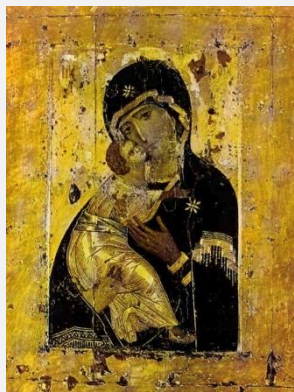


Issue 7:  
September 2025



A candle in....

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

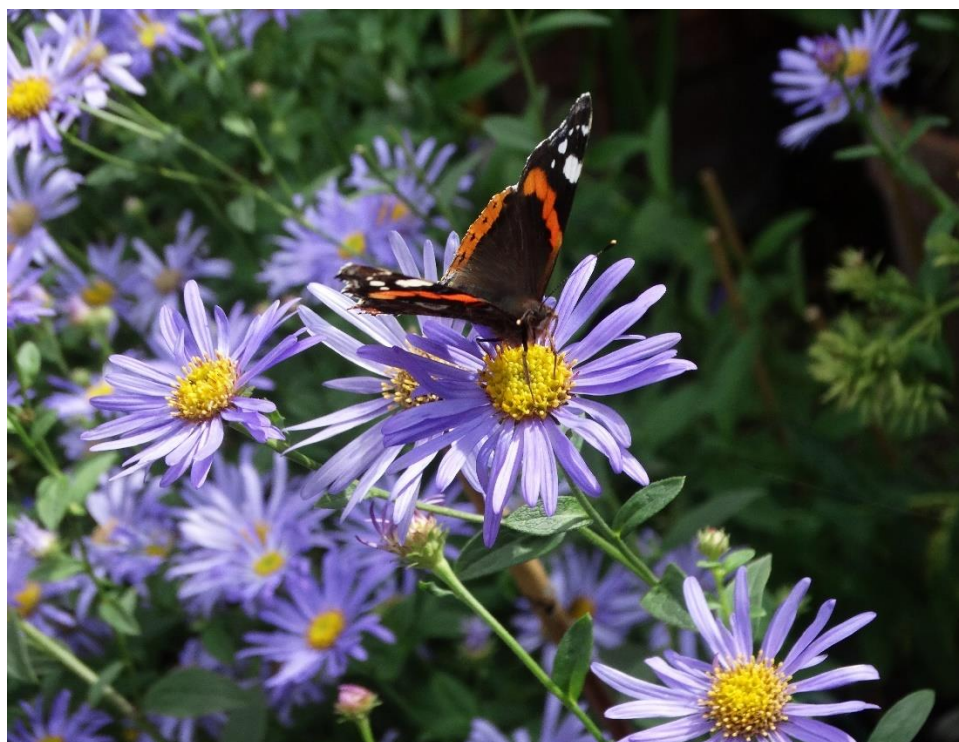
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Michaelmas Daisies in the Parish Centre Garden  
with Red Admiral  
*Photo: David Bevington*

## Inside:

A final poem from Susan Gee  
A Celebration of John Blacknall  
Jane Austen at 250  
Children Heard and Seen  
A celebration of the Parish Centre Garden  
Events  
A poem from Eileen Duckett to cheer us up  
And, of course, a quiz and a cartoon

## The Gift of Darkness

Without darkness,  
we would not see the sparkling quilt of stars and planets,  
stretching infinitely out into space.

In the darkness,  
God showed Abraham the multitude  
of stars in the night sky,  
and promised that his descendants would be  
more numerous still  
than these.

Jacob lay down in the night, and  
saw visions of angels,  
ascending and descending  
the star-lit staircase to heaven.

In the quiet stillness of sleep,  
God called Samuel, who heard his voice  
clearly without distraction.

Early in the morning, before it was light,  
Jesus would go to a quiet place  
to talk with his Father,  
a source of strength and guidance for the day ahead.

In the darkness the Christ child came to dwell amongst us,  
and from the deep and silent darkness of the tomb,  
Jesus bounded forth, freed from the prison of death,  
finally to scatter light and resurrection life,  
a light which fills everything and can never be dimmed.

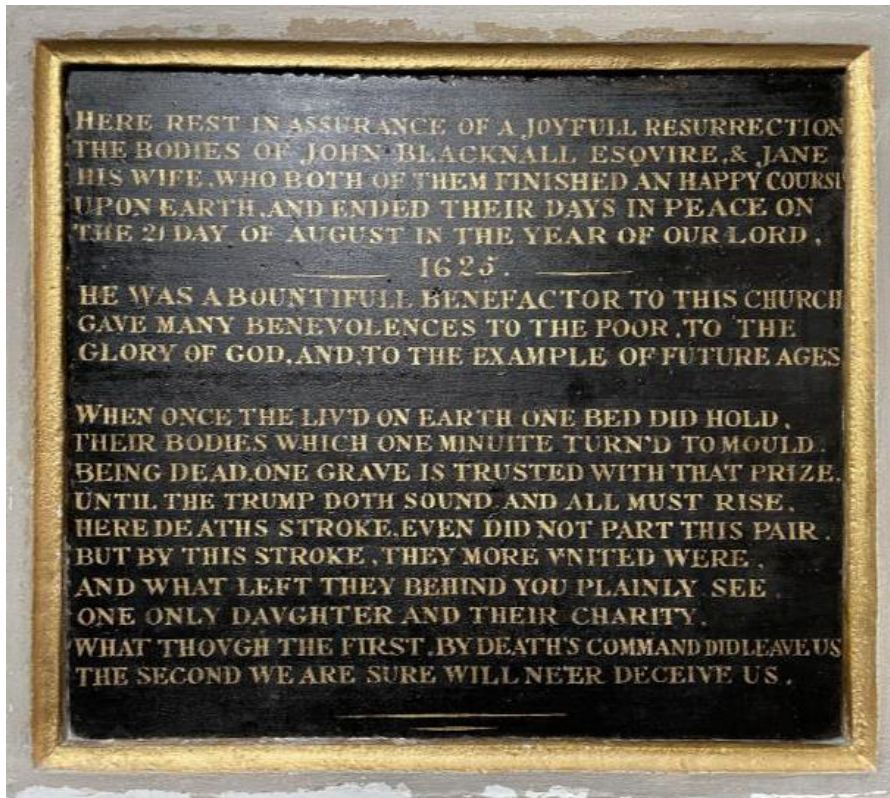
Susan Gee  
21 August 2025



## Celebration of the Life of John Blacknall On the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Death

*Jenny Smith (Metcalf)*

On the evening of Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August St Nicolas' Church held an evensong to celebrate the life and legacy of John Blacknall, gentleman of Abingdon, barrister and benefactor to St Nicolas' Church, the town and beyond. It was the 400th anniversary of the deaths of John Blacknall and his wife who died of the plague on the same day, as reported in the "poem" on the memorial plaque.



*Photograph:  
AFACS (the restorers)*

John Blacknall's grandfather, William Blacknall, moved to Abingdon in 1548 to take on the fulling and corn mills on the site of the dissolved Benedictine Abbey. After a series of deals with the Court of Augmentations William Blacknall ended up with effective ownership of the Abbey site and the mills. He also gained control of the waters that powered the mills and the fishing rights. He and his son William were talented at raising money and bought more land, mills and property.

William junior's son John Blacknall was born in Abingdon on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1583. He was educated at Roysse's Grammar School that later became Abingdon School, and he subsequently went on to Queen's College, Oxford. From there he was admitted to Middle Temple, read law, and became a barrister but, as a man of wealth, he did not consider it right to gain money from practising. He is reputed to have used his legal knowledge by giving advice to the poor and to help make peace between parties at odds with each other. Industrial management held no interest for him so, as soon as his father died in 1613, he sold off the Abbey mills and continued to acquire more land.

John married Jane (b.1591), a daughter of the Blagraves of Bulmershe, a high-status gentry family in Berkshire. We have records of three children. Mary was born on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1616, Jane in 1624 and John in 1625. John was baptised on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1625 and is believed to have died at the same time as his parents. John Blacknall senior and his wife Jane died on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1625 from the plague. They left 9-year-old Mary and one year old Jane. Unfortunately, Jane was only to live another 13



months. She died in September 1626 and was buried at St Nicolas' Church on the 18<sup>th</sup> of that month. Mary Blacknall became a rich heiress on the deaths of both parents and all her siblings and was made a Ward of the Crown. Eventually Sir Edmund Verney, Knight Marshall to Charles 1, secured her wardship and, subsequently, arranged her marriage to his son Ralph on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1629 when Mary was only 13 years old. Ralph was knighted in 1642, and Mary became Lady Verney.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1671 it was agreed that a statue of John Blacknall, his wife and children should be set up. This was done in early 1685. Only two children are depicted on the monument. The most popular suggestion is that the two children on the monument are his two daughters, the one kneeling being Jane who died young and the one standing being Mary who survived. John and Jane senior's images are also pictured kneeling.



The ornate memorial was initially installed against the south wall of the nave in front of the blocked window. It was moved to its present position on the east wall of the north bay of the church in 1881. Burlison and Grylls of London restored the decoration of the memorial in 1881 and decorated the ceiling and the upper walls of the north bay which is also known as the Blacknall aisle.

*Bread was put on the memorial on the day of the celebrations as a re-enactment of the tradition of placing bread here every Sunday for the poor of the town. For this service, the bread was baked by Linda Hobbs.*

*Photograph: The Abingdon Blog*

#### Legacy:

John Blacknall's will left property providing an income so that a Reader would take daily services morning and evening, alms would be given to the poor and the church fabric would be maintained. He bequeathed 40s per annum to the schoolmaster of the Free School along with numerous other legacies to locals and people in other parts of Berkshire. Funds for the relief of the poor of the parish were administered partly by the trustees and partly by the church. In the past the churchwardens placed twenty-four loaves of bread on the memorial each Sunday for twenty-four poor persons of the town, but a settlement has since moved all obligations to the poor from the church to the trustees.

Blacknall desired that leases, out of which payments were to be made, were to be settled upon the Governors of Christ's Hospital of Abingdon. It was not until the nineteenth century that Blacknall's wish was carried out. Christ's Hospital of Abingdon, a charity dating back to 1553, still manage the capital and the income is divided between St Nicolas' Church for "maintaining, repairing, and

insuring against fire the fabric, ornaments and furniture of the Church of St Nicholas” and Christ’s Hospital for the support of residents of the town of Abingdon who are in need. Grants have recently been given to support the town’s State Schools, its vulnerable residents, and its young people.

#### Restoration:

The monument had undergone some re-painting in the last century, but the paint was flaking off badly on John Blacknall’s statue, other areas were fading, and the monument was dirty. Over recent years work has been done to reduce damp in the Blacknall aisle and so IFACS were commissioned to clean and restore the monument. This was completed in July of this year. The lower wall paintings have been cleaned and stabilised by Cliveden Conservation. The walls are being monitored for damp for one year before a final decision on the eventual appearance of the wall is made. This restoration was made possible by generous legacies from the families of the late Doreen Barnes and the late Andrew Birks.

#### Celebrations:

For the celebrations we tried to keep as much as possible in keeping with the time of John Blacknall. King James 1, who commissioned a translation of the Bible, died at the end of March 1625. Orlando Gibbons, musician and composer at the Royal Court, who was born in Oxford in the same year as John Blacknall, unfortunately suffered a brain haemorrhage and died in June 1625. We therefore celebrated the legacy of John Blacknall with music by Orlando Gibbons and bible readings from the King James version of the bible, but we used the 1662 version of Evensong as previous versions are no longer available for us to use.



*The Preacher at the service was the Rt Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester pictured here in front of the memorial with the Revd Paul Smith and AKMA.*

*Photograph: The Abingdon Blog*



*Flowers decorating the church were all flowers that would have been about in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the majority picked locally.*

*Flowers and  
Photograph: Sue Cox*

The refreshments provided after the service were refreshments that John Blacknall would have recognised – bread, English butter, local cheeses, local ham, and fresh plums. The freshly baked bread placed on the memorial was also enjoyed by those present. The drinks – elderflower, apple juice, wine, cider and small beer - were common in John Blacknall's days. Grapes would have been known to him but our supply may not have been local.

The whole celebration, with excellent music, beautiful flowers and local food was a wonderful tribute to the value of benefactors down the years.

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## 🎵 Do you enjoy singing in Church? 🎵



**St NICOLAS' CHURCH**  
ABINGDON-ON-THAMES

St Nicolas' church has a small choir which leads congregational singing at the **11.15 service each Sunday**.

The choir is looking for new members, **sopranos especially welcome!**

We mostly sing well-known traditional hymns accompanied on a pipe organ.

On the first Sunday of each month the Matins service also includes some psalms. Third Sunday services are more informal with piano accompaniment.

If you would like to explore singing with us please contact Geoffrey Currey or Roger Cox ([music@stnicolasabingdon.org.uk](mailto:music@stnicolasabingdon.org.uk)).

*Thank you!*



## Just Jane

Louise Heffernan

Bonnets, ribbons, balls, country estates, carriages, enigmatic heroes: is it just for these images of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century life that we are so engaged by the novels of Jane Austen? What is it about her writing that has so gripped readers for the past two hundred and fifty years?

We love her books because she is a brilliant storyteller whose plots hinge on the rash, unaccountable decisions her characters make. And how real and unforgettable those characters are to the reader. Austen has created some wonderful comic characters – Mr Collins, Lady Catherine De Burgh, Mrs Elton to name but a few. And she has written some of the best put-downs in literature. How we applaud Lizzie Bennet when she states, *‘He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman’s daughter; so far we are equal.’*<sup>i</sup> Her heroines are delightfully rounded characters many of whom resist the restrictions of eighteenth/nineteenth century society.

*‘Am I to understand, said Sir Thomas, after a few minutes silence, ‘that you mean to refuse Mr. Crawford?’ ... ‘For what reason?’*

*‘I - I cannot like him, Sir, well enough to marry him.’*<sup>ii</sup>

Mild Fanny Price, downtrodden all her life, stands up for the right to choose to marry as she wishes, the man she admires and loves.

In an age when gentlemen and gentlewomen were expected to marry for money or for social status (i.e. ownership of land, links to aristocracy) Jane Austen posits the importance of love. And her concept of love encompassed friendship, intelligence, respect, esteem as well as attraction and affection. How grateful we should be for her wisdom but also her generosity in providing us with happy endings, differences resolved, foolishness forgiven.

Austen takes us into a world of social codes and rules where there is apparent certainty but also frustration. Why shouldn’t a woman get muddy skirts on a three-mile walk? Why are forms of introductions so important? And why are some levels of society more acceptable than others (inherited money as opposed to money gained through trade). And, yes, it was a harsh world for some, a world in which children might be adopted and then neglected, a world in which women might be expected to marry for maintenance and men might take up a profession (e.g. the Church) for status or financial well-being rather than calling. Not forgetting the backdrop of political uncertainty in that time of revolutions, industrialization and war. While not directly addressing such problems, Jane Austen reveals a changing social order in which the landed gentry begin to mix with the middle classes (for example, Darcy comes to appreciate and love the Gardiners) and in which an honest farmer like Robert Martin can be respected for his ‘true gentility’<sup>iii</sup>. In describing the changing values of her time, Jane Austen may lead us also to question the accepted conventions of modern life – perhaps equally puzzling to us as the codes of the eighteenth century.

Austen shows us characters who learn. She understands human nature, our follies and foibles but also our potential strengths and wisdom. She presents us with moral dilemmas which are still relevant today. Are men or women to be valued mainly because of the extent of their income? Or the grandeur of their connections? Or is worth founded on honesty, kindness, moral integrity? – (Miss Bates, though poor and foolish, is presented sympathetically for her kindness and engagement with the community.)

This is to mention just a little of all that might be said in praise of Jane Austen. In the two hundred and fifty years since she was born, she has delighted, entertained and inspired her readers. We hope to honour her just a little with our tea on 11<sup>th</sup> October when we shall be enjoying readings from her novels, music and cakes cooked to recipes of her time. Please do join us at St Michael’s Church at 3pm for what we hope will be an entertaining tribute to Jane.

<sup>i</sup> Pride and Prejudice: chapter 56

<sup>ii</sup> Mansfield Park, chapter 32

<sup>iii</sup> Emma: volume 1, chapter 8

## Children Seen and Heard (CHAS) Weekend.

*Elizabeth Dawson. Abingdon MU.*

Once again, the CHAS weekend residential at Hill End Camp was a resounding success. Over 140 youngsters attended along with their adult carers. The weather was exceptionally hot but the children rose to the challenge and eagerly took part in a variety of activities including craft, pizza making (and eating), cake decorating, rounders, football, quizzes, a BBQ, a visit from the police and many more activities. It was a real action-packed weekend.

On the Friday afternoon, several Mothers' Union members provided the younger children with a Teddy Bears picnic tea and a soft toy hunt in the wood. We had loads of toys donated which were "hidden" in the wood for them to find. This occupied them for a good half hour and they were very excited to be told that they could keep their "discovered toy." Thank you to everyone from MU and the parish who donated toys.

Added thanks to all who made or bought cakes for the families. We took 2 car-loads of "goodies" which were used throughout the weekend as desserts. Again, they were very much appreciated by all.



*Mothers' Union members making sandwiches for tea*





## Events page September and October 2025

Compiled by Louise Heffernan



## St. Helen's Church, Abingdon

Heritage Weekend  
opening hours:  
13 Sept: 10 to 6  
14 Sept: 12.15 to 4

### Saturday:

**Bacon butties** on sale, 10.30 to 2  
**Drinks and cakes** on sale 10 to 4. Proceeds from the refreshments will be shared between St Helen's Church and **Macmillan cancer** as part of their coffee morning campaign.



**Macmillan  
cancer support**

**Guided visits to the tower belfry**, 10.30 & 2.30  
A talk about **the organ** & chance to try it, 2 to 3.  
Throughout the day: **quizzes** to do, **archives** on display

Music at St Michael's

**HUW RHYS JAMES**

**PIANO RECITAL**

Featuring music of Haydn, Mozart, Liszt and Debussy

**Sunday  
14<sup>th</sup> September  
3.00 pm**

Tickets £12 Available from  
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FBGM>  
or on the door. Children free

Kindly sponsored by:

St Michael & All Angels' Church, Park Road Abingdon OX14 1DS

Refreshments available  
Free parking

**FindersKeepers**  
Property. Properly.

**St HELEN'S CHURCH**

**AGNOSTICS  
ANONYMOUS**

Meeting for Open Discussion

**"Why would a good God create through evolution's violence and waste?"**

Led by Bethany Sollereder with Jennifer Brown & John Barton

**Tuesday 30th Sept 2025  
6pm to 7.30pm**

In **Parish Centre** (opposite main door of St Helen's Church, Abingdon)

**FREE** **Everyone Welcome**

Contact for more Information: Jill Gant 01235 528929

**Farewell Tea for Fr Paul**  
**28<sup>th</sup> September at St Michael and All Angels'**  
2.30 – 4.30pm. All welcome  
**28<sup>th</sup> September at St Michael and All Angels**, 2.30 – 4.30pm. All welcome

**Faith Forum**  
**September 28th**  
12.30 in the Parish Centre

**Fr Paul's farewell service**  
**9<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm**  
**St Michael & all Angels' Church**  
All welcome

St Michael's Church, Park Road, Abingdon. OX14 1DS

# JUST JANE

An afternoon of readings from Jane Austen with contemporary music and refreshments (tea, coffee, and cakes)



**Saturday, 11 October 2025, 3 - 5.30 pm**

Tickets £15 (Under 18 free) from  
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FCZA>  
 Or £10 on the door if pre-ordered (after 22 September) from 01235 525898  
 and paid for with a Jane Austen £10 note

 **St Michael & All Angels Church**  
 Abingdon-on-Thames

Proceeds in aid  
 of St Michael's Church



*Music at St Helen's Church*  
 Abingdon


**Saturday 25th October 7:15pm**  
**St Helen's Church, Abingdon OX14 5BS**

# HAYDN

# THE CREATION

**The Inauguration Choir & Orchestra**  
 Soloists: Helen Atkinson, Peter Willis, Will Orr  
 Leader: Tom Gregory-Smith  
 Conductor: Sally Mears

Tickets £15 (accompanied under 16s free), on the door,  
 from The Bookstore, Abingdon, or from the QR Code:



## The Licensing of Revd Jen Brown as Team Rector

**21<sup>st</sup> October**  
**7pm at St Helen's Church.**

All welcome

## The Year of Matthew

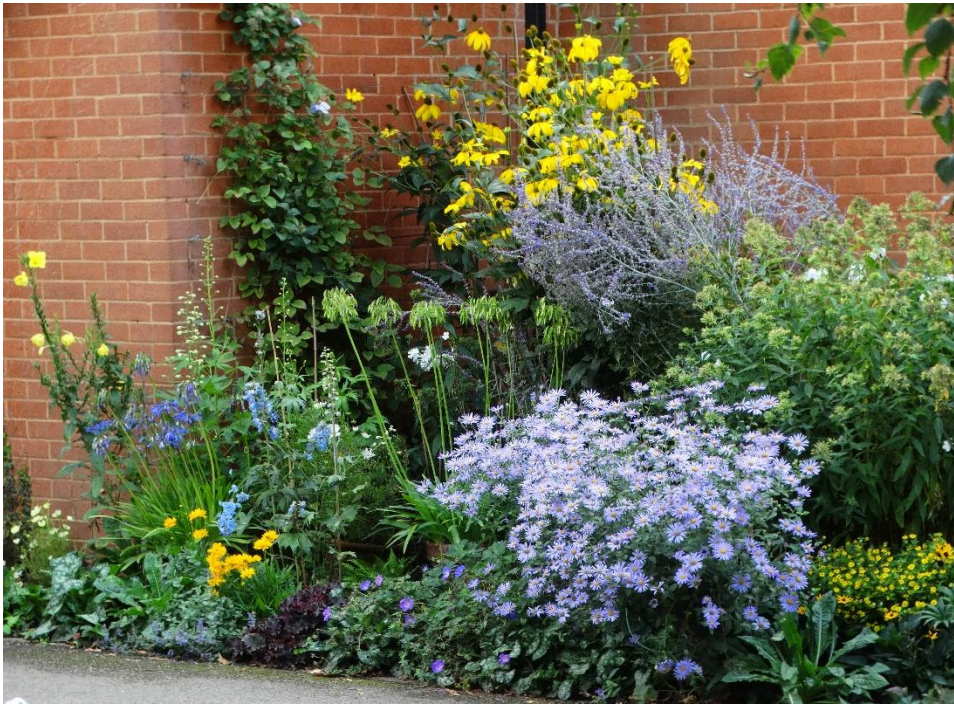
At Advent 2025 the lectionary cycles back to the 'Year of Matthew'.

You may want to revisit the article by John Barton about the Gospel of St Matthew in the November 2022 edition of this magazine. Found here: [https://abingdonparish.org.uk/P\\_window2022.html](https://abingdonparish.org.uk/P_window2022.html)

The book group that meets under the name 'Desiring Life', with members across the Parish, will be studying "Meeting God in Matthew" by Elaine Storkey. The first meeting will be on 23rd Sep which should give time to get a copy of the book and start to read it. We'll meet as usual at 2.15pm upstairs in the Parish Centre to discuss the introduction and Chapter 1 from p1 to p9. Just turn up or email [candle@abingdonparish.org.uk](mailto:candle@abingdonparish.org.uk) for more info

Subsequent dates will be: 7 October, 21 Oct, 4 Nov etc





## The Parish Centre Garden in September.

*With thanks to Anne Faulkner for the  
beautiful garden and to David Bevington  
for the photos.*





## Flowers in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Literature and an odd-man-out

*Collated by Rob Rutherford*

I know a bank where the wild \*\*\*1\*\*\* blows,  
Where \*\*\*2\*\*\* and the nodding \*\*\*3\*\*\* grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious \*\*\*4\*\*\*,  
With sweet \*\*\*5\*\*\* and with \*\*\*6\*\*\*:  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;

There's \*\*\*7\*\*\*, that's for remembrance:  
pray you, love, remember

What's in a name? that which we call a \*\*\*8\*\*\*  
By any other name would smell as sweet.

To throw perfume on the \*\*\*9\*\*\*...  
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess

Dear Diary, Today I tried not to think about Mr. Knightly. I tried not to think about him when I discussed the menu with Cook... I tried not to think about him in the garden where I thrice plucked the petals off a \*\*\*10\*\*\* to ascertain his feelings for Harriet.

Gather ye \*\*\*11\*\*\* while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles today  
Tomorrow will be dying.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:  
In a \*\*\*12\*\*\*'s bell I lie;  
There I couch when owls do cry.  
On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

Fair \*\*\*13\*\*\*, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.  
Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the even-song;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will go with you along.



Flower Sketch by Mia Ketels

## Sunday Afternoon Tea

*Eileen Duckett*

What could be better on Sunday  
Than a proper afternoon tea  
With sandwiches of ham, some scones and some jam  
And plenty of cake, yippee.

In winter it's tea cakes and crumpets  
As we sit by our blazing log fire  
All oozing with plenty of butter  
To skimp on it would be just dire.

And sometimes there's lemon drizzle,  
Carrot cake or a rich Dundee,  
Swiss roll or Victoria sandwich  
Or meringues filled with cream maybe.

My husband he makes the sandwiches  
His are so much better than mine  
But I make the scones and the cake  
Which suits us both just fine.

Not everyone sticks with tradition  
And has an afternoon tea  
But once a week on a Sunday  
It's a treat for my husband and me.



*Ashmolean Tea! See [here](#).*

Quiz Answers:  
Don't peek!

1. Thyme
  2. Oxlips
  3. Violet
  4. Woodbine (honeysuckle)
  5. Musk-roses
  6. Eglantine (sweet briar, a wild rose)
  7. Rosemary  
[*Midsummer Night's Dream: Act II, Scene I, Line 249*]
  8. Rose  
[*Hamlet Act 4, Scene 5, Line 175*]
  9. Violet  
[*Romeo and Juliet Act II, Scene II, Line 43*]
  10. Daisy  
[*King John Act 4, Scene 4, Line 11*]
  11. Rosebuds  
[*Robert Herrick*]
  12. Cowslip  
[*Ariel in the Tempest*]
  13. Daffodils  
[*Robert Herrick*]
- The odd one out is, of course No10 which is from Jane Austen

## Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

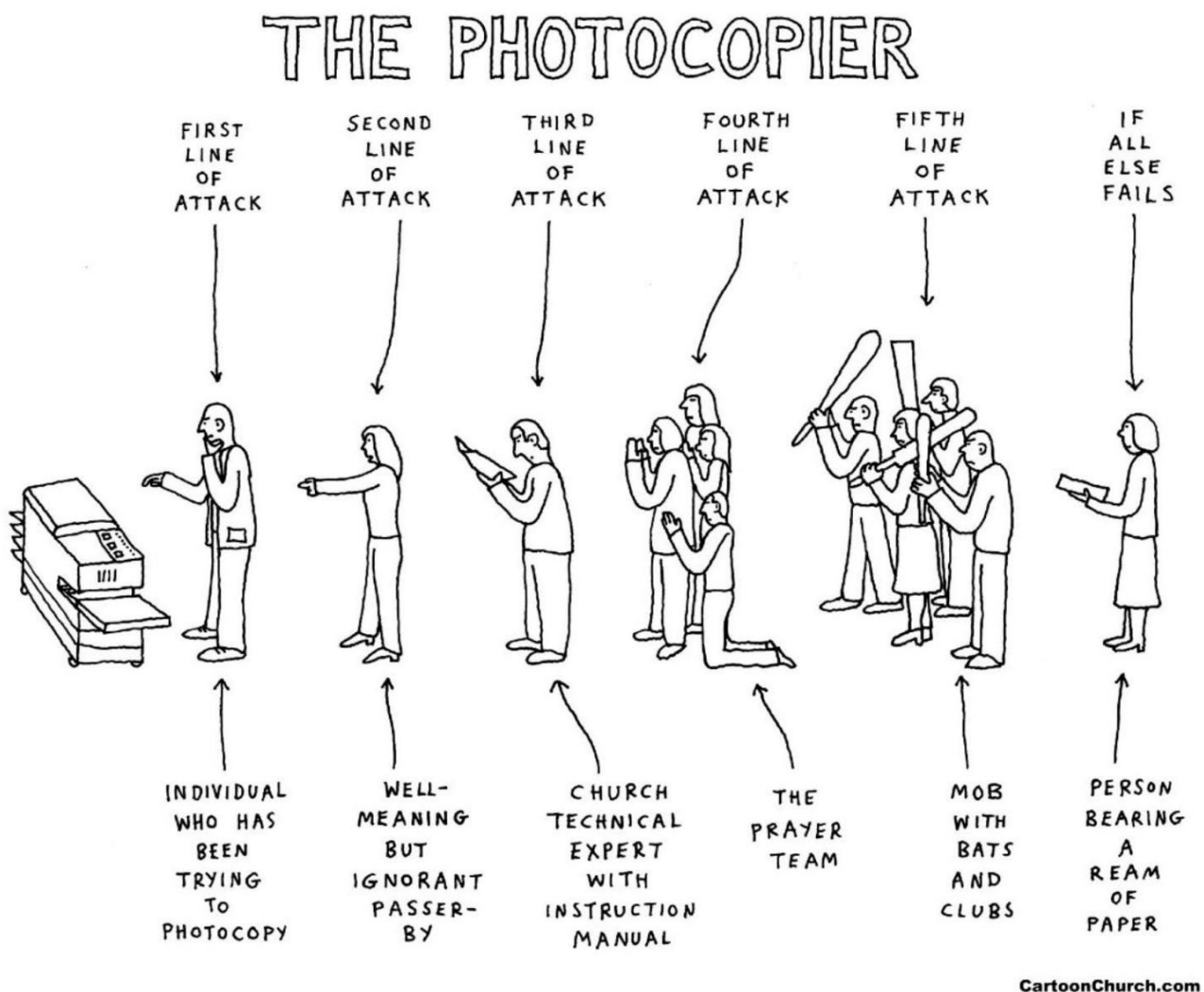
<https://abingdonparish.org.uk>

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. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

Finally, from Dave Walker:



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

The next issue will be published on October 12<sup>th</sup> - ideas and contributions to

[Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk](mailto:Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk)