ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SN
NEWSLETTER
November 2026



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 3SN.
Website: https://stthomaschurchupshire.com
Editor: Mrs Lyn Wackett, 94 Upshire Road, Waltham Abbey. 01992 711573
Email: lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk

This Newsletter is free: donations to Lyn Wackett. Copy date for December Newsletter: **7th November**

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 NOVEMBER

Sunday 1st	ALL SAINTS DAY 9.15 am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Revelation 7:9-end	Matthew 5:1-12
Saturday 7th	3pm-4 pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church	
Sunday 8th	REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY Service of Remembrance at the Lych Gate followed by service in church Readings: Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16	Matthew 25:1-13
Wednesday 11th	11.30am for 12 noon COMMUNITY LUNCH in church. 07899 846711 to book, Please let us know if you have to cancel	
Sunday 15th	Second Sunday before Advent 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-end	Matthew 25:14-30
Saturday 21st	10.30am-2.30pm CHRISTMAS FAYRE in the Village Hall	
Sunday 22nd	CHRIST THE KING 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24	Matthew 25:31-end
Wednesday 25th	2.15pm Upshire Mothers' Union meet in the Village Hall. All welcome.	
Sunday 29th	First Sunday of Advent Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9	Mark 13:24-end
Weds 2nd December	11.30 for 12 noon. CHRISTMAS LUNCH in church. 07899 846711 to book. Please let us know if you have to cancel	
Saturday 5th	3-4pm SEEDLINGS meet in church	
Sunday 6th	Second Sunday of Advent 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11	Mark 1:1-8

THE VICAR WRITES

Dear Friends,

November seems to be the month for remembering. On the 1st of the month, we celebrate All Saints Day – when we remember all those who had a special closeness to God and who revealed God's love for us all in the way they lived their lives. The 2nd November is All Souls Day when we remember all those who have gone before us on this earth. At least four ancient English dedications to All Souls are known, the most famous of which are All Souls College, Oxford and the church in Langham Place in London. In bygone centuries All Souls' Day was certainly uncomfortable for anyone who had wronged a person who had then died. For it was believed that souls in purgatory could appear on earth on this day, in the form of ghosts, witches or toads, to haunt anyone who had wronged them in life. On a more cheerful note, it was also believed that you could help the dead on this day by almsgiving in cash or in kind. Some of these beliefs seem to have been caught up in the popular customs of Hallowe'en.

Then on the 5th November, we remember Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. How many of us know all the words of the poem written about this:

Remember, remember, the 5th of November, Gunpowder, treason and plot. I see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot. Guy Fawkes, Guy Fawkes, 'twas his intent to blow up the King and the Parliament. Three score barrels of powder below Poor old England to overthrow. By God's providence he was catch'd with a dark lantern and burning match. Holler boys, Holler, let the bells ring, Holler Boys Holler, God save the King!

And then we have that famous poem by John McCrae, written during the First World War and published in Punch magazine in 1915.

'In Flanders' fields the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place: and in the sky the larks, still bravely singing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below.'

It soon came to symbolise the sacrifice of all who died in World War One. Today, the poppy remains an important symbol of all those who have sacrificed their lives in conflicts over the years. But why do we remember them?

'They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.' (Micah 4:3). Writing 700 years before Christ, Micah spoke at the time when Samaria was captured due to the invasion of Assyria. However, he prophesied a future of hope, a world where nations would come together in peace rather than war. His words are fulfilled in the kingdom of God established by Jesus.

In our current year, 2026, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, there are over 130 active armed conflicts occurring globally today, which is roughly double the number recorded 15 years ago. How sad is that.

Our understanding of *peace* is more than simply the absence of conflict. It is about building relationships between people, communities and nations, founded on love and justice for all. As we remember those who have died in war, we should look practically at how we can build such relationships, beginning with our own families, colleagues and neighbours. *'We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.'* (Micah 4:5). Let us ask God's Spirit to make us people of peace, justice and compassion for today's world. Let us remember all those who have strived, and still work, to make our world a kinder, more peaceful place.

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.'

Every blessing
Jane
Revd Jane Begley

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, Gill, Mark, and Fred.

CHURCH FLOWERS

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

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.

ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2026
Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon start

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 9 letter anagram: UNDERCANE. 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.

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.

COMING UP AT ST THOMAS':

Monthly Community Lunches (see separate article)
Saturday 21st November: Christmas Fayre in Village Hall 10.30am-2.30pm
Sunday 13th December: Brass Band Christmas Concert 3.00 for 3.30 start

GROWERS CORNER

November in the garden is a time of transition, clean-up, and vital winter preparation. The focus is on getting all the trimmings from the beds into the compost, planting bulbs, and making sure any tender plants are protected indoors. It's nice to take the throttle off a bit and slow down. I'll be making the most of these colder days with lots of soups and stews.

Update on the plots:

I've been following the lead of my plot neighbour and clearing the beds. I need to plan a manure delivery and go on the hunt for some woodchip. The polytunnel has been cleared of tomatoes and I have been a bit cheeky and ordered some plug plants, including salad, turnips and winter greens. Just a couple of bits to overwinter.

The greenhouse still needs to be cleared — I'm not looking forward to cleaning all the glass again.

To be fair, after the summer drought the plots are not looking too bad, and I'm happy overall with the harvests. I have enjoyed growing new crops, including mangelwurzels, sweet potatoes, parsnips and melons. Now I need to start planning plantings and sorting my seeds for next year's growing season.

November to-do:

The focus for the November garden is protection. Cold weather has arrived, and tender plants need to be snug in the greenhouse or cloaked in protective fleece. Move containers into sheltered positions against house walls.

November sowings:

- Salad leaves / winter lettuce – keep sowing every 3 weeks for a constant supply
- Herb seeds for the windowsill
- Broad beans

Flowers / Shrubs:

- Plant all tulip bulbs (and other spring bulbs if not already done)
- Mulch dahlia tubers if leaving them in the ground, or lift and store somewhere frost- and rodent-free
- Sow sweet peas in root trainers / toilet rolls
- Plant bare-root plants / trees

Tip: Tidy leaves from your grass and paths, but not from your garden beds.

'That soft autumnal time, the woodland foliage now is gathered by the wild November blast' – John Howard Bryant

Happy Gardening. Love, Louise.

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.

SHOEBOXES

A great big thank you to everyone who contributed in any way to the Shoebox Appeal for Blythswood Care this year. We managed to make up 156 boxes with all the essential items asked for included in them. You also donated over £250 to help with the transport costs of sending out a container load of boxes (approx £7,000), thank you again. The boxes will all be delivered to needy people in Ukraine, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia.

Thank you for helping to make so many people happy and brightening their Christmas.

ANAGRAM The answer to the anagram is ENDURANCE.

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

UPSHIRE MOTHERS' UNION

In September we held a special Corporate Communion Service, lead by Revd Jane Begley, to celebrate the 150th anniversary since Mary Sumner founded the Mothers' Union. During the service we enrolled a new member, Cathy-Ann and all present members re-affirmed their commitment to the Mothers' Union. At this special anniversary we thought it would be nice to remember all those who have been past members of our branch, especially, to name just a few:
Katherine Haworth - High Beach Vicarage, Sandra Brown - Crown Hill, Mabel Wackett - Horseshoe Hill, Muriel Adams - Paternoster Hill, Dorothy Chiswell - Paternoster Hill, Gwen Dale - Wormley Court, Audrey Watts - Crown Hill, Yvonne Bone - Pick Hill, Glenis Fletcher - Crown Hill, Pat Avery – Woodredon Road, Jane Gottschalk – Cobbinsend Road and Sheila Matthews – Fernhall Lane. Towards the end of the service Revd Jane blessed our branch's Mothers Union Banner. Thank you to Revd Jane Begley for leading the service and to all those who came along to join us on the day.

The Mothers' Union Worldwide Gathering opened in Durban, South Africa on Wednesday 30 September to celebrate, over 4 days, 150 years of faith in action, with worship and a warm welcome to members from across the globe.
There may be thousands of miles between members, but in Durban everyone was united by a shared faith, a shared calling and a shared sense of belonging. There was plenty to celebrate after 150 years and instead of looking back at every chapter of Mothers' Union's history, Worldwide President Kathleen Snow encouraged delegates to remember with gratitude, recognise God's faithfulness and look ahead with hope. 'Our mission is still as vital today as it was in 1876,' Kathleen said. 'We are a movement not just an organisation. We are continuously evolving, speaking different languages and wearing different dress, but we are one in the Lord.' The anniversary is not simply a celebration of how far Mothers' Union has come it is also an opportunity to ask where God is calling the movement next. For 150 years, Mothers' Union members have responded to the needs of their families and communities as society has changed around them. That same willingness to listen, adapt and serve will be important as the worldwide fellowship looks towards its next chapter.
Day two of the Worldwide Gathering began with a question about the future: how do we ensure Mothers' Union flourishes for the next 150 years? The answer, delegates heard, is not simply about attracting younger people. It is about creating a movement where younger generations can belong, contribute and lead, and where every generation can learn from one another.
Day three of the Worldwide Gathering in Durban brought delegates to the heart of Mothers' Union's ministry: living out faith through service, advocacy and action. Attendees were challenged to consider not only what they believe, but how their faith shapes the way they respond to the realities facing people and communities around them.
After four days of worship, learning, celebration and connection, the Mothers' Union Worldwide Gathering in Durban came to a close on Saturday 3 October with a message of hope, courage and renewed calling.
With the theme of Celebrating Worldwide Fellowship: One Worldwide Family in Christ, delegates from across the world were reminded that while Mothers' Union has much to celebrate from its first 150 years, the anniversary is also a moment to look forward.
The Gathering concluded with the Closing Eucharist and Commissioning Service, led by The Most Revd and Rt Hon, Dame Sarah Mullally, Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied by The Rt Revd Dr Thabo Magkoba, Archbishop of Southern Africa.

Our next meeting is on 25th Nov, at 2.15pm, in the Village Hall. Our speak is Nadene Steveson talking about Magnetix Wellness, followed by tea and cake. Everyone is welcome to join us.
Tea Hostesses: Kate Dale and Gill Negus. Raffle: Gill Negus

MUSIC FOR LUNCH at Waltham Abbey Church Saturdays at 12 noon.
Refreshments available from 11.30am. All welcome, free admission with retiring collection.
November 7th: Cambridge Renaissance Voices
14th: Adam Khan *guita*r, Julian Rowlands *bandoneon*
21st: Student(s) from Trinity Laban Conservatoire
28th: Travis Baker *organ*

ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE, EN9 3SS

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

In Upshire Village Hall on Saturday 21st November, 10.30am-2.30pm

Everyone welcome so do come along and join us
Buy your Christmas presents from the lovely items on sale
Stalls include cakes, pickles & jams, Christmas puddings, handmade bags, cards & jewellery
Plants, decorations, and much more. Raffle, tombola, pick-a-bag
Refreshments Admission free

COMMUNITY LUNCHES

Have a break from cooking a meal by coming along to our Community Lunches. The lunch on November 11th will be a hot meal with roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, potatoes, carrots, peas and gravy, followed by a selection of home made desserts and tea or coffee for only £9 per person.
In December we have our Christmas Lunch on 2nd December with roast turkey and all the trimmings, Christmas pudding and mince pies for £12 per person. Book early!
Vegetarian options are available, please let us know when you book on 07899 846711.
Come along and enjoy your meal in friendly surroundings, bring your friends and family or just come and make new friends. You won't be disappointed!

THANK YOU

Seedlings, St Thomas' children's Messy Church would like to thank Grace and Ross of Hatter's Farm, Takeley for their kind donation of pumpkins. Every family went home with a lovely pumpkin, we played toss a ring over a pumpkin stalk and some were kept to be delivered to the local foodbank. Hatter's Farm is open until the end of October, so go pick a pumpkin, play in the hay bale maze and other fun activities. Thank you team!

50/50 CLUB

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

1st:	£35	No. 48	Kate Dale of Loughton
2nd:	£25	No. 97	Isobel McKinley of Arundel
3rd:	£15	No. 37	Ellen McGowan of Gravesend

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
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
n the C of E School, Ninefields, EN9 3EL

COFFEE MORNING on Saturday 14th November in the school hall.
From 11am until 2pm
Refreshments – cake stall – raffle – sale of books – cards – jigsaws
Nearly new gifts – children's activities – School Choir

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: 24th November – Christmas Demonstration by Daphne Grant. 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

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.

EXCITING EXHIBITION EVENTS PROGRAMME AT EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM!
We've got lots of fabulous events over the Autumn and winter at the museum – join us for Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Halloween and Christmas inspired events!

For the whole community:
Friday 27 November – Calvalcade: Waltham Abbey Parade of Lights, from 4:30pm! Join us at the museum for children's crafts (making a pomander), hot chocolate and the U3A choir in the museum garden! The parade starts down Sun Street at 7pm, culminating in the Christmas lights switch on, and there will be a fun fair outside the west entrance of the church.

For families and children:
Saturday 5, 12, 19 December – Father Christmas at the museum! 10:30 – 3:30pm, BOOKING ESSENTIAL. Every child receives a present and gets to do a craft. All inclusive cost per child is £7.50

For Adults:
Wednesday 4 November - Talk: The West Essex Archaeological Group's excavations at Durolitum near Chigwell, AT CHIGWELL LIBRARY, 7 - 8:30pm
Wednesday 18 November – Talk: Churchill in the Epping Forest, by Thomas Barclay Matchett, 7-8pm, doors open at 6:45pm, £7.50 per adult, light refreshments included.
Saturday 28 November - Wreath making workshop, 10am - 12pm, £30 per adult, BOOKING ESSENTIAL
Saturday 28 November - Christmas card block printing workshop, 2pm - 5pm, £25 per adult, BOOKING ESSENTIAL
Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @efdmuseum, check our booking page: www.ticketsource.co.uk/efdmuseum and sign up to our mailing list: www.efdmuseum.org.uk

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@vaef.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.
20th November: The Mysterious Meridians of Highams Park and Waltham Abbey and why the Greenwich Meridian is in the wrong place!
An entertaining and light hearted presentation about the lines, their history and their purpose.
Speaker: Mike Payne.

WALTHAM ABBEY CAVALCADE OF LIGHT
A magical evening to start the festive season: Friday 27th November. Lights switched on at 7pm.
Spectacular parade – live entertainment – festive stalls – food & drink and more!

catholicism
Catholicism with a large 'C' is a religion whereas catholicism with a small 'c' is something that is described, at least in my dictionary, as including a wide variety of things which we refer to as having catholic tastes. Going off on a slight tangent have you seen the film "Conclave" starring Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci and John Lithgow et al which is a story about the machinations of the Roman Catholic Church in its selection of a new Pope. Well worth a watch, the ending of which was certainly a surprise that possibly takes its idea from the election of a particular Pope in the Middle Ages. However, returning to the small 'c' word I can say that my music taste is catholic; whilst I have a leaning to opera and classical music I also enjoy all types of music so long as the music is, to my ears, enjoyable and musical. I would add that 'Rap' does not fall into this category, what I hear from many cars in the Leyton area defies any musicality whatsoever, but as they say, beauty is in the ear of the listener!
Art can also fall into the catholic area as although many people will say that they might like impressionism, cubism or realism many will enjoy art for each picture's quality, as perceived by that viewer. Some years ago I went to the Tate to see an exhibition of Freud's paintings. I was asked by

several friends who knew I was going "you're not into fat women, are you?" Well Freud did make use of fat models, one I believe was his cleaner but more importantly, to me at least, was that he had Whippets, a breed of dog I love, two of which I owned many years ago. Freud's whippets invariably would curl up on the couches on which his models were sitting and consequently he included them in his paintings and were excellently painted and extremely lifelike. Needless to say I couldn't afford the paintings!

Just recently I heard about an exhibition of railway art that was being held at the Kidderminster Railway Museum. What type of railway art was not entirely clear in the advert as it could be of railway posters that has a keen following with many of the pictures attracting goodly sums, or paintings of locomotives and railway scenes that likewise attract large numbers of aficionados. So, with my ticket bought and speedy journey to Birmingham to change onto a branch line for Kidderminster, in no time at all I was at the museum. The museum is on the small size and concentrates mainly on the paraphernalia of railways – the signaling, types of tokens used on single line running, the telecommunications used and signage of all types: loco names, station name plates and way-markers. But on the first floor the area had been cleared and set aside for nearly sixty paintings mainly of locomotives in a variety of settings.

The exhibition, which evidently is held each year, is on behalf of the Guild of Railway Artists, an organisation I was vaguely aware of but had never before seen any of their work. To say I was gob smacked is an understatement for the pictures were of such quality, detail and realism that I was left breathless. I kept wandering around and around looking at them, frankly very envious that people could produce art of such quality. As I pottered around one of the ladies who was there to mind the place came over to me. "They're good, aren't they? Have you picked a favourite because if you fill in the form on the desk you might win a print of it." "Favourite!" I said, "they are all favourites, they are just so stunning!" If you think of a steam locomotive you will be aware that it is festooned in pipes and valves as well as having a tubular boiler, chimney and other protuberances. These were all faithfully reproduced on the paintings, with some showing the locos in working grime whilst others were in pristine condition. Envious, I was jealous! To be able to produce a likeness of that quality is outstanding.

So I thought I might as well have a go at the competition, but which one? After much deliberation I boiled it down to three, which was not easy out of sixty paintings! The first was 'Reflections' which shows an express locomotive, a 4-6-0 hauling carriages across a bridge over a road junction. It has obviously been raining as the road surface is glistening with the street lights reflecting off it. Coming under the bridge is a little Austin A35, the same colour as the one I took my driving test in! For only £275 I was sorely tempted but the eventual print will be cheaper, hopefully! The next had a strange title: 'Semi at Greenholme.' Greenholme is a place in the Lake District but as of yet I haven't worked out the significance of the word 'Semi' in relation to steam locos. However, the picture shows another express locomotive steaming at night across open countryside which is covered by snow. The lights from the carriages are lightning up the snowy banks alongside the track, and the loco is steaming hard with a red glow coming from the open firebox lighting up the steam exhaust passing over the loco's cab. At the front, the steam is pulsating out of the chimney and mixed in with it are red hot embers. The train is coming straight at you and as you stand there looking at it you can almost feel the pounding of the one-hundred-ton engine as it rushes along the track, the picture being so realistic. Interestingly, the painting was not for sale so presumably had been a private commission, if so, the eventual owner will be a fortunate person.

But I had to make a choice and eventually I picked 'Dartmoor Prairie.' It was a picture I just stood in front of and was mesmorised with its bleak beauty. The bleakness coming from the depiction of the moor which immediately took me back to Exmoor and Ribblehead in Yorkshire. Both places with that bleakness but with an inherent beauty that can only be found on our moors. The train crossing the moor is almost in the distance but can be seen to be a green tank engine pulling a rake of two carriages and a goods wagon. It looks like summer because the sky is blue and the tiny figure of the walker on the path on the left is not in winter clothing. The steam from the loco's chimney is lazily rising as the train being on a single track is obviously not speeding. In the middle of the picture is a brick arched bridge over which the train is crossing, the stream running through it meanders down to another bridge which carries the path on which the walker must have traversed. It just made my heart beat faster and for a long moment I was back on moorland enjoying the scenery and wildness. At a price of £3,950 I just have to hope that I win the competition!

Adrian J Liddle