

ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SN

NEWSLETTER

October 2026



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This Newsletter is free: donations to Lyn Wackett. Copy date for November Newsletter: 14th 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 3 rd	3pm-4 pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church
Sunday 4 th	Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity 9.15 am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7 Matthew 21:33-end
Sunday 11 th	Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 25:1-9 Matthew 22:1-14
Saturday 17 th	6.30 for 7.00 pm QUIZ NIGHT in the church. 07899 846711 to book
Sunday 18 th	Luke the Evangelist 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 35:3-6 Luke 10:1-9
Wednesday 21 st	11.30am for 12 noon COMMUNITY LUNCH in church. 07899 846711 to book, Please let us know if you have to cancel
Sunday 25 th	Bible Sunday 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Nehemiah 8:1-4a (5-6) 8-12 Matthew 24:30-35
Wednesday 28 th	2.00-4.00pm Upshire Mothers' Union JUST DESSERTS afternoon in the Village Hall. £5 person
Sunday 1 st November	All Saints' Day 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Revelation 7:9-end Matthew 5:1-12
Saturday 7 th	3-4pm SEEDLINGS meet in church

CHURCH FLOWERS

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

THE VICAR WRITES

I love the month of October. Summer has faded and our forest slowly transforms into a wonderland of gold, red and brown, and everywhere we look there are leaves beginning to fall. For some people the sight of falling leaves brings sadness, a sign that something is ending, but I like to think they have rather more to teach us than that.

Leaves don't cling to the tree forever. When their time comes, they let go.

That sounds simple, but letting go is not always easy for us. We can spend a great deal of our lives holding on; to things we have accumulated, to memories, to old hurts, to worries about the future, or even to the way we think things ought to be. Yet the natural world reminds us that change is part of life. The leaves don't fall because they have failed. They have done exactly what they were meant to do. They have spent the summer gathering sunlight, providing shade and helping the tree to grow. And now, as autumn comes, their purpose changes and I for one find that reassuring.

For as we travel through life our lives change too. Things that once seemed important may become less important. We may no longer be able to do everything we once did. Our families change, friendships change and sometimes the places we know and love change too.

Now it can be tempting to see these changes only as losses. But perhaps autumn invites us to see them differently; that a change in our role does not mean a loss of our value for the leaves can remind us that letting go is a necessary part of making room for something new.

The tree may look bare for a while, but beneath the surface it is preparing for another season. Winter will come, but then will spring and I think that that is a wonderful image of Christian hope. Our faith does not promise that life will never change, or that we will never experience loss. Instead, it reminds us that God is with us through every season of life. There are times of growth and times of rest, times of abundance and times when we have to let go. The writer of Ecclesiastes puts it beautifully:

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

Perhaps, as we walk through October and see the leaves falling around us, we might pause and ask ourselves:

What am I grateful for?

What do I need to let go of?

Where might God be leading me into a new season?

The leaves don't know what next spring will look like. They simply let go when the time comes, trusting the tree to which they belong. Perhaps we can learn something from them.

We don't have to know exactly what the future holds. We don't have to hold everything together ourselves. We can let go of some of our worries and place them into God's hands, trusting that whatever season of life we find ourselves in, we are still held by the God who loves us.

So, this October, when you see the leaves beginning to fall, perhaps don't just see an ending.

See a reminder:

It is okay to change.

It is okay to let go.

It is okay to begin again.

And through every season, God is with us.

--

Revd Jane Yeadon

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

Benefice Youth Missioner

Deanery Vocations Advisor - Epping Forest and Ongar

MB: 07960 604416

Monday is my rest day

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, Sue, Ann & Cyril, Rosalind, Carol & George, Jackie, Andrea & her Mum & Dad, Nina, Carmel & the Price family, Nigel, Lola, Pearl, Susan & Alan, Jackie & Linda, Graham, Christine, Chris, Izzy, Pennie, Steve, Kevin, Gina, Sue, Rosemary, Gill, Mark, Fred and Cyril.

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' 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



ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

Our mailing list to receive the electronic version of the Newsletter 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.

ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2026

3rd Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon start

21st October, 11th November (a week earlier than usual), 2nd December (Christmas Lunch)

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

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

ENFIELD BRASS BAND CHRISTMAS CONCERT

In the church

Sunday 13th December, 3pm for 3.30pm start.

Book early for this lively concert

tickets £10 (£5 for under 16s) from Lyn on 01992 711573.

Seasonal refreshments, raffle.

COMING UP AT ST THOMAS':

Monthly Community Lunches (see separate article)

Saturday 17th October: Quiz Night 6.30 for 7.00pm

Saturday 21st November: Christmas Fayre in Village Hall 10.30am-2.00pm

Sunday 13th December: Brass Band Christmas Concert 3.00 for 3.30 start

Litter Pick Saturday 24 October 10.30 am

I hate to see litter lying around the streets, so I'm holding a litter pick in Upshire on Saturday 24 October. Why not come and join me? We will meet at the church at 10.30, and collect litter along the main road through Upshire Village from the pub, going eastwards. We will have litter picks and high vis vests, but if you've got your own do bring them.

If you have any questions, please ring me 07852 668633.

Ruth Moore

GROWERS CORNER

October is the key transition month, we are holding on to an extra hour of daylight before the clocks change at the end of the month. The last of this year's late summer crops have been harvested and we are now thinking about protecting tender plants. Autumn is officially here with amazing skies and dewy mornings. The risk of frost is ever closer. We are still preserving crops, have made chutneys and ketchups as well as stocking up the freezer with sauces and crops to use over the winter. It would have been Dad's birthday this month too. We will make sure we take the time to remember him with a nice cake. Dad loved his cakes.

Update on the plots:

We've been away for two weeks so this also means that we've had a well-deserved rest. So much of time this summer has been spent watering meaning other tasks have fallen behind. We still have the sheds to organise and tidy behind the greenhouse. That is a big job and we need to dedicate some time to it. We need to plan to empty out the Polytunnel and greenhouse ready for the winter months. I am hoping that the dahlias will keep cropping until the first frosts.

October to do:

- **Clear Beds:** Remove spent summer plants, leaving roots of nitrogen-fixing plants like beans and peas in the ground.
- Continue to weed throughout the plot to prevent weeds from becoming overwhelming.
- Turn the compost heap to accelerate decomposition and add fallen leaves or pea and bean foliage to it.
- Protect bare patches of soil by mulching or covering.

October Sowings

- **Root Vegetables:** Plant root vegetables such as turnips, carrots, and radishes to benefit from the cool weather and quick growth.
- **Hardy Vegetables:** Plant cold-tolerant greens like kale, chard, and winter lettuce.
- **Overwintering Crops:** Sow seeds for plants that will overwinter, such as broad beans.
- **Fruit Trees:** Order bare-rooted fruit trees and soft fruit bushes for delivery in November onwards.

October Flower Sowings

- Start hollyhock seeds undercover now. Pot up seedlings and over-winter in a cold greenhouse or cold frame.
- Sow sweet peas and place them in the cold frame over winter for planting out in the spring.
- Sow Aquilegia Vulgaris in a cold frame ready to plant out next spring.
- Oriental poppy seeds can be sown into pots and placed in a cold frame over winter.

Tip: Time to be thinking about spring bulbs!!! If you have a colour scheme you want to follow, order them now.

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower." — Albert Camus

Happy growing. Love Louise.

CRAFT MARKET

The next Craft Markets in Waltham Abbey Town Hall are Tuesday 6th October, Tuesday 3rd November and Tuesday 1st December. 10.00am – 2.00pm.

MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING & BAKE OFF

The Macmillan Coffee Morning on Saturday 19th September raised £516 for Macmillan Cancer Support. Thank you to everyone who came and bought or donated and to all the helpers.

As usual we held a Cake Baking Competition and we thank Michael Godfre, helped by his wife Anthea, for judging it. Congratulations to Eliza who won the junior competition and Carol Baldwin, who won the adult competition.

If you were unable to attend the coffee morning, but would like to donate you can do so at the following website:
<https://donate.justgiving.com/fundraising/cm26002384/donation-amount>

UPSHIRE MOTHERS' UNION

MOTHERS' UNION

An MU member's 150th Anniversary Fundraising Challenge:

When 1,600 of MU members gathered at St Paul's Cathedral for the 150th Anniversary Celebratory service, many travelled great distances by train, car and coach to attend. But Zonal Trustee for York Province, Deb Lee, went above and beyond in her choice of transport. Deb chose to embark on a nine-day cycle ride from York to London, stopping off over 20 times on the journey to meet members, before finishing up at St Paul's Cathedral for the anniversary service. Cycling over 370 miles, she carried a prayer capsule with her containing the prayers of the members and branches she met, she climbed a cumulative height of over 4,200 meters, and raised over £5,000 for Mothers' Union. Deb enjoys cycling and as a York trustee, she thought it would be good to do something provincial that would take her all over the place and allow her to meet lots of people on this anniversary year. Deb started planning in October last year. Firstly, to decide on the route, then she contacted people in both York and Canterbury provinces to determine stopping points in lots of different dioceses. Her aim was to visit ten dioceses, and eight cathedrals/minsters. Once she had decided a route, she sent it to the DPs in York and Leeds, and worked with them to decide on some good places to stop, and to obtain contact details for people on route in case she ran into difficulties. She had lots of great breakfasts and lunches with members throughout.

Bev Jullien, MU's recently retired CEO, joined them on the penultimate day, she had links with the churches around Harpenden, so it was a joyful day for her to visit the area. The prayer capsule was York province's initiative for the 150th. The Bishop wrote a provincial prayer, and after a 150th anniversary provincial celebration service at Manchester Cathedral in March, the capsule spent a week in each diocese in York province. They each added a prayer to the capsule, and it's been on every possible form of transport – car, tram, bus, horse, train, and more. It's been round the TT track on the Isle of Man, onto Lindisfarne, spent some time with the RNLI on the west coast, and visited Sycamore Gap on Hadrian's Wall. Every diocese took it to somewhere significant to them, imbuing it with a real persona. It was a tactile connection between the dioceses, showing strength they have in difference, and symbolising the common thread that runs between all. There was a handover service between each diocese each time the capsule changed hands, which used the same liturgy, providing real continuity throughout. It was given to Deb outside York Minster on the Tuesday morning when she set off, and the branches she visited were really pleased to see it. As Fundraising starts with fun, Deb chose to incorporate fundraising as a central aim of her cycle ride as she enjoys cycling and it's fun. She used a bunting template to make little flags to put on the back of her bike, which meant that everyone could see she was from Mothers' Union. After talking to people, who Deb met on her travels, about Mothers' Union, they were often inspired to donate, or to learn more about what MU do. In an hotel outside London, she spoke to a fellow guest in the lift, and he remembered how his local branch had cared for his mother when she had Alzheimer's, and her gave me £10. Before arriving at St Paul's Cathedral, Deb's first stop in London was to Mary Sumner House, where she was given a great welcome by all the staff. A handover service for the prayer capsule was held in MSH Chapel, where more prayers were added to it, including a memory stick containing pictures of the capsule on its journey to that point. Deb then cycled to St Paul's, in her glad rags rather than her cycle gear, to photograph the capsule at St Paul's, before bringing it back to MSH to be placed in Mothers' Union's archive. Deb said the service at St Paul's was an incredible way to end her trip.

ON WEDNESDAY 28TH OCTOBER WE WILL BE HOSTING A 'JUST DESSERTS AFTERNOON'
IN THE VILLAGE HALL,

2.00PM - 4.00PM AT £5.00 PER HEAD (INCLUDING RAFFLE TICKETS AND A FREE DRINK REFILL,
A SECOND PORTION £1).

EVERYONE IS WELCOME, SO DO COME ALONG AND JOIN US.

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 at 94 Upshire Road – please leave in the porch if no reply. Please leave about ½“ of envelope around the stamps. Thank you.

ANAGRAM The answer to the anagram is BRAINSTORM.

SHOEBOXES

By filling a shoebox with simple things you can bring warmth, joy and hope this Christmas.

Filled 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 (please ensure the box can still be opened as the contents need to be checked for customs).

It costs approximately £7,000 to send a container load of shoeboxes to Eastern Europe so if you are able to donate any amount to help with 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** 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) and no other food. Other items: notepad/colouring books/pens/pencils etc, new make-up, sewing equipment, household candles, screwdrivers/pliers, kitchen utensils, t-shirts, pyjamas,, shirts – anything you can give will be appreciated.

Boxes can be for any age – children aged 3 and over, adults – the choice is yours.

Last year we were able to send 148 shoeboxes to needy people in Ukraine and the above countries thanks to your generosity.

Boxes and any items to go in them can be left with Lyn as above **no later than 11th October** or they can be left in the church. Thank you.

MUSIC FOR LUNCH at Waltham Abbey Church Saturdays at 12 noon.

Refreshments available from 11.30am. All welcome, free admission with retiring collection.

- October 3rd: Brahms' quintet for clarinet and strings
 10th: Steel Pan in Motion: Classical Sounds of Steel
 17th: No recital
 24th: Simeon Walker, *piano*
 31st: Alexander Evans, *organ*
- November 7th: Cambridge Renaissance Voices
 14th: Adam Khan *guitar*, Julian Rowlands *bandoneon*
 21st: Student(s) from Trinity Laban Conservatoire
 28th: Travis Baker *organ*

50/50 CLUB

Congratulations to the winners of the 50/50 Club Draw in August:

1 st :	£35	No. 25	Louise Eleftheriou of Woodford Green
2 nd :	£25	No. 80	Valerie Lee of Ninefields
3 rd :	£15	No. 35	Joan O'Mullane of Waltham Abbey

It is not too late to join Draw 18 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 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 18

July to December 2026

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 40-45-20, 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. Thank you.

Name:
Address:
Telephone:

HIGH BEACH CHURCH

Festival of Light Saturday 31st October: 4-30-7.00pm

Come and join us to celebrate All Hallows Eve. If you wish, please bring a pumpkin carved with Christian symbols. Children are welcome to come dressed as a hero or heroine or a star. A BBQ will be running all evening, soup and a roll will also be available. Many activities for younger people. All refreshments and activities are free but any donations will be much appreciated.

Christmas Concert by The Songbirds Saturday 28th November at 7.00pm. Tickets £15 from Margaret Wackett on 07949 961184, includes seasonal refreshments

Christmas Concert by The Woodford Singers Sunday 6th December at 2.00pm. Tickets £15 from Margaret Wackett on 0784 961184, including seasonal refreshments

Christmas in the Forest Sunday 13th December at 3.30pm. The ticket price is £15 but there is an Early Bird Rate of £12 for any tickets purchased from 8pm on 26th September until just before midnight on 11th October! Please visit www.ticketsource.co.uk and search for 'Christmas in the Forest'

ST LAWRENCE CHURCH in the C of E School, Ninefields, EN9 3EL

HARVEST QUIZ on Saturday 3rd October in the school hall. Doors open 1.45 for 2.00pm start. Tickets £10 (children £5) include Ploughman's Lunch. Teams of up to 8 people.

Please contact Valerie on 01992 713996 by 1st October.

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 Jean on 07733 084815.

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

WALTHAM ABBEY FLOWER CLUB

We meet on the 4th Tuesday in the month except January, June, August and December at Waltham Abbey Community Centre, Crooked Mile, EN9 1QD. Doors open 1.45 for 2pm start.

Next meeting: 27th October, AGM and workshop. All are welcome, raffle, sales table, tea, coffee and homemade cake. Further details from Chris on 07792 594443.

AN INTRODUCTION INTO HISTORIC WALTHAM ABBEY

Contact Waltham Abbey Tourist Information Centre on 01992 660336 or tic@walthamabbey-tc.gov.uk for more information on day/evening guided tours.

Cooper's Cards

WE HAVE MOVED!

19 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1ER

Greetings cards, balloons, toys, wrapping paper, stationery and seasonal items

Family run and friendly shop, pet friendly

Monday to Saturday 8am to 5pm

WALTHAM ABBEY STITCHERS Knit, Crochet and Chat! Every Friday 1.30-3.30pm in 'The Space', Epping Forest District Museum, cost £4. Everyone welcome, bring your stitching project and pop along any Friday or contact Diana dian@thecrochetchain.co.uk for more details.

What's on at Epping Forest District Museum!

Join us at the Epping Forest District Museum on Sun Street in Waltham Abbey for changing exhibitions, community curated displays, exciting events and lots more! We are the museum service for the Epping Forest District of Essex, housing around 75,000 items which tell the story of the people, places and events that have shaped our corner of Essex over many centuries. Visit the museum to discover and help shape the telling and display of your local heritage.

The museum is open 10am – 4pm on Mondays, Tuesdays Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

14th March – 14th December 2026: TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE IN ROMAN DUROLITUM – Roman Life in West Essex

Friday 2nd October: Essex Cider Tasting, 7-9pm. £20 per person – to book see below

Wednesday 14th October: Home Learner session: Bayeux Tapestry live stream from the British Museum 10am-12pm 7-14 years. Witness one of the most incredible pieces of Anglo-Saxon history! Hosted by Emma-Louise Amansia with lots of expert to answer your questions. To book see below.

HALF TERM EVENTS:

Tuesday 27th October – Drop in Crafts 10.30am-3.30pm - £3.50 per child

Wednesday 28th October – Art Workshop 11am-12pm - £5 per child

Monster Sitter: Storytelling Event, 2.00-3.30pm £5 per child

Thursday 29th October – Monster Museum: A Spooky after hours event 4.30-6.30pm £7 per child, £3 per adult

To book/info: www.ticketsource.co.uk/efdmuseum or call 01992 716882

WALTHAM ABBEY MEN'S SHED

Every Monday at Epping Forest District Museum, 1.00-3.00pm.

A welcoming, inclusive place for local men to get together, socialise and turn their hand to practical tasks. New members welcome. Free to join, free refreshments, just turn up.

For more information contact 01992 910701 or communityhub@vae.org.uk

WALTHAM ABBEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

Visitors welcome: donation of £4 per person requested.

16th October: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM BYRD. Considered as one of the greatest composers of the Renaissance, Burd was a pupil of Thomas Tallis. He had links to Ingatestone and Standon Massey in Essex.

Speaker: Andrew Smith.

KING HAROLD II DAY CELEBRATIONS Saturday 10th October

Join us in remembering King Harold II Lord of the Manor of Waltham, there will be a procession through the town and the following events will take place:

EFD MUSEUM: Medieval Actors from 'Swords of Penda' will be performing.

Dancing by Chingford Morris Men. Performance/event times will be announced closer to the day.

There will be Anglo-Saxon cooking arts, craft activities and storytelling, along with King Harold's Battle Axe throughout the day. Join us for a small ceremony before the procession starts at 1pm.

Waltham Abbey Church tower will be open (weather permitting) 1.30-3.45pm £5 per person. (Supporting the bell fund) Tea/coffee and cake will be served in the church.

LITERARY GIANTS

Who are your literary greats? Could it be Shakespeare, Orwell, Donne, Lawrence, Chaucer, the Brontes, Hardy or Austin? No? Well, how about Blyton, Johns, Doyle, BB and Forester? I'm afraid when I tried reading some of the 'accepted' literary giants they left me cold and I couldn't get into their stories. Also, having to study three of them for English Literature exams it somewhat put me off their writing for life! I started my literary journey like many of my generation with Enid Blyton's Noddy and Big Ears, the unexpurgated versions, and I don't think I have turned into a raving xenophobe for all that despite what some so-called social experts might say. Blyton

wrote hundreds of books and thousands of short stories so following on from Noddy came The Famous Five and The Secret Seven. Really exciting stories for youngsters which were definitely 'couldn't put downable.' From Blyton it was a move to Capt. W E Johns who wrote the Biggles stories. Not about the South Woodford testudine who after recent escapades is, I believe, vying for a starring role in the next Avanti TV advert but rather a teenager who enlists in the Royal Flying Corps as an underage pilot. After many daring adventures throughout the first world war, he becomes a charter pilot in the inter-war years whilst working secretly for the British Secret Service. During World War II he commanded 666 Squadron then when that conflict ends he headed up the Special Air Police attached to Scotland Yard. Real 'Boy's Own' stuff!

Where Biggles was aimed at children the next author appealed to both youngsters and adults alike. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a doctor based in Southsea whose practice had few clients so he took up writing which became his mainstay employment. His most famous character was, of course, Sherlock Holmes, a private detective, but one with a difference. He was asexual, had a brilliant analytical mind, smoked heavily and also tended to inject himself with various narcotics; a vice not viewed in Edwardian times the same as we do now! The stories were invariably bizarre criminal mysteries that involved people of all classes from the working man up to royalty. Doyle also wrote other books and his well-known ones are the Professor Challenger series; the first, The Lost World, being perhaps the better known especially as a film of the book was made with Michael Rennie as its star. In Edwardian times the world was still much unexplored so in The Lost World, Challenger and a team of fellow explorers find a mysterious plateau in the Brazilian Amazonian jungle that is a thousand feet high with unclimbable sides. There time has stood still and dinosaurs still rule the land. The book is still available if you have not read it. Incidentally, with the copyright on Doyle's work now run out a new book and audio-book has been produced: Sir Sherlock: The Red-Letter Day, starring none other than the Dr Who actor, Tom Baker.

I've mentioned 'BB', Denys Watkins-Pitchford MBE, before although I've had trouble finding the article! He deserves, though, an article to himself as he was, apart from being a wonderful writer, a countryman, a wildfowler, a naturalist and a breeder of the rare purple emperor butterfly. Most of his books were factual although he did write several children's books the best known of which was 'The Little Grey Men' which won the Carnegie Prize for literature. Inspired by the sighting from his bedroom window of a real-life gnome, this book is about the last four gnomes to live in England and their adventures. And that brings us to C S Forester who has written many books but is probably best known for his Hornblower series. Supposedly loosely based on the life of Vice-Admiral Nelson who had started his career in the Royal Navy as a penniless midshipman, as did Hornblower. However, where Nelson was killed in battle Hornblower lived to a ripe old age becoming an Admiral of the Fleet, a Baron with a seat in the Lords, wealthy with an estate in Kent and married to one of the most beautiful women in England, the sister of the Duke of Wellington no less.

The eleven books are chronological but were not written chronologically. The first, for instance, had Hornblower as a Captain sailing to South America. Forester readily admits that he would get a germ of an idea and find a suitable place in history to set a story as he explains in the penultimate book, The Hornblower Companion, he wrote two years before his death. Along with how Forester wrote the stories the book also includes maps showing all the journeys that Hornblower took in his life. Perhaps the last book, the unfinished one, explains this better than I. In Hornblower and the Crisis Hornblower had just completed his command of the *Hotspur* and was on his way back to England with little chance of obtaining a further command when he acquires secret orders from Bonaparte which he duly takes to the Admiralty. As a backdrop to the story is the factual element that the Franco-Spanish fleet under the command of Admiral Villeneuve had retreated to Cadiz after sailing across the Atlantic to lure Nelson away from the Channel so that Bonaparte could invade England. That ruse had failed but the Admiralty needed to have Nelson confront the Franco-Spanish fleet to neutralize it. The Admiralty uses the secret orders that Hornblower had acquired so that further orders could be forged requiring Villeneuve to sail from Cadiz to meet Nelson. Hornblower who can speak French as well as Spanish is persuaded to get those orders to Villeneuve which he achieves, the fleet subsequently leaves Cadiz and the rest is history. Talking of historical events, one asks why the Tsar did not capitulate when Bonaparte invaded Russia, the answer lies in the book: 'The Commodore'!

As Forester's last book was only half finished there are two short stories included, one when Hornblower was a young Lieutenant and the other when he is an elderly man who meets up with Bonaparte. But you'll have to read them to get the full gist! The Hornblower stories have unfortunately been portrayed in a TV series which was an absolute travesty but if you can obtain the Gregory Peck film, Captain Horatio Hornblower RN, also starring Virginia Mayo you'll find a film that portrays Hornblower much as in the books, it should do as Forester helped write the screenplay! Peck evidently said that it was one of his favourite films, one in which there is plenty of action. Incidentally, the original Star Trek series owes its origins to Hornblower as it was pitched as Hornblower in deep space. With Christmas coming and if you have teenagers, don't get them X-boxes or PlayStations, instead spend less money and buy the three compendiums (The Young Hornblower, Captain Hornblower RN and Admiral Hornblower) and the unfinished book (Hornblower and the Crisis). They will provide a lifetime of exciting adventures that will be read time and time again.

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