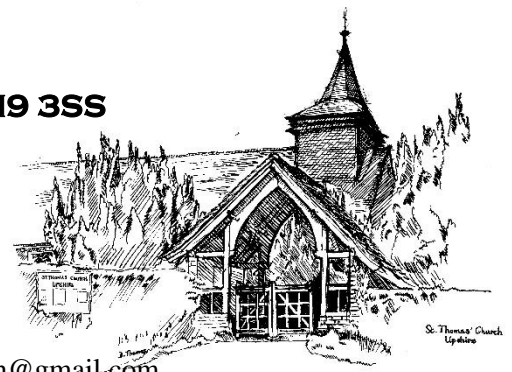


ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SS

NEWSLETTER

September 2024



Rector: Revd Peter Smith, 01992 767897
Team Vicar: Revd Jane Yeadon, 07960 604416. Email janeyeadon@gmail.com
Benefice Office: Abbey Church Centre, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1XQ. 01992 767897
Church address: Horseshoe Hill, Upshire, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3SS.
Website: <https://stthomaschurchupshire.com>
Editor: Mrs Lyn Wackett, 94 Upshire Road, Waltham Abbey EN9 3PA. 01992 711573.
Email: lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk

This Newsletter is free: donations to Lyn Wackett. Copy date for October Newsletter: 14th September

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The PCC has adopted the Church of England's policies and best practice on safeguarding which may be found on the Church of England website and also on the Diocese of Chelmsford website.

SERVICES AND DIARY FOR SEPTEMBER

- Sunday 1st Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION
Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9 Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23
- Saturday 7th 3.00-4.00pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church
- Sunday 8th Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION
Readings: Isaiah 35:4-7a Mark 7:24-end
2.30-4.30pm SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEAS
- Sunday 15th Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION
Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a Mark 8:27-end
- Wednesday 18th 11.30am for 12 noon-2pm COMMUNITY LUNCH in the church – 07899 846711 to book
Please let us know if you have to cancel. Thank you.
- Sunday 22nd Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION
Readings: Jeremiah 11:18-20 Mark 9:30-37
2.30-4.30pm HARVEST SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEAS with Auction of Produce
- Wednesday 25th 2.15pm UPSHIRE MOTHERS' UNION CORPORATE COMMUNION in church – all welcome. Tea and cakes afterwards.
- Friday 27th 10am-2pm MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING & CAKE COMPETITION
- Sunday 29th Michael and All Angels
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION
Readings: Genesis 28:10-17 John 1:47-end
- Sunday 6th October Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity
9.15am HOLY COMMUNION

Our mailing list to receive the electronic version is now in excess of 100 participants so if you are not one of those and wish to be included please send your email address to Kate at dalek16@btinternet.com or phone 02085083942. We are looking to reduce our 'paper footprint' for climate change by printing fewer copies – your contribution will help. Thank you.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Thank you to the people who have sent in articles to be included in the Newsletter. Please keep them coming! Anything: maybe a poem you have written, what you have been doing in the garden, childhood memories, something that happened to make you smile, it all makes for interesting reading.

THE VICAR WRITES:

The story of Elijah – one of the Great Old Testament prophets is told in the book of 1 Kings. It's a story full of great battles such as his defeat of the prophets of Ba'al on Mount Carmel, amazing miracles such as raising a widow's son from the dead and beautiful encounters with God in the still, small voice he hears in a mountainside cave.

However amongst all these amazing stories there is an incident that is often overlooked and yet, to my mind, is just as important as all the great tales we tend to associate with Elijah.

After his defeat of the prophets of Ba'al, Queen Jezebel issues death threats against him and he flees out into the desert – there he sits under a tree and asks for God to take his life. After the great high of battle comes the great low of despair. (1 Kings 19)

Now we are never told why he falls into such despair but for whatever reason Elijah is struggling. What we do know is what happened next, and that is that God sends help. God essentially staged an intervention, sending an angel to come to Elijah and offer him practical pastoral care. The angel awakens Elijah and gives him bread and water before allowing the prophet to rest again. The angel rouses Elijah a second time, and again gives him food and water. (as a friend of mine says, never underestimate the healing power of a nap and a snack!)

I find this so powerful – the actions of the angel so interesting. He doesn't come with condemnation – which he could so easily have done – "For God's sake man, pull yourself together – you have just had a major victory what have you to feel bad about"... but he also doesn't come to coddle him and let him wallow in his despair. Instead, God's angel accepts Elijah's feelings as they are, meets him, literally and figuratively where he is, and offers him respite and recovery.

And it led me to thinking, can we echo God's messenger and seek to help those around us who may be going through tough times like Elijah, who may feel that they have little or no worth, who may even have reached the point where they feel that the world would be better off without them....?

Or indeed to accept that help if we are going through those tough times ourselves.

And of course the answer is yes....

We can echo the messenger by not condemning or stigmatizing someone who is going through difficulties – you may think that's really an obvious thing to say, and think it was something you would never do, but it's amazing how easy a trap this is to fall into.

Many reports have said that there is an additional struggle when having mental health difficulties as a Christian that adds to the difficulties themselves. That is a feeling of an overriding sense of failure that somehow a person's faith is not good enough because after all if God loves them and is on their side what is there to be depressed about. As such, sometimes in an effort to help someone by prayer, by telling stories from the Bible and those kinds of things we can inadvertently add that pressure on. I'm not saying don't do these things but just that we need to be particularly mindful of how this may be being received.

But it's also important not to go too far the other way because, as I said, the messenger was not content to leave Elijah in the situation he was in. Sometimes our desire as Christians to be loving and kind and helpful means that we over empathise with someone. We go to meet people where they are, as the messenger did, but get stuck there. We metaphorically climb into the hole with them which is fine but when we do that the aim is not to remain with them at the bottom of that hole but to meet them there so that you can support them in finding a way out. The aim is to offer consistent and kind care that will enable them to continue on their journey toward healing just as Elijah continued his journey to Mt Horeb after spending time with the angel.

Now I won't pretend that this is in any way easy, or indeed that it's something that we should attempt alone. In many cases people will need professional help and a very wide network of supportive friends and family to help with their recovery. It is also something that can take considerable time and there may be many backwards steps along with the forward... but I believe that this is the work of God to help people in the dark times, to be the messengers of God, to play whatever part we can, Both as a church and individuals

... Can you be God's angel for someone in despair?

And if you are that person in despair please do have the courage to ask for help, I know that that's difficult but God loves you and wants to send people to help if you will but let him in.

There is no shame in it being the one that needs help or being the helper. Elijah was one of the mightiest prophets there was and yet he struggled and in that struggle God loved him and sent help..... and maybe that help may be you.

Blessings,

Revd Jane Yeadon

Team Vicar St Thomas, Upshire and Holy Innocents, High Beech

Benefice Youth Missioner

PRAYER REQUESTS

You are invited to offer names to be added to our prayer diary to remember those who are unwell or unhappy. First names only are required as God will know who we are praying for.

Contact Lyn Wackett on 01992 711573 or email lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk

This month we pray for Laura, Alan & Pam, Lesley, Charlie & John, Anne, Pam & John, Barbara, Vernon, Mal, Louise, Sue, Ann & Cyril, Rosalind, Doreen, Maureen, Carol & George, Beverly, Terry, Jackie, Andrea & her Mum & Dad, Nina, Carmel & the Price family, Dave, Pat, Nigel, Lola, Pearl, Susan & Alan, Jackie & Linda, Eleanor, Peter, Graham, Brenda & Adrian.

Church Flowers

Each month we can create memorial dedications, wedding, anniversary or special occasion flowers - Contact Kate Dale email: dalek16@btinternet.com or 02085083942



ST THOMAS' SEEDLINGS

1st Saturdays of each month (unless otherwise stated)

A free Stay and Play church group for children and those who care for them
Join us Saturdays 3-4pm for messy craft, play, songs and stories along with a welcome cuppa
St Thomas' Church, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire, EN9 3SS



St Thomas Church, Upshire Bank details

St Thomas Church Upshire PCC

HSBC Bank Sort Code 40 45 20 Account number 00724505

Any queries regarding setting up a Standing Order, giving a donation to the church, Gift Aid or about joining the Parish Giving Scheme please contact our Treasurer, Ruth Moore on 07852 668633

Ruth4366@gmail.com

If you are able to Gift Aid donations this increases your gift without any extra cost to yourself.

St Thomas' Church, Upshire, EN9 3SS

AFTERNOON TEAS

2nd & 4th Sundays, 2.30-4.30pm in the church

Come along to our lovely little church for home-made cakes and a welcome cup of tea or coffee. You can either sit in the church and enjoy the occasional organ music or sit outside in the churchyard and admire the view from both the front and back of the church. Dogs on leads welcome!

ANAGRAM Unscramble this 10 letter anagram: AGOGFRIEND. The answer will be found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

COMING UP AT ST THOMAS'

Afternoon Teas 2nd & 4th Sundays until the end of September, 2.30-4.30pm

Sunday 22nd September HARVEST FESTIVAL and LAST AFTERNOON TEAS

Friday 27th September MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING/CAKE COMPETITION 10am-2pm

Saturday 12th October QUIZ NIGHT 7pm

Saturday 23rd November CHRISTMAS BAZAAR in Village Hall, 10.30am-2.30pm

Sunday 8th December ENFIELD BRASS BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT, 3.30pm

Community lunches every month from February to December – see separate article.

ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2024

Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon-2pm

SEPTEMBER 18th, OCTOBER 16th, NOVEMBER 20th, DECEMBER 4th

Please book your place to confirm attendance: 07899 846711

If after booking you are unable to come, please phone to cancel, we can then offer a place to people on the waiting list.

Growers Corner

Life on the Plot!... September Edition

Hello all! My name is Louise Eleftheriou, Stephen Brown's daughter. I helped Dad write his final submission for the newsletter before he passed. It got me thinking that I should try and keep the gardening section going and follow in Dad's footsteps.

So here I am, I'm not writer nor am I trained gardener, but I do have a small urban garden and two allotment plots. I am a relatively new gardener and covid accelerated my hobby. It was during covid that I got my first allotment plot. Dad as well as my husband Stef were instrumental setting up the plot. Dad always insisting that everything was drawn out on graph paper! I didn't do the scaled drawings, much to Dad's annoyance, but between us we cleared the plot and renamed plot 550 Lou Lou's Teapot and haven't look back.

The plot is always evolving, but my fundamentals are that we use no pesticides or nasties and be as environmentally conscious as possible.

We had a big change recently and I have now taken over custodianship of the empty plot next to the first plot. It feels like we are back at square one. The big job of clearing has commenced we know it's a long-term project and that it is going to keep us very busy over the coming months. Watch this space for all the new developments and plans for the plots.

Plot updates: Harvests this year have been out of sync compared to previous growing years. The lack of sun in May and early June has held the growing season back by approximately six weeks but we seem to be in full flow now.

Harvesting: I've been harvesting salad, a couple of tomatoes, chard, beetroot, first of the courgettes, abundance of mint, self-sown tree spinach and potatoes from my pots.

Flowers: One of my passions is growing cut flowers. I always used to buy myself flowers, but I grew concerned where these flowers were coming from, pesticides used and the amount of single use plastic with the wrapping. I am now reaping the rewards and picking the dahlias that I overwintered at the allotment as well as the last of the sweet peas. It's always such a joy to pick your own flowers for the house or pass on to others as gifts.

Jobs/Tips for the month ahead

- Pests: keep eye out for things nibbling your crops. Enviromesh is very helpful from keeping the cabbage white out/pigeons off.
- Watering: typically, things in the ground only need to be watered twice a week. If it's rained, then no need. But small plants establishing and those in pots will need watering at least once a day. Obviously with this warmer weather we might just have to up the watering.
- Harvesting: keep on picking. Courgettes are much tastier when small and keeps them coming. Applies to most harvests.

Sowings: Once this heat passes, I'm going to get going with more sowings: lettuce, chard, spinach, and beetroot. Need to start planning for the autumn but right now I might just take a seat on the bench and have a cuppa first. Happy Growing! Louise

MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING & CAKE COMPETITION

27th September, 10am-2pm in the church. Become a star baker – classes for under 16 years and over 16 years of age: make a cake of your choice and bring to the church by 10am for judging at 10.15am. Please bring a list of ingredients used in the cakes. Prizes for the winners. All entries become a donation to the Macmillan event refreshments. Raffle.

Please try to attend and show your support for the Macmillan nurses as they carry out valuable work.

STAMPS Please continue to save your postage stamps and foreign or out of circulation coins as the charities we support can use them to raise funds. At present we collect the coins for Essex and Herts Air Ambulance and The British Legion and stamps for St Clare Hospice. Stamps and coins can be left with Lyn & Dave at 94 Upshire Road – please leave in the porch if no reply. Please leave about ½“ of envelope around the stamps. Thank you.

TEDDIES FOR TRAGEDIES

A message from Tricia Gibb of Teddies for Tragedies:

‘JUNE: So far this year 750 Teddies have gone to Poland to be included in food parcels being taken into Ukraine. This means that over the past couple of years over 3200 of your Teddies have now travelled to Ukraine, with at least another 400 ready to go next month. Thank you all for making this possible so can you keep knitting, please, as I have been told that the charity would like more to include with their food parcels.’

‘Thank you all again for your support. Please keep those Teddies coming!’

Gardens are not made by singing ‘Oh how beautiful’ and sitting in the shade. - *Rudyard Kipling*

ANAGRAM The answer to the anagram is GODFEARING.

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, HIGH BEACH

Sunday Afternoon Teas every Sunday from 28th April until 29th September between 2.00 to 5.30pm.

£2.50 a slice of cake and 50p for tea/coffee. Whole cake £12.

Everyone is welcome to come and sit in church or in our churchyard and enjoy home-made cake with tea or coffee every Sunday throughout the summer. We are hoping for nice sunny days! There will be the opportunity to ring the carillon and some Sundays there will be various forms of entertainment. Please be careful where you park – you notice.

Music to Refresh the Soul

High Beach Church, Epping Forest (near the junction of Avey Lane & Mott Street, High Beach, Essex)

Every third Sunday June to September, 3-4pm. Entry free (with retiring collection) Refreshments available.

15th September – The Asaph Ensemble – Mary Young, Elaine Patience, Gill Townsend, Anna Frazer, Geraldine Warner, David & Nicola Hooke

Concert by Opera Octaves

Saturday 21st September, 7-9pm. Tickets £10 to include light buffet and glass of wine/soft drink from Margaret Wackett on 07949 961184 or on the door.

ST LAWRENCE CHURCH, Ninefields, Waltham Abbey EN9 3EL

QUIZ and HARVEST TEA on Saturday 28th September, 2pm for 2.15pm start.

Teams of up to 8 people. Tickets: Adult £10, child £3.

To book your tickets please contact Valerie on 01992 713996 by 25th September please.

50/50 CLUB

I was recently asked ‘Why is it called the 50/50 Club?’ The reason is that there is no limit on the number of members as the prizes are determined on the income. 50% of the income goes to the church, 50% is returned to the winning members as prizes: i.e. if we had 10 members the income would be £120 for each session and £60 would go to the church and £60 paid out as prizes. Fortunately we have a lot more members than that! Sadly, we have lost several members during the last session so the Bumper Prize Draw in December will be reduced unless we get more new members. The regular monthly prizes will stay the same.

Congratulations to the winners of the 50/50 Club Bumper Draw in July who were:

1 st :	£35	No. 9	Colin Ward of High Laver
2 nd :	£25	No. 19	Sarah Gullefer of Welham Green
3 rd :	£15	No. 86	Joan Bingham of Waltham Abbey

It is now time to begin Draw 14 of St Thomas’ 50/50 Club.

There will still be monthly draws and the entry fee is £12.00 every six months (or £2 for every month of membership). Each member is entitled to a maximum of two entries, couples can have four. Please complete the form below and return it to me; payment by Bank Transfer is preferred or alternatively you may pay by cheque or cash to the address stated. Please let me know if you pay by Bank Transfer so I can include your number in the Draw (email lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01992 711573).

St Thomas’ Church 50/50 Club Draw 14

July to December 2024

I wish to become a member of St Thomas’ 50/50 Club and have paid by Bank Transfer to HSBC Bank, A/c St Thomas Church Upshire PCC, Sort Code 404520, A/c No: 00724505.

OR I enclose cash/cheque of £12 per entry (maximum 2 per person). Please make cheques payable to St Thomas’ Church Upshire PCC and return your entries to Lyn Wackett, 94 Upshire Road, Waltham Abbey, EN9 3PA.

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Our thanks to all our members for their support of St Thomas’ Church. Good luck to everyone who enters.

UPSHIRE SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB

Held in Upshire Village Hall, Mondays 2.00-4.30pm, Tuesdays 7.00-9.30pm

No experience necessary. Tuition and bowls available. It's fun to play!

Contact Fred on 01992 711720 or Jean on 07733 084815.

Upshire Mothers' Union

In July Revd Jane Yeadon gave us a very interesting talk about her holidays.

Jane loves to travel and said it's in her blood. Her dad wanted to see the world and wanted to show the world to her and her brother and started to do so while they were very young. Jane's aim is to see as many countries as possible and so far, she has visited 70 different countries. Jane enjoys 'Slow Travel', so instead of flying direct to a destination Slow Travel is travelling by Walking, Cycling, Driving, Train or Boat, the journey is slower but becomes part of the holiday and enables you to see far more of a country rather than just flying over it.

In 2013 Jane and her friend Matthew travelled Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles by car driving 2448 miles, which took them 2 and half weeks. Route 66 runs through 14 states and along the way they saw many different landscapes evolve, and some weird and wonderful sights. The Blue Whale of Catoosa, an adventure structure situated in a pond, a Cadillac Ranch in Texas consisting of 10 Cadillacs buried nose down into the ground in a straight line, a giant Ketchup bottle, an abandoned Motel which is just as it was when locked up and left after the new Interstate Road by passed the town. These are just a few of the weird and wonderful sights. They stayed at the iconic Wigwam Motel on Route 66 in Arizona.

In 2009 Jane and Matthew did the Trans-Siberian railway journey from Moscow to Vladivostok, 9,288 Kilometres. They did the whole journey starting from London by train, which included a few train changes from London to Moscow. Leaving Moscow, most of the journey was spent on the train just watching the varied countryside go by; Jane mentioned how different the landscape was between the European side of Russia to the Asian side. They did have a few stops at some small villages along the route, which would have a few shops at each station. These stops would be the highlight of the day for the locals who would come out to greet the travellers as they got off the train. Vladivostok is quite a vibrant town. Whilst walking around they randomly came across a submarine sited on the side of the road. From Vladivostok Jane and Matthew took a boat to Kyoto, Japan. After spending 24 hours in Kyoto, they took the Bullet train to Tokyo. The Bullet train takes approx. 2 and half hours and can travel at speeds between 150 to 200 miles an hour. Jane showed a video of the train speeding along but said it didn't give a true sense of how fast the train was going. They found Tokyo and incredible city with amazing contrast in different life styles.

In 2022 Jane and her friend Mary did a boat trip from Argentina to the Antarctica Peninsular on the MS Roald Amundsen. The MS Roald Amundsen is a Hurtigruten Expedition ship, not a cruise liner. On board is a scientific centre. This ship was built for Polar Exploration and journeys of scientific interest. The scenery was amazing, they saw lots of icebergs and penguins. They landed 3 times, each time they landed they were well toggged up with warm protective clothing, had to be taken by a Rib to their destination and go through disinfection stations. Jane showed 2 videos, one of the Penguins in Antarctica and the other of the Penguins on parade on the beach. On the return journey they stopped at the Falkland Islands and visited Stanley and Port Stanley. There were lots of penguins on the Falkland Islands too. While on Stanley they visited a lady's house. The lady makes Tea and Cake for visitors to the Islands. That day she provided Tea and Cake for 350 people.

As Jane was talking about her journeys she was also showing us slides of all the places she was talking about too. It was a very interesting and enjoyable afternoon, Jane's passion for travel shone through as she took us on her journeys. Thank you, Jane.

Our next meeting is on 25th September at 2.15pm, our Corporate Communion service in Church, followed by Tea and cake. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Tea Hostesses: Ann Smith and Sue McKinley. Raffle: Eleanor Huxter

Further information contact Eleanor Huxter on 01992 892869

WALTHAM ABBEY CHURCH

Music for Lunch – Saturdays at 12 noon. Refreshments available from 11.30am. No admission charge or ticketing but donations welcome

September 7th: Students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire

14th: Students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire

21st: Cambridge Renaissance Voices

28th: Jonathan Lilley: *Organ anniversary special*

Is Noah's Ark needed again?

If you take the road from Abridge towards Passingford Bridge you will be following the River Roding which runs through the fields on your left. At Passingford Bridge there is a weir and if you continue on the road round towards Ongar you will cross the river giving good views of the weir. About a mile or so further on there is a turning to the right down into Shonks Mill Lane. It used to be a quiet country lane winding its way through fields towards Crown Corner on the Brentwood road some way further on. Unfortunately, it has now become somewhat of a racetrack as drivers use it as a cut-through. A little way along is the actual Shonks Mill which now is a bridge across the Roding, whether a mill did exist here at some time in the past is not known. Opposite is another small lane from which we used to come with our first horse, Poppy. Crossing Shonks Mill Lane we could come off the lane onto the riverbank and thence down into the river itself. It was not possible for a walker to follow the river as there is no riverbank path but it was certainly possible for a horse to travel up the river which in the summer with low water levels was feasible. Not being able to follow on the bank, all one could do was to stand and listen to the whoops of delight as horse and rider forged their way up the river. On a hot summer's day the overhanging foliage and cool clear water of the river was invigorating and cooling. The river was never more than a few inches deep and the ride could continue for nearly a mile until the river deepened into almost a pond. Poppy loved the water and would take the opportunity to stand in any pond available but if she were walking along, she had the odd habit of inserting her nose into the water making a bow wave. How she managed to breathe has always remained a mystery!

Sadly, getting into the Roding here is no longer possible as a new bridge was constructed and safety measures put in place: a crash barrier across the access point onto the river. Driving along the lane recently we were somewhat disturbed to see that contractors had moved in with signs put up mentioning a project for the river. We immediately thought that more houses were about to be built on this pristine farmland but some research on the internet revealed that the Environment Agency had commissioned flood relief works. A 'Flood Storage Area' is to be constructed which will hold back the river's waters and then allow it to flow downstream in a controlled manner. All the information seemed to indicate that the flooding that occurs is a recent phenomenon and that these works will mitigate the problem. We used to travel up to Passingford Bridge every day for many years and every winter there would be flooding between the bridge and Abridge. At Debden I would regularly walk my dogs along the riverbank when I could as the flooding there would usually cover the surrounding fields. In a recent article (June – A little Known Gem) I mentioned how the cattle travelling from Epping to Romford in times past would rest and feed on the flood meadows near to Chigwell and how those waters gave rise to a unique system of flora and fauna. The Roding is often referred to as one of London's forgotten rivers, in fact the largest, but for many years it was an important waterway. Records show that the first two miles of the river from its confluence with the Thames, known as Barking Creek, was navigable from the 13th Century. Indeed, the Creek was once home to England's largest fishing fleet. Forgotten for many years and used as a dumping ground for fly tips, the area has been 'saved' by intrepid canal boat owners who have set up the River Roding Trust and who have moved in and cleaned up the area as well as further up the river's course. Interestingly now that tons of rubbish have been removed, the natural features are starting to show themselves once more and one in particular is the reed beds growing alongside the river's course indicative of the regular flooding that takes place along this river. Indeed, a quick scroll on the internet will detail the floods that have occurred in the recent past with pictures of the events; one is of a canoeist travelling down the Chigwell Road towards Charlie Brown's Roundabout! Residents who have lived in the area for many years will tell you how the river was straightened and put under a new bridge at Woodford Bridge whilst leaving the original course intact alongside.

So, why the construction works at Shonks Mill? The length of the Roding, especially in the lower reaches, is and has always been prone to flooding – it is part of a natural process, and as a consequence unique flora and fauna have developed at the Roding Valley Meadows and reed beds grow along its banks along the final two miles before entering the Thames. It would actually help if the river was cleared of the detritus, rubbish and growth that occurs in much of its length especially in the canalized portion around Woodford Bridge. A person with perhaps a cynical mind might argue that the 'flood prevention works' have more to do with the planned, as yet unpublicized, building that is to take place on the flood plains and associated Green Belt. We can only wait and see what our 'Masters' have in mind for the area but it will be interesting to see what effect the new flood storage area at Shonks Mill has to the river's flow during the winter months.

Adrian J Liddle

I am taking a break from writing for a couple of months but I will be back for January's edition so if it's not too early to say, can I wish you all in the meantime, a happy and joyful Christmas.

Dragons and Damsels

Sitting by the window, hoping for inspiration for the subject of this article, I noticed two dragonflies hawking back and forth over Copthall Green, large enough to be watched from across the road.

I have loved dragonflies and damselflies since childhood but my admiration deepened one day in the 1970's when I sat beside a pond with a small group of children. They had already watched in their white enamel pond-dipping bowls, aquatic young dragonfly nymphs and separated out the carnivorous individuals to give the other inhabitants of the dish a fighting chance. One nymph, however, had been missed and they had watched with a mixture of horror and admiration as it emerged from under the weed, extended the pincers folded neatly under its 'chin' and latched on to an unsuspecting tadpole which shrank before their eyes as its insides were consumed. Now we were sitting by a clump of reeds where a dragonfly nymph had climbed upwards in the position of a fireman descending a pole and settled into the process of drawing its body out of its papery skin. These were children who had been labelled as 'difficult'. Their teacher had apologised at the beginning of the day for their poor attention span. They sat for twenty minutes or so, sometimes cheering the dragonfly on, in its efforts but mostly quietly absorbed in the fascination of seeing the beautiful green shiny body emerge from its papery case leaving a perfect replica of its previous life clutching the rush stem. The tiny wings they had seen and described as looking like the nymph's backpack, started to uncrumple.

They were disappointed that the expanding and drying out process would take too long to watch but thrilled to be given the empty case of another nymph to take back to school.

Later that day, we watched a dragonfly and a wasp in aerial combat over Fairmead Pond and returning through the forest found horsetails growing by the stream. The children were told about the relatives of these plants which grew three times as tall as the trees around them and among which dragonflies flew with wing spans as wide as their outstretched arms.

Dragonflies have been on this earth for three hundred and twenty million years and the only evolutionary change in all that time has been their size. Palaeozoic dragonflies had wing spans averaging seventy centimetres, modern ones fifteen centimetres. They are unusual insects in having a freely movable head. Their 'wrap-around' compound eyes have 30,000 facets so 360 degree vision is almost perfect.

Whereas most flying insects have indirect muscles which are attached to the inside of their thoraxes, so their wings can just flap up and down, dragonfly wings have direct flight muscles. They can control their wings independently, up, down, left, right, forwards and backwards. They can flap their two sets of wings independently so they can fly slowly or hover by counter-stroking. Phased flying, with hind wings ninety degrees ahead of front wings, gives a speed of up to 30mph or they can glide without flapping at all. Each wing has a small coloured spot on its leading edge which acts as a counter-weight to prevent the outer edge from developing vibration, or flutter, which would reduce its speed by 10-25% even though the spot is only 0.1% of its body-weight.

The cells of their eyes detect wavelengths from orange to ultra violet and their brain enables them to predict where their prey is going so they can hunt by interception as well as by tracking. 95% of the prey they chase is caught. Mammals and birds get nowhere near that success rate. Flying over ponds, they scoop midges into balls with their forelegs.

These wonderful creatures are not just feats of engineering. They are things of incredible beauty, with their vivid iridescent colours and exquisite tracery of veins in their wings – one design for chasers who need flexibility and one for perchers who need more stiffness.

Dragonflies appear in the mythology of many cultures, sometimes revered, often feared. Nicknamed 'Devils Darning Needle' in our islands, they were used to frighten children into good behaviour because they knew when a child had been naughty and would come at night and sew up their mouths!

In fact, they are completely harmless unless you happen to be a passing fly or unlucky tadpole and those of us who are pestered by midges in our evening garden, have reason to be very grateful.

Sue McKinley

RODING VALLEY MEADOWS CONSULTATIVE GROUP EVENTS

The following events are open to all ages but pushchairs and buggies are not acceptable due to the terrain. The cost is £2.50 per person and children must be 5+ and accompanied by an adult. All events must be pre-booked by a booking form available on the Epping Forest Council website.

Bat Walk 7.15pm-8.45pm Friday 13th September

Meet at the car park, Grange Farm Centre, High Road, Chigwell, IG7 6DP

For more information and to book for any of these please telephone Damien Weller on 07895 208432. For booking support please call 01992 564226.

ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SS

QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 12th October 6.30 for 7.00pm start

£10 per head – tables of 8

Includes hot drink and nibbles, anything stronger bring your own

Pre-booking for catering and safety purposes on 07899 846711

If you are on your own or can't make up a table, just come along anyway and make new friends

SHOEBOXES All the boxes going from this area will be going only to UKRAINE.

Please remember to save your shoeboxes for Blythwood's shoebox appeal. Shoeboxes will be distributed to Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia & Ukraine. It is easy to choose gifts for people who have so little; Shampoo, a pair of socks, a notepad, a small toy, a bag of sweets – things that we take for granted will seem like luxuries to people living in poverty.

Shoeboxes need to be covered in pretty paper (lid and box separately please as the contents need to be checked for customs). It costs approximately £6,000 to £7,000 to send a container load of shoeboxes to Eastern Europe so if you are able to donate £3 or more to help the cost of transporting your box that would be much appreciated. Leaflets with all the information will be available in the church or from Lyn & Dave at 94 Upshire Road but essential items asked for include hat, scarf, gloves, toothbrush & paste, underwear, tights/socks, toiletries (no talcum powder) shampoo, soap, small toy (not war related) sweet (no lollies or chocolate or sweets containing chocolate). Other items: notepad/colouring books/pens/pencils etc, new make-up, sewing equipment, household candles, screwdrivers/pliers, kitchen utensils, t-shirts, pyjamas, jumpers, shirts – anything you can give will be appreciated. Boxes can be for any age – babies, children, adults – the choice is yours.

Last year we were able to send 144 shoeboxes to needy people in Ukraine and countries supporting Ukrainian refugees. Boxes and any items to go in them can be left with Lyn and Dave as above no later than mid-October or they can be left in the church. Thank you.

WALTHAM ABBEY FLOWER CLUB 2024

We meet on the 4th Tuesday in the month except January, June, August and December at Waltham Abbey Community Centre, Crooked Mile, EN9 1QD. Door open 1.30pm for 2pm start. All are welcome, raffle, sales table, tea, coffee and homemade cake. Further details from Chris on 07792 594443.

Tuesday 24th September: Demonstration by Lisa Morgan, title to be arranged. Visitors £8

Tuesday 22nd October: AGM approx. 20 minutes. The workshop by Chris. Visitors £7

Tuesday 26th November: Demonstration by Gill McGregor entitled "Festive Flowers and Fantasy. Visitors £8

Public will be able to feel the tree rings of Sycamore Gap

Members of the public are now able to feel the rings of the felled Sycamore Gap tree, thanks to a new art exhibition.

The 200-year-old sycamore was cut down last year in a "malicious act of vandalism". But it has now been 'brought to life' through a series of five prints, created from a disc of the trunk.

The prints are on display at four locations along Hadrian's Wall. One of them, named Access, has been hand pressed, so that the 3D shape of the wood and tree rings became embossed on the paper. Visitors can touch the print and feel the rings.

The National Trust explains that the art exhibition is only part of an attempt to "ensure there is an enduring legacy of the tree informed by the huge public response to its loss."

The five bespoke prints have been named 'Heartwood.' They were taken from a 90cm disc of the original tree. They show every tree ring, groove and detail from the cross-section of the almost heart-shaped trunk.

Our eyes are placed in front because it is more important to look ahead than to look back. -Anon