

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton			
5 th July Trinity 5	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv 1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008	
12 th July Trinity 6	9.30 Holy Communion	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008	
19 th July Trinity 7	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP	
	9.30 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 23 vv 1-6 p782 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174 Mark 6 vv 30-56 p1009	
26 th July Trinity 8	9.30 Holy Communion	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069	
2 nd August Trinity 9	9.30 Family Communion	Exodus 16 vv 1-15 p73 Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070	
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling			
5 th July Trinity 5	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Judges 14 vv 1-20 p257 Luke 18 vv 1-14 p1052	
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Ezekiel 2 vv 1-5 p831 II Corinthians 12 vv 1-10 p1165 Mark 6 vv 1-13 p1008	
12 th July Trinity 6	11.00 Holy Communion	Amos 7 vv 7-15 p922 Ephesians 1 vv 1-14 p1173 Mark 6 vv 14-29 p1008	
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Job 4 v 1 & 5 vv 6-27 pp 511 and 512 Romans 15 vv 14-29 p1141	
19 th July Trinity 7	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Jeremiah 23 vv 1-6 p782 Ephesians 2 vv 11-22 p1174 Mark 6 vv 30-56 p1009	
26 th July Trinity 8	11.00 Holy Communion	II Kings 4 vv 42-44 p372 Ephesians 3 vv 14-21 p1175 John 6 vv 1-21 p1069	
2 nd August Trinity 9	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Job 28 vv 1-28 p529 Luke 12 vv 13-21 p1045	
	11.00 Holy Communion	Exodus 16 vv 1-15 p73 Ephesians 4 vv 1-16 p1175 John 6 vv 24-35 p1070	
Holy Communion Wednesdays 9.30 am @ St Michael's		Holy Communion Thursdays 9.30 am @ St John's	
1 st July	Genesis 21 vv 5-20 Matthew 8 vv 28-34	2 nd July	Genesis 22 vv 1-19 Matthew 9 vv 1-8
8 th July	Genesis 41 v55- 57 and 42 Matthew 10 vv 1-7	9 th July	Genesis 44 v18 – 45 v5 Matthew 10 vv 7-15
15 th July S Swithun	Exodus 3 vv 1-12 Matthew 11 vv 25-27	16 th July	Exodus 3 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 28-30
22 nd July S Mary Magdalene	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 II Corinthians 5 vv 14-17 John 20 vv 1018	23 rd July	Exodus 19 vv 1-20 Matthew 13 vv 10-17
29 th July	Exodus 34 vv 29-35 Matthew 13 vv 44-46	30 th July	Exodus 40 vv 16-38 Matthew 13 vv 47-53

Copy Date August: 10th July 8.30am Rectory.



Being Different

In the early days, it was special to be a Christian. Indeed, at first in Jerusalem, the Christians were always in the Temple or in one another's houses, worshipping

and breaking bread together. They were attentive to the apostles' preaching. Miracles were wrought. They even pooled their goods and money. Outsiders were both in awe of the Christian community and strangely drawn to it, as people are to God. (This tension may lead people

to faith, but it also arouses in many others, not indifference, but hatred, of Christ and of His followers and of all that they stand for.) That initial excitement and closeness couldn't last, however, because the numbers grew so rapidly and, as early as Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira attempted to defraud the Church and were buried in the same grave.

Even so, it was still special to be a Christian. The early Christians were often despised and sometimes persecuted. Many of them were women, poor people or slaves, and looked down on accordingly by Roman and Greek society. They were misunderstood and traduced. Because they made so much of love, they were accused of sexual immorality by people who didn't know the difference, and the celebration of the Eucharist was mistaken for cannibalism. Sunday was not a day of rest until C4. So Christian people had to get up early for their Sunday Communion and meet together before work. This had the advantage of not drawing the attention of their persecutors. Nevertheless there were many martyrs. Christians were an unpopular minority, scapegoats blamed for all society's woes. When Christians began to articulate their faith, they were sneered at by the "intellectuals" of the day. They gave generously of what they had, not merely for the benefit of their own community, but also for the poor pagans among whom they lived. If you were a Christian in those days, you really meant it. You had put your life on the line. You had joined a despised sect, which alienated you from the culture in which you lived and worked, and demanded that you yield up everything to God, even, if necessary, life itself.

And yet, the Church grew. The blood of the martyrs was said to be the seed of the Church. Those early Christians knew God, Whom to know is eternal life. The Holy Spirit within them bore witness to the truth which is in Christ. Their devotion to Him, their faithfulness even unto death, convinced many more. Gradually, the Roman Empire became Christian, till the Emperor himself was a Christian, official persecution ceased, Christianity was at first permitted and then became the established Church.

And it was no longer special to be a Christian. There was no longer a high cost to being baptised.

On the contrary, it was harder to say you weren't a Christian than to say that you were. Most people just go along with what everybody else thinks. So, once the general population claimed to be Christian, most people complacently followed what had then become the conventional faith. Now it was the pagans, the Jews and the atheists who were different. To our shame, these were the people who were then persecuted. Even in pagan times, Christians had come to be respected for their integrity and honesty and had therefore been appointed to positions where trustworthiness was important, such as the magistracy. Bishops were made magistrates. If you didn't want to stand out as different, if you wanted to get on in life, it made sense to be a Christian. Indeed, ordination as a priest or bishop had become a good career move.

Unsurprisingly, there were many Christians who were worried about this development. How sincere were all these conventional Christians? Did they really know God? Had they truly yielded their life to Him? Was the Church in fact undermined by all these complacent Christians joining up? Christians might be much more numerous than they had been, more prosperous and have a much greater influence on society than previously, when they had been a despised sect, but had they fatally compromised with sin, the world and the devil? Had they forfeited their own salvation and so watered down the Gospel that it had lost its power to save? We are still debating these questions!

One answer, from about the third century AD, was for Christians to separate themselves from the world. They went out into the desert and lived as hermits. They forsook the comforts of civilisation, and the temptations that come with them, and spent their time in prayer and fasting and meditating on the sacred texts. Many of them reported experiencing a powerful relationship with God, by Whose grace they were saved, in tremendous conflicts with the devil. The wisdom of some of them survives to this day in their preserved writings.

It is, however, an odd vocation to be a hermit. Christian faith is community. It is about love for one another. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a perfect unity of love. We dwell in Him and He in

us. We are members of Christ. We are members one of another. The Church is a fellowship, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The rite Jesus commanded His disciples to perform is called Holy Communion. In it, we are one with Him and one with one another. That is why the old saying, *you can be a Christian without going to Church* needs very careful consideration. The Church is not the building. It is the people. Can you really claim to belong to a people with whom you never enjoy fellowship?

Anyway, it was not long before these hermits who had separated themselves from the world mostly concluded that they should not remain isolated, but that they should live together in community. They began to congregate in the same areas to live and pray and study. They evolved rules for living together, sharing the domestic chores, worshipping together and studying together. In due course, they cooperated to care for the poor and the sick, to educate boys (and, much later, girls), and to preach the Gospel both to the Church at home and to heathen lands over the seas. They had become monks and, later, nuns, and, later still, friars. This is what came to be called the *religious life*, living together in community, separated from the world, devoted to worship and other good works. Members of religious orders take lifelong vows, including poverty, chastity and obedience.

For such communities to be effective in building up their members as members of the Body of Christ and to deal with the problems that are bound to arise when people live closely together, wise and effective leadership is essential. The various orders of monks and friars adopt an appropriate Rule, initially drawn up by one of their founding fathers. Those early monks in the Egyptian desert drew up their Rules. When monasticism spread to the West, the Rule of St Benedict was universally adopted. Benedict lived from about 480-544. He began as a hermit in Italy and subsequently founded a number of religious houses. *The great features of this Rule were regularity and good order, rather than austerity, and he laid great emphasis on the value of work* (Daily Express Encyclopaedia).

When the Roman Empire collapsed, to be followed by the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, it was largely the monasteries (following the Rule

of St Benedict) which kept Christian civilisation alive. They were centres of prayer, which upheld the Church and civil society. They were repositories of learning. There were few others who provided education, care of the sick, charity to the poor and hospitality to travellers. They kept the flame burning through very dark times.

We mark St Benedict's Day on July 11th and this year's barbecue in the Rectory Grounds will be a celebration of St Benedict. In addition to the usual programme of good food, fun and fellowship, we'll remember Benedict in a prayer and in a hymn (if we can find a suitable tune for it) as well as the grace before meals.

But what went wrong? Why were the monasteries abolished in England at the end of the Middle Ages and why are we Protestants still ambivalent about them? There are two good answers and one bad one. The bad answer is that Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell wanted their loot. One of the good answers is that the monasteries were abolished because they did not live up to their high calling. Given the vows of obedience the monks took, abbots were very powerful people and some of them were corrupted by power. Some monasteries became very wealthy and succumbed to that love of money which St Paul describes as the root of all evil. As in any community of human beings living together, there were cases of bullying and sexual immorality. It is hard to know how bad things were. Those who wanted to abolish the monasteries gave us their account. Supporters of the monasteries have left us theirs. It is a matter of historical judgment where the truth lies. If, however, monasteries were a good thing that had become corrupted by human sin, what was needed was not suppression, but reform.

There is, however, another better reason for questioning whether monasticism is a good thing or not. If we describe monks and nuns as *religious*, it's a bit like when people describe being ordained as *going into the Church*. The implication seems to be that, in order really to be a Christian, you have to become a priest or a monk or a nun. Even if it doesn't go quite that far, there seems to be the suggestion that somehow there are different classes of Christian – that somehow the clergy and members of religious orders are more special than ordinary Christians, that they are

somehow closer to God, that they make a greater commitment. In a way, this is where we came in. For the first couple of centuries of the Church's existence, every Christian was special. All Christians laid their lives on the line. It was worth it for the joy of knowing Jesus Christ. Then Christianity became ordinary, Christians became complacent and some of those Christians for whom Jesus was special went off into the desert to become hermits or monks.

There are two reasons why this is wrong. One is that all Christians are special. All the baptised are full time members of the Body of Christ. Every one of us who is called to be a Christian is called to yield his or her life entirely to Him. All the baptised are ministers of Christ. All of us constitute a royal priesthood. We are all called to take up our cross daily and to follow Him. We all have the witness of the Holy Spirit that we are the children of God. All Christian people have eternal life. This is our calling and none of us can be complacent in our failure to fulfil our vocation as Christians.

The other reason why it is wrong to think that only the clergy and members of religious orders are special and that the rest of us are just ordinary,

is that there is so much of God's work to be done in the world. We all have talents and gifts and opportunities. The clergy may indeed have gifts and opportunities that lay people do not, but God's work still needs to be done in places where the gifts and opportunities that lay people have are much more useful, such as in places of employment and schools and people's homes and the social and sports clubs they belong to. God's work is far too important to be left to the clergy and members of religious orders. God's work is the work of all the baptised, which almost certainly means you who are reading this.

In conclusion, personally I believe that God does call some people to serve Him in the particular way that members of religious orders serve, just as He calls some Christians to be ordained as bishops, priests and deacons. So come along and celebrate St Benedict with us at our barbecue on 11th July (and, more conventionally, if you like, at our 8.00 am Eucharist at St Michael's). However, never forget that God calls all His people. Every one of us has his or her vocation. Don't worry. God supplies you with the grace you need to do the good works He has prepared for you to walk in. All He asks of you is faith. Roger.

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before thee for all estates of men in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Forthcoming Attractions

July 5th: 6.30 pm St Michael's Evening Service & Reception to mark John Bogg's Silver Jubilee

July 11th: from 6.00 pm *St Benedict's Day Barbecue in Rectory Grounds.

July 16th: 7.00 for 7.30 pm at St Michael's Prayer and Praise for Foodbank/CAP.

September 19th: 7.30 pm Christian Aid Quiz in Cuxton Church Hall.

September 27th: Michaelmas Tea with Tideway in Church Hall

September 29th: 7.30 pm Patronal Festival Eucharist at St Michael's, preacher the Archdeacon.

October 4th: Harvest Festival. Harvest Supper to follow evening service at venue to be announced.

December 12th: 10.00 Christmas Coffee Morning in Church Hall.

December 16th: 12.00 Christmas Parish Lunch in Church Hall.

*The monks at Halling were Benedictine. As we are celebrating their founder's day, this counts as a religious occasion and is exempt from the strictures of the Licensing Act. We shall therefore be able to have music for the first time since 2009.

Please take special note that the Michaelmas Tea with Tideway is 27th September, NOT the 26th, as erroneously stated previously.

Jubilee Hall Hire: Claire Stotesbury

17, Meadow Cresc

244289 Claire-mad@homail.co.uk

From the Registers

Baptisms:

10 th May	Noe Andrew Spicer	Cuxton Marina
24 th May	Mollie Greer Gordon	Larkfield
31 st May	Oliver Matthew Ricardo Huntley	Sundridge Hill
7 th June	Mitchell William Bray	Stanford Way
7 th June	Spencer Kennedy Crayford	Walderslade

Wedding Blessing:

29 th May	Shaun & Jacqueline Fitzgerald	Cuxton
----------------------	-------------------------------	--------

Funerals:

13 th May	Gilbert Frederick Stone de Medewe Everett (96)	Grain
27 th May	Raymond John Knott (91)	Meadow Crescent
8 th June	Norah Bernadette Cogger (96)	Northfleet

Collect for St Benedict

Eternal God, who made Benedict a wise master in the school of your service and a guide to many called into community to follow the rule of Christ: grant that we may put our trust in your love before all else and seek with joy the way of your commandments; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

It Makes You Wonder

A grammar teacher was explaining to his class that, whereas in some languages, such as Russian and Greek, two negatives may effectively reinforce one another, in languages like English and Latin, a double negatively effectively cancels itself out and becomes a positive. So *I didn't never do it* means the same thing as *I did do it sometime or sometimes*. He then went on to add that, however, two positives can never make a negative. "Yeah, right!" was the response from the back of the class!



Christian Aid 2015

The collection for Christian Week this year amounted to £854.28p including £214.48p for the coffee morning. In addition, at the coffee morning, we raised £121.30p for the Nepal earthquake appeal via Christian Aid. Thank you everybody who took part, collectors and donors. By the time you read this, Mary Pitt, Tommy & the Rector will have taken part in the Christian Aid Walk. It is not too late to sponsor them if you wish. Also, don't forget the quiz evening for Christian Aid in the church hall on 19th September. The reason this year's total (so far) is less than previous years is that the street collection in Christian Aid week is getting harder to organise. The people who used to do it are getting older. They may not now be able to do it at all or to go back to houses they have missed. There is also a feeling that people are getting less willing to give. So, please, come forward if you can help with next year's street collection or if you have any alternative ideas so that we can maintain our support for the very important work Christian Aid does.

St Michael's Draw: £10 each to Mrs Morren, Mrs Isaac and Mrs Jones – drawn by David & Thomas Gates.

St John's Draw: £25 to Mrs Hesketh (119), £10 each to Mr Thorne (32) & Mrs Crow (29) – drawn by Mr Wooding.

CHURCH ARMY: Gillian has emptied the Church Army box in St. John's church. It contained £1.69, which she has forwarded to Church Army. Thank you to all who have supported this very worthwhile cause, in whatever form.'

Take Care: If you don't pay your exorcist you can get repossessed.

John Bogg's Silver Jubilee

John Bogg reminds me that at the Scoutana 1995 I mentioned to him that we needed a new organist at St Michael's, Maureen Harrison having just tendered her resignation. John kindly undertook to perform the duties of organist and choirmaster on a temporary basis and everybody is delighted that he is still with us twenty five years later! The anniversary will be marked at a special evening service and reception on **Sunday 5th July at 6.30 pm.** Roger.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS GROUP AT THE BIG LUNCH.

On Sunday 7th June our Fresh Expressions of church group unfurled our banner and set up a marquee at the very popular Cuxton Big Lunch. It was a bright sunny day and drew huge crowds thanks to the excellent organisation of parish councillors Jill Sayer and Kay Hutchfield, backed by Cuxton Parish Council. We held a tombola and children's lucky dip and offered a prayer request box and leaflets about the Christian events that happen in the village. We made a good profit, thanks to the many kind donations we received, for which we are most grateful, but more importantly we were able to promote our inter-denominational Christian group within the community. Thank you to everybody who helped erect and dismantle the marquee and set up the stand and to all who served on the rota for manning (and womaning!) it. Halling Parish Council are holding their Fun Day on 18th July and although another group is holding a tombola, we hope to be making our presence felt again there. Buffy Maisey.

St Benedict's Day Barbecue

11th July 2015 6.00pm

Cuxton Rectory £7.00

Music by

Tuning Fluid

Ukulele Band

Misunderstandings in the News

I've been asked about a couple of current discussions in the media with reference to Christian belief. The first concerned the gender of God! The answer is what we have known for centuries: **There is but one living and true God, ever-lasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (1st Article of Religion).** God is neither male nor female, and certainly not a man or a woman, but infinitely greater than we can understand. There are both male and female metaphors for God in the Bible, but, given that the Bible mostly refers to God as "He" and that Jesus teaches us to call God "Father", it would seem to me somewhat arrogant, and perhaps missing the point, to make a change now in the interests of contemporary gender politics.

The other question concerned whether, given the current rate of apparent decline, the Church of England will survive another generation. The answer is the same as the above. Given the greatness of God, the Church will live forever. Whether or not the Church of England will survive or whether our churches in Cuxton and Halling will survive is another matter. We know that God is faithful, but are we? Roger.

For Further Reading

Having quoted the Thirty Nine Articles on the Trinity above, I thought you might be interested to see what they have to say about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We don't always think about these things as deeply as maybe we should. If you want to read the rest of the Articles, you can find them at the back of your 1662 prayer book or Google them.

II. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man.

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

V. Of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

We Will Remember Them

Last year, when we commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War, we asked for personal stories about the people commemorated on our war memorials. We realised that it would have been better to have undertaken this project earlier. So we are asking now for stories about the people commemorated on our Second World War memorials. If you are prepared to share any information, we shall publish it in this magazine. If there is enough, there might be a separately printed booklet.

Halling War Memorial

James Angus	Ernest Harris	Arthur Osborne
Bertram Ashby	Gordon Holmes	Marjorie Startup
Gordon Bowles	Jack Homewood	William Wretham
Ernest Castle	George Kitney	Frank Wright
Frank Chapman	Eric Martin	

(To start us off, I'm told that Marjorie Startup was a WREN who died of meningitis whilst serving and William Wretham had been a chorister at St John's. Gordon Bowles had been in the St John's Sunday School.)

Cuxton War Memorial

James Alderson	Percy Squires	Brian Wilde
Francis Bethel	Stanley Austin	

Memories of Sunday School

A group of us were talking about the Sunday Schools (now Saints Alive!) which have run in Cuxton and Halling over the years and of which many present day adults must have fond memories. Before my time, Marie Clarke ran the Sunday School at Halling (in the church room, I believe) and the Misses Hanchett ran the one at Cuxton, at first in the old National School and then in the church until the new church hall opened. Since then Jenny Beaney with several other people over the years has maintained the Sunday School in the church hall and Marion Browning and Ann Lucas have both held Sunday School for a time in St John's church. There must be many of you with memories you could share with us. Perhaps you have photographs or other artefacts which you might be prepared to lend for a display or to be copied for a more permanent archive. If so please, tell Jenny Beaney or me. People might also have memories of the uses to which the old National School at Cuxton was put after the council school opened in 1905. I know there was a dancing class held there and that children from Halling School had classes there (walking from Halling, those were the days!). I also think I knew the last person to be educated there. Roger.

Molly Looks Back

(This article takes the place of several of our regular features which are not available this month.)

When Molly was a little girl, she lived right on the edge of town. So she was lucky enough that her father could take her for lots of country walks. On these walks, he introduced her to the more common wildflowers, birds, animals and insects. They also had a garden with flowers and vegetables, chicken and an allotment. In the ordinary things that surround daily life, she was shown, there is beauty and wonder. Molly learned not only their names, but that everything had its place in nature, even horrid things like wasps. Molly would never have deliberately harmed any living thing. She would never hurt or destroy anything. When she herself became a mother, she taught her children the same. In later life, she could never really understand people who seemed to be motivated principally by malice, people who told lies and people who selfishly failed to live up to their responsibilities to their families and friends.

At school and Sunday School, she also learned lots of lovely hymns, which sometimes they sang at home as well. *Each little flower that opens, Each little bird that sings, He made their glowing colours, He made their tiny wings. We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land, But it is fed and watered by God's Almighty hand.* God our Creator and Father, but the hymns she learned to love also taught the story of Jesus. *He came down to earth from heaven Who is God and Lord of all, And His shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall; With the poor and mean and lowly lived on earth our Saviour holy. There is a green hill far away, Without a city wall, Where the dear Lord was crucified, Who died to save us all.* And, of course, *Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!* Some hymns were repeated so often that she got tired of them. And she didn't like dirges. A good strong tune and the right words make a good hymn. When Molly was much older, she welcomed some of the great new hymns then being introduced into our churches. She hadn't much patience with old fuddy-duddies, who dislike anything new, almost on principle. *Shine Jesus shine, Fill this land with the Father's glory. Blaze, Spirit blaze, Set our hearts on fire. Flow, river flow. Flood the nations with grace and mercy, Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light.*

When she was five, Molly went to school. It was really interesting. Not only did she make new friends, there was so much to learn. Some lessons were much more interesting than others and some subjects were quite hard. Some of the teachers took a real interest in their pupils, arranging exciting trips out, which had nothing to do with the curriculum, even to London, when they were older. Education is so much more than learning facts and skills, passing tests and ticking boxes. Education enables you to grow into the person you are meant to be, to express your individuality. When people fulfil their potential, when they become their true selves, not only do they live happier lives, but also they are much more useful members of society. A community is built up of cooperating individuals, not made up of factory fodder, or examination fodder, little producers and consumers, turned out of a common government mould.

All the foregoing sounds ideal, but Molly's life was not all easy. Born just before the Wall Street Crash, she lived through the hardships of the 'thirties and the Second World War, but she did so on the foundations laid above.

As a young married woman, Molly joined the Women's Institute – which celebrated its centenary this year with a royal garden party and the presence of the Queen and the Princess Royal (members themselves) at their Annual Meeting. Moving to a new village, Molly joined the WI for the friendly welcome she received, the speakers, the crafts and the drama. First established in Canada, the WI provides a society for women to meet, to develop their creativity, to become more independent and to acquire the skills they need better to provide for their families and to serve the wider community. Molly would be pleased to know that there are many new younger members joining. The WI also have a good hymn – Jerusalem, strong tune, not too difficult to sing, words celebrating the beauty of nature, and a simple message – one which is so simple that people do not seem to be able to agree what it is. Apart from Jerusalem, however, the WI avoids religious commitment, but Molly found Christian fellowship and support for Christian family life which we all need in the Mothers' Union. Just a reminder of what these things mean to us all.



Tommy's Talking Points

Still having fun. We're enjoying some long walks in the woods now. Master says he ought to allow a little longer time for all the people who want to stop and make a fuss of me. I was especially flattered to be recognised in the woods by my portrait in the magazine, though I have grown a lot since this picture was taken.

Master is always delighted by the way I am always so eager to go to Church. Actually, I should say that he is normally delighted. Sometimes, he doesn't seem very pleased when we are walking through the churchyard to somewhere else and I go bounding up to the church door and won't come back. Generally speaking, however, it does his heart good to see me racing into church with my tail wagging furiously. He even gave a little talk to the children about it, saying that I love going to Church so much because I am happy there. I'm made welcome. There is a great deal of love and joy in the Church. I'm accepted and forgiven. I enjoy a lot of freedom and Master says I will enjoy even more freedom when my character is more fully formed. We walked with a friend through the woods to the Jubilee Hall for tea and Evening Prayer. The sandwiches were nice. So were the sausage rolls. I slept through the service, which was possibly a good thing. We walked home down the road, because the hills in the woods are a bit steep. Master thinks it was a good thing I slept through the service, because I was rather naughty on Ascension Day at St Michael's, winding my lead around his throne and then straining because what was left was too short. He says I shan't be getting that opportunity again until I learn some self-discipline. He also says that, when Max was accused of vandalism when he was a puppy, Master had vehemently denied that he would do any such thing, but that now, having seen what I can do as a springer puppy, he is not so sure that Max was entirely innocent. It's too late now as the person who thought he might have erred and strayed like a lost dog is now probably in heaven.

We were supposed to be meeting Master's friend and travelling to Canterbury to resume walking the North Downs Way, which they had been doing with Max. The weather forecast was terrible, however, and they decided instead to meet at Master's friend's flat in Maida Vale. Master had been wanting to see it for some time, but what about me? He really didn't want to leave me all that time, but how could he take me? He knows that I don't like busy roads and I had never been on public transport. The obvious route would be high speed train to St Pancras and Underground to Maida Vale, but Master thought I would find the tube terrifying. I certainly would have been scared walking along the Euston and Marylebone Roads and there's no direct bus. We could have walked from St Pancras to Maida Vale along the canal towpath, but that's a long way and heavy rain was forecast. Master nearly missed a train once at Paddington, trying to do that route with Max. He didn't know then what he knows now about the Overground.

So he decided that we would walk to Sole Street and get the train to Victoria and then the number 16 bus, which he remembered taking when he lived all those years ago at Willesden Green, something he has in common with another person referred to in this article. It wasn't raining when we went to Sole Street – more what Master called Scotch mist. It was a lovely country walk. Master liked the old photographs of the railway at Sole Street in the olden days. I was very good on the train and other passengers made a lot of fuss of me. I didn't like Victoria. It was raining hard by the time we got there and it was so crowded and busy. The bus was all right, however, apart from the nasty steep stairs which are scary to negotiate when the bus is moving. Again, there were nice people on board. Master got a bit frustrated, complaining that he had forgotten how slow London buses are and that it would have been quicker to walk. Looking at the pouring rain, the crowded pavements and the terrific volumes of traffic, I'm glad we stayed on the bus! Master says he was pleased it rained. Otherwise we'd have cancelled our walk for no reason. No problem finding the flat, which was very nice. My first pub lunch. (Actually I had dog food at the flat. It was the humans who ate food ordered from a menu Master couldn't understand but tasted very nice and drank Japanese beer.) We all had a good time, then walked down to the canal hoping to find a cafe to finish off, but no luck. So back on the bus to Victoria with Master's friend. Victoria really was too much for me this time. So he picked me up and carried me as our train was about to depart. We walked home from Sole Street on a lovely sunny summer's evening, meeting new friends on the way. He thought I might be tired, but, no chance. I still insisted on my evening playtime, even though he could have done with a rest! Tommy.

Nature Notes May 2015

“The Cry of the Children” E B Browning.

The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest
The young fawns are playing in the shadows
The young flowers are blowing toward the west

Go out children from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children as the little thrushes do,
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud to feel your fingers let them through.

On the first day of the month, the sun shines warmly but there is still a gnawing north east wind blowing. In the morning, we drive to Addington and along the route I see May blossom and creamy flowers on the wayfaring tree. In the afternoon I walk with Murphy beneath skies of blue and golden sunshine round the lake at Bluewater. The wind is very cold. I hear young warblers in the reeds. On 4th westerly winds are blowing bringing warmth from bright sunshine. We walk round the lake where all is fresh and green. White clouds drift across the sky. Buttercups raise their golden heads to the heavens. The cowslips are beginning to fade but ox eye daisies are in bud. The afternoon becomes cloudy, but no rain falls until the evening. The 5th is grey with strong westerly winds blowing and billowing clouds march across the sky. Rain falls during the night and the next morning is grey. The afternoon becomes sunny, a respite from the rain. The 7th is warm and sunny. The sun beams down on Church Fields full of golden dandelions and buttercups while one field is beautiful with delicate cow parsley. I walk along the damp footpaths of Mays and Wingate Woods where the trees are dressed in fresh Spring greens. I see a variety of flowers-wood spurge, bugle, ivy, ground ivy, speedwell, sanicle, primroses wood anemones, ramsons, woodruff, may blossom, cow parsley, wild strawberry, herb Robert, violets and flowers of the wayfaring tree. I reach the carpets of bluebells filling the air with their sweet perfume. On 9th, the ash trees at Bluewater are beginning to burst into leaf. On 10th, I hear a chiff chaff's song then the cheerful song of a blackbird. The hawthorns across the railway line are gradually bursting into beautiful creamy flowers. The slender silver birches wave their silver branches of quivering leaves. On 11th I walk with Murphy round the lake at Bluewater. White clouds bowl across the sky. Ox eye daisies and vetch are beginning to bloom and golden buttercups replace the cowslips. The lake ripples in the wind. Sycamores have burst into leaf. The next day I watch a heron fly up river. The evening skies are tinged with salmon pink clouds. The following days are bright with sunlight and birdsong fills the air. By

the 17th a variety of flowers adorn the verges at Bluewater—sanfoin, vetch, buttercups and ox eye daisies. Horse chestnut flowers adorn the trees' branches. Rain falls in the night of 18th then billowing clouds march across the sky the next morning. Eventually the sun shines again but the wind is still strong. Two jays visit the garden. Heavy rain falls during the afternoon of 19th. The 20th is fine with sunshine and westerly winds. The spring green of the trees and the blossoms on the embankment are beautiful. Birdsong fills the air. On 23rd we drive to Bluewater and walk round the lake beneath grey skies of billowing clouds. Winds are chilly and a few drops of rain fall. The afternoon brightens. A jay comes to the feeders in the garden. When I walk along the road on 24th, I see the bittersweet smelling flowers of elder trees. The 27th is a beautiful day. The great tits are feeding their young in the nest box on the front wall. Later, the moon shines brightly in the night sky. The sun shines brightly on 28th as I walk round the lake with Murphy. Ox eye daisies, vetch, sanfoin, adorn the grassy banks and areas among the trees now in full leaf. A clump of meadow cranesbill joins the birdsfoot trefoil and knapweed. I spend some time in the garden enjoying the warmth of the sun. The skies become cloudy in the evening but no rain falls. The morning of 29th is dismal but by the afternoon the sun is shining. The evening skies are clear. The 30th is sunny and warm with birdsong filling the air. I spend some time in the garden then in the afternoon I walk up Pilgrims road where I see garlic mustard along the verges. The green of spring is predominant. Clouds gather in the late afternoon and early evening. Rain falls during the night. The morning of 31st is grey and damp. A pair of jays come into the garden. I walk to church. Along the roadside verges white campion and bladder campion bloom. Large creamy elder flowers adorn the shrubs. The wind strengthens and rain is falling when I walk home and there is a chill in the air. There is some brightness in the afternoon when I see another jay in the garden. Long tailed tits appear and great tits look for food. Light grey clouds drift across the evening sky from the west. Elizabeth Summers.

What Christians Believe

The following is a meditation on the Apostle's Creed, traditionally taught to those who wish to be baptised.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Everything that exists has a Creator. The world did not come into existence by chance. Neither did we. There is a purpose behind the universe. This Creator, Who gives everything its existence, is not a blind, impersonal force, but a loving Father, individually concerned with every person and every part of His creation.

I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.

The mystery of the Godhead is such that the one eternal God exists as three persons, united in love, and manifesting that love to the created world.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

One person of the eternal uncreated Godhead entered our world and became one of us.

Born of the Virgin Mary,

While eternally being the Son of God, Jesus was born and remains a human being just like us.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,

There was nothing illusory about Christ's humanity. He experienced life as we experience it.

Was crucified, died and was buried.

God made human beings in His own image to enjoy eternal life with Him. Humanity rebels against God and we cut ourselves off from the life which is His gift. God therefore endures our death in order to give us the gift of life restored.

He descended to the dead.

There is nowhere His love cannot reach. He even takes the Good News to the "spirits in prison."

On the third day He rose again.

God, goodness and life inevitably win out over the Devil, evil and death.

He ascended into Heaven.

Jesus the Man has opened the way to Heaven to everyone who believes in Him.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

All our prayers reach God through Jesus, Who also Himself prays for us.

And he will come to judge the living and the dead.

This world will come to an end, but Jesus will always be there. We shall have to account to God for what we have done with our lives. We can rely on His mercy to forgive us what we have done wrong.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

God sends His Holy Spirit into the world - the third person of the Holy Trinity. With God's Holy Spirit in us, we are forgiven and sanctified and united in communion with Christ and all who believe in Him on earth and in Heaven. We have the gift of eternal life which is the same thing as the knowledge of God.