

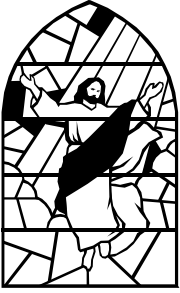
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
April 6 th Easter 3	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	1 Corinthians 3 vv 10-17 p1146 John 2 vv 13-22 p1065
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Zephaniah 3 vv 14-20 p947 Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 1 Peter 1 vv 17-23 p1217 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
April 13 th Easter 4	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 2 vv 42-47 p1094 1 Peter 2 vv 19-25 p1218 John 10 vv 1-10 p1076
	5.30 Evening Prayer St John's	Ezra 3 vv 1-13 p475 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174
April 20 th Easter 5	11.00 Holy Communion (Stop! Look! Listen!)	Genesis 8 vv 1-19 p9 Acts 7 vv 55-60 p1100 1 Peter 2 vv 2-10 p1218 John 14 vv 1-14 p1082
April 27 th Easter 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 8 v20 – 9 v17 p10 Acts 17 vv 22-31 p1113 1 Peter 3 vv 13-22 p1219 John 14 vv 15-21 p1082
May 1 st Ascension Day	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
May 4 th Easter 7	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 36 vv 24-28 p868 Acts 1 vv 6-14 p1092 1 Peter 4 v12- 5 v11 p1220 John 17 vv 1-11 p1085
Services at St Michael and All Angels Cuxton		
April 6 th Easter 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 2 vv 14-41 p1093 Luke 24 vv 13-35 p1061
April 13 th Easter 4	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 2 vv 42-47 p1094 1 Peter 2 vv 19-25 p1218 John 10 vv 1-10 p1076
April 20 th Easter 5	8.00 Holy Communion	Ezekiel 37 vv 1-12 p868 John 5 vv 19-29 p1069
	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Genesis 8 vv 1-19 p9 Acts 7 vv 55-60 p1100 1 Peter 2 vv 2-10 p1218 John 14 vv 1-14 p1082
April 27 th Easter 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 17 vv 22-31 p1113 Genesis 8 v20 – 9 v17 p10 1 Peter 3 vv 13-22 p1219 John 14 vv 15-21 p1082
May 1 st Ascension Day	Holy Communion (time & place tba)	Daniel 7 vv 9-14 p892 Acts 1 vv 1-11 p1092 Luke 24 vv 44-53 p1062
May 4 th Easter 7	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 1 vv 6-14 p1092 John 17 vv 1-11 p1085

Copy Date May Magazine 11th April 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton every Wednesday also at 2.00. **Sunday School** is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays). **After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's.

roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

Slimming World meets every Thursday at 7.00 pm at Halling Community Centre. For more information, contact Sharon on 01634 243198.



I am not running the London Marathon this year. One of the questions on the application form was about ethnicity and I refused to answer it. The only race that matters on that day is the 26 miles from Blackheath to St James Park. Over the last ten years or so, officialdom has become ever more intrusive, poking its nose into our lives. We are monitored, kept under surveillance and required to provide ever more information about ourselves. According to Francis Bacon (1561-1626) “Knowledge itself is power”. According to the fictional Sir Humphrey Appleby (of “Yes Minister” fame), the person with real power in any organisation is the General Secretary or the Permanent Secretary. Secretaries are the people entrusted with the secrets. So an official, who has information

about you, has power over you. If that official refuses to share the knowledge he has (even with the subject of the information) he is refusing to share his power. Another great thinker, Lord Acton (1834-1902), comments, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” When we give officialdom information about ourselves, we give it power. Power certainly does corrupt and the only way to be sure that it does not is to make officials accountable. If the public is to have real power over officialdom, it has to know what officialdom is doing. “It is not merely of some importance but it is of fundamental importance that justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done”. (Lord Hewart 1870-1943).

We are often told that we should not be afraid of government holding information about us on file unless we have something to hide. The Stasi, the communist East German secret police, used to tell citizens of that country the same thing. It is fair, therefore, to ask what the state has got to hide when it refuses to share information with the public. My particular focus, this month, is on children and the courts. It is taken for granted that the anonymity of children involved in court proceedings must be protected. There are sound reasons for this. If a child is a victim in a notorious case or caught up in a messy divorce, obviously it is wrong for that child to be subjected to pressure from the media and inquisitive members of the public. Even when that child is grown up, he or she obviously does not want to be known for ever as the victim of that horrendous attack, or as someone abused by his parents, or as the child of a failed celebrity marriage.

It is also true that a child criminal ought to be given the chance to start again with a clean sheet and not to be blighted for the whole of his life by the stupid or even wicked things he did as a teenager. [There seems to be an inconsistency developing in government policy here, however. The latest government IT wheeze is a database on which everybody’s school records will be permanently held and made available to prospective employers. So, if you are suspended from school for swearing at a teacher when you are 15, it will still count against you fifty years later when you are applying for a job at B&Q to supplement your meagre pension!]

We should, I believe, be prepared to challenge the confidentiality principle. For a start, if a teenager becomes a habitual criminal, stealing from local shops and vandalising public property, I believe that there is a strong case for his identity to be made known to the public. Honest people have a right to protect themselves and their property which outweighs a teenage thug’s right to privacy.

I wonder, too, whether confidentiality really works. The people closest to the child caught up in court proceedings know all about it anyway. Beyond that immediate circle, all kinds of rumours probably circulate in the neighbourhood. It might be better to tell people the truth rather than to let them speculate on the basis of half truths.

It is also the case that, when terrible things happen to us, one of the ways we cope is to share our troubles with family and friends. When a family is in deep trouble, it seems cruel to issue court orders preventing them from confiding in other people.

Where there are miscarriages of justice, one of the most effective things we can do, is to launch a public campaign. This is difficult or impossible to do when the miscarriage of justice has regard to a case involving a child. You would be in contempt of court if you told other people or the media what had really gone on.

The question I ask is whom does the secrecy around juvenile cases protect? Generally confidentiality is in the interests of the child, though perhaps not always. The courts' paranoia about secrecy in these cases often leads to orders banning any discussion of the case outside the courts, including a ban on naming the social workers involved or, sometimes, even the name of the local authority for whom they work. Social workers do have a very difficult job and it is not surprising that they sometimes get it wrong. Unfortunately the secrecy, which is normal in cases to do with children, makes it almost impossible to hold social workers to account. Justice is not seen to be done in the Family Courts because proceedings are hardly ever published. Whereas most public officials are accountable to the public through democratically elected local authorities or through parliament, even councillors and MPs are often unable to penetrate the wall of secrecy behind which Social Services Departments operate. There is good evidence that incompetent social workers get away with it and that some social workers abuse their power, bullying families and treating vulnerable people unfairly.

Let me give you an example. Some years ago, there was a notorious case at Rochdale. What little has been published provides the following picture. Social workers took one family's children into care on the basis of rumours of abuse (which have since proved false). When that family's friends tried to stand up for them, the social workers assumed that they too were child abusers and took their children away. All these children have subsequently had wretched lives in care. Now they are grown up and want to tell their stories, but, so far as I know, the courts are still gagging them. Whom are the courts protecting – the children or the social workers, some of whom are still working in Social Services departments?

There is a sick joke which goes like this. What is the difference between a pit bull terrier and a social worker? The answer is that you might get your kids back from a pit bull! Unfortunately the joke works because it is not far from some families' experiences. If social workers take against you, there is almost nothing you can do. It's Catch 22. If you get upset when they take your children away, you are obviously hysterical and unfit to be a parent. If you remain calm, you obviously don't care. If you discuss your problems with anyone but Social Services and lawyers, you are in contempt of court. It is basically you against them and they have all the resources of the local council and the Family Courts behind them.

We have all heard of cases where social workers have failed to protect vulnerable children and you might think that it is better to be safe than sorry, to take a child into care where there is any doubt at all, rather than risk leaving an abused child with his natural parents. It is not as simple as that, however. There is some evidence that Social Services (like most law enforcement agencies in this country) pick on the easy cases. It is much easier to take a child from a family who co-operate with Social Services, allow social workers into their homes and tell them everything, than it is to get into a chaotic household, where nobody keeps appointments or tells the truth and where the menace of violence is always present.

It is not at all obvious that a child is better off in care than living with his own less than perfect family. Love outweighs a great deal of domestic turbulence. The very act of tearing a child away from his mother is an enormous trauma in his life and in hers. Social workers, who take children away without very good cause, are downright cruel.

And what of life in care? It may mean a children's home. In such a home, vulnerable children, taken away for their own safety, are often mixed in with criminal children, taken away from home for very different reasons. Some of the worst cases of child abuse have been in children's homes. Abuse is almost inevitable when vulnerable children are put in the power of adults and not allowed to talk about their plight to anyone outside the "system."

The preferred option is foster care. Some foster carers are wonderful people, who provide marvellous homes for wayward or mistreated youngsters. There is always a shortage of foster carers, however, and some of the people recruited are entirely unsuitable. They are (I am told) paid more than £500 per week per child. So you can see the incentive for people to take the job even if they don't care much about children. Quite often, desperately miserable children run away from the foster carers to whom they have been sent by social workers and run back to their natural families. Unless the families concerned hand their own children back to the Social Services departments which have made them so unhappy, they can find themselves in

gaol. What does it do to a child to know that his own father or mother has been sent to prison because he ran away from unkind foster carers?

Official statistics show that children brought up in local authority care do less well at school than other children. They are more likely to commit suicide. They are more likely to finish up homeless or in prison. We should not assume that, if in doubt about a child's home, he should be put into care "to be on the safe side". Care is not necessarily the safe side!

Yet local authorities seem to be taking ever more children into care with less and less reason. What about taking a child into care because he is obese? Which is worse? To live with your mum and eat too much or to be taken away and made to live with strangers and forced to eat what the local council calls a healthy diet?

Then there is adoption. A few years ago, local authorities were very reluctant to put up children for adoption and established complex and discouraging criteria for adoptive parents. More recently, government has encouraged local authorities to provide children (especially babies) for adoption and even given them incentives. If Social Services have any reason at all to think a woman will be a bad mother, the baby is taken away at birth.

You can of course fight Social Services through the courts – if you are sufficiently articulate and can obtain good legal advice. However, it may not help you if you win. Maybe you can disprove all the allegations Social Services made against you, but, if the child has been adopted, you will not get him back. The court will say it is in his best interests to stay with his adopted family. You may well not get your child back if he has been in care for a long time – and court proceedings generally do take a long time. It can indeed be easier to get your kid back from a pit bull.

The secrecy surrounding the Family Courts puts families at an enormous disadvantage on those occasions when officialdom gets it wrong, when social workers make mistakes. Is there any evidence of social workers doing worse than making mistakes, of their actually abusing their position? The secrecy around the family courts makes it impossible to say for certain.

As a clergyman, I hear all sorts of tales about council officials. Sometimes I hear about them being very caring and doing a good job. Quite often I hear stories about ignorant, arrogant officials abusing their power and being rude or unhelpful to members of the public. I hear stories about officers using the council's powers to do favours for their friends. My own experience, when Medway Council imposed a Tree Preservation Order on my garden, was that officers were prepared to break the rules and even the law, to tell lies and to give favourable treatment to their friends. Even when I had proved that officers had done all these things, the Ombudsman ruled that they still had the power to make the order. So, when people tell me that council Social Service departments behave in the same way, I think it is perfectly possible that they are telling the truth. We cannot, however, know the truth unless the veil of secrecy is lifted.

I am sure that we need to challenge the assumption of total confidentiality in cases involving children. Social Services departments have to be accountable. Good social workers (the vast majority I am sure) will rejoice in the opportunity to put right their mistakes and to learn from them. Incompetent social workers should be offered the chance to retrain. Social workers who abuse their powers must be disciplined. Meanwhile there is an increasing number of English families living abroad to keep their children out of the hands of our own Social Services departments!

Roger.

So What Are We Then? What Do The Words Mean?

I was asked for an explanation of the various words used to describe the branch of the Church we belong to. Well, here goes. And I'm warning you; it isn't easy. Originally the word "**catholic**" was only used in the sense in which it is used in the Creed. The **one, holy, catholic and apostolic church** is the sum total of all Christians on earth and in heaven. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a member of His Body, the Catholic Church. As the centuries passed, however, different branches of the Church fell out. They believed that they were right and others wrong. They developed their own differing versions of the Creed. They no longer recognised one another's hierarchies. They ceased to be in communion with one another. The

Church in the West acknowledged the over all primacy of the pope, the Bishop of Rome, and called itself “catholic”. The East called itself **Orthodox**. The word orthodox is usually taken to mean “right belief”, but it could also mean (preferably) “right glory”. So we tend to use the words “catholic” and “orthodox” to mean respectively western and eastern Christians. However, I am sure the Greeks and Russians consider themselves to be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church and Roman Catholics believe that they are true to the orthodox faith.

At the Reformation, some western Christians believed that the mediaeval Catholic Church had lapsed from the standards set by Christ and the apostles. Those reformers who formed churches independent of Rome are called **Protestants**. The remaining part of the western catholic Church increasingly referred to itself as **Roman Catholic**. All those protestants must however surely be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church we affirm in the Creed and believe that their doctrines are wholly orthodox.

In England, under the Tudors, we separated from Rome. So the Church of England is **protestant**. We made a lot of the changes that the continental reformers believed were necessary. On the other hand, we maintained a church order, inherited from the Middle Ages, but traceable back to the first century after Christ. So we are also quite definitely **catholic**.

The **Church of England** is closely connected to the English state. For a long period, conformity to the doctrines of the Church of England was necessary if a man wanted to take a full part in the political or academic life of the nation. So those protestant groups, such as Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists and Presbyterians, who separated themselves from the Church of England on doctrinal grounds, were called **non-conformists**. Strictly speaking, English Roman Catholics are also non-conformists, but no-one ever calls them that.

Church of England people carried our particular version of Christianity (catholic and reformed) wherever English people settled and shared it with native populations. Christians all over the world who belong to this communion are called **Anglicans**. This is the **Anglican Communion**, millions of people linked in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and with one another.

Around the beginning of the 1800s, some Anglicans in England began to think that the Church of England was becoming less a part of the Catholic Church than the religious department of the British state. They emphasised our catholicity and their followers tended to adopt the practices of Roman Catholics. So they came to be thought of as **Anglo Catholics**. Some people, who strongly value our membership of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, believe that Anglo-Catholicism has become too traditionalist and tribal. These people see themselves as **liberal catholic Anglicans**.

On the other hand, since the late eighteenth century, there have been many Christians in England who have worried that the Church of England (catholic or liberal¹) was not true to the teachings of the Gospel and not sufficiently motivated in preaching to the unconverted. The people who make preaching the Bible the main thing in Church life are called **Evangelicals**. There are Evangelicals inside and outside the Church of England. However, no liberal or catholic can do without the Bible or avoid the Gospel imperative to share Jesus with the world. Neither ought any evangelical to forget the importance of belonging to the Body of Christ and the need to be open to fresh ideas.

Finally, the beginning of the twentieth century saw an outpouring of the Holy Spirit which led to the foundation of the **Pentecostal** churches. These experienced phenomena such as speaking in tongues and healing miracles. The Pentecostal movement spread to other churches and Christians who lay stress on these particular manifestations of the Spirit are usually called **Charismatics**. Charismatics cannot, however, do without a proper Church order and the Bible and the rest of us certainly cannot do without the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Spirit that we recognise Christ as Lord and find the resources to do His work on earth. I firmly believe that an authentic Church must be orthodox, catholic, evangelical, liberal and charismatic. And that is why I rejoice to be an Anglican!

Roger.

¹ **Broad church** or **latitudinarian** in Victorian parlance.

Passion Play at Wintershaw

Every year, there is a passion play in English at Wintershaw near Guildford. The action takes place in the extensive grounds of a country house and takes about 4 hours to perform. Some of the scenes are very realistic indeed and the play very powerfully presents the Bible story. Those of us who have been would warmly commend it.

Bush Road Chapel are organizing a trip this year on 28th June. Including coach, the cost is £28 or £14.50 for children. Please book with Janet Greaves (719474) as soon as possible.

Memorial for Bishop David Say

A number of people have suggested that the Cathedral should consider a memorial to commemorate the life and episcopacy of Bishop David Say.

Over the past six months we have been working with the Cathedral Architect, Fabric Advisory Committee, stonemasons and David's family to develop an appropriate memorial. I am pleased to say that agreement has been reached on a carved floor stone which will be located in the South Transept. We hope that it will be in place within the next six months. Upon its completion we shall hold a simple dedication ceremony.

It may well be that parishes or individuals would want to contribute towards the cost of this, in recognition of Bp David's life and ministry here. The full cost of the memorial will be £4,000. Any contributions should be sent to the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral and marked 'Bp David Say Memorial'.

Adrian Newman, Dean.

Bluebell Walk For Eve Appeal

The Eve Appeal raises funds for the specialist research programme at University College, London, which hopes to halve death rates associated with ovarian cancer in ten years. The date is 26th April. The distance is about 4 ¼ miles and leaves the Browndens Road car park at 10.00. There is a service bus from Lower Halling c 9.20. Buses pick up from Browndens Road at 11.45, 13.45 & 15.45. The walk is being organised by Pat Lawry in memory of his wife Greta. The bluebells ought to be in full bloom on this date. If you would like to take part, to be sponsored or to sponsor anyone else, please contact Pat at 13, Meadow Crescent.

Motor Neurone Disease

We had a letter from Colin Thompson, writing on behalf of the Motor Neurone Disease Association, to thank us for the £12.31 we raised through *Message in a Bauble* at Christmas at St Michael's. He says, "I would assure you that the money raised will be put to very good use by our volunteers towards the direct care and support of those living locally with MND."

Looking Ahead

Christian Aid



A Division of The British Council of Churches

There will be a **Supper** for Christian Aid at Strood Methodist Church in April. Date still to be determined.

Christian Aid Week starts 11th May. We need collectors for every street in the parish, please. Offers to Steve Brown.

There will be a **quiz** for Christian Aid in the Church Hall, Cuxton, on 6th September.

Church Mission Society



On 29th June our preacher at the 11.00 United Parish Eucharist will be Andrew Daunton Fear – our link mission partner in the Philippines.

Church Hall Draw: (January) £40 to Malcolm Curnow drawn by Ray Maisey; (February) £5 to Jo Martin, drawn by Dave Maxwell.

St John's Draw: £25 each to Mrs Chidwick (27) & Miss Wells (111); £10 to Mrs Fuller (78), drawn by Mrs Hayward.

Detling 2008

This year, the Diocese is organising a weekend of events on 21 and 22 June 2008.

It's taking place at the Kent County Showground, Detling. During our two days together, we'll be thinking about what it means to be One People with One Purpose and One Passion.

Throughout the weekend, there will be a programme of activities suitable for all ages. Saturday will finish with music, dancing, a BBQ and hog roast!

The weekend's events will culminate in the Petertide Ordination service, to which all are invited.

Saturday

10.00am Opening Worship*

10.30 Time "together@Detling" Pt1**

12.00 Time to Explore**

5.00 Time to Mingle including BBQ, Hog Roast, Dancing, and Music.

Space to camp/park caravans will be available overnight (details upon request).

Sunday

10.00am Opening Worship

10.30 Time "together@Detling" Pt2**

12.00 Time to Explore**

2.00 Break

3.00 Time "together@Detling" Pt3 including Petertide Ordination Service

* Special children's and youth activities on at these times + Crèche available for under 5's at these times

FAQs

How much is it going to cost me?

Admission is FREE, but there will be a charge for refreshments and overnight on-site camping. If you or your parish wish to make a contribution to the cost of this event, it would be most welcome, please do so via the registration form

What do I have to bring?

All the things you'd need for a family day out, including a picnic if you want to bring food rather than purchase it on site.

Will my child be bored?

No! There'll be times when we'll all be together, and times when adults, children, and young people will have their own individual programmes of activities.

Do I have to come to it all?

No - you're free to come to as much or as little of the weekend's events as you wish.

What do I do next?

If you as individuals or as a parish wish to come to 'together@Detling', please fill in the registration form and send it to the address below as soon as possible, there is a limit on numbers.

What if I still have questions?

Visit our website:

www.rochester.anglican.org/together

Send us an email:

together@rochester.anglican.org

Give us a ring: 01634 560000

Write to us:

Diocesan Office, St Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester, ME1 1SL

Vestry Meeting and Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

These will take place on Saturday 26th April at 10.00 am in the Church Hall Cuxton. The Vestry Meeting elects the churchwardens, who must be nominated in advance of the meeting. The APCM elects the Parochial Church Council and our two representatives to the Deanery Synod. You must be on the Electoral Roll to stand for office or to vote at the APCM. The APCM will also hear reports of the PCC's activities over the past year and is an opportunity to raise questions or topics for discussion.

Dickens' Country Protection Society



There will be a barn dance on 24th May at Buckland Farm, Cliffe – 7.30-11.00. Dancing to the Big Ian Petrie Band. Tickets £10 (£5 <16) includes Ploughman's Supper. Please bring own drinks. Also there will be a raffle.

Annual Subscriptions are also due: £3 individual, £5 family.

Quotation

"Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the 'good' of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated, but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience." C.S. Lewis.

Any Questions?

On Saturday April 26th at 7.30 pm, there will be an "Any Questions?" evening in the Church Hall. The panellists are **Theresa Murray**, who is the Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for this constituency, **Sue Haydock**, who is a Conservative councillor for Medway, a former mayor and secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, **Sarah Lear**, journalist with the "Medway News" and one other yet to be confirmed. Questions should be submitted to the chairman (the Rector) in advance and in writing. All questions are welcome and a selection will be made for use on the evening, but not seen by the panellists.



Halling WI

Our February meeting was almost a full house. We were all glad to get out to see our friends after a very foggy, grey, day. Mary was in the chair with Margaret Sutherland "observing" so that she knows what to do next month when she is in the top job. After Jerusalem and the birthday flowers the minutes were read and signed. Correspondence, yes we did have a little, was dealt with. Invitation to Ryarsh's party was accepted by myself and Margaret Sutherland and Ann Hayward had handed out freebies for 50p off of imitation butter, Flora, supposed to help keep you healthy and, as the saying goes, "every little helps". I had received a Thank you letter from Blythswood care with regards the Christmas Shoebox appeal and a few personal stories from people who had received them. Thank you girls. We must keep up the good work. Start knitting the scarves and gloves for this years appeal, June will soon be here, We can never make too many. Moneywise we are still in the black, thanks to Betty. Mary then introduced our speaker, and had a "senior moment". She called him Mr Taylor. She must have been thinking about her cup of tea. Explanation: we drink Yorkshire tea in the W.I. which is processed by Taylor's.

Mr Robin WALTON has been to our W.I. before, many years ago, but today he has a very interesting set of slides to illustrate his talk on Hop-picking in Kent.

What memories it brought back to many of us. How some members hated it and some, like me, loved it, the camaraderie, the smells and the wasps. I could tell many funny stories about my time in the hop garden. Perhaps I'll write them down sometime. Comparing how much we were paid in those days, shilling a bushel, today it would be considered slave labour, but so enjoyable and I can still remember what you could buy with a shilling. Mr Walton said you can still pick a few hops in September at the museum of Ken Life near the Malta Inn at Allington. He was warmly thanked by Ann Seagar.

After refreshments, Mr Walton judged our competitions. Flower of the Month was won by Ann Hayward with what must have been the first little Iris of the year. Sadly something is tucking into mine as soon as they show their colour. The competition for something beginning with the letter I was won by Ann Heaseman with a flat iron, an appropriate choice as they were all the rage in the hop-picking era, just right for singeing your sack aprons.

April speaker will be Margaret Phillips from West Malling, her subject "The Fascination of Leprosy". It sounds pretty morbid, but Margaret is a very good speaker and has a wide knowledge of the subject. You will be quietly surprised. Come along and have a listen. Phyllis.

Nature Notes and Reflections February 2008

Northwest winds blew on the first day of the month but the skies were blue and there was golden sunshine. I watched the sun rise over Bluebell Hill. Rooks were cawing in the woodland near the river and I heard blackbirds on the embankment. In the afternoon I took Murphy to the river walk. The water, which was low, reflected the blue of the sky and gulls congregated on the glistening mud flats. A pied wagtail strutted along the path ahead of us. The lengthening light was very obvious this early evening as the skies were clear. There was a chill in the air as the light faded. On the 4th the sun shone brightly from a blue sky brushed with occasional cloud and it was quite mild. I was aware of rooks preparing for nest building beyond the embankment. They cawed loudly as they circled the trees. It remained light well after 5pm. There were strong winds and rain during that night. In the morning I watched a pair of long tailed tits in the bare branches of a sycamore on the embankment. The day remained blustery with grey cloud scudding across the sky with squally showers falling in the afternoon. There was some sunshine in the middle of the morning. Stronger winds blew during the night. On the 9th, when frost crystals beautified the garden and a golden sun

shone from a clear blue sky, we took Murphy to Jeskyns Park at Cobham. The sun beamed down on us and I heard the songs of skylarks. It was glorious.

Frost covers the grass and the branches of the trees create a winter wonderland. The trees stand so still as the sun rises melting the frost then droplets of sparkling water hang on the twigs once the frost melts. Birds begin to forage then sing as the sun brings the countryside to life. They hop across the grass then fly up into the holly tree or dart among the bare lilac branches.

The 16th was beautiful with golden sunshine but it was cold because of easterly winds. In the morning we took Murphy to Addington where he ran in the paddock then in the afternoon I took him along the river walk. The water sparkled in the sunlight and gulls congregated on the glistening mud flats. On the 18th we awoke to a world of white for frost covered the trees and the ground, a beautiful scene. The golden orb of the sun beamed down on the earthly stillness for there was no breath of wind. During mid morning, fog wafted its way across the sky from the east and the sun's rays were hidden, the blue sky covered with the grey mist, but by midday, the sun was shining again.

New grass, dog's mercury and lords and ladies plants begin to emerge through brown leaves on the earth's floor. Birdsong breaks the woodland silence and there is a feeling of anticipation of spring in the air. The light is brighter and clearer as the sun climbs higher in the sky and the days lengthen. Celandines begin to bloom, closing their petals when the skies are grey.

The weather was mild on 21st with westerly winds bringing grey cloud. I watched a robin foraging on the edge of the pond and three robins hopping among the lilac branches. Collared doves and a wood pigeon pecked away at the seed on the patio wall. A cheeky squirrel sampled the peanuts. At various times during the day Murphy chased off the squirrel. The 24th was a day of contrasts, sunshine in the morning and grey skies in the afternoon. In the afternoon I walked along the main road where buds were waiting to burst and elder leaves had broken into full leaf. Black privet berries still clung to their twigs. A great tit was calling as I climbed the church path to the fields and Six acre Wood where young cow parsley plants had emerged, and one white violet, a clump of mauve dog violets and a few celandines were in bloom. I found no catkins but I did see hawthorn leaves in areas, which had obviously caught the warmth of the sun. I returned through Mays Wood and across the fields by which time the light was beginning to fade and a few drops of rain were falling. The early morning of the 25th was foggy but soon the sun shone and it became quite mild. High grey cloud covered the sky in the afternoon when I walked Murphy by the river at the Snodland side of Halling. The grass by the water was long and straw coloured while brambles' tendrils crept towards the grassy path. A few deadnettle plants bloomed white by a fence. The river rippled in the very fresh westerly wind and in the creek dank water swished among the dead sea asters watery sun's beams lit up the sky. There was beautiful sunshine on the 27th and the garden was full of birdsong in the pleasant westerly breeze. Murphy and I walked by the river where the water was high and reflected the blue of the sky. Golden sunshine lit up the straw-coloured reeds and sea asters. On the grassy banks I saw daisies, speedwell, dandelions, a few celandines and a clump of cowslips. Vetch and clover plants had emerged. Grey cloud began to bank up from the west during the late afternoon. The air on the 29th was quite raw.

Birdsong fills the air especially in the mornings. It casts away the despondency of winter for the days grow longer refreshing the spirit. The countryside awakens from its winter sleep Elizabeth Summers

The Lent Lily

A.E Housman

*'Tis spring come out to
ramble
The hilly brakes around,
For under thorn and
bramble
About the hollow ground
The primroses are found.*

*And there's the
windflower chilly
With all the winds at
play,
And there's the Lenten
lily
That has not long to stay
And dies on Easter day*

*And since till girls go
maying
You find the primrose
still,
And find the windflower
playing
With every wind at will,
But not the daffodil,*

*Bring baskets now, and
sally
Upon the spring's array,
And bear from hill and
valley
The daffodil away
That dies on Easter day.*

From the Registers

Baptisms:

17th February
9th March

James Matthew Tilley
William George Knight

Factory Cottages
Strood

Funerals:

8th February
11th February
22nd February

Carole Sybil Welby (65)
Susan Molly Heath (58)
Amelia Grain (93)

Mark Cross
formerly of North Halling
Meopham

Thanks

I would like to express my thanks to all those who sent their best wishes to me during my recent stay at the Wisdom Hospice.
Peter Lancley

Halling Historical Society

17th April, 7.30 pm, Jubilee Hall: Dr A Kneif on Leeds Castle. All welcome.



CUXTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

At our February meeting, things were back to front, as we had our speakers first and then business after tea break. We were given a talk by Sally and Michael from Marks and Spencer, Bluewater, on their various speciality products for Easter. They had a table set out with chocolates, biscuits, novelty chocolate items for children, and we were given a tasting of hot cross buns and their wine of the week. Michael was not used to giving this talk as the usual girl was expecting a baby at any moment, and he was quite nervous. He explained about the recycling project M & S are promoting, and emphasized that all their food was made from fresh ingredients. They are not allowed to give cookery demonstrations any more because of the Health and Safety rules. We were pleased to welcome two new members and a visitor.

There was a good attendance at our March meeting and we got through business fairly quickly. Our speaker, Dr. Ann Knelf, gave a most interesting talk with slides about Leeds Castle. She took us from the "front door" of the castle through all the rooms, telling us about the

history of each room, and out into the grounds, through the gardens and to the aviaries. The photography was excellent, including one slide of a pure white peacock, which is quite rare. We all enjoyed her talk immensely.

The various groups are getting together for our entry into the Kent County Show competition, and we are having a Promotional Table at the "Pamper Evening" in the Junior School, in the hope we might recruit some younger members! The Walking Group had a glorious day for their walk around Gravesend, along by the river and through the Fort Gardens, with lunch at the "Three Daws" pub. They drove to Mote Park for their last walk, which although very windy, was another sunny day. Several walkers were filmed on Meridian TV, shown that evening, so got their fifteen minutes of fame!! We were accompanied by a guide, who explained the history of some of the buildings and pointed out things of interest. Once again we enjoyed lunch at a very nice little pub.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 3rd April at 7.30 pm.

Out Of The Mouths OF Babes And Sucklings

A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small. The little girl stated that "But Jonah was swallowed by a whale". Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah". The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?" The little girl replied, "Then you ask him".

NEWS FROM CUXTON INFANTS

Dear Friends,

We have been extremely busy in school over the last few weeks and the children are looking forward to their Easter weekend. Family Trust came into school today and the children stared in awe at Spike the puppet, who explained that Easter was not just about chocolate!

We enjoyed a folk music afternoon. A gentleman named Tim Edey came into school with bodhrans, accordions and guitars, and he also played the piano and had the children singing "blues" songs. One child asked why he was not a footballer, and another asked if he could play some Leona Lewis! He was extremely talented as he could not read a note of music, but played by ear. The children thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The FCS worked tirelessly for both schools selling Mother's Day gifts, which they had purchased and wrapped. My thanks to them all, as always, for their extreme hard work. Following Pamper Night - the next big event - is the Craft Fair on Saturday 10th May, but in between we are egg rolling down the amphitheatre (or in some cases lobbing, as our rolling skills in the past have been a little challenged!)

Mums and Grandmas came to our special Mother's Day assembly. Each class performed either songs, poems or riddles, and some had painted pictures of their Mums. The children each took home a tiny posy of flowers for their Mum.

We felt very honoured to be asked to the launch of the 'newly refurbished Co-Op' in the village. Eight children, accompanied by a couple of members of staff, helped to hold and cut the ribbons to the store. Each child was presented with a bag of goodies, and a chance to look around, and the Co-Op are donating a cheque for £100 to our school.

Year 1 and 2 put on their walking shoes and boots, and walked to St Michael's Church to see Roger. They have been learning about baptism in RE, and visiting the Church to see the font and hear Roger talk about the service was greatly appreciated, and made the learning 'more real' for our small folk.

At the end of this month (March) we are holding a 'pick up a poem' week and hosting a book fair in school. The author John Rice will be coming into school, children will be dressing up as nursery rhyme characters, and parents are invited to read poems with their children. We will be ending the week with a celebration of the children's work around poetry, and probably collapsing ready for the weekend and Spring holiday, as I think it is now called!

As always, take care and keep safe, and a very Happy Easter holiday to you all.

Yours

Sandra Jones, Headteacher

How long is RED TAPE?

Pythagoras' Theorem has 24 words.

The Lord's Prayer – 66 words.

The Archimedes Principle – 67 words.

The Ten Commandments – 333 words.

The Gettysburg Address – 286 words.

Magna Carta (translation into modern English) – 4583 words.

The new European Union rules on the sale of cabbages – 26,253 words.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE KIDS WHO WERE BORN IN THE 1930's, 1940's, 50's, 60's and 70's !!

First, we survived being born to mothers who smoked and/or drank while they carried us. They took aspirin, ate blue cheese dressing, tuna from a tin, and didn't get tested for diabetes. Then after that trauma, our baby cots were covered with bright coloured lead-based paints.

We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors or cabinets and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets, not to mention, the risks we took hitchhiking. As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of a van - loose - was always great fun.

We drank water from the garden hosepipe and NOT from a bottle. We shared one soft drink with four friends, from one bottle and NO ONE actually died from this.

We ate cakes, white bread and real butter and drank pop with sugar in it, but we weren't overweight because..... WE WERE ALWAYS OUTSIDE PLAYING!!

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. And we were O.K. We would spend hours building our go-carts out of scraps and then ride down the hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes. After running into the bushes a few times, we learned to solve the problem .

We did not have Playstations, Nintendo's, X-boxes, no video games at all, no 99 channels on cable, no video tape movies, no surround sound, no mobile phones, no text messaging, no personal computers, no Internet or Internet chat rooms.....WE HAD FRIENDS and we went outside and found them! We fell out of trees, got cut, broke bones and teeth and there were no lawsuits from these accidents. We played with worms(well most boys did) and mud pies made from dirt, and the worms did not live in us forever. Made up games with sticks and tennis balls and although we were told it would happen, we did not poke out any eyes. We rode bikes or walked to a friend's house and knocked on the door or rang the bell, or just yelled for them!

Local teams had tryouts and not everyone made the team. Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment. Imagine that!! The idea of a parent bailing us out if we broke the law was unheard of. They actually sided with the law!

This generation has produced some of the best risk-takers, problem solvers and inventors ever! The past 50 years have been an explosion of innovation and new ideas. We had freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned HOW TO DEAL WITH IT ALL! And YOU are one of them!
CONGRATULATIONS!

You might want to share this with others who have had the luck to grow up as kids, before the lawyers and the government regulated our lives for our own good and while you are at it, forward it to your kids so they will know how brave their parents were. Kind of makes you want to run through the house with scissors, doesn't it?!

Halling Traffic Lights.

We are told that traffic lights are needed in Halling High Street because the bridge is not strong enough to carry traffic in both directions. This is not because it is worn out. If it were, Network Rail would be legally obliged to repair it to its original condition. What the experts are now telling us is that the bridge never has been strong enough in all its 100+ years of history – even though it carried far more traffic (including lorries from the many factories there used to be in the Medway Valley and double decker buses in both directions every 15 minutes) for decades before the bypass opened. Actually the road itself is strong enough and the only problem is if a heavy vehicle mounts the pavement. For some reason, only intelligible to bureaucrats, we can't have a barrier to stop vehicles mounting the pavement! If this really is a matter of **safety**, then obviously we must put up with the inconvenience and cost to the taxpayer. But am I alone in suspecting that it is not a matter of **safety** but of *safety* as in *health and safety*? Possibly two way traffic across the bridge at Halling is no more dangerous than games of conkers, snowball fights, hanging baskets or firemen (sorry fire-fighters!) changing a smoke alarm battery from the top of a stepladder. I should have thought that the place where traffic lights would make a real contribution to public safety would not be at Halling at all, but at the junction of Bush Road and Rochester Road at Cuxton. What do you think? RIK.