

THE

CRAYFISHER

December 2020

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The magazine for the Parish of Cray Valley

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Front Cover Picture: First Frost by Jackie Cook

PARISH LETTER

One of my favourite stories about a school nativity service is of the little boy who wanted to play the part of Joseph. He was very disappointed to be given instead the part of the innkeeper, but he appeared to accept his teacher's decision and got on with his part in the play. However, on the day of the performance, in front of a school hall packed with parents, the boy took his revenge. When Joseph and Mary asked him if there was any room in his inn, he abandoned the script, stood back so that the door to the inn was wide open and said, 'yes there's plenty of room; come on in!'



That might not be the way the familiar story goes but I think the little boy's actions have some things to say to us at Christmas. We all are invited to 'come in' to greet the holy child, born into such very humble surroundings. All will be welcomed to the variety of different services which our churches offer at Christmas as we join together in celebrating the birth of Jesus, the One who comes to save us and bring us joy. There literally is 'room for all' because God welcomes each and every one of us. He does not want anyone to be turned away, because He loves each of us so much. God has shown the depth of that love in His unique gift to us; the gift of His Son, born as one of us, part of a loving human family; the One who was willing ultimately to give his life for us, so that we might share in his life, for ever.

We anticipate the celebration of Jesus' birth, not only because it is a great excuse for a bit of a party, but also because his birth gives us hope. Hope for the future. Hope in the midst of much that seems to be changing all around us. Our Christmas celebrations lead into celebrations of the new year, with a heightened sense of anticipation for all that 2021 might bring. Many will be praying that the next year will be better than the last; others will be going into the New Year with a deep sense of anxiety and uncertainty. However as we approach 2021,

we should remember the wonderful promise which Jesus made to us: 'remember that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time' (Matthew 28, verse 20). Jesus promises to be there with us in whatever it is that life brings; in the happy times and in the sadnesses; in the pain and also in the joy.

At Christmas, God welcomes us all to celebrate the birth of His Son, the One who brings hope to the world. God invites us to come in because He has made sure that there is room for us all.

I wish everyone a very HAPPY & HOLY CHRISTMAS and a peaceful New Year.

Jessie x

READINGS FOR SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

Sun 6th **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

2 Peter 3. 8-15a

GOSPEL Mark 1. 1-8

Sun 13th **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

1 Thessalonians 5. 16-24

GOSPEL John 1. 6-8, 19-28

Sun 20th **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Romans 16. 25-end

GOSPEL Luke 1. 26-38

Sun 27th **FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**

1 John 1

GOSPEL John 21. 19b-end

READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS

- Thur 24th **CHRISTMAS EVE - BETHLEHEM MIDNIGHT MASS**
Isaiah 52. 7-10
Hebrews 1. 1-4
Gospel John 1. 1-14; Luke 2. 1-4 (15-20)
- Fri 25th **CHRISTMAS DAY**
Titus 2. 11-14
GOSPEL Luke 2. 1-14 [15-20]

COLLECTS FOR DECEMBER

- Sun 6th O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever: **Amen**
- Sun 13th O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the minsters and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever: **Amen**
- Sun 20th God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever: **Amen**

Sun 27th Merciful Lord, cast your bright beams of light upon the Church: that, being enlightened by the teaching of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John, we may so walk in the light of your truth that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your incarnate Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever:
Amen

COLLECTS FOR CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE - BETHLEHEM MIDNIGHT MASS – 20.00

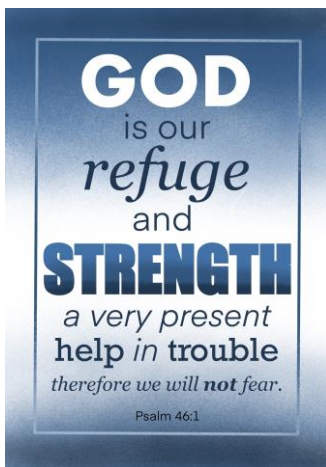
Thur 24th Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your one true light: bring us, who have known the revelation of that light on earth, to see the radiance of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever:
Amen

Fri 25th **CHRISTMAS DAY – 10.00**
Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever:
Amen

SERVICES THROUGHOUT DECEMBER

Tue 1 st	10.00 Midweek Eucharist at St Andrew's
Sun 6 th	10.00 at St Andrew's
Tue 8 th	10.00 Midweek Eucharist at St Mary's
Sun 13 th	10.00 at St Mary's
Tue 15 th	10.00 Midweek Eucharist at St Andrew's
Fri 18 th	17.30 Nine Lessons & Carols on Zoom (link has been sent by email)
Sun 20 th	10.00 at St Andrew's
Tue 22 nd	10.00 Midweek Eucharist at St Andrew Mary's
Thur 24 th	20.00 Bethlehem Midnight Mass at St Andrew's
Fri 25 th	10.00 Christmas Day at St Mary's
Sun 27 th	10.00 at St Mary's

THE DEADLINE FOR THE **JANUARY 2021 ISSUE OF
THE CRAYFISHER IS **WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER** . PLEASE
HAVE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS IN BY THIS DATE –
ANYTHING RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE WILL BE HELD
OVER UNTIL THE NEXT ISSUE**



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COFFEE MORNING AT ST ANDREW'S

On 31st October the usual entertaining Zoom coffee morning meeting took place with 8 attendees and lasting almost 2 hours. Hopefully see you all on 28th November.

Malcolm Hubbard

PARISH PRAYER GROUP

We cannot meet at Muriel's home, but we are still praying for all in need especially at this time.

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

For further details contact Tony Lathey 01689 872742

SOCIAL EVENTS

AT ST ANDREW'S AND ST MARY'S IN 2020

Regretfully, our planned Salvation Army Concert, Dinner and Dance and Christmas Fair will be postponed until further notice.



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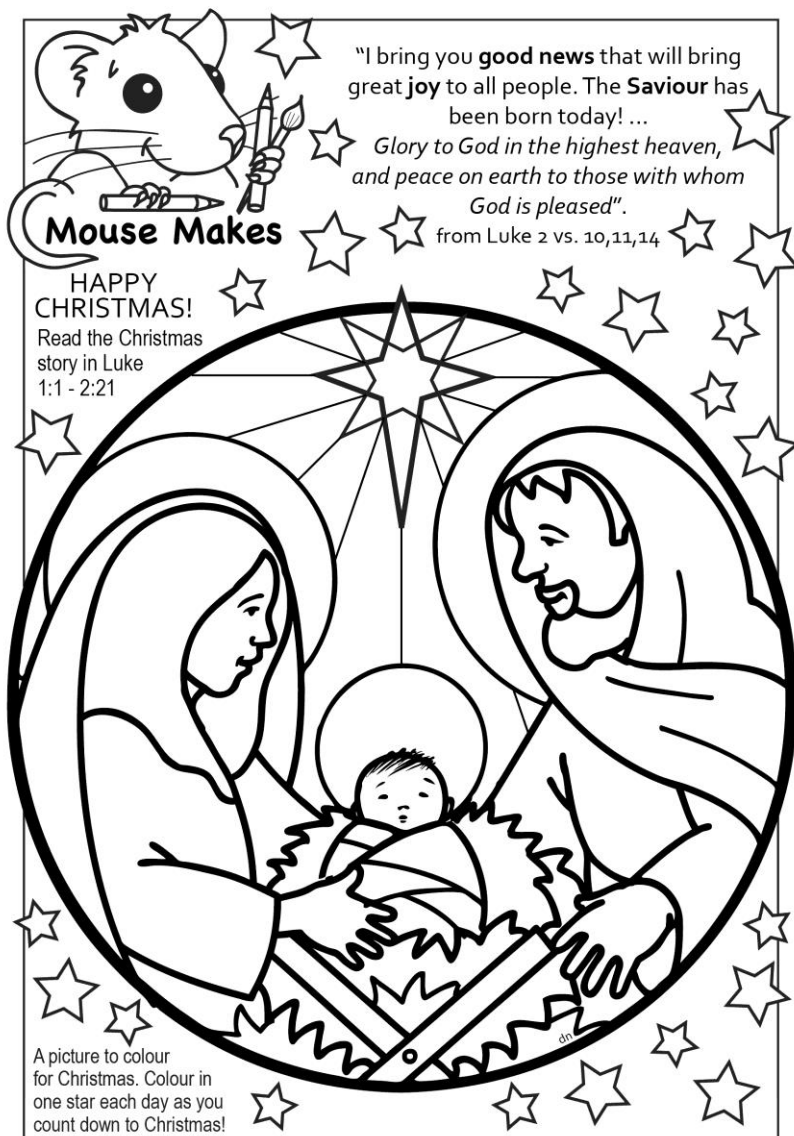
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5	8	4	9	7	6	1	3	2
9	7	6	4	2	3	5	1	8
3	5	1	8	9	7	4	2	6
4	2	8	5	6	1	9	7	3

FOR THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

Here is the solution to last month's sudoku puzzle.



"Nice idea, Amelia, but I don't think that the Angel of the Lord Zooming with the shepherds would have the same dramatic effect."



"I bring you **good news** that will bring great **joy** to all people. The **Saviour** has been born today! ...

*Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom
God is pleased".*

from Luke 2 vs. 10,11,14

**HAPPY
CHRISTMAS!**
Read the Christmas
story in Luke
1:1 - 2:21

A picture to colour
for Christmas. Colour in
one star each day as you
count down to Christmas!

Dec20 © deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

High Days and Holy Days

17th December: Eglantyne Jebb – founder of ‘Save the Children’

Here is a modern-day saint whose compassion and determination has saved literally millions of lives.

Eglantyne did not begin as an obvious ‘mover and shaker’ of people. Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust.

Eglantyne moved to live with her mother in Cambridge, and it would have been so easy to settle for a life of peaceful obscurity. But she was a Christian, and at Oxford she had developed a passion for social concerns, so this compassion now drove her to take action.

She began in 1906 by publishing research on the poverty she’d found in Cambridge.

Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left Cambridge for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The First World War left Eglantyne horrified by the prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary, which even after Armistice meant starvation for millions of civilians, especially children.

And so in 1919 Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy Buxton helped found the ‘Fight the Famine’ Council, which wanted to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.”

She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with Eglantyne’s commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to Save the Children, the new charity just set up by Eglantyne and Dorothy.

Save the Children was officially launched at the Albert Hall in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It was a success, raising £400,000 in that first year alone.

When in the autumn of 1921 Russia was facing famine, Save the Children chartered a cargo ship, the SS Torcello, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 Save the Children had become one of Britain's biggest charities. Eglantyne's Declaration of the Rights of the Child, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations the following year. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.

But ten years of running Save the Children had sapped Eglantyne's fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.

On the best ways for a vicar to disrupt Christmas

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I am sorry I was not alive during that wonderful four-year period when Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas; no Christmas parties, no carol services, no cards to send and no frantic last-minute shopping. That man was a hero.

Planning for Christmas at St James' normally starts on 2nd January. By Easter, the flowers for church have been carefully chosen to be colour coordinated, and the seating plans and table decorations for the Christmas party have been allocated (with nominated reserves in case someone should inconveniently die in the intervening eight months). Long before summer is over, the tree lights have been tested, music for the 9



Lessons and Carols Service has been chosen and the service sheets printed. Way before the dark nights set in, car parking attendants will have been found, those who are to light all the candles will have been rehearsed to perfection, and the brass lectern has had its annual polish.

We do not do spontaneity at St James the Least of All. If ever there was a service when time for something unexpected had to be allowed, its place would be announced in the order of service, how long the unexpected thing would happen for would have been decided by a committee, and who was to be spontaneous would have been allocated on a rota.

But the one person none of these well-meaning, efficient, committed organisers can control is the Rector. You could call it a staff perk.

Carols will (accidentally, of course) be announced in the wrong order; if verse 3 was to be omitted, I announce it will be verse 4. This keeps the organist on his toes while the choir hovers on the point of a collective nervous breakdown. At the Christmas supper, my introductory welcome speech and extensive grace make those in the kitchen wonder if the vegetables being boiled should better be served as thick soup.

I offer the helpful suggestion that the tree, having been installed and decorated in the chancel, may perhaps look better in the sanctuary and I turn all the heating off throughout the season, explaining that it will help the flowers to last. All Services will start five minutes early (was my watch rather fast?) so I can look disapprovingly at those still coming in while we are singing the first carol and making it clear that I think they had spent too long in the pub next door.

And so, we all reach Christmas morning, with 12 months of planning having gone yet again slightly awry, with parishioners exhausted and I exhilarated at the chaos that has been created with such ease. Mr Cromwell, your spirit lives on.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

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POETRY CORNER

I have been asked by members of the congregation if we could have a Poetry Corner. Here is the first one. I hope you like these poems. Please continue to send in your efforts.

Brenda Smith, Editor

Some poems by members of the Croft Poetry Club. We hope you enjoy reading them.

THIS CHRISTMAS WILL BE DIFFERENT

This Christmas will be different:

We cannot say just how:
Maybe with our loved ones,
Maybe alone for now.

Others made a journey
To a place they didn't know.
They huddled in a stable:
Nowhere else to go.

This Christmas will be different:

Back to basics, shall we say.
A time to truly savour
That first Christmas day.

Joyce Ozsvald

CHRISTMAS ACROSTIC 2020

C is for Covid! Is it down the drain at last!
H is 'Hello, Christmas Spirit'. Let's hope it gets here fast.
R is Rave Ups! – or will lockdown come again?
I is Isolating – causing family pain.
S is Supermarkets and the Christmas Fayre.
T is Trust in hospitals so generous with their care.
M is for the Metres rule – safety must come first!
A is Allowing Pantos, laughing till we burst!
S is for our Santa who has had so much to do:
Sanitising reindeer hooves and making masks for you.

Jacky Cook

SHORT-SIGHTED GABRIEL

‘I’ve been chosen to play Angel Gabriel,’ said my sister,

‘I was picked from all the school’s classes.

‘That’s nice,’ said Mum who was getting our tea

‘but do Angel Gabriels wear glasses?’

My sister got huffy: ‘Girls with glasses all take them off –

Miss James will look after them all,

she said I have a strong carrying voice
which can be heard at the back of the hall.’

My sister conscientiously learnt her lines,

‘From heaven above to earth I come –

(with her glasses on and her hands held high)
to bring good news to everyone.’

Preparations were made for the Nativity play

and white dresses and tinsel got ready
and the box representing ‘heaven above’
was nailed to the stage to be ready.

The curtains parted, the audience hushed.

Miss James didn’t notice the danger
for the short-sighted archangel missed her step
and plummeted straight in the manger!

Christine Pope

I THINK ITS NEARLY CHRISTMAS

I think its nearly Christmas
But I'm not entirely sure
I have the Autumn wreath
Still hanging on the door.

Shops are sprouting decorations
As far as eyes can see
The lampposts have all twinkly things
And we have a metal tree!

What will we do at Christmas
All visits out of bounds
No glittery wrapping paper
No cards to send around.

I've puds and pies aplenty
We'll have Christmas of a type.
My family will all join me
As we spend the day on Skype.

Merry Christmas everyone. *Joyce Oszvald*

MARY SEACOLE

Mary Seacole is an amazing woman known across the world for nursing during the Crimean war. Mary was born in Jamaica but had a Scottish father. Her mum was black and her dad was white so that made her creole and she was proud to be so. She tried to join Florence Nightingale on her way to the Crimean war but she was turned down as she was Creole so she decided to go alone. Mary was determined to build a hospital in the Crimea. With the help of friends in London she got enough money to do it. Mary Seacole called it the British hotel. She had a maid called Sally. They got soldiers that were wounded or ill but most were hungry, frightened and far from home. In January 1856, a battle started. All day she could hear guns and many people were wounded. But late in the afternoon she got a visitor she wasn't expecting. A man named William Russel came through the door and he was a writer for The Times newspaper in London. He pestered Mary to let him ask her a few questions. For days he followed Mary and Sally around and watched everything they did. Later, Mr Russel left to go back home to London but Mary and Sally were so busy they soon forgot about Mr Russel's visit. The Russian had been holding a city called Sebastopol but it was now over-thrown so when the troops marched in Mary wanted to be there. She and Sally became the first female from British Isles to walk in Sebastopol. Lines of soldiers by her sides to wave and cheer and shout Mary Seacole! So, as you can see Mary Seacole is an amazing figure in history but not the only one...



Katie Rideout



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**We will be reviewing the
situation in January 2021
and hope we will be able to
see you then**

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join in the fun.

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CHARLES DICKENS (1812 – 1870)

If all had gone to plan in June 2020 there would have been numerous events marking 150 years since the death of Charles Dickens.

I would venture that the works of Charles Dickens fall into three categories. One – classic favourite novels like *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, *Pickwick Papers* that have gained wide popularity from adaptations for theatre, cinema, radio or television. Two – a bunch of his lower profile novels like *Barnaby Rudge* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* that haven't been afforded the same visibility in theatre, cinema, etc. And three – a surprisingly large category, this: sundry short stories, essays, political tracts, travelogues and even poems that this prolific author penned during his famous lifetime.

I bet that many of our top actors and actresses have jumped at the offer to portray one of Dickens's popular fictional creations. In the early days of the lockdown there was a television re-run of the 1999 television series *David Copperfield*. Pure joy! The story abounds with wonderful Dickens characters with gloriously appropriate names. Mr. Murdstone – a hard-hearted, cruel stepfather (Trevor Eve). Mr. Creakle – an eccentric and dry-humoured schoolmaster (Ian McKellen). Mr. Micawber – one of Dickens's most immortal characters (Bob Hoskins – with Imelda Staunton as the long-suffering but ever-trusting Mrs Micawber).

Mr Pickwick? – Ian McKellen has played him, too – and so have Harry Secombe and Nigel Stock. And here's just a small selection of on-screen Ebenezer Scrooges since the war: Basil Rathbone, Alastair Sim, Albert Finney, Christopher Plummer, Michael Caine, George C Scott and Bill Murray.

Let's hope that we can do justice in 2021 to celebrating our great national treasure Charles Dickens even if there isn't enough time to reinstate all the planned events of 2020.

Jerry Dowlen

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH
THE WIDOW'S STORY
(1 KINGS 17:7-24)

Starvation was staring us in the face, my son was whimpering with hunger although it was almost impossible to hear him over my own rumbling stomach. The food was running out – not just low – really running out. I had enough for one last meal. A slow and painful death lurking round the corner.

I pulled my cloak round me and set out to gather sticks to make that last meal and I headed for the town gate. As I bent over to collect some sticks a pair of sandals came into view. I slowly straightened up and found myself face to face with a stranger – what's more you could tell by his garb he was a foreigner.

He asked me for a jar of water to drink. Well, what could I say – he looked dusty and travel-worn and I had been brought up to be hospitable. As I turned to go, he added – and a piece of bread please. Oh no – what do I say now - there is only enough flour and oil for two. Despite him being a stranger, I decided to tell him the truth.

'Sir' I said, 'I am here gathering sticks to make a last meal for myself and my son and there is barely enough for us. Death is staring us in the face.' He looked at me with compassion and said 'Do not be afraid. Go and make the bread. Bring me a small loaf and have the rest for yourself and your son. The Lord the God of Israel says the flour and oil will not run out until the He sends rain on the land.'

Now I didn't have clue what he was talking about; how could flour and oil not run out? Anyway, I reckoned I could squeeze an extra portion out of my meagre supplies. So, I returned home and made the bread. Strangely there was plenty for the three of us and flour and oil left over; if I'm honest there were more in the jars than when I started. It was miraculous.

It turns out the stranger was Elijah the prophet and he needed some where to stay, so I invited him to stay. All the time he was with us we always had enough food.

Everything was going well until my son became ill. He grew steadily worse and stopped breathing altogether. I was beside myself with grief and I blamed the prophet and I told him so in no uncertain terms. What sins had I committed so that his God had so afflicted my son.

Elijah took my son from my arms and went to his room. I heard him calling to his God – three times he pleaded for my son's life. Then I heard my son cry out – breath had returned to him, he was alive!

I realised I had wronged Elijah with my harsh words truly he was a man of God and the words he spoke were the truth. Truly the God of Israel is truly the only God.

Elaine Chappel

GARDENING TIPS

If you are lucky enough to have a garden, continue planting spring bulbs. Tulips are best planted later, they like to go into the ground deep and I sprinkle a handful of sharp sand or grit in planting area, this stops them rotting, good drainage is essential. They look more natural planted in clusters.

It isn't too late for daffodils although these can go in from September.

The same principle applies if you prefer to plant in pots, but important to raise on feet or bricks to alleviate water logging. Put crocks in bottom, some soil then place bulbs, leaving space around each. We cover with chicken wire to stop squirrels raking them out.

Enjoy being in fresh air, with added bonus of vibrant colours in the Spring.
Happy Christmas.

Rita McKay



***THE CHILDREN FROM ST PAUL'S CRAY C.E. PRIMARY
SCHOOL LAID THIS WREATH AT ST MARY'S CHURCH***



**EULOGY OF GEORGE CULLEY, PRESIDENT AND
LONG SERVING MEMBER OF
ST. MARY CRAY ACTION GROUP.**

George was just 86 when he died at his home in Sidcup, after living most of his life in Chislehurst and St. Mary Cray. He was a very charming man whose knowledge of local history was much appreciated by the Action Group, as was his sense of humour and collection of jokes. His ideal meeting was to show his memorabilia such as coins, photography and war artefacts. But also, he liked to question the speakers as his knowledge was considerable.

He will be greatly missed by all those who had the great privilege of knowing him. Our condolences are sent to his wife, Sheila and their daughters, Joanne and Denise.

Jim Cook, Chairman of SMCAG.