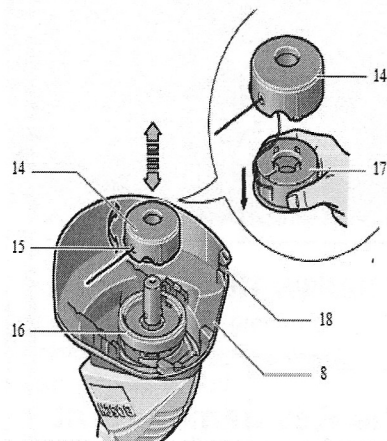


# May thoughts from a Non Techie!



I'VE JUST SPENT AN HOUR STRIMMING GRASS EDGES. THAT'S TO SAY, SINCE PARISH NEWS READERS DESERVE ACCURATE REPORTING, I SPENT FIVE MINUTES STRIMMING AND FIFTY five minutes untangling the trimmer line when it got tangled in the spindle. Fortunately I had kept the Instruction leaflet. Unfortunately it was a series of two dimensional drawings with lots of mysteriously slanted arrows. I won in the end but it made me wish once again that, as a technological dimwit, I had been taught trimmer fixing at some stage in the past. We have left behind the stage of our grandchildren asking us if we ever actually saw Queen Victoria but still battle to keep abreast of the changes that have happened during our lifetime. It seems scarcely possible that we used to dip nibbed pens into inkwells fixed to the corners of our desks but we did and remember the pride of being inkwell monitor more than any good marks we might have been given one fortunate day. The dip-in pens were followed in the 1950's by a cartridge Sheaffer bought in Beales of East Street Brighton, a portable Olivetti typewriter sometime in the 1960's, sight of an electric version at a friend's house in the 1970's, an Amstrad computer with its floppy discs in the 1980's, Windows something or other in the 1990's and now a smart phone which I am told has more computing power than was used to send the first men to the moon, although that may well be an urban myth.

Technology has brought outstanding benefits to millions of people from washing machines to car tyres and CT scanners but as commercial pressures replace human contact with computer algorithms we're faced with questions about our way of life. One reason why Bishop's Waltham and our other local communities are so much valued is that we can speak to someone when we buy our carrots or bread and don't have to stand embarrassed at not understanding the mechanical voice telling us to do something about the bagging area without saying where it is. This is not meant to be an anti computer moan, only a pro human plea. Churches have a role here because while they use technology as much as any other institution they're also clear that people matter for their own sakes more than as consumers or productivity units.

This month brings two events that take us beyond technology. Ascension Day, Thursday May 25th is about saying goodbye and glimpsing glory. The disciples were with Jesus face to face for the last time before a cloud received him from their sight. We can think of times when we've said goodbye to someone we love, torn between sadness at the parting and hope for the future – children going off to university or to another country perhaps. St Luke writes about the Ascension in the first

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. They didn't understand what the parting meant but they went back to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room and together with the women including Mary Jesus' mother and his brothers they continued steadfastly in prayer. On the Day of Pentecost they were led by the power of the Holy Spirit to go out from the Upper Room to tell people about God.

We are called to do pray specially between Ascension Day and Pentecost, June 4th. Last year Archbishop Justin Welby's invitation to Anglicans to pray as "Jesus prayed at the Last Supper that those who follow him, might 'be one that the world might believe' was taken up by other Churches throughout the world and is being repeated this year. In the UK Archbishop Vincent Nicholls head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales said to Archbishop Justin "Maybe that's just a little sign of our growing confidence of the presence of the Spirit . . . and the culmination of Christ's passion, death and resurrection." The subject of our prayers is to be simply "Thy Kingdom come", making that prayer of Jesus our own. I couldn't have written this article without my computer, still ticking over on Windows 7, giving me access to the Internet for checking the details including how to spell Sheaffer and what Archbishop Nicholls actually said. It is heartening to know that God is big enough to include algorithms and even trimmer lines.

*Norman Chatfield*