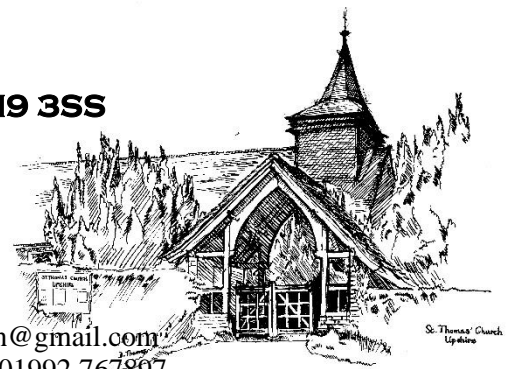


# ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SS

## NEWSLETTER

### October 2024



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This Newsletter is free: donations to Lyn Wackett. Copy date for November Newsletter: 14<sup>th</sup> October

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 OCTOBER

Saturday 5 <sup>th</sup>	3.00-4.00pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup>	Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Genesis 2:18-24 Mark 10:2-16
Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup>	6.30 for 7pm start QUIZ NIGHT in church – 07899 846711 to book
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Twentieth Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Amos 5:6-7, 10-15 Mark 10:17-31
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup>	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 20 <sup>th</sup>	Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 53:4-end Mark 10:35-45
Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	2 – 4pm Upshire Mothers' Union JUST DESSERTS AFTERNOON in Village Hall – all welcome, £4 per person
Sunday 27 <sup>th</sup>	Bible Sunday 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 55:1-11 John 5:36b-end
Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November	All Saints Day 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 John 11:32-44

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](mailto: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.

**We are looking for someone to keep our church clean. 2 hours per week. Hours by mutual agreement. If you are interested then please ring Gwen on 07712 046980 for more details.**

Do you have any spare DK or 4ply wool which you no longer need. If so our knitting friends could make good use of it.

## **THE VICAR WRITES:**

The end of October sees us enter the days of Hallowmas or Hallowtide.

Though this time has been adopted by the secular world as Halloween, the celebration of all things spooky and ghoulish, the marking of All Hallows Eve, and All Hallows Day are actually deeply rooted in Christian practice. A Hallow, though now a word little used, is another word for a saint. We hear it more commonly in its verb form, for example, in the Lord's Prayer; "hallowed be thy name", where it means "honoured" or "sanctified". It is a rather beautiful word, as it seeks to set apart that which would otherwise be ordinary.

What does it mean thought, to be a Hallow, to be a saint?

Well, it usually means one of two things...

Firstly it's a way of referring to all baptised believers. Everyone who has received the Christian sacrament of baptism is entitled to be called a saint, no matter how well or poorly they behave themselves.

We see this, for example, in St Paul's letter to the Philippians in chapter one which he writes "to all the Saints who are in Christ Jesus at Philippi". We are saints, simply because we are members of Jesus' family.

But the second use of the word saint is for those people who are recognised as having an exceptional degree of virtue or holiness. It doesn't mean that they are perfect, but that they are noteworthy because they reflect to us something of God's immeasurable beauty and power. It is a mistake to consider that the church "makes" saints. Instead, the church recognises that some Christians have lived earthly lives of such holiness that they are deserving of the title.

On the day before All Saints Day (All Hallows Eve, or Halloween), Christians would originally have enacted a fast, to prepare to feast with the saints the following day.

The early church simply ran out of feast days to remember all of the baptised who'd been received into God's eternity through martyrdom, and so they set aside a day, known as All Saints Day. On All Saints Day, we tend to remember the "named" saints whom the church has given the title "saint", and we give thanks for their lives and witness.

The following day, All Souls, we tend to remember the ordinary saints whom we've known, who have passed through our lives, and have now died. We remember them and pray for them, that they would rest in peace.

So, as we prepare to enter the three days of Hallowmas, let us fast, and feast, and

pray, as we remember with thanksgiving the saints, both those named and those known only to us, who shone on earth, and shine even more brightly before God's throne.

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](mailto: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](mailto:dalek16@btinternet.com) or 02085083942



## **ST THOMAS' SEEDLINGS**

**1<sup>st</sup> 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



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

## **Growers Corner**

The month ahead brings lots of change for the growing season. The light is diminishing as the night draws in and at the end of the month sees the clocks changing. October was Dad's birthday too, so I always remembered the shift in season. As the saying goes spring forward and fall back.

Much of the garden and allotment is looking tired although there has been a second flush of roses, some rust has set in. The sedum (*Hylotelephium*) is turning pinky/red, and the leaves on the trees are beginning to turn too.

The last few mornings I've noticed the sharp drop in temperatures too.

The dahlias are still cropping and I keep picking them, and enjoy making arrangements for the table. I am also going to give drying some a try this year to make a sustainable Christmas wreath for the front door.

Harvest time... The outdoor tomatoes have been slow, and the not much of harvest to speak of. The polytunnel is still cropping and we had a good harvest this week. Although we've annoyingly lost the labels and I can't remember the variety of large yellow tomatoes. So far they have been the best flavour. Next year I'll have to do a taste test of the varieties and then save seed from the best ones.

The courgettes were slow to crop but now we are struggling to keep on top of the harvests. But one of my favourite things to make with the glut is make kolokithokeftedes.... Don't ask me say it but essentially they are Greek courgette fritters. As I write I'm on plane to Greece and no doubt I'll be consuming these whenever I see them on the menu as they are one of my favs. For those that are interested here is a good recipe.

**500 g** courgette **2** spring onions **1 bunch** mint **1/3 bunch** dill **1 bunch** basil lime zest, from 2 limes

**1 level teaspoon(s)** cumin, ground **2 pinches** chilli flakes **200 g** feta cheese **2** eggs, medium

**2-3tablespoon(s)** olive oil **80 g** all-purpose flour salt pepper

For the yogurt sauce: **200 g** strained yogurt **1 tablespoon(s)** honey **1 level teaspoon(s)** cumin salt pepper

### **Recipe**

Cut off the ends of the courgette and grate them using the large holes of a box grater. Transfer the grated courgette to a tea towel, add some salt, and squeeze the towel well to remove all the moisture of the courgette. Put the grated courgette into a bowl and set it aside.

Finely chop the green part of the spring onions, the mint, dill, and basil, and add them to the bowl with the courgette.

Add the lime zest, cumin, chili flakes, and eggs, and then use your hands to crumble the feta cheese into the bowl. Mix the ingredients with a serving spoon until completely combined. Add the flour and fold it into the mixture just until it is incorporated. Optionally, refrigerate the bowl for 30 minutes.

Place a non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat, add the olive oil, and let it heat up well.

Spread some paper towels in a baking pan and set it aside.

Use a tablespoon to transfer the courgette fritter mixture to the pan in batches, and press them down gently to spread and shape them nicely. Cook the courgette fritters for 2-3 minutes on each side, until they are nicely golden. Transfer the fritters to the baking pan, using a slotted spatula, to drain the excess oil.

**Sauce** Put the yogurt, honey, cumin, salt, and pepper into a small bowl, and mix them well. Serve the courgette fritters with the yogurt sauce.

Stef's YiaYia (my husband's grandmother) has also made great use of all the grapes we harvested from the plot and made Palouza also known as Kofteri. A Cypriot dessert, not something I've had before but we sampled the other night. Safe to say we will be making it next year.

YiaYia have also been busy using the vine leaves too and made koubebe, some have been sampled by a St Thomas' parishioner. Looking forward to hearing the feedback.

For the first time since the fruit trees have been planted we've harvested Russett apples (Dad's absolute favourite) and conference pears. Dad purchased these from Matthew's plants for us, so it seems fitting they have fruited for us this year. We are still holding out for the quince.

The fig tree in the garden has fruited well and we've eaten a lot of figs in different ways. Grilled on the bbq and served with Dad's honey and creme fraiche has featured heavily on the menu. Although we left the last few on the tree as the starlings have feasting on them as they prepare for migratory journey to warmer climes.

**Goals for the plot** To try and get more of all round offering of veggies. I'm currently reading Sarah Raven's a year full of veg.. I will report back next month.

**Garden update.** We've just finished our garden room and we are loving it. We are using it as our office as we both hybrid work but the little patio outside the room has created another area to relax. Much of the planting was brought from St Thomas' plant sale earlier in the year.

**Jobs for the plot/garden** Cut the top off the tomatoes to ensure the fruit already on the plants ripens. Keep harvesting cucumbers/courgettes. Weeding and preparing the soil with mulch. Drying flowers to use to make a Christmas wreath.

**Features for next month** - How to keep growing during the winter months. -How to make sustainable bird fat balls. **Thank you** for all the lovely comments and the warm welcome to the newsletter. I hope you continue to enjoy my offering. Until next month, happy harvesting and preserving. Louise

## COMING UP AT ST THOMAS'

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October QUIZ NIGHT 6.30 FOR 7pm

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November CHRISTMAS BAZAAR in Village Hall, 10.30am-2.30pm

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December ENFIELD BRASS BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT, 3.30pm

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

**Give the ones you love wings to fly, roots to come back, and reasons to stay. *The Dalai Lama***

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](mailto:Ruth4366@gmail.com)

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

**ANAGRAM** The answer to the anagram is FUNDRAISER.

## WALTHAM ABBEY CRAFT MARKET

Craft Market and Table Top Sale in Waltham Abbey Town Hall, EN1 9DE

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October then 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesdays of each month.

## 50/50 CLUB

The 50/50 Club is so called because 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 August who were:

1 <sup>st</sup> :	£35	No. 12	Allan Howard of Upshire
2 <sup>nd</sup> :	£25	No. 92	Sarah Dodds of Waltham Abbey
3 <sup>rd</sup> :	£15	No. 53	Malcolm Songer of Nazeing

It is not too late to join 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](mailto: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.

**ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2024**

Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon-2pm

OCTOBER 16<sup>th</sup>, NOVEMBER 20<sup>th</sup>, DECEMBER 4<sup>th</sup>

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.

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

### Upshire Mothers' Union

On Wednesday 23rd October we will be hosting a '**Just Desserts Afternoon**' in the Village Hall, 2.00pm - 4.00pm at £4.00 per head (A second portion £1 and a free drink refill). Everyone is welcome, so do come along and join us.

### **The History of the Dessert.**

The term 'dessert' can apply to many sweets, such as biscuits, cakes, cookies, custards, ice cream, pastries, pies, puddings, macaroons, sweet soups, tarts, and fruit salad (fruit is commonly found in dessert courses because of its naturally occurring sweetness).

Historically, the dessert course consisted entirely of foods "from the storeroom", including fresh, stewed, preserved, and dried fruits; nuts; cheese and other dairy dishes; dry biscuits and wafers; and ices and ice creams. Sweet dishes from the kitchen, such as freshly prepared pastries, meringues, custards, puddings, and baked fruits, were served in the entremets course, not in the dessert course. By the 20th century, though, sweet entremets had come to be included among the desserts.

The term 'dessert' originated from the French word desservir, meaning "to clear the table", and it referred to the final course of the meal, presented after the table was "cleared" (deservi).

Herodotus mentions that Persian meals featured many desserts, and were more varied in their sweet offerings than the main dishes.

German army officer Helmuth von Moltke, whilst serving in the Ottoman Empire, noted the unusual presentation of courses with the sweet courses served between roasts and other savoury dishes.

Dried fruit and honey were probably the first sweeteners used in most of the world, but the spread of sugarcane around the world was essential to the development of the dessert. Sugarcane was grown and refined in India before 500 BC and was crystallized, making it easy to transport, by AD 500. Sugar and sugarcane were traded, making sugar available to Macedonia by 303 BC and China by AD 600. In the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and China, sugar has been a staple of cooking and desserts for over a thousand years.

Sugarcane and sugar were little known and rare in Europe until the twelfth century or later when the Crusades and then colonization spread its use. Europeans began to manufacture sugar in the Middle Ages, and more sweet desserts became available. Even then sugar was so expensive usually only the wealthy could indulge on special occasions.

The first apple pie recipe was published in 1381. The earliest documentation of the term 'cupcake' was in "Seventy-five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes, and Sweetmeats" in 1828 in Eliza Leslie's Receipts cookbook. The Industrial Revolution in Europe and later America led to the mass-production of foodstuffs, including desserts, that could be processed, preserved, canned, and packaged. Frozen foods, including desserts, became very popular starting in the 1920s.

Further information contact Eleanor Huxter on 01992 892869

## Summer Fayre

As part of the Summer Fayre we held a Fun Dog Show, in the far churchyard. Once again, the weather was kind to us and we had a warm dry afternoon. Lots of lovely dogs, and their handlers, come along to take part and have fun and an enjoyable afternoon.

The classes and winners were:

Class	Winner	Handler	
Prettiest Bitch	Tina	Jean	
Most Handsome Dog	Pablo	Dee	
Best Puppy	Tilly	Joanne	
Best Veteran (Over 7)	Maxie	Carol Green	
Best Child Handler (Under 14)	Penny	Dolly	
Best Condition	Milo	Dawn	
Waggiest Tail	Elmo	Carol Green	Dog the
Judge would most like to take home	Milo	Dawn	

Best in Show went to Tina and Jean.

Best Reserve in Show went to Penny and Dolly.

Well done to all the winners and thank you, to you all that came along to support us. A big thank you goes out to Vivi from Medivet who did the judging and Tina Stewart for stewarding.

(A very big thank you too, to Kate who organised the event)

**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.

## 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.

## THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, HIGH BEACH

**Quiz Night:** 19th October, 7pm at The Owl Public House.

Teams of a maximum of eight, £10 per person. Raffle. Tickets from Sandy Potter – 07814 540307

Why not have a meal at The Owl before the quiz starts?

**Christmas Wreath Making** – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November from 11am to 1pm

Come and make a wreath to decorate your door for Advent.

As this event will be held in the Akers Room in church, we are limited to a maximum of 20 people so places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. The workshop will cost £30 per adult which will include all materials and light refreshments. If you wish to join us, please contact Sandra on 07814 540307.

## WALTHAM ABBEY CHURCH

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

October	5 <sup>th</sup>	Antoine Pichon <i>piano</i>
	12 <sup>th</sup>	Students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire
	19 <sup>th</sup>	Students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire
	26 <sup>th</sup>	Robin Walker <i>organ</i>
November	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Colin Eldred <i>clarinet</i> , Jane Eldred <i>viola</i> , Barbara Manning <i>piano</i>
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Royston Priory Singers
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Yu Zhou Zhang & Naixin Li <i>violin &amp; piano</i>
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire
	30 <sup>th</sup>	James Davy <i>organ</i>

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

Please remember to save your shoeboxes for Blythswood'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 19<sup>th</sup> October** or they can be left in the church. Thank you.

## **WALTHAM ABBEY FLOWER CLUB 2024**

We meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> October: AGM approx. 20 minutes. The workshop by Chris. Visitors £7

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

## **An Anteater in the Churchyard**

Most of us think of our native green woodpecker as a woodland bird, characteristically using its feet with two claws facing forward, two back and stumpy tail to flatten itself vertically against a tree trunk while drilling with a powerful beak. As our church wildflower area proves, this is only part of the story.

The area around the Buxton Graves has a number of ant-hills which were not very obvious during the summer when the grass was tall but now the area has been strimmed and raked, they are visible to keen-eyed woodpeckers who love ants, their eggs and their larvae, which are their staple food. A flash of olive green might make you think you have glanced a parakeet but the woodpecker's characteristic flight, dipping down then regaining height and dipping again, like a rollercoaster, gives it away. Once on the ground, engrossed in ants, you will see a scarlet cap, black moustache and yellow rump with little black and white spots along the edge of the wing. If the bird is a male, there will be a small patch of red feathers in the black moustache.

The dagger-shaped beak is ideal for probing into the ant-hill but the ants and their nursery are deep inside the mound, which is where the woodpecker's specialised piece of equipment comes in. Its tongue is 10cms (4 inches) long and being sticky is ideal for flicking out the ants but how does the bird store a tongue which is longer than its beak? When its tongue is stowed away, it spirals right round the inside and back of the bird's skull and attaches near to its right nostril. The tongue is made of multiple tiny bony structures which are slack at rest but can suddenly be mobilised to flick the tongue in and out. With each sticky flick, it can catch many ants and their pupae and whip them in. It has been estimated that a green woodpecker can eat two thousand ants in a day.

They are shy birds so you are most likely to catch sight of one by quietly rounding the end of the church building, especially if the sun is warming the wildflower area and encouraging activity in the ant hills. You are more likely to hear woodpecker voices calling from Oxleys Wood or the Wares, both places having plenty of rotten wood with juicy beetle larvae if ants are off the menu. The sound is like the laughter of a pantomime witch, giving the green woodpecker its other name, Yaffle or Laughing Betsey – devotees of Bagpuss will remember Professor Yaffle. Other names are linked to the green woodpecker's mythical ability to bring rain, such as Weather Cock or Rainbird. In Roman mythology, it was a sacred bird associated with Mars. The woodpecker flew around Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome and a Roman coin shows two woodpeckers in a fig tree with the she-wolf nursing the twins below it.

As far as St. Thomas's is concerned, the visiting woodpeckers are a happy example of how our attempts to keep a little of the original meadow are helping a whole food chain.

Sue McKinley