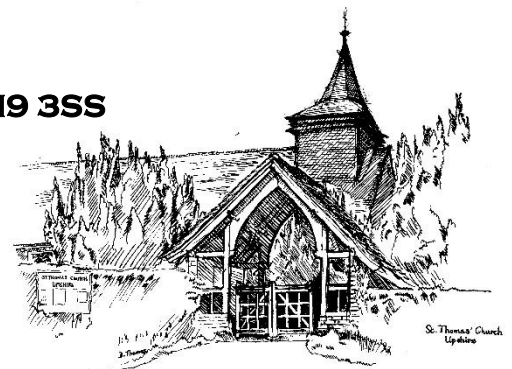


# ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SS

## NEWSLETTER

### *June 2025*



Rector: Revd Peter Smith, 01992 767897  
Team Vicar: Revd Jane Yeadon, 07960 604416. Email [janeyeadon@gmail.com](mailto: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>  
Email: [lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk)

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

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 JUNE

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Seventh Sunday of Easter 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Acts 16:16-34                      John 17:20-end
Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup>	3.00-4.00pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Pentecost 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Acts 2:1-21                      John 14:8-17 (25-27)  2.30-4.30pm AFTERNOON TEAS in the church
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Trinity Sunday 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31                      John 16:12-15
Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	11.30am for 12noon COMMUNITY LUNCH in church – 07899 846711 to book. Please let us know if you have to cancel. Thank you.
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	First Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 65:1-9                      Luke 8:26-39  2.30-4.30pm AFTERNOON TEAS in the church
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-end                      Luke 9:51-end

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.

#### 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, Sue, Ann & Cyril, Rosalind, Doreen, Maureen, Carol & George, Beverly, Terry, Jackie, Andrea & her Mum & Dad, Nina, Carmel & the Price family, Dave, Nigel, Lola, Pearl, Susan & Alan, Jackie & Linda, Graham, Christine, Chris, Izzie, Pennie and Sue.

## **THE VICAR WRITES:**

On the 8th June the church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost. Often called the "birthday of the Church." Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Easter. On this day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples in Jerusalem and something extraordinary happened: a small, uncertain group of followers was transformed into a bold, Spirit-filled community.

From that moment, the Church began to grow—and the world would never be the same.

Before Pentecost, the disciples were waiting—uncertain, hidden, and unsure of what would come next.

But when the Holy Spirit came, they were filled with power and courage. They spoke with boldness, reached across language barriers, and proclaimed the good news of Jesus.

And to my mind one of the most beautiful things about the first Pentecost is how inclusive it was. People from every nation heard the gospel in their own language. It was a sign of what the Church is meant to be: diverse, united, and welcoming.

At its heart, inclusion is about reflecting the heart of Christ, who welcomed the outcast, ate with sinners, touched the untouchable, and loved without condition. To be an inclusive church is to say, with both our words and actions:

“You are welcome here. You are loved. You belong.”

An inclusive church creates space for all people, regardless of age, race, background, ability, social status, or life story. Jesus didn't put up barriers—He tore them down.

Galatians 3:28 reminds us that “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

That doesn't mean we all look the same or think the same—but we are united by grace.

For inclusion goes beyond being friendly. It's about creating true belonging—where people feel seen, heard, and valued. An inclusive church listens, makes room for different voices, and strives to be a safe, loving place for those who may have been hurt or left out before.

Today, Pentecost challenges us to break down walls, to speak the language of love and compassion to those who are different from us, and to be a community where everyone has a place at the table.

So as we celebrate Pentecost this year, may we open our hearts once again to the Spirit's work in our lives. May we be refreshed, renewed, and ready to be the Church the world needs—Spirit-filled, Christ-centered, and inclusive.

Revd Jane Yeadon,

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

Benefice Youth Missioner

MB 07960 604416

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.

## **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



## **GROWER'S CORNER**

It's June! We are now six months into the year. How the year has flown!!! With more sunshine in May than the whole of the summer of 2024 it has thrown us gardeners other challenges. Particularly the lack of rain, hard ground for planting out and crops bolting. Yikes the weeds too. The bind weed on the plot is my nemesis. I only turn my back and I swear it pops up again.

June has always been a month of celebrations. Family birthdays, our wedding anniversary and longest days (which means more hours for gardening). This June will also be the first anniversary of us losing Dad (Mr Stephen Dennis Albert Brown, Dad would always say his name in full ), it seems unreal that this milestone is here. We all miss him so much and still so upset he is not with us. But I cherish all the lovely memories and we are looking forward to special celebrations in Upshire this month to honour our Dad. Thank you for the lovely plants I picked up at this years plant sale at St Thomas' also special thanks to Dave Wackett for a delivery of worms for my wormery at the plot.

### **Update on the plots:**

We've had our set-backs these few weeks both suffering with our backs. We've also had a holiday, a much needed rest. So jobs on the plot have been put on the back burner.

The fruit cage has arrived but not yet assembled, I'm waiting to collect a Facebook marketplace collection of a large(ish) greenhouse to replace the old polytunnel we had to remove as it was no longer salvageable. Our allotment normally gets a skip delivered this month, which will be great as we still have so much rubbish we keep unearthing.

There's still planting out to do and the never ending weeding. We still have not yet painted the shed either.

But on the plus side, we've harvested plenty including asparagus, early mangetout, salads, beetroot, radish, lovage, mint. With lots of lovely crops to come including the strawberries.

The dahlias left in the ground are sprouting! And now there are new editions in pots waiting to emerge. I've done some late sowings of zinnias and cosmos so hoping something comes of them.

### **June to do:**

- Outdoor tomatoes can be planted in deep rich soil in a warm and sheltered location. (I've tried some blight resistant varieties this year. Will keep you posted if they any good).
- Feed and mulch asparagus, water the crown during dry periods
- Take the tips off broad beans to lessen blackfly attacks
- To prevent salad crops from bolting, find a shady spot to sow more.
- Keep an eye on 1st early potatoes as these could be ready for harvest at the end of the month.
- Keep picking dwarf French beans to encourage further pods to set
- Tie in new growth on tomatoes and cucumbers. Pinch out side shoots.
- Container plants will dry out in warmer conditions.
- Stake plants that are growing tall to prevent snapping off in high winds.

### **Vegetables: June sowings**

The following can all be sown direct

Beetroot, cabbage spring and winter varieties, carrots, Chinese leaves, lettuce, peas, radish, spinach, spring onion, squash and turnip.

### **Fruit**

- Apples and pears should naturally start to shed a little excess fruit. If not you can thin out by hand.
- Tidy strawberry beds and mulch, peg down runners
- Tie in new growth blackberries, raspberries and hybrid berries

### **Flowers/shrubs**

- Summer bedding can be planted out
- Deciduous shrubs that flower in late winter, spring and early summer need annual pruning to encourage strong, healthy shoots and improve flowering. Annual pruning also prolongs the life of these early-flowering shrubs.

### **Tip: Keep an eye on pests.**

Fennel, dill and Angelica plants will help attract beneficial insects such as lacewings and ladybirds, which help to keep pest numbers down.

Happy midsummer. Love Louise.

## **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.

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

**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 British Heart Foundation. 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.

## **COMING UP AT ST. THOMAS’**

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month: 3.00-4.00pm Seedlings – messy craft, play, songs and stories for children and those who care for them.

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays, 2.30-4.30pm Afternoon Teas

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July: 1.30 – 5.00pm Summer Fayre and Fun Dog Show

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 3pm for 3.30pm start – Enfield Brass Band Concert – Last Night of the Proms

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September: 10am-2.00pm Macmillan Coffee Morning with Cake Competition

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September: Harvest Festival with last of the Afternoon Teas, 2.30-4.30pm

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October: Quiz Night

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November: Christmas Bazaar in the Village Hall

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December: Community Christmas Lunch

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December: 3pm for 3.30pm start – Enfield Brass Band Christmas Concert

## **50/50 CLUB**

Congratulations to the winners of the 50/50 Club Draw in April, who were:

1 <sup>st</sup> :	£35	No. 23	Steve Huxter of Claverhambury
2 <sup>nd</sup> :	£25	No. 20	Phyllis Huxter of Claverhambury
3 <sup>rd</sup> :	£15	No. 25	Louise Eleftheriou of Woodford Green

It is now time to begin Draw 16 of St Thomas’ 50/50 Club.

There will 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).

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

## **St Thomas’ Church 50/50 Club Draw 16**

**July to December 2025**

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: .....

## ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2025

Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon-2pm

18<sup>th</sup> June, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 15<sup>th</sup> October,  
12<sup>th</sup> November (a week earlier than usual), 3<sup>rd</sup> December

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

## SUMMER FAYRE & FUN DOG SHOW

SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1.30 – 5.00pm

In the churchyard

Refreshments in church

Many stalls, music and fun!

### Upshire Mothers' Union

Vice President Rose Gorton joined us to talk about the theme for the next triennium and give an update on MU locally.

The main theme is the **Rise Up Campaign**, to stop domestic abuse and violence. The info slips on our Rise Up posters are being taken by many across the diocese, which is sad to know there is abuse locally but good to know we may have helped someone survive that abuse.

**Join Us, Join In** is a campaign to help grow the MU membership. To keep going, and to thrive, MU need to grow the movement in Britain & Ireland, they need more members at the grassroots helping local families and the vulnerable in their communities.

The aim of Mothers' Union is **Stopping Violence, Stopping Poverty and Stopping Injustice**. Modern Day Slavery, to stop injustice, is another campaign.

Rose also spoke about the Duchess of Edinburgh becoming the new MU Patron. She visited Chelmsford Cathedral in January.

It was the same day the new World Wide President, Kathleen Snow visited Chelmsford Cathedral. Important people from Mary Sumner House attended. The President gave a talk in the afternoon. Kathleen is from Canada and although Canada is one of the largest countries they only have 411 members.

Mothers' Union main board consists of 10 people, 5 from around the world and 5 from the UK (as the UK are the biggest fundraisers).

There was talk about Mary Sumner House as it is so expensive to run and in need of extensive work; it was a thriving business before Covid, having transformed the bedrooms in conferencing facilities. Those facilities were not available during Covid and have been slow to take off again. The outcome of MSH is to be decided by the board.

There is still a lot of work going on with prisons: teaching **English for Women**, sewing, knitting and other traditional MU work.

**MU Light** has not worked out as hoped. There are 5 MU Light groups in Chelmsford one has now closed but it's hoped the rest will carry on.

President Maxine has been taking info of MU to Deanery Synods and people have been amazed as it is 'real work' and not just baking cakes as MU is perceived.

More **Empowering Her Literacy** notices/posters to be displayed for awareness about joining the campaign to put women's education on the Global agenda.

MU now looking at churches to see how many have a MU branch. It is thought to be only one in ten churches.

MSH have come up with a Church Base Membership idea. It is not fully understood how this will work yet.

Next year Mothers' Union is celebrating 150 years. There will be many celebrations going on, a recruitment campaign and fundraising challenges planned. St Paul's is booked for 20<sup>th</sup> June 2026 for 1800 people. The MU annual gathering is the next day for 850 people. There is a big picnic planned for June 2026. Chelmsford will be encouraging people to eat together. In October 2026 there will be a MU World Wide gathering in Durban, South Africa for 3 days.

If you have been affected by domestic abuse or any form of violence, or are concerned for someone else who has, please contact **the National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247**.

There is no meeting in June. Further information on MU contact Eleanor Huxter on 01992 892869.

## **WALTHAM ABBEY CHURCH**

**Music for Lunch** – Saturdays at 12 noon. Refreshments available from 11.30am. Free admission with retiring collection.

June 7<sup>th</sup>: The Wild Rose Trio flute, oboe, recorders, piano, harpsichord

14<sup>th</sup>: To be confirmed

21<sup>st</sup>: Musicians from Trinity Laban Conservatoire

28<sup>th</sup>: To be confirmed

## **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 1.45 for 2pm start.

We have an outing to the Mount, an open garden in Epping Road, Roydon on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July. All welcome, £7 per person, contact Chris as below.

Our next meeting is on 22<sup>nd</sup> July: demonstration by Sion Rogers. All are welcome, raffle, sales table, tea, coffee and homemade cake. Further details from Chris on 07792 594443.

## **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**

Sunday afternoon teas 2.00-5.30pm every week until Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September. There will be free walk-in concerts by Asaph at 3pm on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 20<sup>th</sup> July, 17<sup>th</sup> August and 21<sup>st</sup> September. Everyone is welcome to enjoy the tranquillity of our churchyard whilst sampling home-made cakes, tea and coffee.

**Charity Concert in the Forest Church of the Holy Innocents** The next charity concert to raise funds for Myeloma UK will be on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm. Choral8 and friends will perform a mixture of light hearted music, with something for everyone. There will be pieces by Gilbert & Sullivan, Flanders & Swann, Mozart, The Kinks, and ABBA, plus songs from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, and even some sea shanties! Multiple Myeloma is a form of bone marrow cancer which is treatable but so far incurable. Stephen Fellowes lived with this disease for some years but sadly died in January. This concert will be in tribute to him. Do come along for a fun musical evening with us whilst raising money to help find a cure for Myeloma. Please purchase tickets from TicketSource at: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/charity-concert>: Katherine Fellowes, producer/director

## **ANAGRAM** The answer to the anagram is CHEESECAKE.

At **HOME INSTEAD** Epping Forest we recognise that as we get older, you may need help to be able to stay living in your own home. We Tailor our care packages to meet your needs making it possible for you to stay living in your own home where you are happiest.

Our services include Dementia Care, Personal Care, Home Help, Companionship and much more.

Our monthly Memory Lane and Singing for the Brain Sessions are held at Theydon Bois Village Hall providing lots of fun complimented with refreshments served by our lovely Team. Why not contact us to find out more and to get a copy of our What's on Where Guide (WOW Guide) and future newsletters.

Telephone 01992 666777 or email: [Victoria.rigby@homeinstead.co.uk](mailto:Victoria.rigby@homeinstead.co.uk)

## **CRAFT MARKET**

The Craft Market and Table Top Sale in Waltham Abbey Town Hall will be on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, then the first Tuesday of each month until December. 10.00am – 2.00pm. Admission free; refreshments.

## **WALTHAM ABBEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Monthly talks on Friday evenings at 7.30pm at the Baptist Church, Paradise Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1RL.

Next meeting: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September

Visitors welcome, donation of £2 per person requested.

## **WALTHAM ABBEY COMMUNITY POPPY PROJECT**

Come and join our team working to create poppy displays around Waltham Abbey for Remembrance 2025.

Monthly crafting sessions: Saturdays 1.00-3.00pm in Waltham Abbey Library

21<sup>st</sup> June, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 18<sup>th</sup> October.

For more information, search 'Waltham Abbey Community Poppy Project' on Facebook, or email

[walthamabbeydi@gmail.com](mailto:walthamabbeydi@gmail.com)

If you have other crafting skills and want to get involved, please come to one of the above sessions. **All welcome.**



## **Oh, to be in England now that Spring is here** (with apologies to Robert Browning)

Ask anyone which is their favourite season many will say autumn for the wonderful colours that trees turn, others might pick winter for evenings in front of a roaring fire toasting crumpets and the wonderland of snow whilst others will go for summer – long sunny days and the chance of a holiday abroad. To me spring is the best for it foretells of warmer times to come but more importantly it signifies the re-emergence of life both flora and fauna. There are set days for the start of the seasons, my diary for this year and next states March 20<sup>th</sup> although my 60-year-old Wightman's Arithmetical Tables lists March 21<sup>st</sup>. The day does seem to wander somewhat although the season of spring was determined many, many years ago as to be 92 days and 21 hours long. We need to ignore the Met Office's prognostication that it starts on March 1<sup>st</sup>, it seems that their super-computers aren't able to correlate something that starts mid-month! The ancients using abacuses and primitive slide-rules managed accurately, even Easter had been calculated for a millennium – to fall on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. Perhaps it's worth noting that Christmas bucks all the rules, after all it starts in August and doesn't finish until the last present is broken and the booze has run out, usually the third week in January! When I worked as a litter picker in Epping Forest my colleagues and I used to find that come October old Christmas trees, many still covered with baubles, would be dumped in the Forest presumably to make room for that year's new tree!

So, re-emergence of life. The first sign is generally the blossom appearing on trees before their leaves, done to enable insects to find the flowers more easily. But underneath one can just discern the verdant growth of the new year's leaves which wait until the necessary pollination has taken place before sprouting out. Some trees don't always follow the rules, we have a collection on our horse yard of what appears to be some type of thorn trees although I have been unable to categorically identify them. Their leaves appear well before their blossom so much so that this year because of the lack of rain I thought that the blossom would not come. How wrong I was for six trees all came out together with the most glorious white blossom imaginable. Think of a fresh fall of heavy snow, that's how these trees looked – the white almost blinding. They are a terrible time waster for after putting the horse out I invariably just stand and admire their beauty, unfortunately it won't last for as soon as pollination takes place they will start developing into fruit, in this case a hard, red, small seed. Some plants aren't viewed quite so magnanimously. I spent a long time cutting back brambles from the track down to the paddocks to make access easier but despite the lack of rain the brambles have shot into growth, each night they seem to put on over six inches on each branch complete with jagged thorns! The hedge trimmer and secateurs will be the order of the day again soon!

But it's not just the flora that is showing new life but also the animal kingdom. I've written before about 'our foxes' and each year they never fail to delight us with their antics and the young generation that they produce. At present we have two vixens who have obviously produced cubs. Their progeny from last year still live on the fields around us and two visit regularly, one will venture onto the yard whereas the other stays on the other side of the fence so long as I can manage to throw food over! The mums are braver, one will come to within a couple of yards whilst waiting for food scraps and other delicacies but the other has no fear for she will happily take food from our hand. Indeed, whilst I eat my lunchtime sandwiches I have Matty on one side of me and the two mums the other all waiting for the crusts off my sandwiches. Their cubs have been born on the top floor of the old barn which is unsafe for human use as the floors are rotten. Cubs have fallen through in the past and make-do repairs have stopped the incursions downwards, however, we obviously missed one hole as the other day I could hear barking from the hay barn and sure enough, looking through the grill in the door, I could see a cub wandering about. Donning my gloves I entered the area and the cub shot into between two bales of hay leaving his bottom sticking out – an ostrich syndrome! Having picked him up I took him outside to where his Mum was waiting, she grabbed him around the throat and dragged him back upstairs to the upper floor. Thankfully no more have fallen, so far!

The avian life is no less busy although we have lately had a dearth of dunnocks and robins, both species are usually spotted gathering scraps that have fallen from the feeders. Surprisingly, the robins seem to buck the received wisdom that they are fiercely territorial as often two will feed together. But lately none are around, and I found out why as whilst sitting watching a dunnock feeding there was a flurry of wings as a sparrowhawk shot past gathering up the dunnock in its talons and sweeping off through the trees. The other day a crow went past in obvious distress and seconds later the reason became apparent for mewing could be heard, not one but two voices from the two buzzards floating languidly high above. Then something happened which I had never seen before, the buzzards folded their wings back and dropped or rather zoomed at great speed down into the field next door. Presumably they had spotted something but to see it from their great height of roughly six hundred feet is staggering. The bird feeders are being emptied daily so young avian life must obviously be nurtured, indeed the nesting box we put up on a tree is being used by blue tits who are constantly back and forth from its entrance. We often have spotted woodpeckers visiting and also hear the 'yaffle' of the green woodpecker, so it has been a pleasant surprise to see a green woodpecker clearing out a hole in one of the trees at the back of the yard. There is a large pile of 'off-cuts' at the bottom of the trunk so hopefully the 'nest' will be to the right dimensions and that young will eventually appear! Toasting crumpets in the cold of winter or holidays abroad, no, not for me for spring is the best time as far as I'm concerned, hopefully it is for you as well.

Adrian J Liddle