

Issue 8:  
October 2021



A candle in...

THE

# WINDOW

*News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames*

## Harvest Celebrations across the Parish!



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Photographs: thanks to Margaret Horton, Susan Scott, Laurie King  
and Eluned Hallas

## Where is Charles Darwin buried?

*Charles Masheder*

Well you may know it is in Westminster Abbey and when I was doing Duty Chaplaincy, I found this was often a big surprise to some visitors. I remember one particular man who I think would have liked to have opened the grave and hauled the mortal remains out! It highlighted for me the apparent divergence between science and religion, which through the years, I believe, has been considerably exaggerated.

When I was in one Parish there was a lovely man who was the Pastor at the local Evangelical Chapel. He and I got on well but there was one area where we had to agree to disagree - evolution. He sincerely believed that in accordance with dating in the Old Testament, the earth was created in 4004BC. He felt that fossils and other signs of antiquity were created by God at that point to make the earth look older. Of course, I had to admit that it was possible but that I believed those who told us that the earth was much older and that, through the millennia, life-forms had evolved. The one thing we agreed in this discussion was that it was God, the Supreme Being, who had created not only the earth but the whole universe.

Now all this made me think – and question – whether the scientists are so very accurate in dating the earth as 4.54 billion years old...there is after all a great disparity between that age and 6000 years! Scientists, in common with many others, have often through the years, spoken with great authority but have had, sometimes, to backtrack. I have to admit to holding their opinions with great respect but also a shade of cynicism. Can they really be that certain? Quite that old? Perhaps that question may start a discussion!

Humans have, apparently, lived here for between 1.4 and 2.4 million years and we find ourselves living in a time when probably the greatest concern, even with the threat of Covid, is about our planet; how to manage the gravest of concerns raised by anxiety of the climate and the quantity of plastic in the oceans. The latter is undoubtedly the result of human involvement and has only been around in abundance for the last few decades. Blaming climate change on our behaviours, particularly the vast use of fossil fuels, is, of course, correct in part until we study history and find that the climate has changed anyhow though the centuries.

I sense that as we are so clever, we are tempted to believe that we are the most special generation ever to have lived on the earth. I am firstly saddened by the lack of knowledge and appreciation of history which gives us a greater understanding of previous generations and their behaviours, including in our own country the Industrial Revolution. I am more saddened by the way the Creator seems left out of our concerns. So, what must we as Christians do? Well the COP26 will be staged in Glasgow in a few weeks. We have to pray that there will be a challenging outcome, but one that is realistic for countries throughout the world to achieve. It seems to me that zero carbon emissions by 2050 must mean no burning of candles (even in the window!!) after that date... In the UK there are many steps in the right direction and these must continue – and we all have our own part to play. However there is a real challenge in recognising that some of the biggest ‘polluters’ are countries (India and China?) which have not hitherto enjoyed all the pleasures we now take for granted.

I admit that the world of God’s creation is for me a tonic to my faith and I have a love of nature, especially wildlife. How good it is to just stand at the window and watch the birds or, when out, seeing some little plant growing by the roadside or, as for us the other day, seeing a little beetle crossing the road. I understand, appreciate and celebrate all that is being done to save those species under considerable threat, particularly those threatened as a result of direct human involvement. I am aware though that through the course of time, species have come and gone...and humans were not here at the beginning of time. Could it be that having done so much damage to this beautiful planet that our time to become extinct may also happen? With the seas expanding might the dolphins do better than we have done? It is so important for us to play our part now as stewards of this amazing planet and let us pray for all that is being planned (and will be with COP26) and for our readiness to co-operate with God, the source of all life.

## The Isles of Scilly

Mary Anderson

At St Helen's we recently sang the beautiful first verse of Psalm 19:

The heavens are telling the glory of God,  
The wonder of his work displays the firmament.

These words aptly capture my response to the Isles of Scilly, which my husband John and I visited in early September. Despite a history of more than 500 shipwrecks, to my tourist's eye the islands feel pristine and perfect. I can scarcely believe that this contemporary Eden, surely a reflection of God's glory, is critically endangered because of climate change.

Earlier this year, we had decided to pre-empt Covid travel bans by booking a holiday on Tresco, famous for its Abbey Gardens, an exotic taste of the Mediterranean off the west coast of Cornwall. I enrolled in a painting course, and John was to enjoy walking and photography. We came back refreshed, relaxed, and renewed. The sea was turquoise, the sun was shining, and my fellow-painters offered great company. On St Agnes Island, I managed a swim off the most westerly beach of the British Isles, and we saw a wryneck (bird) for the first time ever.



The time-depth of research reports vary, but between 1,000 and 9,000 years ago the Isles of Scilly constituted one landmass. There are now over 100 islands, many little more than rocky outcrops, and only four inhabited by humans. The possible reality of earlier patterns of habitation are preserved in stories about the kingdom of Lyonesse, which lay between the coasts of Cornwall and Brittany and which Tennyson celebrated in his poem *Idylls of the King* (1859):

Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse –  
A land of old upheaven from the abyss  
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;  
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwell ...

On a more prosaic level, reports of submerged stone walls and boundaries from times past provide a stark reminder of a tumultuous relationship with sea-level rise. Small, low-lying and with a unique ecosystem, the Isles of Scilly are extremely vulnerable. The highest point of the biggest island, St Mary's, has an elevation of 42 metres, but the capital, Hugh Town is located on an isthmus only 6 metres above sea level.

It is anticipated that by 2080 – possibly in our children's lifetime – the maximum wave height in the deep waters around the Isles of Scilly will be a metre more than at present. The consequences of flooding and coastal erosion are frightening and potentially catastrophic.

Only time will tell exactly how the Scillies will be impacted by rising temperatures and sea levels. In the short term, the positives of climate change may outweigh the negatives, because tourism will increase. But looking further forward, will these islands meet the same fate as mythical Lyonesse?

As COP26 approaches, my trip to the Isles of Scilly has provided me with a stark reminder that we cannot simply consider 'in awesome wonder all the works [God's] hand has made', but that we are also stewards of creation and must take responsibility for our relationship with God's Earth.

## Book review; and “Living in Love and Faith”

*Gwen and David Bevington*

*Borders and Belonging. The book of Ruth: A Story for our Times* by Padraig O Tuama and Glenn Jordan. Canterbury Press, 2021

An exciting read! The authors set up groups of people across Britain and Ireland to study and discuss the book of Ruth. A close reading leads them to call it “one of the most radical in the whole of the bible.” It’s not just a sweet love-story, light relief after the brutality of Judges and Joshua. It’s much more than it seems.

In the Hebrew Bible it is placed in “the Writings”. The authors tell us that the Jewish feast of Shavuot includes, in the liturgy, readings side-by-side from Exodus (the giving of the law) and from Ruth. A key word in Ruth is the Hebrew *chesed*, often translated *lovingkindness*. God’s lovingkindness, shown to God’s people and required of them, is seen most clearly in Ruth’s loyalty towards her mother-in-law. Thus, the liturgy seems to tell us that law makes sense only when seen through the prism of lovingkindness.

Ruth is a Moabite from Moab. In Numbers 22, the Israelites, recently escaped from Egypt, request bread and water from Balak, king of Moab, and are not only refused but turned away and cursed. The hostility felt towards Moab remained huge. Ruth is not just foreign, but from a people anathematized by Israelites. Hence, the book is doing what Jesus did in the parable of the kind Samaritan. It embodies the Hebrew tradition of questioning traditions, rethinking them in the light of the over-riding importance of *chesed*; calling for a different way of thinking, letting go of prejudice.

I can’t do justice to either *Borders* or *Ruth* itself. For me the over-riding thoughts are the permission/requirement to question tradition; and the supreme value of kindness.

...so to “Living in Love and Faith”

Faith Forum this term introduces us to LLF.

In the light of the teaching of *Ruth*, I wonder about the following questions:

- As Anglicans, we respect Tradition (and Scripture and Reason). Which traditions are over-riding? Which traditions and parts of scripture control the way we assess other traditions and other parts?
- LLF is about far more than the possible blessing of same-sex relationships – but there lies the biggest controversy. Some people find it distasteful to contemplate. Others are incredulous that it hasn’t happened yet, and impatient. How can both sorts of people receive *chesed*?
- What can we do when church policies, felt by some to be logically consistent, are experienced as cruel to individual persons?
- When should the church learn from the wisdom of people outside it?
- How do we care for people who have been hurt/rejected by the church?

The Faith Forum format doesn’t lend itself to personal sharing; but it is a chance to listen, to think, to learn, to question our assumptions. There will also be a small group considering LLF matters, led by rector Charles, especially for younger people. Whatever your current thoughts, please come to something if you can.

## Abingdon young bell ringers triumph!

Susan Read



For years, church bell ringers throughout the UK have realised that have been getting older and that there weren't enough younger people taking up ringing. In around 2010, there were lots of ringers over the age of sixty but very few in younger age groups. It was important that more young ringers were recruited and trained so that all the UK churches would have enough people to ring their bells in the future.

One of the main initiatives taken to try to address the shortage of young ringers involved The Ringing World, bell ringing's weekly magazine. In 2011, they organised the first ever Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC), an annual competition for teams of school-aged bell ringers. As a result, Ringing Associations all over the country started organising activities suitable for younger ringers so that they would be able to enter the new contest.

Here in Abingdon, Kevin Beer had started running after-school ringing practices at St Helen's Church, timed to end when the choir started practising. He had already taught several young people to ring when I started to help him in 2009. In preparation for Kevin's move on the completion of his training at Cuddesdon, I attended one of the first ever courses run by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) so I could learn how to teach ringing. It was inspirational and has helped me to follow in Kevin's footsteps and to teach dozens of young ringers in Abingdon. I also run ringing outings in the school holidays to which young ringers from all over Oxfordshire come. As a result, our area is known as having more young ringers than any other part of the Oxford Diocese.

The number of teams entering the RWNYC has increased from a handful in 2011 to 21 this year. Each competing team has to ring for about ten minutes while the judges mark them on the evenness of their rhythm (known as their "striking"), something quite difficult to do well. Teams enter either the Method Ringing category, changing the order of the bells on every stroke, or the Call Changes category, where one of the ringers calls out instructions to change the order of the bells every 10 to 20 seconds.

The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers (ODG) represents ringers from Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. We have entered teams in the Method Ringing category of the RWNYC every year since that first competition in 2011.

The 2021 competition was held in Worcester on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September. Our team had met to practise once a month since April and were coached by Colin Newman, an eminent ringer from Reading. The squad of ODG ringers consisted of thirteen young people, including three from Abingdon, Joe, Sophie and Willow. Colin chose the team who would represent the ODG. It included Joe and Sophie in the team of six and Willow was first reserve.

It was quite a festival of ringing with eleven rings of bells (including Worcester Cathedral) open for the young people to ring. Each team was given an individual timetable of towers to visit throughout the day so that the queues to ring did not get too long. All Saints Worcester had a cafe in the church and also contained a portable bell tower with small bells for the young people to try ringing.

At 6pm, the teams of young people were allowed into the College Hall and the results were announced. We are pleased to report that the ODG team came first in the Method Ringing category, just beating their rivals from Sussex! Each young ringer was presented with a gold medal as can be seen in the photo as they emerged from the Hall. We won the Whitechapel Trophy, presented by the former owner of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and held in the photo by Daniel from Reading who conducted the winning team.

Five of the group shown will be too old to compete next summer. To be eligible for the competition, young ringers must be under nineteen on the 31st August in the year concerned.

Abingdon has an outstanding record of representation in the ODG team, which has now won the Method Ringing category of the RWNYC four times.

In general, we suggest children are not big enough to start learning to ring until they are around ten years old. Please let me know if you would like us to teach you / your child / your grandchild to ring in St Helen's Church, Abingdon where we have active teaching schemes for both children and adults.

mail@37steps.uk

Training Officer, Old North Berks Branch  
Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

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St Helen's welcomes  
Maia Oliver to her first  
communion:





## Harvest in the West Porch

*Sue Pemberton*

Following the success of the Christmas and Easter events in the West porch of St Helen's Church, we decided to follow this up with a harvest event, running through the last week in September and culminating in a short informal service in Church at 3.30 on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

The display centred on Our Beautiful World and suggests four responses to it: Thanking God for it, Caring for it, Giving to support it and Sharing its bounty. As well as pictures illustrating the themes, there was information on various organisations such as the Abingdon Food Bank, the Community Fridge and Abingdon Carbon Cutters. A table in front of the display was filled with autumnal fruits of the earth with a splendid harvest loaf (from Linda Hobbs) as a centre piece.

As before, we gave out 'goody bags' containing harvest-themed activities, information about organisations in the display, an invitation to the service, a piece of fruit from the Community Fridge and some daffodil bulbs to grow.

As usual, this has been a real team effort – bag-packing, artwork, flower-arranging, producing and distributing publicity, foraging in hedgerows and stewarding the porch. Despite the weather that changed so suddenly just as the event started and a rather quiet start, good conversations were had!



## Pilgrimages near and far

You may remember that the St Sigfrid pilgrimage passed through Abingdon on its way from York to Växjö in Sweden. Led by Rev Hugh White they reached Växjö, one of Oxford’s partner dioceses, on day 86. Hugh quoted Bunyon: “I am going to my Father’s, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it....”

When they were in Canterbury, Hugh and Beth were interviewed by Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. You can find the film they made, promoting pilgrimage in Kent [here](#):



**St Frideswide  
Pilgrimage**  
Saturday 16 October 2021



### *A diocesan pilgrimage to your Cathedral*

Join one of five guided walks from 1.5 to 9 miles long to Christ Church Cathedral in the heart of the city of Oxford. Refreshments in the Great Hall, prayer stations and reflection at the Shrine of St Frideswide.

**Come on your own or bring a group. Booking essential.**

Find out more at [www.chch.ox.ac.uk/pilgrimage](http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/pilgrimage) or call 01865 286165



## Autumn's Bounty

*Eileen Duckett*

Of all the seasons autumn is the one I love the best.  
The colours and the harvest make it better than the rest.

The heat of summer is over, the cold of winter is still to come.  
The crops planted in the springtime have ripened in the sun.

Our wine grapes are ready to harvest, I've apples and blackberries to freeze.  
We've onions to pickle, jam and chutney to make and then we can take our ease.

Like squirrels we are getting ready for winter, with our cupboards quite full of fine fare,  
So we can have lots of heartwarming food when the trees are all skeletal and bare.

Photos from  
Jeanette Thomas



## Into which building does each door lead?

*With thanks to Carolyn Hawkes of Trinity Church*

All are in the centre of Abingdon: “Seek and you will find”, (but you need not “knock for the door to be opened to you”!) Answers on page 12.



## Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the church websites:

<https://www.abingdon-st-helens.org.uk/>

<https://www.stmichaels-abingdon.org.uk/>

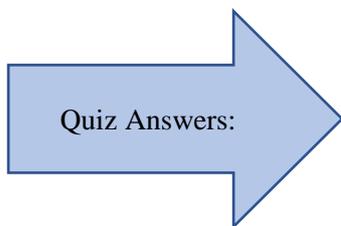
<https://www.stnicolasabingdon.org.uk/>

Page for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

**FOOD BANK.** The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. **Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm.** Their main long-term needs are:

Long life milk (not soya), sugar, fruit squash, tinned meat and vegetables. They also give out a lot of washing up liquid, bleach and toilet rolls. You can also make donations by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank'. You can also donate via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office have details if you want to donate via online banking.



1. Abingdon School Lodge
2. St Nicolas side door
3. St Ethelwolds
4. St Helen's
5. Tattoos and Piercings
6. The NatWest bank
7. 35 Oak Street
8. Abingdon Baptist Church
9. Trinity Church side door

## SHORTAGES

And finally,  
from Dave  
Walker of  
Cartoon Church:



BOOK AHEAD IF YOU WANT ONE OF THE  
LAST FEW SEATS AT THE IOAM



SIGN UP QUICKLY TO SECURE A PLACE ON  
THE CLEANING ROTA



THE POPULAR TIMES FOR A PASTORAL  
CONVERSATION HAVE ALL BEEN TAKEN



QUEUE HERE IF YOU  
WANT A BISCUIT

**Thank you** to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published in November: ideas and contributions to [Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk](mailto:Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk)

We would also welcome responses to any articles published here or in previous issues.