

We don't know what we shall be allowed to do over the course of the next few months. I'm afraid it will still be social distancing, masks and no singing for the foreseeable future. Unless things change, we'll carry on with said services of Holy Communion at Cuxton at 9.30 on Sundays and Wednesdays and at Halling at 11.00 on Sundays and 9.30 on Thursdays. It has been good to see so many of you able to come. Please keep in touch whether you are able to attend church or not and let me know if I can help you in any way. There will be a sermon for each week on my web page cuxtonandhall.org.uk. If you'd like to receive my weekly email newsletter, please ask me and give me your email address. It is not likely that this magazine will be printed for general distribution, but please feel free to forward it by email to anyone who would like it. You're also welcome to print this if you wish. Magazines are also available on my webpage. There will also be daily bible reading notes which I can send you by email on request and they too will be on the webpage.

I'm still saying Morning & Evening Prayer daily at the Rectory with the Litany on Sundays, Wednesdays & Fridays plus the Ante-Communion when there ought to be a celebration in church but there isn't. Please let me have any prayer requests.

If you wish to arrange christenings, weddings or funerals or need any other of the Church's services, please ask me. Roger.

Opportunities to Give in These Difficult Times

We'll be pleased to accept tinned and packeted goods for the **Foodbank** at our services (and at other times when the church is open too at any time). There are reasons especially this year that it might be better to send a gift of money to the Foodbank than to handle goods which also have to be stored and handled again. You can also arrange for the Foodbank to have vouchers to keep to people to use to purchase their own food. If you would like to explore these options, please go to <https://medway.foodbank.org.uk/> They are not requesting any more baked beans, tinned soup, UHT milk or pasta for the present.

Also, we must continue our support for the annual **Poverty & Hope Appeal**. Details of this year's projects are in the September magazine and online. See below..

There are a number of ways to make donations

- through your Church,
- by e-banking to Rochester Diocesan Society and Board of Finance, sort code 20-54-29, account 90760099, reference P&H plus something to identify you, unless you wish to remain anonymous),
- by card via the Poverty and Hope page on give.net (<https://www.give.net/povertyandhope/fundraising>),
- by cheque made payable to 'Rochester DBF' with 'Poverty and Hope' written on the back and posted to the Finance Team Rochester Diocese, St Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL. You can also use one of the envelopes available in church. Please put your full address if gift aiding. Please put the envelope in the collection plate.

Your donation can be increased by gift aiding it. There are details how to do this at www.bit.ly/PovertyHope where you can find full details of the Appeal and the projects we are supporting.

Shoeboxes for Blythswood can be brought to services on 1st November. Lists of suitable contents should be available shortly and can also be found at <https://blythswood.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-SBA-checklist.pdf>

There are problems about this year's **poppy appeal** because of COVID. We shall sell them in church if we can obtain any. It is suggested that people buy poppies etc. online this year or donate online to the Royal British Legion. See <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/poppy-appeal> I suggest that all of us who send out publicity or have our own websites try to make this information available as widely as possible.

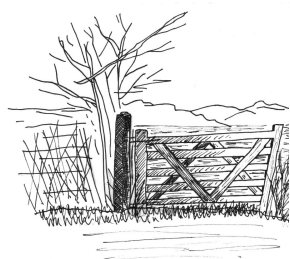
Jokes to Cheer Us Up

How did the Vikings communicate?
What's so special about Switzerland?

By Norse Code
The flag is a big plus.

Services Planned for November					
1 st November All Saints Day		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling		Revelation 7 vv 2-12 Matthew 5 vv 1-12 p968	
Monday 2 nd November All Souls Day		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling		I Peter 1 vv 3-9 p1217 John 6 vv 37-40 p1070	
8 th November 3 rd Before Advent Trinity 22 Remembrance Sunday		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 10.50 Holy Communion Halling		I Thessalonians 4 vv 13-18 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 1-13 p994	
15 th November 2 nd Before Advent Trinity 23		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling		Zephaniah 1 vv 7-18 p944 I Thessalonians 5 vv 1-11 p1188 Matthew 25 vv 14-30 p994	
22 nd November Christ the King Last Sunday after Trinity Stir Up Sunday!		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling		Ezekiel 34 vv 11-24 p865 Ephesians 1 vv 15-23 p1123 Matthew 25 vv 31-46 p995	
29 th November Advent Sunday Year B		9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton 11.00 Holy Communion Halling		Isaiah 64 vv 1-9 p750 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 Mark 13 vv 24-37 p1019	
Wednesday Holy Communion @ St Michael's 9.30 am			Thursday Holy Communion @ St John's 9.30 am		
4 th November	Philippians 2 vv 12-18 Luke 14 vv 25-33	5 th November	Philippians 3 vv 3-8 Luke 15 vv 1-10		
11 th November S Martin	Titus 3 vv 1-7 Luke 17 vv 11-19	12 th November	Philemon Luke 17 vv 20-25		
18 th November	Revelation 4 Luke 19 vv 11-28	19 th November	Revelation 5 Luke 19 vv 41-44		
25 th November	Revelation 15 vv 1-4 Luke 21 vv 12-19	26 th November	Revelation 18 v1 – 19 v9 Luke 21 vv 20-28		

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From the Rector

Thomas Hood (1799-1845) is the author of the poem *November*. It has never struck me as very cheerful. It isn't even true. We do sometimes see the sun in November. If there is a pleasantly warm spell around the 11th, we call it St Martin's Summer, because that day is the soldier saint's feast day. On clear nights, you can certainly see the stars and the moon. I remember one such Guy Fawkes Night, clear and dry, but the moon haloed, a sign of the heavy rain which was to follow after we were all safely

home and snuggled up in bed. Fruits on the apple tree often last till Christmas. There are still flowers and flying insects. Our birds don't all migrate south and some birds migrate to England to overwinter here in preference to the more northern climes in which they aestivate. There's certainly a lot of cheerfulness in November. It's my birthday month and Christmas is coming. Healthful ease too as work and school focus more on the coming festivities and less on productivity and examinations. All times of day are not the same. Whether or not your rheumatics play up as winter approaches, I suppose depends on whether you have rheumatics. My aging joints seem to play up much the same whatever the weather. I have an idea, to be fair however, that Thomas Hood did live in a period when the weather was worse than it is now.

November by Thomas Hood

No sun - no moon!
No morn - no noon -
No dawn - no dusk - no proper time of day.
No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
No comfortable feel in any member -
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds! -
November!

Nevertheless, despite my optimism, November has a number of features which might be regarded as grim. Autumn is far advanced. The days are getting short. The weather is colder.

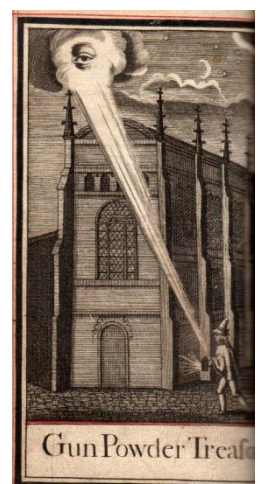
On the 1st and 2nd, we remember those who have died. In some countries, there are elaborate rituals for the Day of the Dead. Hallowe'en on 31st October overshadows All Saints Day by a long way. There's a lot to be thought about in the way those three days relate to one another – the reality of good and evil and the final triumph of the former; facing our fears and overcoming them by faith, hope and charity; the certainty of death as the natural end to our lives faced up to in the context of the *sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life* because we believe in Jesus. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* (Hebrews 2^{14&15})

On the 5th November, we remember the barbaric punishment of a terrorist who wanted to blow up parliament. Such were the passions swirling around politics and religion in the seventeenth century. Then come Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday when we remember the millions of dead of two world wars. Traditionally, these have also been occasions of thanksgiving. We are thankful that we were on the winning side in the two world wars. Think of the alternative.

11th November is, as remarked above, S Martin's Day. Martin (316-397) was a Roman soldier, as his father was before him. The family was pagan, but Martin and his mother enquired into Christianity and, when Martin met a poorly clothed beggar on an extremely cold day, he cut his own cloak in half to share it with him. The legend says that Jesus appeared to Martin in a dream and told Martin that he had shared his cloak with Himself. (See Matthew 25^{31ff}.) Martin was baptised and then, deciding that soldiering was incompatible with Christianity as he understood it, left the army and suffered imprisonment being called a traitor and a coward. Released from prison, he first lived the life of a hermit, then co-founded a monastery with S Hilary of Poitier, and finally became Bishop of Tours by popular acclaim. That's how bishops were chosen in those days.

Martindale in the Lake District is named after him. S Ninian (who knew Martin) founded a church there in Martin's name on his route northwards to preach the Gospel in Scotland. The story of Martin's charity, conversion, faithfulness to Christ and missionary inspiration is something well worth celebrating in November.

Not only were we glad that the Gunpowder Plot did not succeed in blowing up the king, the lords temporal and the lords spiritual, and members of parliament, we were also thankful that our protestant heritage was preserved and that we were not subject to the tortures of the Inquisition as so many were in Catholic Europe and South America. The picture is a woodcut from an old prayerbook, reflecting the belief that God Himself was on our side and that He Himself thwarted the Gunpowder Plot. There was even a service added to the prayer book – *a Form of Prayer with Thanksgiving to be used yearly upon the Fifth Day of November; For the happy Deliverance of King James I and the Three Estates of England, from the most Traiterous and Bloody intended Massacre by Gun-powder.* English catholics tend to see things differently. We Anglicans also have a shameful heritage of persecuting our political and religious opponents. It was Queen Victoria who decided to drop this service from the prayerbook along with those commemorating the Martyrdom of Charles I and the Restoration of Charles II.



So, there is a grimness about November, but it isn't all gloom and doom. Far from it. The first weekend in November is very often the best for autumn colours. All Saints Day is a celebration of goodness. All Souls Day is a celebration of eternal life. It may well be darker and colder outside, but it is very pleasant to be indoors in the warmth and light while the storms rage. And Christmas is coming. This year, Advent Sunday

is 29th November. Advent means coming or arrival. We're getting ready for Christmas. We're preparing to celebrate the First Coming of the Light of the World into the world. We are preparing for that great day when He will come again to judge both the quick and the dead and to restore all things. We prepare for the Christmas feast by putting up decorations, buying or making presents, laying in food and drink. We prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus by casting away the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light. In order to do so, we need to pray for the grace of God. Hence our Advent collect.

Every blessing,
Roger.

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Foodbank & Harvest Festival

Harvest Festival was very different this year. Normally, the sun shines. This year, the weather was cold and wet. We didn't even have heating at S Michael's because the gas is turned off awaiting the replacement of leaky pipes. I thought of past harvest festivals in packed churches beautifully decorated with flowers, fruit and vegetables, corn, hops and harvest loaves, and singing those wonderful harvest hymns. But, you know, this year was great too. There were fewer of us. Not everybody can come in these COVID times, but many of those who can do. We did have harvest loaves and fish. The fish were wooden at Cuxton and tinned at Halling, but the symbol was real, reminding us that Jesus fed five thousand men plus women and children with just five loaves and two fishes and can meet all our needs today. Our organists played in both churches. I was very pleased to see how much people had brought for the foodbank, which of course is very much needed at this time, more than ever. Also, it is good that people continue to work hard, despite the vicissitudes, to keep both churches clean and in good order. It is so depressing to go to a church building to worship where nobody seems to care, as is the case in some places.

I was very pleased to see how much people had brought for the Foodbank. According to Malcolm, when the Foodbank weighed our combined contribution, it amounted to 60.1 kg which is 132lb 8ozs or 1.18 cwt.! Well done everybody.

XKids

On 12th September, we held our most recent XKids at Halling. The day was perfect to hold the event outside in the churchyard. A fair gathering of children and accompanying adults sitting outside in the sunshine enjoyed a production of the Prodigal Son. The audience performed the actions and provided the sound effects and the story was illustrated with a puppet show from behind a blanket suspended between two trees. We learnt a bible verse. *See how very much the Father loves us for he calls us his children. I John 3:1.* There was an adults versus children quiz. You can guess who won and it wasn't the adults. Families then ate the picnics they had brought. Unfortunately, COVID won't let us share. Afterwards, some of the children, budding archaeologists, tried to decipher the inscriptions on some of the very old tombstones which are quite worn and partially covered by dirt, moss and lichens. We'll let you know when we arrange another XKids if you are on the emailing list. If you aren't on the list, but would like to be, please let me (or Ruth) know.

Roger.

Why are hairdressers never late for work?

They know all the shortcuts.

What colour is the wind?

Blew.

What's the difference between a hippo & a Zippo? One is very heavy; the other is a little lighter.

Why did the mushroom get invited to the party?

Because he was such a fun guy.

Why do sharks live in salt water?

Pepper makes them sneeze.

From the Registers

Funeral:

6th October

Valerie Jeffery

White Leaves Rise

All Souls Day

On the 2nd November each year, the Church commemorates the Festival of All Souls. It is a day specially set aside to remember the faithful departed. In the words of the Creed, we believe in *the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting*.

In other words, we believe that we can trust God for those whom we love but see no longer. Death is not the end, but a new beginning, a new and infinitely more marvellous phase of existence. Our love for them and their love for us continues within the love of God. The things we have done wrong on earth can be forgiven if we ask God in Christ. Our personality, our soul, is not extinguished by death, but finds its fulfilment in God's love. These are the kinds of thoughts to remember when we think about our loved ones who have died.

In this parish, we remember by name on All Souls Day all those whose names are in the Books of Remembrance, those whose funerals we have arranged in the last year and any other individuals we are asked to commemorate.

The All Souls services this year are on Monday 2nd November at 9.30 am at St Michael & All Angels' Church Cuxton and 11.00 am at St John the Baptist's Church Halling. At both services we remember all those whose funerals we have taken in this last year and people from the parish we have heard about. If you or other members of your family or friends would like to be present at either service, you would be most welcome. If there are other names you would like to be remembered, please give them in writing to the Rector.

Unless the COVID rules change, I'm afraid you will have to wear a mask unless you are exempt¹ and keep 2m (79") from other people you don't live with. If you receive Holy Communion, you will only receive the bread, though this is sufficient in itself. Christ comes to us fully in the bread as well as in the wine. We still remember His death on the cross. He still dwells in us and we in Him. We still receive the pledge of eternal life. Please also use sanitizer (provided) or wash your hands thoroughly.

St Michael's Draw: £10 Mrs Crundwell (25), £5 each Mr Silverthorn (1) & Mr Hills (31).

Ride & Stride

I thought that this year's Ride and Stride would be cancelled because of COVID. However, it went ahead on 12th September, though in a lower key than usual. Many churches were unattended. Several left out lists for participants to sign in. Many did not and we just had to record our visits on our own sponsor forms. Understandably, I was the only one this year from our parish to take part and I cut down what I usually do. Last year, I went mad and cycled down the Thanet Way to Birchington and then around the coast to my old church at Ramsgate and came back home by train. This year I wouldn't risk timetables turned upside down by the virus and the prospect of having to wear a mask. So I decided not to go too far. In any case, I wanted to be back



¹ There are a range of reasons for not wearing a face covering, including: • young children under the age of 11 • not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability • if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress • if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate • to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others • to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you • to eat or drink, but only if you need to • to take medication • if a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering

for XKids (qv).

It was a beautiful warm sunny day, as so many days have been this Spring, Summer and Autumn, raising our spirits despite everything else which is happening. I cycled up Bush Road and marked off Cuxton URC and S Peter & S Paul Luddesdowne on my sponsor form. Then up the hill to Meopham and, on a whim, to S Mildred Nurstead via S Mary's Church Rooms, Sole Street. I met some nice people at Nurstead – a couple of other cyclists and a nice lady who is a member of the congregation there. She was not happy that, given such a small building and tightly packed pews, people now have to book if they wish to attend services. We never expected a pandemic in our lifetimes. She wondered what her grandfather would have thought about it. Then we realised that he would probably have experienced and survived the 1918 influenza outbreak.

I had personal experience of how crowded the furniture is in S Mildred's once when I preached there. The pulpit is reached by a very narrow winding staircase, itself reached by climbing over a pew, and all in a cassock and surplice. A fall in the solemn circumstances of a service is so undignified. Fortunately, I made it up and down quite safely.

Thence down and up deceptively steep hills to Longfield Hill, where the old village hall has been converted into a private dwelling. I was warmly welcomed at St Mary Magdalene Longfield and had a nice chat with someone who recognised me. Then, down memory lane to Westwood and round via Axtane and Hook Green (not to be confused with Hook Green, Meopham, both Hook Greens having once been served by the 489A bus) to Southfleet. This took me past the allegedly haunted old Southfleet Rectory and the Ship public house, where people who claimed to have seen the ghost used to endeavour to claim a restorative brandy. S Nicholas Church (where I worshipped as a small child) was closed, but I signed myself up for it. Then Dale Road past the new village hall which replaced the two wooden huts I remember hosting the library, whist drives and so on and so forth in my youth. Then to the site of the old LC&DR station, now disappeared under a Garden Centre, and via the now redundantly named Station Road to my childhood home of Betsham. Up what my grandmother called "the Green Road" and the council call Betsham Road to High Cross where the 452 was supposed to wait on Saturdays for the 450 on the remote chance that there would be passengers for Brands Hatch. Thence through Bean (where Mrs Botting used to sell bedding plants from her beautiful garden and elderly end of row cottage fascinatingly – for a five year old - shored up by huge baulks of timber) to Greenhithe, astutely avoiding being sucked into the maw of Bluewater. That was once such a pretty, quiet road, under overhanging trees, conducting travellers to the church where the people are buried above the tower.

Back home then along the main road towards Gravesend, diverting via Swanscombe to record the mediaeval Church currently in use, rather than the redundant Victorian building (now flats) which I'm wont to count towards my total. Two churches on Northfleet Hill, then Vale Road to Perry Street where my infant school teacher got married and we saw her wedding from the Betsham bus. Where better? Wrotham Road was closed for resurfacing and I'm afraid I took to the pavement! From Singlewell, the old A2 is now cycle track, which was lovely. The present A2 was, however, closed and much of the traffic between London and the coast and vice versa had diverted through Cobham with somewhat interesting results. Having signed in at the church, I was not sorry that you can, in extremis, cycle on footpaths! The A228 at Cuxton was controlled by traffic lights while they re-laid the gas mains. So that was three major jams in one short morning's excursion. Thank you all who sponsored me. We made £210 of which we receive half and the remainder goes to Friends of Kent Churches to help other congregations in the county. Roger.

What happens to a frog's car when it breaks down?

It is toad away

Can a kangaroo jump higher than a skyscraper?

Skyscrapers can't jump!

How do you organise a space party?

Planet

Why can't you trust atoms?

Because they make up everything.

I told her she was drawing her eyebrows too high.

She looked surprised.

East Peckham to Oak Weir Lock

This is a circular walk, of about 4 miles, along and close to the River Medway, starting and finishing at East Peckham. East Peckham has a long history and has developed from nine hamlets; Beltring, Little Mill, Snoll Hatch and Roydon to name a few. The main economic focus was agriculture and included hop growing. In 1896 the first ever speeding conviction in England was 'achieved' by Walter Arnold of East Peckham for travelling, in a motorized vehicle, at 8mph through the town where the speed limit was 2mph. Furthermore, he was chased and caught by a policeman on a bicycle! How times have changed.

I step out from the car park behind the Methodist Church in Pound Road and turn left to walk up Old Road. I turn right at the third turning, at a carved wooden post, into Pinkham. The road starts off as a quiet lane with a field for ponies and donkeys on my left, a few cottages on my right then further down a delightful house and garden. The tarmac path gives way to a track and then a footbridge. Once over the footbridge there is a meadow with a pillbox leading down to the River Medway. The main footpath crosses my line of vision and I turn off to the right to follow it. After a few hundred yards I arrive at Sluice Weir Lock and watch a gentleman take his canal boat through the lock on his way to Yalding. This morning there are only two people



here. However, the previous weekend, this whole area had been busy with walkers, picnickers, children playing and boat enthusiasts. I walk over the lock then cross the footbridge over the river and turn right to join the Medway Valley Walk. I walk a short distance but stop to watch the water cascading over the weir. It seems to be rushing at such a speed.



The footpath is well sign posted and follows along the riverside. There is little noise, the odd rustle amongst the

trees or undergrowth or the plop from fish or gliding water fowl. On the opposite side of the river are some moored water craft. One boat has evidence of habitation but the others seem to be closed up deserted. Suddenly a kingfisher breaks cover and there is a flash of blue as it flies along the river and then it is gone. I search among the leafy trees but there is no sign. The footpath moves slightly away from the river and enters a field which is used for camping. Looking away from the river, the oast houses at the Hop Farm Country Park can be seen in the distance. A few families are enjoying what may be the final camp of the summer. Some children and adults are playing games whilst others are preparing lunch on a barbecue. The footpath returns to the riverbank and a family of ducks appear from under the over-hanging plants. Ahead I can see a footbridge and



a pathway leading across farmland. I remain on the Medway Valley Walk and watch some kayakers

paddling down the river. They have some provisions carefully wrapped up in their boats. On the other side of the river I see another hexagonal pillbox. These are made of brick and concrete and were constructed as part of Britain's defences during World War 2 when it was feared that the river might provide an arterial route for invasion.

I continue along the Medway Valley Walk until I reach a junction of pathways. To my right the path goes over the river but I turn left to travel through a meadow on a well used path which returns to the riverside and opens out at Oak Weir Lock. This is a splendid lock. Well worth a visit. There is a picnic table, a sluice, a lock, an island and a canoe chute. There are no canoeists at this point today but on my last visit there was a group who screamed with equal measures of fear and delight as they each traversed the chute and filmed each other. I stop and watch the birds. Some are on the water whilst some are in and around the bushes and trees. Although the area may seem quiet it is in fact alive and buzzing with wildlife.

After a short break I turn around and retrace my steps back through the meadow to the junction of pathways. I go over the river but stop on the bridge. Below me, on the water is a pair of swans and some

bright red river obstruction markers which look like very tall top hats. Over the bridge I turn left to join a farm track which passes yet another pillbox then leads up to Tonbridge Road at a hamlet known as Little Mill. This hamlet has a very nice pub with outside seating beside the River Bourne. At this place the river is teeming with carp of all sizes. I think that they were waiting for a diner to throw them some tasty scraps. At the little bridge I turn right, away from Little Mill and walk along the river bank to open fields of salad plants. I walk diagonally across the fields and arrive at

Snoll Hatch. This hamlet has some quaint buildings. I turn right and follow the road passed Strettit Farm then onto the junction with Pound Road where I turn left to return to the car park behind the Methodist Church.



This is not a long walk but it is packed with so many delightful sights. I recommend it!

Holly Croft.

Tommy's Talking Points

I've told you how twice our plans to meet up for a walk with Master's friends were thwarted – once by Master's inadequacies as a navigator and, the second time, by the fact that one of the proposed party was indisposed. Third time lucky and here is the proof. At the end of the walk, Master and I are sitting on a seat on the Green at Westerham, opposite the statue of Sir Winston Churchill, Britain's great wartime prime minister, who was born on the same date as Master, but not in the same year!



We drove to Westerham to start the walk. This is something Master prefers not to do because you have to finish in the same place as you started and because the driver can't have a drink with his pub lunch. However, Master thinks it is probably better for now to avoid public transport, especially as he would have to wear a mask, which he hates, and

also he can't face the hassle of pre-booking, track and trace registers, social distancing and masked waiters. Maybe he is being unfair to the publicans and restaurateurs who are trying so hard to serve the community and to keep their businesses open despite the pandemic. Going by car rather than by train, there was no timetable for leaving here, only an agreed time to meet at St Mary's Church, Westerham. Master cut things a bit fine. It was amusing that a programme on the car radio was about why some people are always late and how annoying that is to other people. Master actually is quite obsessive about time and doesn't like it when other people are late or being late himself. He hates wasting time, however, and very often only makes it just in time – which is what we happily did on this occasion. There proved to be a lovely big car park at Westerham with plenty of empty spaces and a pay & display machine which still takes coins. Some want you to use an app on your mobile, whatever that means, to pay parking charges. Master knows someone much younger than himself who had to ask a stranger to pay his parking charges on her 'phone and give her the cash!

It was a beautiful day. A nice walk along the back ways took us to the Church where we met our friends. Across the Green, up some steps, and from then on it was nearly all footpath with no roads. There are plenty of footpaths in the area and we saw lots of other walkers, some with dogs. There were woods and hills, like home, but not quite. The Weald and the Downs are not the same. The flora and fauna reflect the geology, Master says. We touched the edge of Chartwell, Churchill's much loved home, which Master has visited years ago and says is well worth seeing. There were some open fields with notices warning of livestock, which was not always in evidence. There were several attractive old houses in the woods which looked ideal places to live in. In one place, a sign warned that the path was closed because of shooting. It was just as well we believed it and took another route because, a little later, we heard volley after volley going off across the other path. There came a point when I and one of Master's friends realised that we had completed the circuit. So it was back to the Green, the church and the car park and home. Whereas we usually have a pub lunch, Master's friends had made some delicious sandwiches, which, he says, more than made up for not being able to go in anywhere. We hope to meet up for another similar outing soon, before the weather deteriorates.

Speaking of weather, there have been some very dramatic changes which have had an impact on the schedule we had become used to. We can't go out so early now because it is too dark in the woods for Master to see where he is going, though it doesn't worry me. I can always find my way by scent and sound as well as by having my eyes nearer to the ground. Moreover, when you are five years of age, have four legs and a centre of gravity at about a foot above the ground, falling over is less likely and less painful than when you are sixty five, have only two legs, and your centre of gravity is about three feet from the ground. Also, while he could carry me home, I couldn't carry him. So we've been making rather later starts.

Hot weather continued well into September. Globally, it was the hottest September ever recorded. Then it became very cool and we had some nasty cold rain. One morning, he said it was too cold, too dark and too wet to have a run. Well wrapped up, he took me for a walk instead. Then, about mid afternoon, Summer suddenly returned. The sun shone. The air warmed up by several degrees. It was like a miracle and he cheered up tremendously. So we had a late afternoon run with him stripped down to shorts and trainers. A couple of days like this were followed by the return of the rain – torrential this time for hour after hour. One morning, we didn't go out at all, though we did manage a walk when it left off for a bit in the afternoon. We saw the men who are going to fix the gas pipes to the heater at S Michael's, though I don't know how much good heating will do so long as we have to keep both doors open to blow away the virus. Master suggested that we could use the money allocated for replacing the leaky gas pipes to buy overcoats for the congregation instead. It is good to see so many of my friends back in church now.

The rain returned, but now, after a couple of days, it was nice warm rain and we did manage to go for a lovely run. People still thought he was mad, however. I'm not sure how much longer this early morning what passes for running will go on for. Will he just stay in bed? He has started doing that sometimes and, when we do, we generally get our run in the afternoon, which means seeing some different people and dogs.

Master has been a bit cross because the badgers in our garden have dug up the lawn and the new plants he has just put in. Friends said that this was because they were hunting for worms which had gone down deep because of the drought. He's hoping that all this rain will have brought the worms to the surface where the badgers can help themselves without digging. On the other hand, he reckons that there are more molehills in damp conditions. He likes to think of gardening as working with nature, but, if you ask me, I should say that nature isn't working with him – though he is pleased that his hollyhocks are flourishing after taking months to germinate. These should not only survive most garden pests but also self-propagate and proliferate. He's pleased to see them thrive because the seeds were a gift from friends. Now his dilemma is whether to leave the geraniums in the pots outdoors where they are still flourishing or to clear them away and plant spring bulbs.

We can see the change each day in the colours of the leaves. Experts say that it should be a good year for Autumn colours because of the weather we have already had this year. That's if there are no gale force winds to blow them all away!

Last month, Master wrote a lot about prayer, asking God for what we need. But he shouldn't have left out saying *Thank you* to God which is even more important. He went at some length through *A Collect or Prayer for all Conditions of Men*. So let me just, without comment, offer this. Tommy, the Rectory Spaniel.

A General Thanksgiving

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men; We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

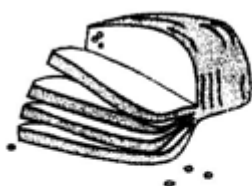
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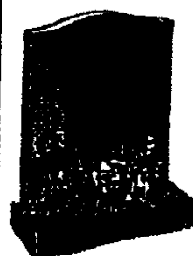
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