

Services December 2020			
6 th December Advent 2 Gift Services	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 40 vv 1-11 p723 II Peter 3 vv 8-15 p1224 Mark 1 vv 1-8 p1002	
13 th December Advent 3	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Isaiah 61 vv 1-11 p748 I Thessalonians 5 vv 16-28 p1188 John 1 vv 6-28 p1163	
20 th December Advent 4	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	II Samuels 7 vv 1-17 p310 Romans 16 vv 25-27 p1143 Luke 1 vv 26-38 p1026	
25 th December Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion Halling 9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton	Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063	
27 th December St John the Evangelist	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I John 1 vv 1-10 p1225 John 21 vv 19-25 p1090	

Christmas in the Context of Covid 19

Not just in this parish but throughout the whole nation we are wondering how we can celebrate Christmas without transgressing the regulations intended to limit the spread of the corona virus. Many of you have given this considerable thought and I am grateful for your suggestions. However, it has been strongly represented to me that continued discussion and uncertainty would not be tenable and that I must make my decisions now.

The issues are these. People want to be together for Christmas and also to meet up with people they seldom see, but this is just what would spread the disease. Specifically, in the Church, we normally hope for large numbers of worshippers packed tightly in the pews. Again this is forbidden by the virus rules. We should like to put on nativity plays, very difficult to do while maintaining social distancing and sharing costumes, etc., and not worth doing when we can't invite a large congregation to enjoy them. We also all want to sing carols together. Congregational singing remains forbidden. Choirs are allowed to sing, but only softly, in small numbers and socially distanced, which would have a big effect on the quality of the sound they could produce. It would not do for a whole "nine lessons & carols" type service. I do not believe that people would want to come to such a service if there were only the readings and no opportunity to sing. While we have been leaving St Michael's open for prayer when only a handful of people at most might be expected to come in, we have trusted to their common sense regarding sanitising and distancing. Were we, however, to put on an exhibition of Christmas trees or encourage large numbers into the building to see our cribs etc., we could not be sure that people would behave responsibly.

We have considered whether the various suggestions offered would be feasible under the current regulations and have concluded that they would not. Moreover, it is quite possible that the rules will be even more strict by Christmas. There is talk of the whole country still being in lockdown in mid December.

I have decided, therefore, with a heavy heart that our only Christmas services this year will be Holy Communion at 8.00 am at St John's and at 9.30am at St Michael's on 25th December if I am allowed to do even as much as that. Christmas will be celebrated this year, however, in whatever way we can manage it.

I know that this is very disappointing and thank you once again for all your suggestions. It is, however, in the circumstances of this parish, the only decision to which I could logically come.

I do hope, however, that if people are willing the churches will be decorated for Christmas as normal. The decorations will still be there for people to see on the Sundays following, including 27th December.

Roger.

Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
Advent			
2 nd December	Isaiah 3 vv 1-15 Matthew 13 vv 44-58	3 rd December	Isaiah 4 v2 – 5v7 Matthew v14 vv 1-32
9 th December Ember Day	Isaiah 8 v16 – 9v7 Matthew 16 vv 1-12	10 th December	Isaiah 9 v8 – 10 v4 Matthew 16 vv 13-28
16 th December	Isaiah 51 vv 1-8 Luke 20 vv 27-44	17 th December	Isaiah 51 vv 9-16 Luke 21 vv 5-19
23 rd December	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 John 5 vv 30-47	24 th December Christmas Eve	Isaiah 32 vv 1-8 John 13 vv 1-17
Christmas			
30 th December	Isaiah 59 vv 15-21 John 12 vv 34-50	31 st December	Deuteronomy 10 v12 – 11 v1 Luke 21 vv 25-36

Please see pp 8&9 for January Services. Copy date February Magazine: January 8th 8.30 am Rectory. There is no January magazine. Magazines are likely to be published only online for the foreseeable future. Please keep in touch, however, and let me know if there is anything you require.



From the Rector

So what about Christmas this year? How are we all going to keep it? Several people have said that we shall just have to concentrate on the things that really matter.

But what does really matter about Christmas? What is important to you? Perhaps you are the only person capable of answering that question. So I thought that I would write this month about what is important to me about Christmas and very likely we shall be found to have a lot in common.

When I was a young child, I'm afraid that most likely the most thrilling thing about Christmas was getting presents. The only day I can remember being taken out of school for anything other than illness was probably my fifth birthday – 30/11/59, My father took me up to London to Regent Street to see the Christmas lights and to visit that fantastic toyshop Hamley's. If I remember rightly, I brought home a large, plastic flying boat. I wonder what happened to that? I also remember being taken to the Bowater Social Club Christmas party for children and two years running receiving a gun which could fire corks. The corks were supposed to be on a piece of string to stop them going anywhere, but string isn't too difficult to untie even when you are an infant. Christmas morning, when we were very young, we children got into bed with our mother while our father lit

the fire so that we could get up without freezing. We would wake up to sacks full of wrapped goodies and open them at great speed, despite injunctions to read the labels so that we should know to whom to write the thank you letters in the new year. It was probably Christmas 1962, when I had a bike and my sister a doll's pram, which were not wrapped up and inserted into a pillow case. It was a bit of a mystery that Santa was supposedly the source of our presents, but we had to write our thanks to various relatives and friends for them.

At primary school, we had an Advent calendar – with scenes from the bible story, not chocolates! We made Christmas decorations and Christmas cards. We also had a Christmas party and I sadly remember the consequences of eating one too many cakes. Well, the last one was a meringue. We also performed in nativity plays. I must have been in them, but I can only remember being the narrator in *The Pied Piper of Hamlyn*, which was possibly not a Christmas production.

I enjoyed helping to decorate the house and the tree. We used to have a live tree and replant it each year. When we changed to artificial trees, it stayed out in the garden, where, for all I know, it still is. I can also remember helping to ice the cake.

I also used to enjoy seeing other people's decorations, as I was coming home on the school bus on those dark December afternoons. Near us at Wigmore, the residents of Grain Road always made a big thing of outdoor Christmas decorations, well worth a visit when taking the dog for his evening walk.

I really enjoyed having family to stay – grandparents, great aunt and great uncle. It meant some uncomfortable and inconvenient sleeping arrangements. I particularly remember an instrument of torture called a Put-U-Up. I still say it was better then when most people didn't have cars. You all agreed in whose home you would spend Christmas and you stayed there two or three days or more. The children could unpack, set up, build and play with their toys. The adults could enjoy a drink without worrying about driving. None of this dinner in one place, rushed packing up and off somewhere else to tea and then perhaps another trip in a car home to bed. Other relatives did visit, coming and going the same day, but there was a stability about our family Christmas parties, which I now miss. Can't be helped though. If you can go to see the in laws in Canterbury, you've really got to. You can't just accept that it is virtually impossible to do so as it would once have been and they'd be hurt if you didn't go. It is still good to see the people you like, however, even if it does mean driving and no beer.

Crowded into the family home, filled with warmth, light, good cheer and bright colours, we would play games, take part in quizzes, sing carols and popular old time songs. There was an abundance of good food and drink and all the time in the world to enjoy it.

As I grew older, there came the enjoyment of purchasing gifts for other people. I've never been a keen shopper, but I used to enjoy going out once a year to get what I thought people would like. I wasn't always very perceptive. The first present I can remember buying for my mother (for, I think, her birthday), when I was about six or seven years old, was an oven stick from the village shop. Well, it cost a shilling which is what I had to spend and mothers do clean ovens! There was only the one shop in the village then and that has been gone for forty years or so now. So there wasn't much choice in those days and even less today. I suppose I could have bought her sweets, but would they have made it home from the shop? Even when I was young, a child of that age wouldn't have been allowed to go into town on the bus on his own and, given that the child's fare was 5d each way, it would only have left 2d for the present, if I had!

Somehow, since I came here, I seem to have stopped doing most of my own Christmas shopping. There is a limited range of stuff in our own village shops. I'm very busy at this time of year and don't have much time to go into town. My main presents are for my nieces and, not only do I not know what young ladies would like, I should probably be embarrassed to ask for them if I did. I was disappointed, when buying for the children in the family, to discover that all toy shops are not like Hamley's. The small family businesses were disappearing, even when my first great nephew was born, as did Woolworth's soon afterwards. I was disappointed to find that *Toys Are Us* was little more than a giant warehouse and I believe that this too is now gone. I'm not sorry not to have to find time for Christmas shopping and people are more likely to get what they would like if they choose for themselves or their parents choose for them. I do miss the buzz of Christmas shopping a little bit, however, – the crowds, the carols playing over the speakers or executed by the Salvation Army band, the embarrassment of having no change for the collection tin, the shared excitement and bonhomie.

Also, I'm not so easy to buy for as I was when I was eight. I've got everything I want even if I haven't got everything some people think I need. They say you can only give a man alcohol for Christmas or something which costs thousands of pounds. I wouldn't say that that is necessarily true in my case and I do receive some very nice presents which neither bankrupt the giver nor intoxicate the recipient. I don't get as excited though as I did when I was still in short trousers.

Just as an aside on this theme, I had a parishioner at Ramsgate whose boyfriend worked for Gillette. He told me that the reason I still used a single-bladed flat safety razor was that I was not married. Their market research had shown that it's wives and girlfriends who buy their men folk fancy new razors as presents, perhaps not knowing what else to get them. I do now (having been given one as a present, I'm not telling you by whom) use a razor with multiple angled blades. I have also discovered that there is currently a vogue for the old-fashioned flat single blades and that razors which will take them can be worth a fortune. Personally, I don't think there is much difference, but I am glad that I do not have to use a cut throat

razor as my grandfather did from choice! Shaving only two or three times a week during COVID, I do find the multiple blades get clogged with bristles. Presumably a single blade would not. So maybe the trend for single blades is being set by hipsters with trimmed light beards or men with designer stubble.

I'm sure we'll all do the best we can this year, meeting up as and when permitted, taking particular care of people whom we know to be alone or struggling, catching up with those who perhaps feel forgotten. I'm sure we'll find ways to exchange presents. Personally, I feel it is quite important to decorate as usual this year even if we aren't going to have our normal parties or family dinners.

We're encouraged this year to put in our windows or front gardens some symbol of the Christmas story – maybe a crib or star or candle.

We can keep in touch with those we shan't see by telephone or online. It has been suggested, however, that this year we should make a special point of sending actual cards even if we've recently been cutting back on postage and relying on electronic communications. Let's give people something they can touch and put on the mantelpiece.

You may have noticed something missing from my account of what I think is important at Christmas time. I heard someone on the radio say he thought we could probably do everything that really matters this Christmas. It's only the religious bits we might need to miss out on!

To be honest, when I was a child, I would have resented any idea of taking time out of the general festivities to do something religious. I can't remember at what age I started to think it was important to go to Church at Christmas. Certainly, we were all taught the Christmas story at home and at school and probably in Sunday School and Church as well. We knew all about the baby Jesus, how Mary was His mother and God His Father. We knew about shepherds and wise men and sang all the traditional carols. I remember, with my very literal mind, being troubled at Infants' School by carols such as *The Holly and the Ivy* and *I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In*, because I couldn't see what they had to

do with a stable in Bethlehem. I also puzzled over *tiny form* in *Little Jesus, sweetly sleep, do not stir; We will lend a coat of fur, We will rock you, rock you, rock you, rock you, We will rock you, rock you, rock you: See the fur to keep you warm, Snugly round your tiny form.* I thought a form was a kind of bench, fur was an unsuitable material for clothing a baby and, in any case, it was all a bit sloppy. It was thrilling when I was deemed old enough to go to Midnight Mass, but I can't remember when that was – in my teens, I suppose.

So what does Christmas mean to me at the deepest level? Thinking it through logically, I'd have to start with God. That is a difficulty to begin with, because God is infinitely beyond my understanding. I know that God made Heaven and earth. So everything I can see or hear or smell or touch is God's handiwork. I can look up into the night sky, like the psalmist, and say, *For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. What is man, that thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Or I can sing the words of that wonderful hymn:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When through the woods, and forest glades I
wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

I am awed by the natural world and readily realise that its Creator must be infinitely more awesome than the universe itself, than Heaven and earth in all their glory, or even that He must be awful in the original sense of the word. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* If I reflect, I can see the works of God in the city too (with greater difficulty), in motorways and crowded

streets, hospitals, schools, housing estates and factories. The works of man are the works of God because God made man. Yet humanity so often degrades the works of God by exploiting them selfishly without regard for genuine human need or respect for the non-human creation.

I know that God made me and everyone I love. He made everyone and everything. Any talents and opportunities that I have are the gift of God. Any understanding or experience that I may have of love or hope or faith or any other virtue have been given to me by God and to you and to every other human being.

God is awesome, awful, beyond our comprehension, infinitely greater than anything we can imagine. Anything we might say about God is ultimately false because human words, human understanding, are utterly inadequate to describe God. The best that we have to offer in worship, praise and thanksgiving falls far short of its goal.

God is holy. God is just. God is love. God loves me. He loves me, sinner that I am. What is a sinner? A sinner is a person who is not holy. A sinner has no right to appear in the Presence of the thrice holy God. A sinner is one who does not love, who does not love God, who does not love his neighbour as himself. God is love and those who do not love have no right to seek friendship with Him. God is just. There are right and wrong and ultimately we get what we deserve. There is judgment. Insofar as we have not behaved as God would have us behave, loving as God loves, we can quite rightly expect to be punished. God is just. God is wise. There is a right way to live, a sensible way to live and consequences follow when we live wrongly and foolishly. *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.* So what can the fool expect on the Day of Judgment? (I wonder if this is why Jesus says that it such a dreadful thing if we call anyone a fool.)

You can read the Bible or you can read the newspapers and either way you will see that human beings are all sinners. Whom do you know whom you would call holy? Whom do you know who loves not only those who love him, but does what Jesus tells us to do, and loves his enemies as well? Who is truly just in the sense that God is just, caring for people's needs whether or not

those people care for him? Who can say that he has always lived rightly and wisely. Read the Bible. Read the newspapers. Look in the mirror. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

God is. Without God, we are nothing. Everything comes from God. Our lives depend on Him, here on earth and when our time on earth is over. We cannot live without God and yet we are hopelessly alienated from Him. He is infinitely greater and better than we are. He is beyond our knowledge, though our eternal life is dependent on our knowing God. We are unholy, hateful or indifferent to the needs of others, unjust, fools. We cannot attain to God. Yet without God, we are nothing.

So, Jesus. What do the best of our Christmas carols mean? The infinite gulf between us and God is bridged. God has Himself bridged the gulf. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. Astonishingly, God is one of us. He is our teacher and our example. When we behold Jesus, we behold God. Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man, experiences all that we experience in our human lives. He totally understands. I hope it is not irreverent to say that God has heart knowledge as well as head knowledge of what it is to be human. He not only knows about us; He knows us, because He is one of us.

Jesus is what a human being is meant to be. He is holy as we are called to be holy. He loves God to the extent of giving up His life in order to accomplish God's purposes. He loves humanity to the extent of offering His life on the Cross for our salvation. Jesus is just and merciful. It is the divine nature to be just and merciful. It is unfallen human nature to be just and merciful. We are made in the image of God. We fall short of our vocation to be like Him only because we are sinners. Jesus is not a sinner. He is perfect love. Jesus lived on earth the perfect human life. He lived rightly, the personification of the Wisdom of God.

By offering His own perfect human life to God, Jesus opens the way for us human beings to come into the Presence of God. We are sanctified by His holiness, wooed through His love, justified by His sacrifice, enlightened by His teaching and example, forgiven for our sins, set free from the

fear of death, **at one** with God, because of the **atonement** which God wrought in Jesus. The gulf is bridged so that we might come home to God. In Jesus, we know God Whom to know is eternal life.

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

When Christ shall come, with shout of
acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration
And then proclaim: "My God, how great Thou
art!"
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

There is so much more that I could say about what Christmas means to me, about how much God loves me and how that knowledge of God transforms my life. Far better for you, however, to experience all this for yourself, which of course we do through faith in Jesus Christ.

I'll end this section with an excerpt from the Creed we very seldom say, probably because it's long, difficult and includes clauses with which we are very uncomfortable. That does not mean, however, that it is without value to the open-minded.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the

substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man of the substance of his Mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood; Who, although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ; One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty: from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

Finally, Christmas is often a time when we especially think of giving to charities. Because of COVID 19, the need for the work of many charities is much greater than in ordinary times, but much of their normal fund-raising activity has been difficult or impossible. So could we consider giving to the charities which need our support this year either online or by post, to replace the opportunities we have lost by not being able to sell poppies, hold Christingle services, etc.?

A merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Roger.

PS: On a musical note, I was amused by something I read recently. A very enthusiastic Welsh tenor told his vicar about a wonderful dream he had had. "I'd died and gone to Heaven and we were all singing the Messiah. There was a mighty organ with ten thousand pipes. The million strong orchestra included a brass section of 20,000 trumpets. When we got to the Hallelujah Chorus heaven swelled to the sound of cherubim & seraphim, myriads of archangels and angels and an innumerable multitude of Christian souls. And the archangel Gabriel put his arm round my shoulder and said, 'Gareth, you're still drowning them all out.'"

Local Churches



Christmas Nativity Festival

We invite you to:

**display a Nativity Scene in your Garden or Window
to celebrate the Christmas Story.**

**(Nativity Pictures, Angels, Stars, Figures or Barn animal ornaments. Nativity
Flags, Mats, Wreaths, Banners, Bunting, Wooden sets or Light Displays.
Nativity Stained Glass Window, Silhouettes, Lanterns or a Bale of Hay!)**

You could even turn your front porch into a barn!!

I don't know if we shall be back in Church 6th December. We should be if the prime minister's prognostications turn out to be correct. If we are, we shall hold gift services that day. Suitable gifts are toys, toiletries and Christmas goodies like crackers and mince pies. They should be new and in date for Christmas in the case of food and please leave them unwrapped. If we cannot hold services that day, please let me know if you have a gift to give & we'll arrange for it to be collected from you or you could bring it to the Rectory.



CHILDREN'S SOCIETY NEWS

Dear Boxholders,

I hope you are all well and coping with our current situation. I thought I had better bring you up to date on our collection for the Children's Society. I'm afraid I was unable to collect and count the boxes in September last year, so most of them were counted in January instead. This produced a total of £145.01.

I decided that it would be easier to stick with a January date for the box opening in future so that is the plan. I don't have a particular date in mind at the moment so I will contact everyone in early January and see if your boxes need collecting or not. It may well be that you have had less opportunity to collect coins over the past year as we have all been using them far less often. You are obviously welcome to write a cheque or donate online to the Children's Society (through the website childrenssociety.org.uk) if this would be easier. Like all charities, they need funds more than ever to continue their valuable work.

If I did not count your box in January and you would rather not wait until after Christmas, do let me know and I will do it before then for you. I'm sure we can arrange to hand it over safely and I can leave it for 72 hours before touching it.

Thank you for all your support, which has been given over many years in a lot of cases. It is very much appreciated. Julia (Tel. 727424)

Defibrillator at the Church Hall

There is now an additional defibrillator in the parish outside the Church Hall, Cuxton. If you believe that someone has had or might be having a heart attack, you should telephone 999 and give the location. The person on the other end of the line will then give you the code to open the case and tell you what to do until an ambulance arrives.

Historical Titbit

London was the first city in the world to introduce an emergency telephone number in 1937. In 1935 there had been a terrible fire in Wimpole Street in which five women died. A neighbour, trying to call the fire brigade, was frustrated by the long wait to be put through by the local exchange. (He couldn't get through because so many other people were trying to do so for the same reason at the same time.) He wrote an angry letter to the "Times" and eventually the government acted. The number 999 was chosen because it is easy to remember, the number nine is easy to find on a telephone dial even in the dark, and it is not close enough to other numbers then in common use that an emergency call could easily be triggered by mistake. (However, the dial code for Medway from Southfleet used to be 992. Assuming it would be the same from Gravesend, I dialled 992 for a Medway number only to be asked "fire, police or ambulance?". The code for Medway from Gravesend was, it turned out, 92!)

Services January 2021

Services January 2021		
3 rd January Christmas 2	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 John 1 vv 1-18 p1063
10 th January Baptism of Christ Epiphany 1	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 1 vv 1-5 p3 Acts 19 vv 1-7 p115 Mark 1 vv 1-11 p1002
17 th January Epiphany 2	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	I Samuel 3 vv 1-21 p274 Revelation 5 vv 1-14 p1237 John 1 vv 43-51 p1064
24 th January Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Genesis 14 vv 17-20 p15 Revelation 19 vv 6-10 p1247 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064
31 st January Epiphany 4	9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling	Deuteronomy 18 vv 15-20 p197 Revelation 12 vv 1-5 p1241 Mark 1 vv 21-28 p1002

Holy Communion Cuxton Wednesdays 9.30		Holy Communion Halling Thursdays 9.30	
6 th January Epiphany	Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 Matthew 2 vv 1-12	7 th January	Isaiah 15 vv 1-9 Matthew 19 vv 16-30
13 th January	Ezekiel 2 v3 – 3v11 Matthew 22 vv 34-46	14 th January	Ezekiel 3 vv 12-27 Matthew 23 vv 1-15
20 th January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Ezekiel 13 vv 1-16 Matthew 24 vv 29-35	21 st January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Ezekiel 14 vv 1-11 Matthew 24 vv 36-51
27 th January	Ezekiel 28 vv 1-10 Matthew 26 vv 14-29	28 th January	Ezekiel 28 vv 11-19 Matthew 26 vv 14-29

St Michael's Draw November: £10 to Mr Payne (40), £5 each to Mrs MacDonald (2) & Mrs Nunn (28).

Clambering Over Valleys In Delight

The season has changed. Gone are the hot days of summer and bright early morning sunrises. Now, the leaves and fallen branches carpet the ground and try to obscure the footpaths. The temperatures have dropped and increasing morning frosts whiten the gardens.

We are back in lockdown but exercise is allowed so, today, I intend to stay near home and enjoy one of my favourite local walks. I did this walk many times during the summer and enjoyed a light picnic at one particular spot. From Bush Road, I walk up Tar Tank Lane, over Charles Drive and up to Poplicans. Here, I turn left and go further uphill to the footpath next to No 86. The footpath travels parallel to the railway. After a short distance I turn right and cross the bridge over the railway. I take the left footpath and remain on high ground. The footpath, which continues to

run parallel to the railway, is a little muddy due to recent rain and frequent use. After just a few minutes the path opens out and I am rewarded with the first of many splendid views across the valley. This is Mill Hill and there is a wooden bench seat in the far corner. I walk on and enjoy the views over Bush Valley towards Upper Bush. The uphill footpath slopes more gently then reaches a gate leading into the 57 acre field known as Brockles Field. This special chalk downland

is rich in plant-life, insects and birds. It provides grazing for a small herd of cattle but today they are not in evidence. There is a seat very close to the gate. This is a frequent

venue for a snack break. I decide to walk straight across the field to the far perimeter fence leading to Nor Woods. Along this



fence there are two pedestrian gates. The upper gate leads into the wood and has a very interesting information board and a beautifully carved wooden seat. The information board has a marvellous visual display of the view from Brockles. It identifies and labels the different woods, hamlets and valleys and then describes a little of the local history. After I have perused the information board I take the lower gate and walk a short distance along a narrow pathway. When I

reach beyond the trees I find open land. In front of me is a fantastic panoramic view. To my right is the fringe of the woods leading into Cobham Park, directly ahead is a valley with a wide grassy footpath, meadows and farmland. To my left is the railway line, Bush Valley, farmland, meadows and woodland. At this point, there is a large wooden seat which provides an excellent place for picnic lunches and peaceful contemplation. I sit

here for some time

admiring the views,

listening to the

birds and gazing at

the occasional train

as it rushes by.



After my lunch break I walk down the path and up the next slope (as in the photograph) and turn left at the first way-marker to walk down the field towards the tunnel under the railway line. Close to the tunnel the pathway is quite overgrown with brambles but once through the tunnel the path is clear at the edge of the field. I

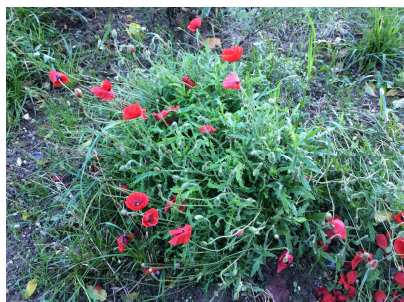


year and secondly the numerous clumps of flowering red poppies. Previous to today, I had thought poppies only show their flowers in late spring or summer but this is November! Apparently, seeds may lie dormant in the soil for years. When the ground is disturbed (eg the soil is ploughed) then the seeds germinate and grow. Thus, producing flowers at this unusual time of year. Still, it is 2020 so I guess anything can happen!



follow down this field and emerge at the road beside Warren House and opposite the 'Cuxton' road sign. I cross the road, turn left and walk the short distance to the next footpath on my right. This path takes me to the bottom of the valley and then up through a little copse to Upper Bush which is to my left. On the lane I pass the sign for Upper Bush and then

turn right.



The houses at this point are very old and quite magnificent. The footpath descends and I turn right at the bottom. Two things capture my attention. Firstly

the growth in the acres of vines planted earlier this

I climb up between the vines and walk through the woods to Dean Valley. I see the cattle grazing on the hillside to my left and the sheep beyond the high hedge on my right. All seems peaceful in the valley and Dean Farm. I am on the North Downs Way which rises up the steep and slightly slippery hill towards the Warren. I turn left at the top of the hill and head towards Cuxton and Church Hill. On route I see several scurrying squirrels and many busy birds. As I reach the last enclosed footpath I can see the fields around Ranscombe Farm area across the other side of Cuxton. At the top of Church Hill I am greeted by the familiar view - St Michael's Church, the M2 bridge and a tiny distant glimpse of Rochester Castle and Cathedral. I walk down the hill and return to Cuxton. Today has been sunny and not at all cold but temperatures will drop quickly when the sun goes down.

I have enjoyed my walk and hope to repeat it. This route may be familiar to many of you. I do recommend it. Holly Croft



what was probably the last. The next day there was a nasty, cold drizzle all day. So I am glad that we went

Tommy's Talking Points

Following on from our wonderful walk around Westerham which I told you about last month, we've crossed the border once again into Surrey and this time managed to meet up with our friends for a walk in foreign parts – well not that foreign actually, just six miles from the boundary with Kent. There were Lolly, Master and I and we drove through Westerham to the Ridland's National Trust car park. Even Master didn't find it too difficult to find, but it is quite small and it was quite full up, presumably because it was a beautiful sunny day and half term. We took the antepenultimate parking space and our friends

we did. The woods were beautiful, the Autumn foliage perfect and the sun shining for much of the time. It had been raining and the clay soil under paw was a bit wet, sticky and slippery. We're more used to chalky soils, which only get wet and slippery. There were plenty of people about and dogs and we had a booklet which gave detailed instructions, though these were not always easy to follow. There came a time when they began to suspect that the paragraphs had not been printed in the right order. Either that, or different sections of the route were so similar that they attracted almost the same descriptions. Anyway, where the path looked interesting I generally just carried on and I'm sure I was right more often than not. Master (who has a similar policy) says that the problems arise when the most interesting looking path turns out to lead somewhere you don't want to be and can't find your way back to the car park from. We heard a politician on the radio say, "Any decision is better than no decision." It's the sort of thing Master would say when the minutes of a meeting stretch into hours, but, if you think about it, it is a dangerous idea. "Should we plant daffodils or tulips?" Either would definitely be better than neither. "Should we fight for our principles or should we renounce our principles?" might need a bit more thinking about.

Master says that I keep ending sentences with prepositions. It is the result of hearing something else on the car radio, the little boy who said to his mother, "Why have you brought the book I don't want to be read to out of up?"

We were up hill and down dale quite a lot. We came to Cearne, a house that was built for Edward and Constance Garnett, prominent members of The Fabian Society. Edward was a literary editor and publisher's reader and became friends with numerous well known authors of the early 1900s, including Galsworthy, George Bernard Shaw, H.E. Bates and Joseph Conrad who all visited the home. D.H. Lawrence wrote part of his novel *Sons and Lovers* whilst staying at The Cearne. There is also a symbiosis with the Bloomsbury Set. Views from the house across the Weald to the South Downs must be spectacular, but we couldn't see much because there is a hedge between the house and the public footpath, which, no doubt, the current occupants appreciate. It would be a beautiful place to live. Prosaically, it also had good access to London with the coming of the railway, which added to its attractiveness for those who both revelled in nature and in metropolitan culture.

There are lots of smaller houses and cottages in folds in the landscape – idyllic places to live, I should think. There was one with a nice big pond with ducks on it. Then a long ascent to a place which they couldn't at first identify but which, once they had, turned out to be a good point from which to return to the car park. Master was a little disappointed to see a young man on a bicycle staring at his mobile telephone despite being surrounded by so much natural beauty. He said that, when he was a teenager and went out on his bike on his own, he used to think it was a shame that you could never totally escape from potential telephonic communication because of the abundance of red kiosks dotted about the countryside. Nowadays, he says, they take the infernal instruments with them! At least there are fewer kiosks than there used to be.

Lolly loved coming out with us. She did once before about the same time last year when we walked along the coast from Appledore to Rye. She is a bit strange. She loves playing the stick game, but she has no idea how to play it. She keeps on picking up sticks or anything else which could be thrown like balls or apples, dropping them at people's feet and looking longingly until they throw them for her. This is where it gets weird. She then brings the stick back and if the person says, "Drop", she does, he throws it again and the whole process is repeated ad infinitum. Master tried to teach me to play like that when I was a puppy, but I'm too smart for him. First of all, it isn't really all that much fun chasing sticks. I have to be in the mood for it. When I am in the mood, there's a much better game than bringing the stick back. I run off with it. If I can get him to, he then chases me, but he can't catch me. If he or I get tired of running around, I lie down chewing the stick. He approaches, says, "Drop," and reaches out with his hand. I then move just far enough to keep out of his reach. That's much more fun than obeying such commands as "Fetch" and "Drop". That is, however, all a game. If I ever pick up anything I really shouldn't and he uses a stern voice when he says, "Drop" and obviously really means it, I do drop. Mischievous I may be, but malicious I am not. By the way, did you know that a boomerang was invented as a stick for a man who hasn't got a dog? That's up there with "A home without a dog is just a house."

We piled back into the car, just before it started to rain and, disregarding the AA, came off the M25 onto the M20 – which might be a little farther, but does not require the negotiation of the traffic jams around the A2 exit. The humans had had their sandwiches out in a field. Now we had our dinners and settled down for a quiet evening in front of the TV to watch a box set recommended by the companions of the day. We intend one more sally into Surrey before Winter bites. Tommy



Remembrance Sunday

We observed Remembrance Sunday in both Cuxton and Halling with the Act of Remembrance, laying of wreaths and some prayers at very quiet ceremonies in the open air. Cuxton's was above the churchyard where the memorial bench is. Halling's was at the Forge Green war memorial. Here are some pictures which were taken at the time. Afterwards, some of the wreaths were placed in the respective churches.



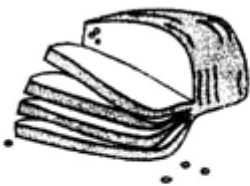
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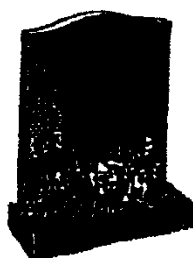
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