrs detached from my fur. The tail's the worst bit! They are now thinking of doing some more Saxon Shore. West of Gravesend, there are plenty of stations, but the route might be much less rural. East of Cliffe would be delightful, except that coming home would depend on the very infrequent bus service from High Halstow or Allhallows. We shall see!

Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.