

Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 30 <sup>th</sup> August Trinity 12	11.00 United Parish Eucharist & Holy Baptism	Deuteronomy 4 vv 1-9 p182 Mark 7 vv 1-23 p1010
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 13	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Exodus 14 vv 5-31 p71 Matthew 6 vv 1-18 p970
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 2 vv 1-17 p1214 Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 14	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 James 3 vv 1-12 p1214 Mark 8 vv 27-38 p1012
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Exodus 18 vv 13-26 p76 Matthew 7 vv 1-14 p971
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 15	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 11 vv 18-20 p770 James 3 v13 – 4 v10 p1215 Mark 9 vv 30-37 p1013
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 16 <b>BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY</b>	11.00 Holy Communion	Numbers 11 vv 4-6 p147 James 5 vv 13-20 p1216 Mark 9 vv 38-50 p1013
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> October Harvest & Dedication	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall (Trinity 17)	Genesis 2 vv 18-24 p5 Mark 10 vv 2-16 p1014
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 28 vv 11-18 p30 1 Peter 2 vv 1-10 1218 John 10 vv 22-29 p1077
	6.30 Harvest Praise	Joel 2 vv 21-27 p913 1 Timothy 6 vv 6-10 p1194
Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 13	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 Mark 7 vv 24-37 p1010
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 14	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 50 vv 4-9a p737 James 3 vv 1-12 p1214 Mark 8 vv 27-38 p1012
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 15	9.30 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 11 vv 18-20 p770 James 3 v13 – 4 v10 p1215 Mark 9 vv 30-37 p1013
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup> September Trinity 16 <b>BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY</b>	9.30 Holy Communion	Numbers 11 vv 4-6 p147 James 5 vv 13-20 p1216 Mark 9 vv 38-50 p1013
Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup> September Michaelmas	7.30pm Holy Communion (Meet outside Co-op at 6.45 pm for procession of celebration and witness.)	Genesis 28 vv 10-17 p30 Revelation 12 vv 7-12 p1242 Hebrews 1 vv 5-14 p1201 John 1 vv 47-50 p1064
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> October Harvest & Dedication	9.30 Family Communion	1 Peter 2 vv 1-10 1218 John 10 vv 22-29 p1077

**Note Bene: 6.45 pm outside Co-op Michaelmas Procession of Celebration and Witness.**

This follows the wonderful success of the event on Ascension Day.

May fewer of you miss this than that!

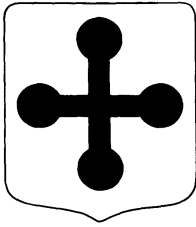
### Help

We're desperately short of help on this magazine. We need people to take the bundles to the deliverers. (I act as stand in, but it is really, really not a job for a useless driver like me!) We also need more people to deliver on the streets. Please contact Margaret on 240644 if you can help. I believe a lot of people find the magazine interesting and informative. It is a good outreach. It is also one of our most successful fundraisers. I, for one, should be sorry to see it die for lack of people to take it to the readers.

Roger.

P.S: I've just been told off for being out delivering magazines when people needed to speak to me on the telephone. They were inconvenienced by my not being there and the parish had to pay for the returned calls. These jobs really ought not to be left to the Rector.

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



#### Religious Responses to Darwinism

2009 is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of his *On the Origin of Species*, the book which sold the Theory of Evolution to the world. I have just been on a conference at Oxford entitled *Religious Responses to Darwinism* and very enjoyable it was too.

The Theory of Evolution is a scientific theory promulgated in order to explain a number of observable facts, of which the following are, I think, the principal.

- The discovery of fossils all over the world indicates that many different kinds of plants and animals have formerly existed on earth – probably many times as many different species as there are today. There appear to be family connections and gradations between many of them. I remember pictures in school text books of fossil horses from *Eohippus*, a horse with toes, the size of a dog, through taller intermediate creatures, with more hoof like appendages, up to *Equus*, the modern, magnificent hoofed horse we can see in the fields today.
- On islands (such as the Galapagos Islands) you often find distinct populations of birds and other creatures, similar to, but slightly different from, others on the mainland or on other islands.
- The plants and animals on earth today can be grouped into genera, families, orders and phyla. Different species have family resemblances, suggesting various degrees of relatedness.
- We find what are called vestigial organs, such as the human appendix, of no obvious use to modern humans, but very important in the digestive tracts of “related” species.
- As babies develop in the womb, they appear to go through the same development as baby fish, reptiles, etc. For example, at one stage in development, human babies have gills. Embryos of other animals also go through stages which are apparently more appropriate to other species – species which evolutionary scientists would describe as their ancestors.
- Bacteria do change from generation to generation in order, for example, to develop resistance to antibiotics. Some larger creatures apparently do the same in the wild. Human beings can certainly change species by selective breeding. Over generations, we have changed the wolf, *Canis lupus*, into many different sorts of domestic dog, *Canis lupus familiaris*.
- Much of the science of genetics seems to make most sense in the light of the Theory of Evolution.

It is important to bear in mind what a scientific theory is – a proposed explanation to account for observable and testable facts. You can challenge the accuracy of the facts. You can suggest alternative theories or hypotheses to account for the observed facts. Any decent scientist will acknowledge that it is possible that one day further facts will come to light which falsify the Theory of Evolution. These are all possible scientific challenges to the Theory of Evolution (or to any scientific theory).

Many people, however, do not like the Theory of Evolution and effectively want to discount Science so as to maintain some other theory of how the world, with its multiplicity of living species, came into being. This is a dangerous procedure. Science, the scientific method, has given us the modern world, modern agriculture, modern industry, modern medicine. Without Science, we should be living like mediaeval peasants. So it is very worrying that people are so willing to discount or reject the scientific method. We can't do without it. I believe that it is a gift from God. By all means challenge evolution scientifically, but you have to be sure of your facts and rational in the way you attempt to account for them.

But why do people so much dislike the Theory of Evolution? For many people, the problem is not really that plants and animals are supposed to have gradually changed from generation to generation over many millions of years or (as some believe) that there were periods of rapid change alternating with long periods

of stability when everything remained much the same. The real problem for many people is Darwin's proposed mechanism for change. Darwin's big idea was that very slight differences occur between parents and offspring and between different offspring. These differences may make the offspring fitter to survive and have offspring of their own or they may make the offspring less fit to survive, in which case they fail to reproduce and that change dies out. Darwin maintained that the differences between offspring are by chance, but that, once they have occurred, they are passed on to subsequent generations. These differences are mutations and there may be more mutations if there is, for example, exposure to radiation or chemicals. The chances of different mutations surviving will vary when there are changes in the environment. In effect, you get the *survival of the fittest*, though this is not Darwin's phrase.

Darwin did not know about modern genetics and DNA, but they help us to see how Darwin could be right about chance mutations which can be inherited by future generations. We pass our genes as DNA to our children, but the process allows for some random variation or mutation. Our children are subtly different from us, but those mutations are now part of their genetic make up and will be passed on to their children, unless they are so harmful that they make it impossible for the children to reproduce. If, on the other hand, they give our children a competitive advantage, they might be slightly more likely to reproduce and to pass on that adaptation to subsequent generations.

Why is Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* a problem for so many people?

- The huge role of chance in the process suggests that there is no ultimate meaning and purpose. Things happen to have worked out the way they have with the species on earth today (including us) but things could have been very different. You and I might never have existed.
- Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* implies that there is nothing special about human beings. We evolved from other animals. We may evolve into other animals. (If we recognise that we are animals, we may treat animals better, but if we think that we are nothing but animals, that might lead us to have much less respect for ourselves and for other people.)
- When scientists like Richard Dawkins try to make Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* account for everything that is, our appreciation of beauty in art, music, literature, architecture, etc. is diminished. Our love for these things is reduced to a mechanism for somehow ensuring the procreation of our genes.
- Our religious impulses go the same way.
- Romantic love and family solidarity are reduced to a mechanism for getting us to reproduce and to look after our offspring.
- Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* has an odd effect on ethics. Religious people have generally believed that the moral Law is something from outside ourselves, something God given. Philosophers such as Plato, without invoking God, have also believed that ideas such as "Justice" exist in themselves. They are not human inventions. We do not make justice; we discern justice. But Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* has to insist that our ethical ideas can only have arisen as a mechanism for ensuring the survival and reproduction of our genes. What is good is nothing more than what is good for the survival of our race.
- Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* challenges some of our most moral ideas. Most of us believe that it is good to look after the weak, but Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* really requires that the weak die before they reproduce and stop wasting resources that could be used for the benefit of the strong. Evolutionary theory in America 80 years ago led to the Theory of Eugenics, the idea that the least fit members of society ought to be sterilised and only the fit to have children. This is partly why there is such a strong anti evolutionary movement in America today. The Nazis too were to some extent inspired by evolutionary theory in their plan to create a master race, by breeding from blond haired, blue eyed "Aryans" and exterminating, Jews, gypsies, Slavs, the mentally ill, homosexuals, etc.

So Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* worries a lot of people with or without the religious dimension. There are a few more problems for religious people in general and for Christians in particular. Creationism (the belief that evolution did not take place) is growing and spreading around the world.

- If Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* satisfactorily accounts for the earth, with its multiplicity of species, there is no need for God. Agnostics like T H Huxley and atheists like Richard Dawkins have promoted evolution as a theory which cuts God out. If Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* is a sufficient explanation, either there is no God or else He is disconnected from the Universe. Maybe, God created things in the first place and set them running, but He does not now interfere; He does not intervene; nature takes its course. This is called Deism and, if you think about it, Deism makes prayer pointless and effectively deprives us of a personal relationship with God.
- Around 1800, people believed that one of the most powerful arguments for the existence of God was that the universe was perceived to be so obviously designed. How could you have the intricacy and beauty of the flowers, marvellously pollinated by the equally perfect bees, unless flowers and bees were designed by God? Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* denies that there is any need for that hypothesis. (Of course there are plenty of other reasons for believing in God nevertheless!)
- According to Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest*, species adapted to their present environment because those creatures insufficiently adapted died before they reproduced. They starved or sickened or were eaten by predators. Is that the way, some people argue, you would expect a good God to design the world?
- If human beings are chance mutations of some kind of ape, who happened to survive and multiply because of particular quirks in the African environment, in what sense can we affirm that we are made in the image of God?
- Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* seems to contradict the biblical account of creation.

I suggest that, apart from the last, nearly all these objections to Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* can be countered by something like the following. The problem is not the role of change, but the role of chance and the seemingly mindless brutality of the process which ensures that some changes survive while others perish.

Let's rid ourselves of the notion of God as something entirely distinct from the Universe. Such a God would always be in danger of being treated as an irrelevance, the God of the Deists, or one Who perhaps would do better not to exist, the "God" of the atheists. Let's recognise that everything which exists, exists in God and that God exists in everything which is. St Paul is happy to quote a pagan philosopher on this point. *For in him we live, and move and have our being.* (Acts 17 v28). I do not for a moment want to detract from the otherness of God, His infinite majesty. God is truly transcendent. He is, however, also truly imminent. He inhabits the Universe. The Universe abides in Him. This is why the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ makes such absolute sense.

Consider then that God is in everything and acting in everything. If the vast majority of scientists are right and everything evolved, they evolved in God with God in them. They evolved in the unfolding of God's eternal plan. There is purpose, God's purpose. There is meaning. Beauty, Justice, Faith, etc. all really exist. They exist in God and inform the unfolding of God's plan in nature. We are meant to be. We are created in His image as He works to create the Universe. It makes sense to say that we can share the divine nature as we also share animal nature. As conscious creatures, we can commune with God in prayer and our prayers co-operate with God in the unfolding of His perfect plan. From our point of view, things may appear to happen by chance, but God is in everything and what appears to us to be chance is in fact the ineluctable unfolding of His eternal plan\*. It makes sense to say that we dwell in eternal life in God. Even suffering makes sense – human and animal – in the context of the sufferings of Christ on the Cross. If we realise that Christ (God made man) is all in all, our faith, our hope and our love are our absolutely rational response to God's work in creation, redemption and sanctification.

Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* is a scientific theory to explain the way things are. Whether it is right or not need make no difference to our understanding of what it is to be human, what is our final destiny and how we stand with God.

And what of the historical question? Does Evolution by *Survival of the Fittest* contradict Genesis? That depends whether Genesis means to teach us history. I rather think it doesn't. Certainly, history is not its main focus. Here are a few of the things the first three chapters of Genesis definitely do teach us.

- God made everything that exists.
- God made men and women in His own image.
- Time has a weekly rhythm, six days for work and one day for what really matters in life.
- Human beings are of the earth earthy and also God-breathed living souls.
- Men and women are made for each other in lifelong marriage.
- God has given human beings the freedom to choose Him or to reject Him.
- To reject God is fatal.
- Human beings do reject God and the result is fatal.
- God never gives up on human beings. He protects us and seeks to win us back to Him.
- It is a descendant of Eve (Jesus) Who vanquishes the serpent (Satan) and thus restores eternal life to sinful humanity.

Maybe Genesis does teach us some history, but history is very far from its main focus.

I hope all this helps us to make sense both of our faith and of the implications of evolutionary theory.

Roger.

\* I cannot help but wonder whether radioactive decay is a helpful analogy. As I understand it, it is impossible to know when a given nucleus will decay. In that sense every time, say, a Radium nucleus becomes a Thorium nucleus, it is a contingent event. It might not have happened. On the other hand, it is possible to know the half life, to know when half of the nuclei will have decayed, but not which half! This seems to me to make it possible for the nuclear physicist to be like the Old Testament prophet and believe that phenomena are simultaneously contingent and necessary or maybe, if Hegel is useful to us, that necessity and contingency are thesis and antithesis, looking for a synthesis in a great mind, perhaps the Mind of God. Determinism and chance may not, after all, be mutually exclusive. Perhaps you can have predestination and free will as the Bible implies! Light turned out to behave both as a wave and as a stream of particles – two theories which were once thought to be mutually exclusive.

#### Confirmation 2010

Arrangements are not yet finalised, but it looks as if we shall be invited to take any confirmation candidates we have next year to All Saints Frindsbury in November. We should probably begin classes, therefore, in the Summer. Please contact me if you are considering being confirmed next year.

Roger.

#### Prayer Chain

A prayer chain has been set up in our two churches with the aim of offering support to Roger's own ministry of prayer. Any villager with something to celebrate or someone for whom prayer is requested, maybe for themselves in trouble or in joy may ring me on 01634 727126 or e-mail me on [elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth@rabhutch.demon.co.uk). The request will be listened to in confidence and passed on to the 4 members of the prayer group. We have now supported in prayer several villagers and would be pleased to receive further requests. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Philippians, ch.4,v.6.

A murder mystery party, Sat. 17<sup>th</sup> October at 7:30pm.  
 St. Michael's Players proudly present a play in two Acts:  
 "Murder"  
 By Helen Bradshaw

Watch Act one and then sit back and enjoy a meal. In teams, decide who is the villain. Watch Act two, when all is revealed. Small prize for the winning team

Tickets limited – first come, first served, available from Sept 1<sup>st</sup> from Shirley and Peter 724997, Julia and Matthew 727424

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

19<sup>th</sup> July

19<sup>th</sup> July

26<sup>th</sup> July

26<sup>th</sup> July

2<sup>nd</sup> August

9<sup>th</sup> August

Alexander David Cockburn

Aniela Grace Eiffert

Finlay Ross & Isla Grace MacTaggart

Franklin Oscar Ram

Luca James Blenko

Ethan Crocker

Riggall Court

Kesteven Close

Vicarage Close

Gillingham

Borough Green

Chatham

### Funerals:

8<sup>th</sup> July

22<sup>nd</sup> July

4<sup>th</sup> August

Pauline (Polly) Wooding (71)

Kathleen Mitchell (91)

Anthony (Tony) Francis Lawrence (62)

High Street

Browdens Road

Snodland

 **BacktoChurchSunday**

There are lots of reasons why people stop going to Church, but some of you would like to come back. Well, you are always welcome at any time, but 27<sup>th</sup> September has been designated as *Back to Church Sunday*. It would be great to see you for the 9.30 at Cuxton or the 11.00 at Halling. If you are a regular member yourself, how about praying for and inviting a friend? First timers also welcome. Roger.

## **Christian Aid**



A Division of The British Council of Churches

### Christian Aid Walk

Dear Fellow Walkers,

I am very pleased to let you know that we have raised £604 for Christian Aid from our walk in May. So THANK YOU VERY MUCH to everyone that took part and everyone that sponsored us. I think this is a very good outcome, and I am sure that Christian Aid will be happy to receive the money. I promise that it will be a "flat" route next year, when I hope to see you all again! God Bless you, Lynda.



### Friends of Kent Churches Cycle Ride

Walk or cycle for Kent churches on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September. Sponsor forms and more information from me. Visit as many churches as you please. Or you could be sponsored to man either of our churches for all or part of the day. Or could you, please, sponsor someone else? Proceeds split between our parish and FKC who support churches throughout the county. Roger.

Shorne Church Open: Guided Tours 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. Must book. 01474 824177

Teas Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> pm – free to cyclists and walkers with Friends of Kent Churches.



### Saints Alive!

Saints Alive! Children's Church will begin again on Sunday, 13th September and will be on every Sunday up to Christmas, apart from the first Sunday in the month, which is a special Family Service when we stay in the church for the whole service. The children start in the church at St. Michael's at 9.30 a.m. After the first hymn and reading and a little talk from our Rector, the children and leaders walk down to the church hall for their story lesson and activities. The activities involve singing, dancing, drama and arts and crafts. Often the children enjoy reading short passages from the Bible. Each child is encouraged to participate in their own way and at their own level. At 10.30 a.m. the children enjoy a drink and a biscuit and this is when the congregation join us in the hall for coffee. If you wish to know more, please ring Jenny Beaney on 241599.

## "Goosebumps!"

This is your second opportunity to hear "Goosebumps", the renowned group, featured on Radio Kent. They played at the Halling Fun Day in the Community Centre. The music is great to listen to and encourages you to get up and dance! "Goosebumps", swing and jive band, appear live at the Jubilee Hall, Upper Halling, on Saturday, 19th September at 7.30 p.m. Tickets are £6 and include refreshments. Please apply to Jenny Beaney, 95 Pilgrims Road, North Halling, ME2 1HW or Telephone: 241599 Please make cheques payable to "Cuxton and Halling PCC"



### Halling W.I

Halling W.I was a bit thin on the ground member wise at our July meeting. Some were poorly, some were on foreign shores and some just forgot, but we still had an enjoyable evening. Ann Hayward read the minutes of the May meeting. They seemed a century ago, but we have had our birthday party since then. Most of the correspondence came from the National Federation, as our own county federation was probably running down towards August which is holiday month. Next years Annual Meeting is to be held in Cardiff on the 2nd June, an excuse for some of us to have a couple of days in sunny Wales. We are going ahead with our annual ploughman's lunch, sometime this month at Betty Head's house. There we really can sit on the stairs if it should rain. Halling W.I. will be having a stall at the Fun Day. Cakes, books, jam, etc, please put prices on your goods.

Our speaker had us all giggling as he turned out to be a quaint little man who didn't take his flat cap off all evening. We had asked him for his holiday slides of Wales. Instead we had a trip on the Thames from Westminster Pier to Kew Gardens,

then on to Hampton Court. His film was lovely. You felt you were really on the boat and as Mr Davis told me he had just turned 80 he had some very up to date gear. I thanked him on behalf of all of us. He then asked if he could follow one of us back to the A228 as he wasn't familiar with our roads in the dark! I took him back via the Pilgrim's Road. He must have been driving at 10 mps as he was so far behind us and at one point I thought we had lost him and he may have turned up to Court Farm, but all was well. It was quite a laugh for Eileen and me. After our usual cuppa, I gave the girls a quick résumé of the annual meeting at the Albert Hall which Betty and I had recently been to. Mr Davis judged our competitions. Ann Hayward won the Flower of the Month with a multi coloured dahlia, and Ann Graves won the cheese scones competition. How he judged them without tasting them I do not know and for competitions savoury scones should always be cut with a plain cutter, but everyone doesn't know that. August we have a treat because we have Mr Laurie Manser who will tell us about being a Gardener's boy in Victorian times and the competition, a Garden Ornament. Dust up your Gnomes, and come and visit us. Phyllis.



**Diocesan Council for  
Health and Healing**

**You are invited to a Healing Service**

**Saturday 24 October 2009**

**at Rochester Cathedral**

Starting at 6.00 p.m. (doors open 5.30pm)

**Speaker: Revd Andrew Procter**

Rector of Shipbourne with Plaxtol and member of the Council for Health & Healing  
speaking on Mark 5.25-34 (the woman with haemorrhage)

*Including a time of worship with the opportunity for individual prayer and the laying-on-of-hands*

**[www.healing-rochester.org.uk](http://www.healing-rochester.org.uk)**

Church Hall Draw July: £40 to Malcolm Curnow, drawn by Thelma Partridge.

St John's Draw July: £5 each to Mrs Chidwick (26), Mr Thorne (32), Mrs Acott (48), Mr Smith (113) & Mrs Cheeseman (134) – drawn by Mrs Knight.

### Forthcoming Attractions

- 12<sup>th</sup> August 12.00: Barbecue 95 Pilgrims Road North Halling (Church Funds)  
13<sup>th</sup> August 2.00: Teddy Bears' Picnic St John's  
18<sup>th</sup> August 10.00: Coffee Morning 9, The Street (Andrew Daunton-Feare)  
19<sup>th</sup> August 2.00: Teddy Bear's Picnic St Michael's  
22<sup>nd</sup> August 2.00: St John's Open for Bishop's Palace Event  
1<sup>st</sup> September 3.00: Tea 73, Charles Drive (Andrew Daunton-Feare)  
19<sup>th</sup> September 7.30: Goosebumps at the Jubilee Hall (music & dancing)  
4<sup>th</sup> October 6.30: Harvest Praise & Harvest Supper St John's  
17<sup>th</sup> October 7.30: Murder Mystery Church Hall  
28<sup>th</sup> November 7.30: Quiz Church Hall  
11<sup>th</sup> December 7.30: Christmas Music St John's?  
12<sup>th</sup> December 10.00: Christmas Coffee Morning Church Hall.



#### Cuxton WI

A lot of people were back from their holidays. So we had 31 members present. Dorothy, our President, welcomed back Joan and Thelma who had both recently missed meetings because of illness. We hear that Betty is now doing well and able to go out shopping sometimes. Shirley was also with us again after an operation on her knee and she is now walking without her stick.

Notices were given out of events to come. A Supper and Sonnets evening at Snodland WI in October sounded very interesting. "A Play in a Day" also in October looked intriguing. A Medieval Autumn day at Sevenoaks on 10 October is another event. October looks as if it is going to be a very busy month. All sorts of things came out in our Reps reports. Water colour artists are going to hide in bushes in the Riverside Country park, Cookery enjoyed the good looking waiter more than the food I think, although the

repast was very tasty, and the Walking group were exhausted after the last country walk but are now looking forward to pacing the streets of London on their annual visit to the city.

The Committee get a month off in September as it is the Members night when they arrange their own meeting. This is a very good time to allow people to experience the joys or otherwise, of being on the committee as new nominations are invited for October at our AGM. and we hope that several new names will appear on the list.

Unfortunately our speaker for the evening did not arrive. So we had to use our brains instead and have a short quiz which everyone seemed to enjoy. Our next meeting is on Thursday September 3 at 7 30 pm at the Church Hall. It should be a good meeting with our standby committee! Do come along and join us, you will be made very welcome as we are always pleased to see visitors.  
Sheila.

[Max apologises for ripping this report longitudinally in two. I hope I have got everything as it should be. Whether he is allowed any space in this magazine for his own contribution remains to be seen! RIK.]

#### **Nature Notes July 2009**

The first of the month brings bright sunshine beaming from an azure sky after early morning grey cloud. I feed the birds then, later in the morning, sit out in the garden for an easterly breeze denies the humidity of yesterday. There are bird calls early in the day but the afternoon is silent. July is the time for the birds to renew their feathers. Blue tits, great tits, a magpie and a chaffinch feed in the morning then a collared dove comes to the seed in the afternoon. In the late afternoon a blackbird sings and a greenfinch calls from the conifer. It is very hot the next day but a cooling breeze blows in the evening when a song thrush trills loudly from a tree on the embankment. I

hear thunder during the night. The 4<sup>th</sup> is warm and sunny. I walk to the village via the edge of Six-acre Wood, returning by a different path where I see tiny snails perched on large nettle leaves. A clump of enchanter's nightshade blooms on the edge of the path. Brambles are in flower along the bank adjacent to the churchyard wall. I sit in the garden in the afternoon when I have the pleasure of watching a squirrel feeding from the tray, while tits forage on the nuts. A jay comes later, grabs some nuts in its beak then flies across the railway cutting. A magpie then a chaffinch comes for food then a wren takes a dust bath before disappearing in the undergrowth by the



fence. In the early evening I take Murphy for a walk along the road. A blustery west wind which causes the trees to bough and bend brings sunshine and heavy showers as we drive to Jeskyns Nature Reserve with Murphy. I hear the beautiful songs of skylarks. Scabious blooms along the road's verges and in the reserve I see bedstraws rosebay willowherb and other flowers among the tall grasses. We visit Jeskyns on the two following days. On the 10<sup>th</sup> I walk across Church Fields, through Mays Wood to Dean Valley, up through North Wood to the top of Bush Valley, back up the hill from Dean Valley through Mays Wood again and back across the fields. The sun beams down from a blue sky and the air is full of the scent of wild clematis. Green elder berries have formed; red poppies adorn edges of the field. Burdock spear thistle and bramble are breaking into flower while a chiff chaff calls loudly. Butterflies hover over the tall grasses and rosebay willowherb and bees gather nectar from a variety of beautiful wild flowers. Nettle leaved bell flowers bloom in North Wood where I hear the chatter of a magpie then the call of a woodpecker. It is so quiet and peaceful and I stand to listen to the silence which I do not wish to leave. As I approach the climb up to Mays Wood on my way back, a rabbit scuttles ahead of me. Hedge woundwort and lucerne bloom along the path. I eventually make my way home after an unforgettable experience of nature's beauty. In comparison the 11<sup>th</sup> is a cheerless day. The 14<sup>th</sup> is warm and blustery with billowing clouds, some white, some grey and rain bearing. I walk in Jeskyns Nature Reserve where along the paths, tall grasses sway in the wind and where Murphy enjoys running. The westward sky is dark with cloud but fortunately for us, no rain falls. The air is full of the glorious songs of skylarks. Rain falls in the evening. On the evening of 16<sup>th</sup>, I sit in the garden where there is hardly a breeze and the air is heavy with the scent of jasmine and

### **My poem this month is Spells by James Reeves**

I dance and sing without any feet-  
This is the spell of the ripening wheat.

With never a tongue I've a tail to tell-  
This is the meadow grasses' spell.

I give you health without any fee-  
This is the spell of the apple tree.

I rhyme and riddle without any book-  
This is the spell of the bubbling brook.

Without any legs I run for ever-  
This is the spell of the mighty river.

I fall for ever and not at all-

buddleia. I watch grey clouds drifting across the sky from the south west and watch collared doves flying in and out of the sycamore branches. I listen to wood pigeons' calls. The 17<sup>th</sup> is blustery and showery. On 19<sup>th</sup>, billowing clouds march across the sky from the west and trees sway in the strength of the wind. In the afternoon I take Murphy to the river which is low but the wind still whips up white horses. Gulls forage on the mudflats. Along the path flowers bloom in the long grasses and a pied wagtail scuttles ahead of us. The song thrush continues to wake me up at 5.am. By 23<sup>rd</sup> it is less blustery as I walk by the river with Murphy. The low water sparkles in the sunlight. As we make our way home, grey clouds drift across the sky from the west and a few drops of rain fall. Heavy showers fall the next day, thunder roars and the gutters become mini rivers. On 26<sup>th</sup> when we again walk by the river, I see burdock and common centaury along the banks where straw coloured grasses stand tall among the other flowers. The next day which is wind swept, I watch clouds scudding across the sky. A blackbird hops across the grass and a magpie chatters in the holly tree. On 28<sup>th</sup> I watch a comma butterfly which has settled on a Japanese anemone leaf. It's one of nature's wonders. The next day I see a painted lady butterfly. The 31<sup>st</sup> is a beautiful day with warm sunshine, blue skies flecked with white cloud and with a calm breeze. In the afternoon I walk through Six-acre Wood where on the ivy-clad banks I see bright orange lords and ladies berries. Herb Robert flowers peep out from the undergrowth. As I enter the field I see golden stubble left after the crops have been harvested. Red poppies adorn the edges. In church Fields I observe reddening haws and purple sloes while elder berries will soon ripen. Downy heads of thistles will soon float on the air. Green hips have formed. The month ends on a warm note.

This is the spell of the waterfall.

Without a voice I roar aloud-  
This is the spell of the thunder cloud.

No button or seam has my white coat-  
This is the spell of the leaping goat.

I can cheat strangers with never a word-  
This is the spell of the cuckoo bird.

We have tongues in plenty but speak no names-  
This is the spell of the fiery flames.

The creaking door has a spell to riddle-  
I play a tune without any fiddle.

**Elizabeth Summers**

Mothers Union  
Mary Sumner Day

August 9<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of Mary Sumner's death. She is the founder of this now worldwide society and August 9<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as her day. As this year it fell on a Sunday, it was decided we should hold a celebration Evensong in Rochester Cathedral for the whole of our diocese, for all our members and their families if they wished to come. What a family event it proved to be! We were encouraged to fill every seat in the cathedral, and fill it we did, not just the nave, but the transept as well. It is always a good sign when they run out of service sheets!

We arrived early as the banner bearers were asked to come 45 minutes before the service was due to start. When we arrived there was an air of excitement and the usual welcome feeling of MU gatherings. We then learnt that there was to be a choir from Holland in attendance. The service started at 3.15 with a procession of the choir and clergy, followed by the banners. The Dean welcomed us and congratulated us on bringing more banners than the British Legion! The choir then sang an arrangement of Evensong beautifully and we sang the hymns joyfully. The Rev'd Michael Skinner was the preacher and the prayers and readings were said by MU members. After the service we had tea and biscuits and time for a chat and time to retrieve our banners. Some members who had travelled a long way had brought tea to eat in the garden. As we made our way home, we decided it had been a great way to spend a lovely Sunday afternoon.

Shirley Crundwell.



Master's Naivety

Master said he was flabbergasted when he learned that the council's dog fouling regulations are to be extended to include the open countryside. "Where," he asked, "do they think wild animals and farm animals do their business? Surely it is better for the environment to let Nature deal with it than to put it in a plastic bag and have it driven in a council van to a land fill site or an incinerator!" I pointed out that people worry about catching diseases from dog's mess. "Don't they realise," he expostulated, "that there are plenty of diseases you can catch from wild animals and domestic animals other than dogs? Foxes don't take worm tablets. Cats can infect pregnant women." I had to remind him that this country is run by an urban elite who regard the countryside as one big city park. They don't like it that footpaths are sometimes muddy. They object to cocks crowing at dawn. They complain about the smell of farmyard manure. Yet they want free range eggs and organically grown vegetables.

Master grumbled that Britain was no longer a free country, quoting the BBC website to the effect that more than 500,000 requests to access phone and e-mail records were made in 2008, according to a report by the government's own Interception of Communications Commissioner. "We are kept under constant surveillance," he complained. "Everything we want to do is either regulated or banned. Government's solution to every problem (large, small or imaginary) is more official intrusion into people's personal lives. Back in 1960, when I was a boy," he ranted on, "a grown man was free to ride a motorbike without a helmet, travel in a car without a seat belt and drive at more than 70 mph on the open road. He could enjoy a smoke in the pub. He could take part in a sing song without a licence from the local authority. He could exercise his dog on any public beach and in nearly every public park. He was free to say what he really thought about things even if his views were politically incorrect. He could use a library ladder to reach a book on the top shelf. He could prune his own trees in his own garden without the prior permission of some bureaucrat. He didn't have to worry about being fined for putting out his dustbin on the wrong day because the men came round the back to collect it. Such parking regulations as there were existed in the interests of road safety and traffic management, not to make money for councils. And the notion of ID cards in peacetime was about as likely as that Britains ever, ever, ever would be slaves!"

I had to remind him that lots of things are legal today which weren't in 1960. Nowadays, he could consummate a homosexual relationship or, alternatively, get a girl pregnant and arrange an abortion. He could go shopping on a Sunday. He is free to practise witchcraft. He can commit a murder without fear of being hung. He can swear on TV. He can even legally commit suicide. "But," he whined, "I don't want to do any of those things!"

I had to explain that attitudes have changed and the law has to reflect what the opinion formers want, not what reactionaries like him want. Master responded that the law ought not to be about attitudes or what people want. The law is not their to reflect the wishes of middle aged clergymen or trendy council diversity officers. The law ought to promote justice, to reward virtue and to punish vice. "What right," Master demanded, "have they to take away our

personal autonomy and our privacy? How do they know that what was formally regarded as wrong is now to be permitted or even promoted? What are the philosophical and ethical grounds for all these changes?"

Again I had to point out that there are no universal, absolute moral principles in a multi-cultural, secular society. Moral compasses don't work without a theological magnetic pole! Parliament and local councils derive their authority solely from the fact that they are elected. Representative democracy is what determines the legal framework in which we have to live. "But," objected Master, "surely representative democracy could only be a genuine basis for moral authority if election manifestoes were the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." I told you Master was naïve!

By the way, he asked me to point out that some of the open land in the parish is part of the Rector's freehold property. Under the Act, even the council cannot fine you if the landowner won't co-operate with them. So if you're accused while on church land, please apply to the Rector. He can probably protect you from the council.

Max, the Rectory Spaniel.