

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
5 <sup>th</sup> February Septuagesima	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 I Corinthians 9 vv 16-23 p1150 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1003
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> February	6.30 Festal Evening Service for Diamond Jubilee	Psalm 101 Proverbs 8 <sup>1-17</sup> Revelation 21 <sup>22</sup> - 22 <sup>4</sup>
12 <sup>th</sup> February Sexagesima	9.30 Holy Communion	Proverbs 8 vv 1-11 p641 Proverbs 8 vv 12-21 p641 Proverbs 8 vv 22-31 p642 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1002
19 <sup>th</sup> February Quinquagesima	8.00 Holy Communion	Collect, Epistle & Gospel BCP Quinquagesima
	9.30 Holy Communion	II Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 II Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
22 <sup>nd</sup> February Ash Wednesday	7.30 pm Holy Communion	Isaiah 58 vv 1-12 p744 II Corinthians 5 v20 – 6 v10 p1161 John 8 vv 1-11 p1073
26 <sup>th</sup> February Lent 1	9.30 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 I Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
4 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 2	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 p1131 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
5 <sup>th</sup> February Septuagesima	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Numbers 13 vv 1-33 p149 Philippians 2 vv 12-28 p1179
	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 40 vv 21-31 p724 I Corinthians 9 vv 16-23 p1150 Mark 1 vv 29-39 p1003
12 <sup>th</sup> February Sexagesima	11.00 Holy Communion	Proverbs 8 vv 1-11 p641 Proverbs 8 vv 12-21 p641 Proverbs 8 vv 22-31 p642 Colossians 1 vv 15-20 p1182 John 1 vv 1-14 p1002
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 2 vv 4-25 p4 Luke 8 vv 22-35 p1037
19 <sup>th</sup> February Quinquagesima	11.00 Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Communion	II Kings 2 vv 1-12 p369 II Corinthians 4 vv 3-6 p1160 Mark 9 vv 2-9 p1012
22 <sup>nd</sup> February Ash Wednesday	9.30 Holy Communion	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970
26 <sup>th</sup> February Lent 1	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 9 vv 8-17 p10 I Peter 3 vv 18-22 p1219 Mark 1 vv 9-15 p1002
4 <sup>th</sup> March Lent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Hebrews 11 vv 1-16 p1209 Gospel tba
	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 17 vv 1-16 p16 Romans 4 vv 13-25 p1131 Mark 8 vv 31-38 p1012

## Diamond Jubilee HM Queen

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 6.30pm

### Festal Evening Service

Preacher Ven Simon Burton-Jones Archdeacon of Rochester  
In the presence of the Deputy Mayor & Mayoress of Medway

Reception to follow in Church Hall.

9.30 Holy Communion Wednesdays at St Michael's		9.30 Holy Communion Thursdays at St John's	
1 <sup>st</sup> February	II Samuel 24 vv 2-17 Mark 5 vv 1-20	2 <sup>nd</sup> February Candlemas	Malachi 3 vv 1-5 Hebrews 2 vv 14-18 Luke 2 vv 22-40
8 <sup>th</sup> February	I Kings 10 vv 1-10 Mark 7 vv 14-23	9 <sup>th</sup> February	I Kings 11 vv 4-13 Mark 7 vv 24-30
15 <sup>th</sup> February	James 1 vv 19-27 Mark 8 vv 22-26	16 <sup>th</sup> February	James 2 vv 1-9 Mark 8 vv 27-33
22 <sup>nd</sup> February Ash Wednesday at Halling, Cuxton service 7.30 pm	Joel 2 vv 1-17 p912 Matthew 6 vv 1-21 p970	23 <sup>rd</sup> February At Cuxton	Deuteronomy 30 vv 15-20 Luke 9 vv 22-25
29 <sup>th</sup> February Ember Day	Jonah 3 Luke 11 vv 29-32	1 <sup>st</sup> March St David	Isaiah 55 vv 6-9 Matthew 7 vv 7-12

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Copy Date March Magazine: 10<sup>th</sup> February 8.30 am Rectory.



#### From the Rector

In 2011 we celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King James Bible. 2012 sees the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that other great Christian English classic the Book of Common Prayer. Given that throughout the Middle Ages the Bible and service books were mostly only available in Latin and that it was a criminal offence to have them in English, it was quite an achievement that we have them in English at all and it is a great blessing that both the English Prayer Book and the English Bible are of such a high standard and have lasted so long, being joined in the last 150 years or so by other more modern translations of the Bible and newer liturgies or forms of divine service.

How come we are celebrating only 350 years of the BCP when most of it is actually older than the King James Bible which will shortly attain its 401<sup>st</sup> birthday? The answer is that the author of the greater part of the prayer book is Thomas Cranmer who was Archbishop of Canterbury 1532-1555, appointed by King Henry VIII and martyred by Henry's daughter Queen Mary. Cranmer was burnt at the stake at Oxford on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1556. Henry was a reluctant reformer and agreed only gradually to the changes Cranmer and the other protestant divines were advocating, including putting the Bible and the words of our services into English. Cranmer's first published service in English was the Litany. You can find a revised version of this in your old prayer books after Morning and Evening Prayer and the Athanasian Creed or Quicunque Vult – which is well worth reading in itself. Under Henry's son Edward VI, the Archbishop introduced an English

Prayer Book in 1549. The protestants wanted to make doctrinal changes as well as to translate the service into English. They wanted to make it crystal clear that we are saved by God's grace through faith alone, not through our own efforts, and that the Bible is the Word of God for every generation, that it contains everything necessary for salvation and that the Church can neither add to it nor take from it. Every Christian has direct access to God through Jesus alone (*our only mediator and advocate*) and does not have to go through the clergy! The Eucharist is something in which all Christians can and should participate fully, a Holy Communion with Christ and with one another: in which we proclaim His Death until He comes again; by which we receive His grace to live Christian lives on earth and eventually to go to Heaven; and through which we find the grace to offer *ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a holy, reasonable and lively sacrifice* to God. The Eucharist, protestants believe, is not a sacrifice offered by the clergy and people daily or weekly for the Church and for the world. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is once and for all *a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world*. The sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and our offering of ourselves back to God. The 1549 version of the Communion service was a protestant service, but in 1552 Cranmer introduced a revised version which was more protestant still. Many people think 1552 went too far and that, in its desire to avoid any suggestion that the bread and wine are somehow almost magically transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, it came perilously close to denying Christ's own words, *This is my Body; This is my Blood*.

When Edward died, his sister Mary came to the throne determined to make the English Church once more Roman Catholic. The English prayer book was banned and churches went back to using the Latin Mass. Many protestants suffered martyrdom for their faith. When Mary died, her sister Elizabeth became queen, determined to unite her kingdom. Elizabeth was a protestant herself and intended that the Church of England should be a protestant Church. She did not, however, want people quarrelling and fighting (as Christians are shockingly prone to do) over subtleties of doctrine or liturgy. She only asked that Christian men should be loyal to her and to England. Accordingly, the Elizabethan prayer books combined the more catholic 1549 service with the more protestant 1552 book and that, in my opinion, is the genius of the Church of England – that we are proud of our Catholic and our Protestant heritage and that we try not to fall out over *things indifferent*.

James I didn't much change the Elizabethan prayer book, except to add a prayer for the royal family, because he was married with children, whereas Elizabeth was the virgin queen. The English Civil War was as much a war of religion as of anything else and when Charles I was defeated by Parliament, the prayer book was again banned, this time by extreme protestants, who thought it was too catholic and too royalist with its prayers for the king and his family. It became a criminal offence to use the BCP even privately and clergy loyal to the old régime (including William Pett Rector of Cuxton) were ejected from their rectories. (Pett continued to live here and is buried in the churchyard.) Charles II was restored in 1661 and it was decided that the Prayer Book too should be restored. There was a certain amount of modernisation of the language and the addition of a few prayers and services for particular occasions and the prayer book came back into use on St Bartholomew's Day (24<sup>th</sup> August) 1662. We shall commemorate the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event with a BCP celebration of Holy Communion at Cuxton on St Bartholomew's Day at 7.30 pm this year.

After 1662, there were very few changes until the twentieth century, by which time there was a strong belief that our services needed to be brought up to date.

People feel strongly about the words we use in our services. Words matter. Jesus is the Word of

God. Our prayers are the most important words we ever utter and they become very precious to us. Some of the people I was brought up among didn't like set services at all. They believed that in public worship as in private personal worship, we should speak as the Spirit moves us. They saw the danger of quenching the Spirit and of repeating words formally by rote without thinking about their meaning. Jesus says that *God is spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth*. I agree that we have to be careful to think about what we are saying, to try to understand, to be sincere in adding the final *Amen*. I would not like to be like the priest I heard of who was asked to pray with someone who was dying and said he couldn't because he hadn't got his prayer book with him. I am all in favour of praying extempore and appropriately as the situation arises. On the other hand, it is fair to point out that in a lot of churches where the prayers are supposed to be extempore, in fact the ministers soon get into the habit of using the same words every week, using their own words rather than those provided by the churches they belong to. Prayers provided by the Church and authorised for use stimulate us to think of things we might not otherwise have thought of. They are a link with other Christians using the same words in other parts of the world and with Christians who used these words in worship on earth but are now eternally worshipping in heaven. As we use the words week by week, the meaning sinks down into our consciousness. As we learn them by heart, they become part of us, available to use when we are so low we don't know what to pray or maybe have lost the use of our other faculties so that we can't see what is written in the book or hear what other people are praying. After all Jesus Himself gave Christians a set prayer to learn and say – the Lord's Prayer and what a profound inspiration that is.

In the Church of England we express what we believe in the words of our services. As you know, religion is one of the most powerful influences on human behaviour. Get religion right and people are transformed into saints. Get religion wrong and you have inquisitions, suicide bombers, religious wars and fatwas. Doctrine is important and in the Anglican Church we express our doctrine in the words of our prayers. That is why our services in our parish churches have to be conducted using forms of service which have been authorised or commended for use. On special occasions we may use other forms provided they

accord with the faith and order of the Church of England, but, by law, we can only use the forms of service in Common Prayer 1662 or Common Worship 2000 for our regular weekly services. Sometimes this frustrates innovation, but it is also a guard against error and, in my view, the latter outweighs the former.

Some people love the old words of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and believe that it was at least in part our abandonment of what so many people valued when we revised our forms of worship from the 1960s onwards that caused people to stop coming to Church. Other people believe the opposite – that it is our failure to come sufficiently up to date which has lost all our young people. You can't prove it either way. You can point to flourishing traditional churches and to flourishing churches in which everything is spanking new. People you ask will tell you that they don't come to Church because there have been too many changes and people will also tell you that they don't come to Church because it's all too old-fashioned and there has been too little change. In reality if people come sincerely seeking God they will find Him. Looking for things to criticise in your local Church is at best a distraction from your spiritual quest and at worst an excuse for not engaging with God at all.

What I can't quite understand is why some lovers of 1662 hate the new services and why some people who like the new services seems to despise the old prayer book. In my experience, Common Prayer 1662 and Common Worship 2000 are both packed with wonderful resources for spiritual worship. You don't have to hate the one because you love the other and it is hardly Christian to be unable to tolerate other people who prefer forms

of worship different from the ones you prefer. What really matters is that we worship *in spirit and in truth* and *in love and charity with our neighbours*.

Personally, I believe that Common Worship 2000 is right for us in this parish for most of our public worship. I do however love the old BCP and I think we lose a lot if we don't know it all or if we never use it. There is a lot missing in Common Worship which is in 1662 and vice versa. The obvious answer is to use both – which we do to some extent – but there is the danger of confusing people. Our forms of service are meant to help people into spiritual worship, not to be a barrier you have to overcome before you can take part in the worship of the Church. There is a lot to be said for the simple and familiar as well as for the new and challenging. I quite often say that, if it was up to me, our public worship at St Michael's and St John's would be more catholic, more evangelical, more traditional and more up to date than it actually is. Being realistic, however, we adopt the lowest common denominator, a compromise between high and low, ancient and modern which suits most of the existing congregation, but we worship leaders have to be careful to remember that our task is to meet people's needs rather than to pander to their prejudices and that the point of public worship is to glorify God rather than to please ourselves.

I'm always interested in what people have to say about worship. It is the responsibility of the whole Church, not just of the Rector. So keep those conversations going, but always remember. Our services are about pleasing God, building His Church and serving His world. Roger.

I received a Prayer Book Society bookmark which reminds us that the Book of Common Prayer is  
Still the sure foundation of Anglicanism  
Closely based on Scripture  
Used for thousands of services nationwide throughout the week  
A service book for all occasions  
All available online at [churchofengland.org](http://churchofengland.org)

#### Thanks for Christmas

We started Christmas early this year with the WI District Carol Service on 2<sup>nd</sup> December at Halling which went very well and included the themes of Advent which had then only just begun. Then we had a superb parish Christmas Dinner on 14<sup>th</sup> December in the Church Hall. We hosted carol services for Cuxton Junior School and for Halling School in our parish churches and some of us attended the delightful Cuxton Infants nativity, as well as the rumbustious *Junior School the Musical*. I led my 24<sup>th</sup> Scout & Guide Carol Service, arranged this year by a senior scout as part of his Queen's Scout and Duke of Edinburgh award programmes. Some of this year's parents were probably cubs or brownies when I first started doing this.

### LANGUAGE TUITION

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The carol services at Halling and Cuxton were incredibly moving and the church nativities, crib services and Christingles were a wonderful celebration of all that Christmas means, as of course were the Christmas Eucharists, the more formal Midnight Mass, the said 8.00 and the Family Communion at 9.30 on Christmas Day. Mince pies and mulled wine or the “cup that cheers but does not inebriate” went down very well after some of our Christmas services. So thanks to everyone who made it all possible, the people who donated, obtained and decorated the Christmas trees, those responsible for the flowers and other decorations, those who keep our buildings clean and tidy, the people who prepared the Christingles, the choristers, organists and lesson readers, the bell ringers, the cooks and caterers and all who participated in any way in our Christmas

celebrations.

I had thought that Christmas might be difficult this year in view of family bereavements, but, as it has turned out, I have felt wonderfully close this Christmas to *those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.* Roger.

### Christmas Card 2011

Thank you all for the support given to our Christmas card project. Support came from the whole of our villages, ranging from church folk to our local garage.

Seven hundred and ten pounds was raised – which will be given to the Cuxton & Halling PCC – the body responsible for our finances.

I personally wish to thank the gang of three for superb assistance, making the project “almost” enjoyable. We started in January 2011 with the photographic skills of the Haywards continuing to December 21<sup>st</sup> with 1420 sold. Best wishes for 2012. DAH.

### **J Williams Tree Care**

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### All Change at Magazine HQ

After nearly forty years printing, collating and generally running the parish magazine, Margaret Guest has finally decided it is time to hand on to someone else. When she first started, there was quite a team to do this work, but gradually they have dropped off one by one till Margaret was left alone to do everything between editing (my job) and distributing (for which thanks to all those who take the magazine out onto the streets). It is hard to think of words adequate to express our appreciation of one of the most time-consuming jobs in the parish which is also inconspicuous to most people who just receive their magazine each month without knowing how it gets to them. But, thank you ever so much, Margaret.

I did wonder if the magazine would cease production when Margaret retired, but I’m glad to say the printing has been taken on by Ann and James Watts. Please be ready to offer if help is needed to deliver the magazine or in its production. Also, this might be a good time to see if we can build up our circulation. Ask your friends and neighbours if they would like to receive a quality magazine at only 30p a copy or £3 for eleven - a whole year’s output. If the magazine is worth it, it deserves a wide circulation and, if it isn’t, we might as well shut up shop. Roger.

## From the Registers

### Baptisms:

4th December  
8<sup>th</sup> January

Nancy Mary Vedat  
Lorraine Olivia Newby

Kings Hill  
Charles Drive

### Wedding Blessing:

28<sup>th</sup> December

Christopher & Mary Brockwell

St Michael's

30<sup>th</sup> November  
2<sup>nd</sup> December

Jean Johnson (83)  
Douglas Martin (84)

Kent Road  
Meadow Crescent

### Church Flowers- A Personal Thank You

Over the past year or so three stalwart members of the Church Flower Guild have retired after many years of ensuring that there are always fresh flowers in St Michael's Church. Jo Martin, Shirley Houlan and Pam Fowler never failed to take their turn both at weekends and festivals, providing not only their flowers but also their valuable time, week in week out. St Michael's is lucky to have such a loyal generous group of ladies. Long may it continue.

Margaret Guest.



### Thank You From the Church Army

The Church Army thanks us for the £40 we raised last year. If you would like to know more about the Church Army or have a collection box, please speak to our representative Gillian Feraday. Church army magazines and

prayer letters are available to help yourself to at the back of the two churches. There is also a website [www.churcharmy.org.uk](http://www.churcharmy.org.uk)

Church Hall Draw: £5 to Gill Bogg, on her birthday, as it happens, drawn by Di Maxwell.

St John's Draw (November): £25 to 59 Mrs Brown & £10 each to 71 Mrs Fennemore & 161 Mrs Rogers.

(December): £5 each to 49 Mrs Smith, 51 Mrs Warman, 102 Mrs Shaw & Mrs Botten – drawn by Joyce Heighes.

### Classic Poetry

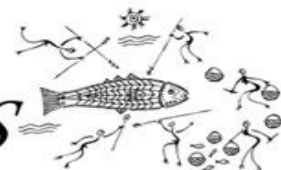
Mary had a metal cow.  
She milked it with a spanner.  
The milk came out in shilling tins  
With little ones a tanner!



# TIME

A  
N  
D

# TIDES



### *A local history and community arts project*

Money has been awarded recently by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Medway Council to run a local history and arts project focussing on the villages of Cuxton, High Halstow and Upnor and anyone with an interest in the area. The project is called Time and Tides and offers a chance for local communities to research their local history and take part in arts and drama activities. There are many opportunities for the whole community to be involved with projects which will be run for primary school children, teenagers, and adults. Three local primary schools are in process of joining the project and the pupils will follow local history learning workshops, enjoy a trip to Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, visit the Rochester Guildhall Museum and create a piece of artwork in response to their local history findings. For adults there will be up to 12 free local history workshops comprising talks, visits to local museums, history walks, formal local history learning workshops, oral history interviews, a chance to undertake real research using local archives, and anything else that interests people who take part. For teenagers there will be opportunities to take part in verbatim theatre, to make a heritage documentary DVD and to create a website for the project.

All of this needs you! The first sessions will be taster events held in Cuxton, High Halstow and Upnor. Come along and see items from the Rochester Guildhall Museum, handle archive documents, see information about the project, sign up for things that interest you and meet representatives of local organisations in the village. The sessions will operate on a drop-in basis.

For more information or to book free space for your organisation please contact Nicola at the ICON Theatre in Chatham on 01634 813 179 or email [Nicola@icontheatre.org.uk](mailto:Nicola@icontheatre.org.uk)



### Halling WI

GOODBYE 2011 At our December meeting we had a cosy Christmas party and we entertained ourselves as we are now so few. The company was great, we played parlour games, no. not musical chairs, most of us are not quick enough for that, but we did have musical parcel and one of our guests ended up with Rudolf's carrot. We then reminisced as to what we did at Christmas when we were kids, this caused a lot of laughter. I was the slaughterer's assistant, from the time I was able to hold a torch. The week before Christmas my dad and I went from rabbit hutch to chicken shed all around Wouldham, dad knocking off many a Christmas dinner. I learnt all my butchery skills from my dad. The worst culprit we had to deal with was a very big angry goose "we'll have to knock him out first" dad said, duly hitting him very hard with a bottle. You couldn't blame the bird being mad when he was about to be decapitated. That goose was the skinniest bird I have ever seen when it was undressed but the gravy was lovely. Lily Hesketh's memory was the funniest. Lily lived in a 2 up 2 down house with the stairs going up the middle, clothes hangers on the wall opposite the stairs for the coats to hang on. The family pig was slaughtered at Christmas, so the coats were thrown onto the sofa in the front room and the dissected pig was splayed out on the coat pegs at the bottom of the stairs, trotters on all four corners, the head hanging down the back like a hood. Poor Lily was too scared to go by the corpse to go to bed

,and too scared to come by it in the morning. Her tale made us all laugh, but that is the kind of things we did in the old days. We then had a lovely supper prepared by our hard working committee, a good time was had by all, but we didn't sing any carols, but-----

Halling W.I. were hostesses for the Malling District Carol service which was held at the very beginning of December. So I arranged it as an Advent carol service. St John's was duly decorated with holly ivy and about 200 tea lights, Ann Heasman in charge of lighting and "putting out", no mean task. All nine institutes in the district took part. Some of our ladies weren't used to reading in such a large building. Roger welcomed everyone. Almost 100 members attended. East Malling's new institute sang two carols and I plucked up courage and sang a solo for Halling's contribution. "Light a Candle in your Window" made some of our Larkfield ladies cry. Mince pies and tea were served after the service by Betty Head and her little helpers and each member present were given a small candle to light in their widows. The retiring collection helped to cut the church's ever growing debt, if only slightly. All in all I was very pleased with the outcome and even though I say it myself, it was the best Christmas carol service I attended in 2011 especially when some of our visitors said what a lovely welcoming church we have.

WELCOME 2012 HAPPY NEW YEAR. Phyllis.

### **Nature Notes November 2011**

When I am in the fields or woods I like to take time to gaze at the beauty around me so I have chosen the following poem.

#### ***"Leisure" by W H Davies***

What is this life, if full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like stars at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.

On the first day of the month, early greyness gives way to sunshine and blue skies patterned with billowing white and grey clouds. We drive to Larkfield and the trees along the way display their beautiful colours in the sunshine. In the afternoon we take Murphy to Bluewater where I view the scene in golden sunlight and clear skies. Shrubs, green and red, are reflected in the rippling water of the lake where the fountain sparkles in the bright light. By the time we are coming home the sun is beginning to set and the temperatures are such that it feels like late Summer. As the light fades the trees stand still as statues. Southerly winds continue to blow bringing mild weather. In the afternoon of 3<sup>rd</sup>, I take Murphy to the river where, along the verges, I see clover, mallow and yellow crucifers. The river is low so the mud flats are exposed. Gulls fly across them. The sky and water are grey but the air is warm. Heavy rain falls in the evening. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, I take the opportunity to cut the grass in the back garden. On 6<sup>th</sup> as I walk through the churchyard, I notice that the ash trees are bare. The 7<sup>th</sup> is a dull, damp day but it is not really cold. I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater and still see a few flowers, clover, hawkweed small umbellifers and lucerne. The skies are grey but the bright leaves light up the scene. Some trees have lost at least half their leaves. There is some light drizzle in the afternoon and evening. The next morning, which is grey, I walk with a friend and her dog to Bush. A few bristly ox tongue and hawkweed flowers bloom along leaf-strewn path. Again, there is no sun but the beauty of the leaves lights up the woodland. Drizzle falls as I drive home and it continues for the rest of the day. The sun shines brightly during the afternoon of 9<sup>th</sup> and the temperature reaches 15 degrees C. The grass in the back garden is bright green and looks beautiful. The weather remains very mild and as I listen to birdsong, I hope the birds are not becoming confused and beginning to breed. The morning of 11<sup>th</sup> is grey, misty and damp. I can just see the electricity pylons standing tall and still. I hear the solitary song of a robin and watch a bird as it flies very high overhead. A light breeze stirs the leaves of the jasmine the leaves of which are gradually changing colour. The early morning of 13<sup>th</sup> is grey but eventually, as I watch the sky, the golden sun rises over the hill and the sky becomes a pale blue. This is Remembrance Sunday and is unusually mild. After church, we walk Murphy by the river which is low and where gulls congregate on the mud flats. A light breeze blows and the sun beams into our faces. It feels almost like Spring. The next day I walk with Murphy in Cobtree Manor Park where large areas of grass are carpeted with yellow and brown leaves. Many trees are almost bare. On 15<sup>th</sup>, the sun rises over Bluebell Hill to light up the pale blue sky. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy by which time, the North West winds drive

clouds across the sky but the sun continues to shine. The trees bear fewer leaves but there is still a wealth of beauty. Tiny catkins have formed on hazel twigs. After a grey day, the sun shines on 17<sup>th</sup> and the temperatures are mild. Southerly winds drive billowing clouds across the blue while out in the garden, I see a dragonfly hovering over the edge of the patio wall and later large bumble bee flies in front of me. The next day at Bluewater, I watched two large crows foraging in the grass. On 20<sup>th</sup>, the sun breaks through the mist and skies clear. The top of the conifer by the garden pond is covered with glistening spiders' webs which look beautiful in the sunlight. Later in the day as the sun sets the sky is tinged with pink which spreads like a blanket. Grey skies and fog dominate the 21<sup>st</sup>. The next day the garden has fallen silent as the fog covers trees and shrubs, hills and the river, while I listen to the lone song of a robin. While at Bluewater, I see almond blossom which blooms on bare twigs but when I look closely, I see new buds almost ready to burst into leaf. A grey heron flies over the rippling water. Its movements are so graceful. A light drizzle falls as darkness descends. On 23<sup>rd</sup>, the sun shines from pale blue skies after I've watched it rise over the hill. A blackbird forages by the pond, chaffinches peck seed from the patio wall and tits feed on the nuts. The temperatures remain above what they would normally be for this time of year. On the morning of the next day, when westerly winds drive billowing clouds across the sky I watch a pair of magpies as they settle in the bare branches of a sycamore tree. Pigeons fly purposely across the sky. Later in the morning we drive to Bluewater where I walk round the lake with Murphy. It is beautiful as bright sunshine casts long shadows of me across the grass. I watch a kestrel hovering near the chalk cliffs as it looks for food. Yellow and brown oak leaves cling to their twigs and chattering magpies can be heard within the trees near the lake late the next night; I go into the garden to check on noises. I look up into the sky and see beautiful stars something I've not seen so clearly for a long time. The morning of 27<sup>th</sup> is grey. I go out into the garden and watch a small, white feather spiral to the ground. I wake upon 28<sup>th</sup> to see frost on the grass, quite a shock to the system after so much mild weather. The 29<sup>th</sup> is mild. As I walk with Murphy, I watch leaves scurrying across the grass as a strong wind blows. The final day of the month sees blue skies feathered with white cloud and the sun shines brightly across the lake where coots glide on mirror smooth water. and where shrubs and trees are reflected. Oaks display leaves of brown and yellow, willows display leaves of pale green and yellow. The sun beams down on us and I feel the warmth on my face. The afternoon remains clear and bright until mid-afternoon, when the sun dips down behind the trees.



## Nature Notes December 2011

I have chosen "The Lamb" from "Songs of Innocence" by William Blake for I feel it is apt for remembering the birth of Jesus Christ the true meaning of Christmas.

Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?  
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing, woolly bright,  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice?  
Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb I'll tell thee;  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb.  
He is meek and he is mild;  
He became a little child.  
I, a child, and thou a lamb,  
We are called by His name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

The morning of 1<sup>st</sup> is damp and mild for the time of year. There are a few glimpses of the sun later in the morning and birds sing. Much needed rain falls in the afternoon. A misty moon hangs in the sky once darkness has fallen. The next day, the sun shines brightly from a clear blue sky as I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater. The wet grass sparkles like diamonds in the sun's golden light and the mirror smooth water in the lake shines brightly. Young oak trees still bear their Autumn colours. On 3<sup>rd</sup> I watch the sun rise over the hill but the skies are not clear blue for grey clouds drift across from the west but no rain falls. I walk to the village then return through Six Acre Wood where I see fresh cow parsley plants which have emerged through ivy plants and Autumn leaves. At the end of the path, I gaze across the valley where, in Mill Hill Wood, the trees are bare. Brown and yellow leaves strew the paths in Mays Wood. I cross Church Fields where scarlet hips and haws and pink spindle berries hang on their delicate twigs. The 5<sup>th</sup> is a cold day with penetrating north winds. Yellow willow leaves lie on the grassy path near the lake at Bluewater and a pied wagtail hops ahead of us. The sun, though pale, lights up the water and the few leaves left on the trees. As the light fades in the evening, the bare branches are black against the pale sky. The following day I watch a gull flying high in the morning sky across which clouds drift from the west. The sun shines on the frost covered areas of Cobtree Manor Park where I walk with Murphy. Red berries glow on various trees and shrubs. Leaves strew the paths. More cloud envelops the sky in the afternoon and the air remains cold. In the evening the skies clear but soon the moon is ringed by cloud as it casts its light across the earth. On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> I gaze up at the sky across which stretch herring bone clouds. I watch a pair of collared doves pecking seed from the patio wall. In the garden, the black currant sage is in flower, winter heathers and elephants ears are in bloom. The 8<sup>th</sup> is wet and windy. In the early hours of 9<sup>th</sup> there has been a frost and the air is very cold but the sun shines brightly. Round the lake at Bluewater while with Murphy, I enjoy the lingering colours of

leaves and the golden willow branches some of which still bear pale green and yellow leaves while almond blossom brings a feeling of spring although that season feels far away. The grass is covered in frost the next day as I watch the glow of the sun before it rises over the hill. The skies are a clear pale blue as the sun lights up the day. I walk across to the church hall and see carpets of frost on the churchyard grass where the sun has not penetrated. The afternoon remains bright until the sun sets behind the trees which stand still as statues. I can hear the rooks as they fly home to roost. There have been strong winds and heavy rain in the night of the 12<sup>th</sup> but by the next morning the sun which is rising in the east brings its golden glow to the sky. As I walk to the village, I watch leaves scurrying across the pavements driven by quite strong south westerly winds. In the afternoon of 14<sup>th</sup>, I walk along Pilgrims Road and the sun, low in the sky, beams into my face. Old mans beard straddles the hedges of bramble and ivy. In the evening, the moon shines high in the sky. The next day we visit Bluewater. The skies are a clear blue from which golden light shines and sharp west winds blow. Most of the trees are bare but the almond blossom blooms. A gull hovers high in the sky where vapour from four planes streams across the blue. The 16<sup>th</sup> is wet with a mixture of rain and sleet and there is a light covering of snow on the hills. Before I draw back the curtains the next morning, I hear the "pinking" of blackbirds on the embankment. It is cold after frost with a North West wind. In the afternoon I hear the Spring song of a great tit. Sparkling frost covers the grass covers the grass on the early morning of 19<sup>th</sup>. On the evening of 20<sup>th</sup> I'm aware of rooks calling raucously as they fly home to roost. Rain has fallen during the night of 20<sup>th</sup> and the following morning is damp and rather grey. This is the shortest day so we can look forward to lengthening days. As the rooks return on the next evening, the sun, which has set, leaves a golden glow in the western sky. Tall sycamores stand dark and still against it. Two satellites are bright in the sky. The 23<sup>rd</sup> is mild, grey and damp but the 24<sup>th</sup> brings some welcome sunshine. As I walk to church for the

Christingle service I hear the cheerful song of a robin. Christmas Day is mild, grey and cheerless. Birds come to feed. The next day the skies are grey with just a few glimpses of brightness. Birds are singing because it is so mild and bulbs have sent fresh leaves through the soil in various pots. Two daffodil plants bear buds, hyacinths are in bloom and a primrose is in flower in the front garden. At mid-day, I walk near the river with Murphy and the water is high. A chilly wind blows off the rippling water where gulls hover. The skies are rather grey but there is some brightness before the sun sets. There are grey skies on 27<sup>th</sup>. Squirrels come to the feeders while a few tits look on from the holly and lilac branches. In the afternoon, which remains overcast, I walk up the path by the church, across Church Fields where I meet folk with their dogs and into Mays Wood. There is no sound except my footsteps along the leaf strewn and muddy paths. I gaze across Dean Valley where I see sheep

grazing, and then turn towards another path. Two catkins have burst into flower on the hazel tree. I make my way down to Purty's Shaw, take the path along the edge of the field to Six Acre Wood. The river is high and mirror smooth which I view from the churchyard before making my way home. The light is fading fast. The sun shines on 28<sup>th</sup> as I watch squirrels feeding on the bird seed. We have bought a squirrel free nut feeder but the birds won't use it. Towards sunset, the skies are clear while a few white clouds become salmon pink. A crescent moon shines in the starlit sky. Heavy rain falls in the evening of 30<sup>th</sup>. The 31<sup>st</sup> is another grey, mild day. I walk round the lake at Bluewater with Murphy and I see snowdrops on the banks. A west wind ripples the water and drives billowing grey clouds across the sky. A pied wagtail hops ahead of us. Eventually, darkness falls and we bid farewell to another year. Elizabeth Summers.

### News from Cuxton Infant School

Dear Friends of our School,

A happy new year to you all. We hope it is a healthy and peaceful one. We had a very busy month of December in school, with several performances of our plays which we arranged differently this year owing to our growing number of children. We were therefore sadly unable to entertain visitors to our plays this year. However, children and parents had a lovely time. Year R performed a fabulous Nativity scene. They sang well and said their words very loudly! Year One gave us a Winter Wonderland treat of songs, rhymes, dancing and acting. Lastly Year Two read nine lessons very confidently and sang beautifully. We were proud of them all. Our cook produced a delicious Christmas lunch, enjoyed by all and 140 children ate hungrily whilst wearing paper hats and pulling crackers! The children then partied in classrooms, playing party games and waiting for that special visitor clad in red. We now look forward to a pantomime at the beginning of February, which has been paid for by everyone's generosity at the school's Christmas bazaar, run by the Friends of Cuxton who continue to work so hard in raising money for both schools. We are extremely grateful to them for their continued support.

We now have a busy term ahead, class assemblies, parents evenings, workshops and continued monitoring of teaching and learning. Sandra Jones, Headteacher.



Cuxton WI  
December. We tried something different this year. Pat had asked at the November meeting if members would be kind enough to just bring a small plate of either savoury or sweet things to eat at our party. We all wondered what the reaction would be from members as in previous years the committee had provided the food etc. which worked out quite expensive and time consuming. This year they elected to bring in drinks, table decorations crackers etc. and put out a table for the food. Did I say a table? Members were simply wonderful and in the end we had to use three long tables for the

savouries and a long one for the "Puds". Nobody took any notice of Pat's request and instead came laden with sandwiches, quiches, scones, crudités, any manner of imaginative goodies. And then we came on to the sweets: trifles, Nanaimos, apple spiced squares even strawberries in chocolate! We were very glad to sit down after that and listen to the beautiful voice of Sarah Eve who entertained us with a selection of Christmas melodies.

Then it was time for mince pies and coffee, the results of the table quiz and the raffle. We invited Maureen to cut the cake which was delicious and made and iced by Joan What a lovely evening and

with everyone making a contribution it really showed the true spirit of our WI  
It has been a good year. Pat has grown in confidence and is an excellent President and she is well supported by an enthusiastic committee. The various clubs are all doing well, even my walking group manage to forget the aches and pains for a while and manage a 2 hour walk each month, and the craft, painting, poetry, drama etc. are all well attended.

January. It was a good start to the New Year as this time last year we were all staring at a snowbound landscape and having to cancel the meeting. This is one reason why we do not engage a speaker for this month but entertain ourselves. Thirty three brave souls came and I think we all enjoyed ourselves. There was the usual business session and we heard about several things that are happening this year. Home Economics days are always something to look forward to and this year there will be a demonstration of Ikebana! and talks about Knole House and a demonstration of cup cake making. We also heard about the Icon Theatre group who are hoping to come to Cuxton in January or February to show items from the museum and talk about local history. We heard that our district conference along with possibly

other meetings will now be planned to take place before the dark evenings appear in October, This seems a good idea as none of us are getting younger while traffic is getting heavier and it will be nicer and safer to travel in the daylight. After all this it was time for a cuppa and a good long look at our craft display – we really have some very talented ladies in Cuxton and their works were justly admired. There were homemade cards, a beautiful quilt, china articles all hand painted, watercolour pictures, knitted toys and many more. We also had unearthed some of the scrapbooks which record events of the past and present of the WI and members found these really interesting particularly the newer members who were enjoying all the antics we got up to in our younger days. Several of the Poetry group then read some of their poems and we concluded with a simple quiz - at least I said it was simple but nobody seemed to believe me! A very happy evening to start the New Year.

Our next meeting is on Thursday February 2nd at 7 30 pm at the Church Hall. The speaker will be telling us about the History of the London Coffee Houses. Do feel free to join us if you would like to, you will always be welcome. Sheila.

#### The Moped and the Paraclete – Epiphany 1 2012

Genesis 1 vv 1-5 p3, Psalm 29, Acts 19 vv 1-7 p1115, Mark 1 vv 4-11 p1002

You've heard of the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*? Well this address is called *The Moped and the Paraclete*. Cast your mind back to the year 1970. You're a disaffected teenager. You live on a rundown post War housing development. The old people go on about the community spirit in the old slums and the way they came through the blitz, and how all that disappeared when they built these spanking new tower blocks in the 1960s. Only they're not so spanking new anymore. A combination of vandalism, poor workmanship and untried new materials have left families besieged in rotten flats surrounded by litter-strewn, crime- infested, graffiti-disfigured communal areas. You've left school at 15 with no qualifications and the days of full employment are rapidly drawing to an end. You're heading for a dead end job or a life on the dole. Everyone went on about the sixties as a time of liberation and new ideas in music and on the fashion scene, but the stars of ten years ago are either dead (of drugs suicide or murder) or they've sold out and turned commercial. And the fashion! Does anyone remember seventies fashion? At school you were told about Great Britain, but the empire's going, going, gone and some people are saying it's more something to be ashamed of than to be proud about. If Britain was once the workshop of the world, it isn't going to be for much longer. All the cheap stuff is made in Hong Kong or Taiwan and the decent stuff comes from Germany or Japan, the countries that lost the War.

So you're pretty fed up and you hang around the streets mostly bored and occasionally getting into trouble just to relieve the monotony. Then this new detached youth worker arrives on the estate. His name is John and he's a bit weird, but he's cool really. He tells the kids something's going to happen, something big and they've got to be ready for it when it comes. People listen. When word gets out that he's chilling in the park, they all hang out with him. You go down to find out what it's all about. You're going on a quest. He might look like a rocker with his old leather coat and his greasy long hair, but he's done a deal with a metal dealer for twenty scrap mopeds. He says you're going to do them up and embark on an adventure. This could be your way out, but you've got to be ready.

There's only 20 mopeds. The younger kids have got to go back to school. The more conventional boys and girls turn their backs on the project and go and get jobs. The Mummy's boys won't take a chance. So there's just 30 of you left and 20 mopeds to do up for the quest.

First you've got to fetch them from the scrap yard and scrap is pretty much what they are. None of them runs. In those days mopeds had to have pedals as well as motors, but it's harder work riding them than pushing them. So it takes a real effort to get the bikes to John's workshop and ten boys drop out the first day. They were up for a laugh, but they didn't reckon it was going to be hard work. The 20 of you left slave like nobody's business under John's direction. You strip the mopeds down to their constituent parts. Every bit is cleaned, repaired, or replaced if necessary, greased and reassembled. While you work, you talk. John's really wise and he tells you lads what's what about a lot of things. A lot of what he says is the same as what your dad and your teachers have been telling you, but it comes better from him. You feel better about yourself because you're achieving something really worthwhile. Eventually you have 20 gleaming, perfect mopeds. They still don't run. They're a bit easier to push or pedal, but you can't start the engines yet. John won't let you. You can't afford the petrol. He says you've all got to wait for his mate Josh who is the real business. When Josh comes, you'll be cooking with gas. Till then, it's clean, polish and pedal round the yard and you start to wonder whether the quest is ever going to take off.

Then Josh comes, pushing his own immaculate machine up the road. John looks out of the workshop and shouts, "There he is". You all rush out. Josh says to John, "Just check over my machine, would you?" John says, "What me, check your machine?" Josh, "Says, yep. I want you to do the same for me as you've done for these lads." So John gives Josh's machine the once-over and Josh pushes his moped into the petrol station and fills up. Josh pays the petrol pump attendant for all of you and you all fill up and for the first time you start your engines. Every cleaned gleaming machine starts the first time and you're off.

John stays behind, but you follow Josh out on to the open road. You follow your quest and what adventures you have. You see new places, new people, new things. You're free. You're gone for months. You find you can do things you never knew you could do. You make plenty of mistakes, but Josh is always there for you. You think it's going on for ever. Whenever you run out of fuel, Josh tops up your tank. You travel thousands of miles and it's just amazing. You stop caring about the object of the quest. The journey is just so awesome.

Then one day, you're devastated. Josh tells you he's got to go. He'll never forget you. You'll never forget him. He gives you his credit card (which had only just been invented in 1970) and tells you you can have as much petrol as you need. It's up to you now. You've got wheels. You're free. You can go on holiday. You can get a job. You can visit people. You can fetch and carry. Instead of hanging about on the estate getting bored and making mischief, you will be a useful member of society, a giver, not just a taker. You can make a contribution. You've got wheels. You can use them to do some good in the world. Indeed you can do more than Josh ever did, because there are 20 of you and you can pass on the good news. You can tell other people, recruit them into the Josh movement. Give them Josh's credit card. He won't mind. He wants you to do it. They can be set free too, given wheels, become givers, not just takers, and they can recruit others too and so can those others and the movement will spread across the whole world because the spirit Josh freely gives out sets them free to serve the whole world. And not to forget the quest. The journey is awesome, but the end is spectacular. Josh says he can't tell you what it's like now, but you will see him again and then you'll really know what it's all about. Just do what he did, what he told you to do. He's already given you everything you need – a set of wheels and a tiger in your tank. Just do it. And they did and that's why we're here and it's our turn now.



#### Max's Tail Piece

Master isn't always keen on taking me places. Not everybody enjoys my irrepressible *joie de vivre*. Back in the Summer, when I was taken out to lunch at one of his old friend's house, the 15 year old cat suddenly discovered that it could still climb trees, the younger cat disappeared into the bedroom, and I got green paint all down my front from sticking my head through the cat flap when the door had just been painted. So it was with some trepidation that Master took me to visit another old friend in Reading. However, it was take me or not go at all and his friends said they would be pleased to see me. Master said it was appropriate that a dog's first ever trip outside Kent should be to BARKshire. It was a lovely ride in the car. I've always liked car riding since I was first brought home with Mummy and Master when I was just six weeks old. Master's friends have a lovely big house and a nice enclosed garden. So they cat was turned out into another part of the house and I was allowed my freedom in the supposedly secure grounds. I was having a lovely time exploring. So they left me alone until Master noticed that the garden was empty. Where was I? How could I possibly have got out? Well, the answer is that I'm thinner than I look and I'd squeezed between the railings. He found me just outside. So my exploration of Reading was postponed till after dinner when I was taken round the grounds of the university on my lead – which was actually very pleasant. These are the same grounds in which my mad master swam across the lake to rescue a child's toy, but that was some years ago. He's too old for that sort of thing now. Max, the Rectory Spaniel.