

# Ashwell Yearbook 2025

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# Welcome to the 2025 edition of the Ashwell Yearbook

This 37th edition of the Ashwell Yearbook has been prepared again by a working group led by Parish Councillor Norton Mahy supported by an enthusiastic team of volunteers. We thank them all for working so hard on preparing this valuable record of Ashwell Village life. Norton has continued to edit and design the layout of this years' issue, maintaining the high quality that has been achieved in recent years. We would also like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have provided interesting and informative reports for us all to read.

It is only with the support of advertisers and the parish council that we are able to bring every household and business in Ashwell a free copy of this Yearbook. So, many thanks to all those Ashwell based businesses, and other businesses that provide a service to Ashwell, for advertising in this issue. Without your support it would simply not be possible to maintain such a high quality and comprehensive Ashwell Yearbook publication. So to all Ashwell residents – please continue to use their services as much as possible. And after the initial reading please keep the Yearbook as a handy reference book for service providers and activity groups available in the village.



**Graham Lee**  
Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

*If you would like to see your organisation's report and photographs in the 2026 edition of the Ashwell Yearbook, please contact the parish office before the end of November 2025*

**clerk@ashwell.gov.uk**  
01462 743706

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Published in March 2025 by Ashwell Parish Council and distributed free to householders and businesses in Ashwell. The thirty-seventh year of production.

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## The Yearbook team

**Norton Mahy**, team leader, parish council reports and design

**Tracy Young**, editor in chief

**Wendy Hagues**, editor

**Margaret Budgen**, photography

**Gaye and John Rowlands**, weddings, anniversaries, notable nineties and obituaries

**Dave Wallace**, editor and proof checking

**Joan Yates**, advertising

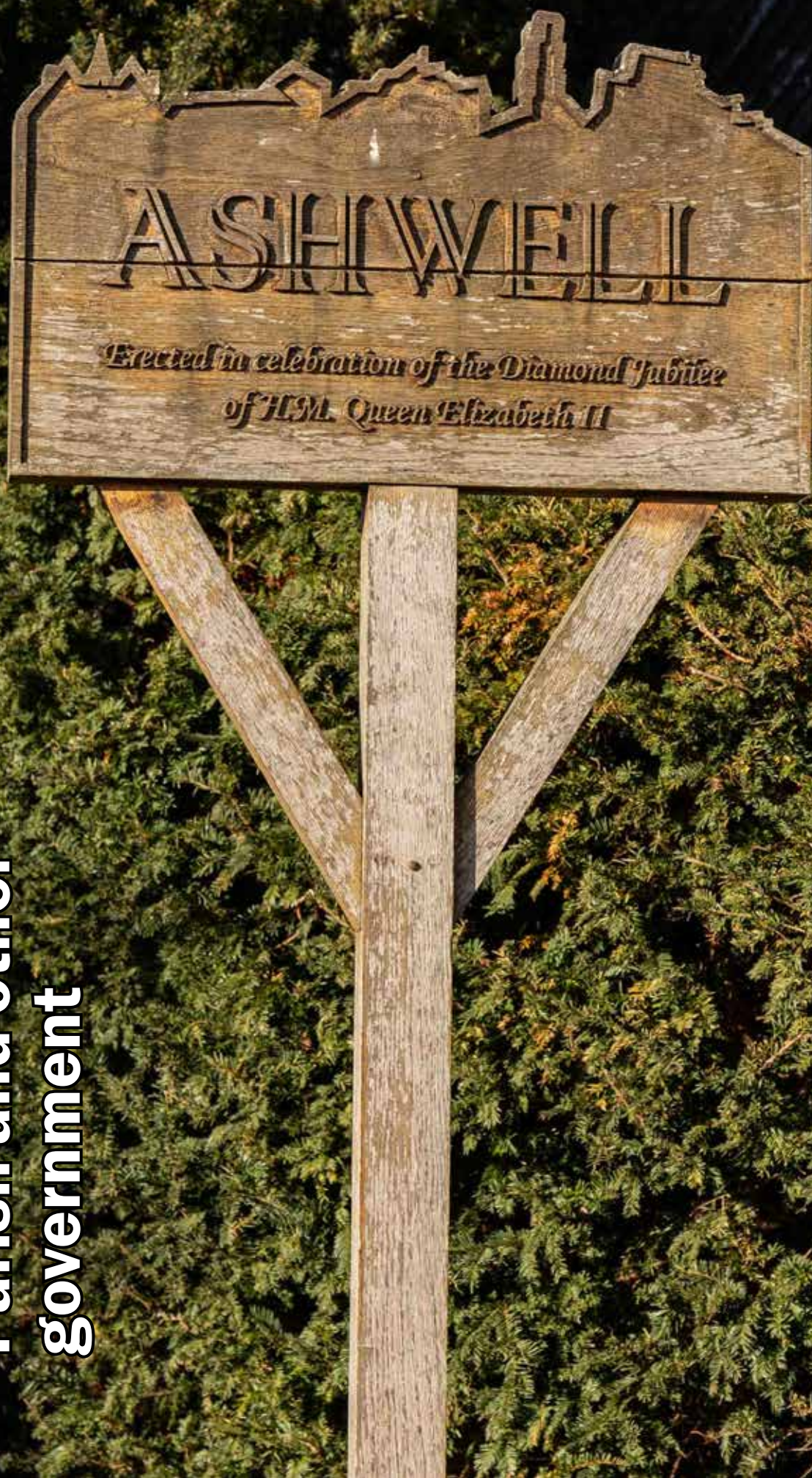
Front page: Aurora Borealis over Ashwell Parish Church, Photograph by **Christopher Morris**.

Ashwell Parish Council would like to thank the many people who have kindly contributed articles and given us permission to use their photographs in this Yearbook, and to thank those who have delivered it to all homes and businesses in Ashwell.

Disclaimer: any views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not to be taken as representing the views of the publishers, Ashwell Parish Council.



Parish and other  
government



ASHWELL

*Erected in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee  
of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II*



## Parish information

Please sign up for regular emails containing news about the Parish Council and our community in Ashwell. To do so, go to the webpage:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/)

Fill in the contact form and press Submit. If you don't want to sign up or cannot, you can contact the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Chairman or individual councillors.

Over and above council matters you will find the website a source of some general information about the parish and its history.

## Parish council meetings

Meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month in the Parish Room and start at 7pm. Everyone is welcome to come to meetings of the Parish Council and there is an opportunity to speak in the 'open forum'. If you want to attend online using Zoom, sign up via the website, or send the clerk (✉ [clerk@ashwell.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ashwell.gov.uk)) a request to be emailed a link with login details.

Our district councillor, Tom Tyson, and county councillor, Steve Jarvis, are invited and routinely attend. Council meetings are minuted as soon as possible after they have taken place and draft minutes are put on to the website. An archive of approved past minutes can also be found there.

Every month a summary of the Parish Council meeting appears in the Parish Council Matters section of the *Ashwell Village News* and is emailed to those who have signed up. Copies of this summary are displayed on the main Parish Council notice board by the Rose & Crown and on the small notice board in the bus shelter in Station Road, opposite the war memorial.

If important issues arise newsletters are published and delivered to every household.

## Parish council representatives

The Parish Council is either represented in or has close links with other village organisations. These include: the Museum, the Village Hall, the School, Ashwell Village Trust, Moss Cottages and the Ashwell Community Land Trust.

## Local Government responsibilities

**Who does what and whom to contact?** The three tiers of local government – parish, district and county – supply most of the services provided in towns and villages.

For details of services provided by Ashwell Parish Council please see pp3-13, for Hertfordshire County Council and North Herts Council please see pp14-15

Contact details for other local services can be found on pp141-145.

## The Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting gives the opportunity for parishioners to put questions to parish councillors and other representatives.

Members of the public are permitted to make statements on relevant matters during the meeting. Any resolutions passed do not bind the parish council but could subsequently be considered by it at their meetings.

Further details and draft minutes of the 2024 Parish Meeting are on the website:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/)

On this webpage there is a short explanation of the purpose of the Parish meeting and a link to past meeting minutes. It is also possible to access papers from meetings of the Parish Council and its sub-committees from this page.



**Annual Parish Meeting, 19 March 2025, 7pm at the school (big hall), all welcome**

### Agenda

- 1 To approve the minutes of the 2024 Parish Meeting
- 2 Matters of report from the 2024 Parish Meeting
- 3 Chairman's Report
- 4 Financial Statement
- 5 Reports from parish council and working groups
- 6 Reports from others
- 7 Parish affairs

Signed  
**Graham Lee**  
Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

*Please remember to bring your copy of the yearbook.*



## Parish and other government

### Parish Council members



**Martin Hoffman**  
Spire Furlong, 3 Newnham Way  
martin.hoffman@ashwell.gov.uk  
01462 742567



**Graham Lee**  
Chairman  
Spade Acre, 59 Ashwell Street  
graham.lee@ashwell.gov.uk  
01462 742834



**David Sims**  
92 Station Road  
david.sims@ashwell.gov.uk  
01462 742151



**Chris Button**  
24 Silver Street  
chris.button@ashwell.gov.uk



**Vinny Hall**  
6 Bells, 2 Swan Street  
vinny.hall@ashwell.gov.uk



**Ian Duffy**  
4 Townsend Meadow  
ian.duffy@ashwell.gov.uk



**Norton Mahy**  
Vice-chairman  
40 Silver Street  
norton.mahy@ashwell.gov.uk  
01462 742677



**Joan Yates**  
joan.yates@ashwell.gov.uk

Clerk: **Sally Roberts**, clerk@ashwell.gov.uk  
Deputy Clerk: **Nicola Forrester**, deputyclerk@ashwell.gov.uk  
The Parish Council office is at 6a Back Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5PE, 01462 743706

Sign up for regular information about the  
village at: [www.ashwell.gov.uk/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/)



## Chairman's report

Looking back, it was proving extremely difficult to find anything particularly positive about world events in 2024 that we could draw on to inspire Ashwell for 2025. But thanks to the insights provided by the Internet, and Google's search engine, I discovered a nugget for optimism and aspiration. Apparently, in September 2024 Norway became the first country in the world where electric cars outnumbered petrol cars.

Out of the 2.8 million private vehicles registered in Norway, 753,905 ran on petrol while 754,303 were electric. More impressively, electric cars made up 94.3% of all new cars registered in Norway in August 2024.

Those of you who read my introduction to the 2024 Yearbook may remember me reporting that the Parish Council had declared a climate emergency in 2022 and were taking steps to help Ashwell become zero carbon ahead of the target date set by government.

### Progress on Zero Carbon Ashwell

In February 2024 a working group under the name 'Zero Carbon Ashwell' was set up by the parish council. That group, which includes some members of Greening Ashwell, liaised with Community Energy England and submitted a stage 1 grant application for £40,000 in October. At the time of writing we are waiting to hear if our application has been successful. If it is, the grant money will be used to fund a feasibility study to identify Ashwell's total energy needs and how that might be provided by locally generated green, sustainable, energy sources which should not only significantly reduce Ashwell's carbon footprint but also help to reduce our energy bills.

The working group is preparing a website and other communication materials which will be used once grant money has been obtained.

If you have any engineering, science, energy based skills and/or a keen interest in climate, carbon reduction or the environment please contact me or the Clerk to express your interest in joining the working group.

### Progress on the Pavilion

Another key objective reported last year was to make progress on upgrading the Pavilion. A village wide survey was carried out in October with the following key results:

- There were a total of 225 responses

- 83% of respondents did not want to lose the Pavilion and toilets
- 53% voted for a major upgrade or replacement of the buildings
- 72% of respondents were willing to contribute towards the costs of upgrade through a temporary increase in Council Tax

We are now forming a working group from parish councillors and volunteers to help with the tasks of creating a specification for the work, obtaining quotations and exploring all fund raising opportunities. It is likely that this work will be carried out in 2025 with the aim of commencing building work in 2026. Prior to starting work parishioners will be briefed on final proposals or options.

### Neighbourhood Plan

The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan was officially adopted by North Herts Council in its local plan in 2022 and covers the 20 year period from 2011 to 2031. The Neighbourhood Plan has legal significance and its policies are used and considered by NHC and the Government Inspector when making or reviewing planning policy. It ensures that the very specific demography, needs, character and heritage of Ashwell are taken into account when deciding on planning applications and wider planning matters that may affect Ashwell. The Parish Council view on planning matters reflect and regularly refer to the policies detailed in our Neighbourhood Plan. A copy of the plan can be read on our website: [www.ashwell.gov.uk/planning/ashwell-s-neighbourh/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/planning/ashwell-s-neighbourh/)

### Doctors' surgery

The Parish Council continues to liaise with the Ashwell & Bassingbourn Patients Group (ABPG) and the surgery. I attend regular meetings held between the ABPG and the surgery, and contribute to design and analysis of an annual survey to monitor the views of parishioners served by the surgery on the systems and service provided. Our Parish Council also acts to communicate relevant updates to parishioners via our website and other communication channels in the Ashwell community. If you have any comments or questions about the Surgery please raise them with me or Peter Chapman (Chair of the ABPG) – his fuller report on the ABPG appears separately in the Yearbook.

### Keep up to date on key developments in Ashwell

If you're not already receiving regular updates then it's easy get them straight to your phone, tablet or



## Parish and other government

computer. To do so, simply go to the webpage: [www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/) Fill in the contact form and press Submit". You can opt to receive all updates or just those categories that interest you.

Thank you.

**Graham Lee**

Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

## The Springs

### Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

As in recent years the Springs have been a popular destination, especially for young families. Everyone loves messing about in the water on a warm summer day during the holidays.

What many may not realize is quite how special the place is. Katherine Briant, a student based in Baldock, has made a wonderful YouTube video about the Springs. She poses as a visitor from the



year 1898 who explains what makes them special and tells us about the ancient life they support. It's called 'A Time Traveller's Guide to Chalk Streams' on:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgsHa-xla-E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgsHa-xla-E)

Or scan the QR code. YouTube videos aside, it has been very much business as usual in 2024. Maintaining the site always involves work. This year storms brought down a tree and the large stump by the stepping stones. It's important to minimise the use of machinery in an area that is environmentally sensitive and contractors removed the tree using only electric tools. But it was necessary to use petrol driven chainsaws on the stump. Alan, our environmental cleansing officer took the downed



logs to the Springhead boundary to provide a habitat for the bugs. He also weeds and prunes around paths and steps to help access.

Greening Ashwell continues to play an active part in keeping the site tidy, curating the natural habitat as far as possible. Occasionally beer cans and even the odd bicycle wheel need removing.

The Environment Agency still measures outflow daily and reports monthly. The data is used to control the amount of water extracted from the aquifer supplying the Springs. Flow rates have remained acceptable through this year.

**Cllr Martin Hoffman**



Snowdrops at the northern end of the Springs





## Ashwell Cemetery

The Ashwell Cemetery working group made a great start in tidying up untended graves in October. This produced a lot of green waste and made a positive start in removing ivy, weeds and self-seeded plants from on top of some grave spaces. This is not something covered by the grounds maintenance contract, so the Parish Council is grateful to the voluntary working group of local residents for its superb start in tackling this. Unfortunately a further Saturday morning session scheduled in December had to be postponed owing to bad weather.

The group is still looking forward to making additional progress in neatening up the cemetery, specifically the Old Area, to ensure it becomes a tranquil space for all to enjoy. It is hoped that this will become a semi-regular event to help keep the cemetery a pleasant place for all to find peace and solace.

In November a contractor has carried out some tree work in response to a tree safety report, as well as removing a self-seeded bush from the ashes section of the cemetery. This created more space in the ashes area of the cemetery for use in future years. There is a plan for additional work to remove four



diseased box hedges, re-landscape the area and replace the dying bushes with an alternative breed of bushes. This should occur early in 2025.

For parishioners' information, The Chapel of Rest remains leased to Nevilles of Luton Funeral Directors, for those who may want to use the area when the time comes.

Ashwell Parish Council thanks all individuals who have had a hand in helping the Parish Council sustain the area's pleasant country cemetery feel over the last 12 months. Your continued support in helping maintain the area is truly appreciated.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk

## St Mary's Churchyard

Because the churchyard is closed for burials the parish council must, by law, maintain the grounds. St Mary's Parochial Church Council is responsible for the graves and lych gate.

There were no problems revealed by the annual tree safety inspection but contractors took out one high placed branch at the request of a neighbouring householder, following agreement with the Church.

Given this situation, the only major tree works were those carried over from the previous year. There was no need to dip deeply into the earmarked fund we have to accommodate occasional large bills. But, even if it is not necessary to spend from it in one year, the balance still needs to increase as trees age. There are regular annual top-ups from the Parish budget. The same applies to the Springs and Cemetery.

Finding a bees nest in one of the Holm Oaks on the boundary with Mill Street was a possible highlight of the Churchyard's year and one of the churchwardens efficiently organised its removal.

**Cllr Martin Hoffman**





## War Memorial

The War Memorial in Ashwell is a grade II listed structure that was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, who lived in the late 19th and early 20th century.

In October a Cambridge based stone-masonry company carried out cleaning and re-pointing work of the War Memorial, so it can be maintained to a high standard for future use. This was completed in time for Remembrance Sunday's commemoration.

Hertfordshire Highways plans to remove the drop kerb on the pavement adjacent to the War Memorial. This is because, when it rains, water coalesces in the area rather than being carried off down a drain. As a result, debris and stains are often left of the pavement after heavy rain. In addition, some bollards will be added to the junction of Station Road and Lucas Lane to prevent vehicles driving over the pavement as they turn left into Lucas Lane.

At the time of writing this article, Hertfordshire Highways plan to carry out this work at some point before 1 April 2025. However, they could not give a specific date.

The British Legion and village crafters had created some wonderful, knitted poppies that they attached to sheets and draped over each side of the steps up to the war memorial and some beautiful, knitted vines of poppies that they wrapped around two trees flanking the War Memorial. This helped to set an attractive and dignified stage for the annual Remembrance Sunday commemoration.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk

## Church Clock

Ashwell Museum records show churchwardens accounts for 1563 confirming a payment of fourpence for a lock to the clock house. Thus there must have been a clock in the church at least that far back. Records suggest that, unlike the current clock, the original one was probably located at the bottom of the tower. The old clock would not have had a face to it and the time would have been marked by church bells. This original clock was worn out by 1603 and a new one installed for a cost of five shillings (£280 in today's money, according to the Bank of England). A third clock was installed in 1896, at the bequest Joseph Butler Westrope, which had the then new innovation of clock faces.

Twice in 2024 the chimes on the clock malfunctioned and constantly chimed. They were turned off while we waited for repair, which happened soon after. We thank a local resident who regularly and promptly carried out the duty of going into the church and turning off the chimes, so that the village could sleep well at night, as on both occasions the chimes malfunctioned in the evening.

During a recent power cut the clock temporarily stopped working, but the restart synchronizer correctly worked to automatically re-set the clock 12 hours after the blackout, thus ensuring that the clock keeps the correct time after a loss of power.

At the time of writing we are waiting for St Mary's church clock to be serviced.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk





## Ashwell Lock Up

Small, constructed of clunch and with a slate roof, the Lock Up is a grade II listed building and part of a larger network of lock ups, cages and prisons across Hertfordshire. To the side is a plaque telling the tale of its last occupant.

**Cllr Norton Mahy**

## Keeping Ashwell tidy

North Herts Council proposals for reducing the number of litter bins came through in November 2024. The reduction was prompted by renegotiation of its waste management contract. From seventeen bins emptied before, North Herts wanted to cut back to nine. Despite Parish Council representations we could only increase that number to ten, though we still continued to negotiate.



Perhaps we should be philosophical about this; there have been worse casualties of austerity.

Our grounds maintenance officer and environmental cleansing operative supplement the work of North Herts in keeping streets clean and tidy, and keep vegetation down in twitchels. They also look after our parish owned spaces.

The parish council is responsible for emptying the dog waste bins and all litter bins on parish council property, for example: at the Recreation Ground. North Herts Council empties litter bins on the street.

You can help keep the Village lovely. Join the Litter pick. It's a chance to enjoy the outdoors after a long winter and has the feelgood factor of a good deed. The picking routes are suitable for families and the Parish Council will supply the necessary equipment. This year it will be on 5 April at 2pm, meet outside the Pavilion on the Recreation Ground.

Just a final reminder: please don't put soiled nappies or dog waste into the litter bins. The schedule for emptying them means these items could be there for some weeks.

**Cllr Norton Mahy**

**Note for your diary:** this year's litter pick  
Saturday 5 April  
meet at the Pavilion, 2pm

## Small Gains and hedgerows

It has been another difficult year for Small Gains Allotments due to changing weather conditions, but the plot holders old and new have worked hard on their plots and have grown a large number of vegetables. Pest control has been a problem but not as bad as in past years when rabbits were a major concern. The track's condition is still a concern and we are working on ways of resolving this problem.

The hedge around the Recreation Ground is still causing concern. It has suffered due to the bad weather conditions and people causing damage to it. It would help if people did not use the hedge as a shortcut. There is no need to enter the hedge row for any reason. The Parish Council does not want the expense of replanting the hedge again, as it is very expensive.

**Cllr David Sims**



## Parish and other government



## Public rights of way

### Footpaths

Robert Lloyd is the officer responsible for Countryside & Rights of Way and the Environment & Infrastructure at Herts County Council and is the main liaison contact for the Parish Council.

Items to report on this year are:

- Track 16 – Ashwell St/Ruddery between Woodforde Close and Station Road. This BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) forms part of the ancient Icknield Way which is thought to be the oldest long distance track in England. It is a rural, unmetalled, tree-lined track for the primary benefit of pedestrians, and it marks the Southern edge of Ashwell's main West/East settlement (housebuilding) boundary. It is extensively used by walkers, dog exercisers, and children walking to and from Ashwell Primary School. It is at risk of damage and diminution or urbanisation if a proposed development of 14 houses in the field known as Hunt's Close is approved (currently on appeal with the Government Inspector). The Parish Council has requested that any conditions of development should include the installation of bollards at the point on the Ruddery of the proposed site entrance so that there is no vehicular access from the site to Station Rd. This would help to protect the track from increased wear & tear.
- Track 7 – Hinxworth Road to Ashwell End. This bridleway was completely resurfaced in the last 12+ months, and thanks to the excellent work done by Herts CC, it remains walkable in all weather with none of the mud or puddles that it used to have.

- Other footpaths. There is no further update on the much needed extension of the Ashwell Station footpath/cycle path beyond the Hertfordshire/ Cambridgeshire boundary. However, it is now recognised as a priority for Stage 2 of the Hertfordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan sustainable transport programme. However, because the missing section to the Station lies in Cambridgeshire we really need the engagement & support from South Cambs Council.

Information sources: for details of access to public rights of way throughout Hertfordshire, use the following link: [webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm](http://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm). Zoom in via your mouse or screen to access Ashwell footpaths or those in the rest of Hertfordshire.

Any Ashwell resident with concerns re Public Rights of Way in Ashwell can contact the Parish Council or Hertfordshire County Council directly using their 'Report a Fault' page.

**Cllr Graham Lee**

Chairman

## Arbury Banks

### Scheduled Monument

Arbury Banks is an example of approximately 150 hillforts that date back to between the eighth and fifth centuries BCE (late Bronze to early Iron Age). Historic England has authoritative information about it and hillforts in general. The entry includes aerial photographs. See:

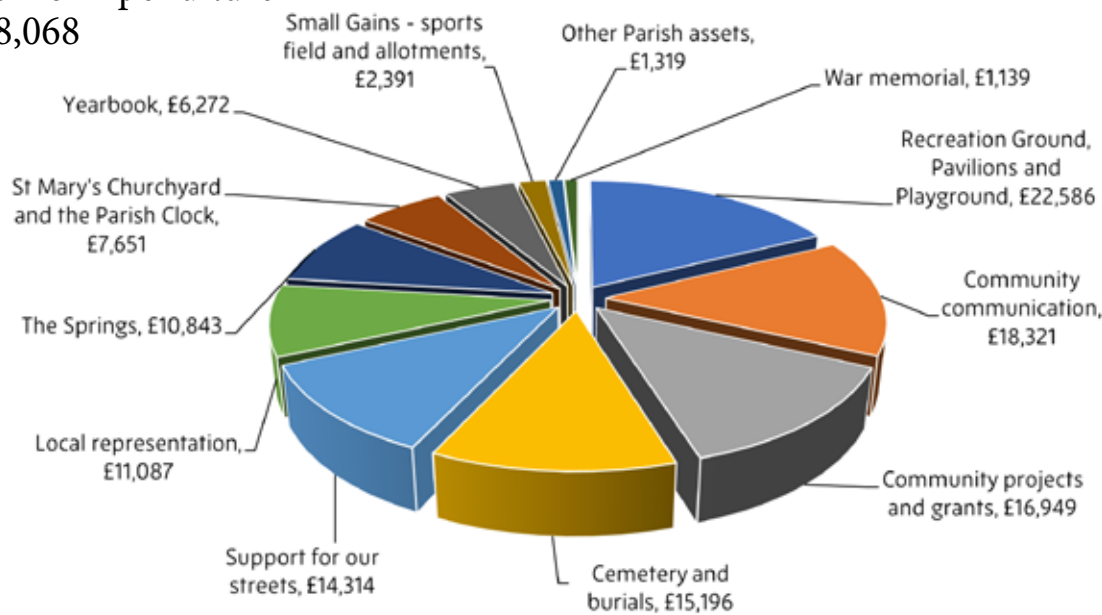
[historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008981?section=official-list-entry](http://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008981?section=official-list-entry)

An information board placed on the site's boundary also provides details. Why not stop and have a look next time you are walking there?.

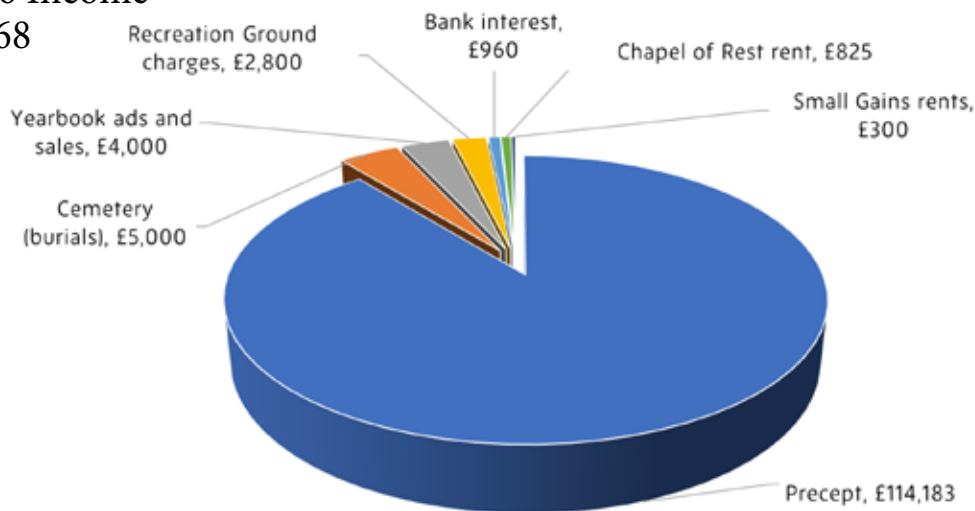
**Cllr Martin Hoffman**

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2025-26 Expenditure  
£128,068



2025-26 Income  
£128,068



Parish Council Finances

Actual spend 2024-25

As at 13 January 2025 the forecast outturn for expenditure in 2024-25 was £132,776 compared with a budget of £127,369, £5,407 more than originally planned. The principal reasons for this expectation were:

- a longer than originally assumed handover from the retiring Parish Clerk to the new one (£2,500),
- increased office expenses, for example: higher than expected accounting software setup costs, an online pavilion survey, reprint of 20s plenty notices (£1,200), and
- higher maintenance and cleaning costs for the War Memorial (£2,000)

The net effect of all other items was £293 under budget. The additional cost was funded from the Council's General Reserve.

Budget 2025-26

The principal aim of the budget planning exercise for 2025-26 was to keep any increase in the precept equal to, or ideally less than, prevailing inflation. The agreed increase was 1.9%. The Parish Council considered it could keep it to this level without affecting the overall quality of service.

There have been challenges. It is still proving difficult to find contractors to work at competitive rates and this was apparent when the grounds maintenance contract was recently tendered out.

The budget exercise included a review of fees and charges and some above-inflation increases have



## Parish and other government

been made to recover a higher proportion of actual costs. However, the Parish Council does not want to make charges so high that they are a deterrent to using facilities that are a benefit to the community.

The overall effect is that households in Band D properties will pay £124.89 in the year for Parish services as part of their Council Tax. This is an increase of £3.46 compared with 2024-25. Note that a 1.9% increase in the claim on your Council Tax translates into an average 2.8% increase in the actual payments for 2025-26 because the tax base in the Parish has shrunk.

The pie charts explain where the Parish's income will come from and how it will be spent in the coming year. The budgeted expenditure for each service includes the full cost of staff time spent on it. This includes time spent on administrative tasks such as keeping accounts, paying suppliers, arranging insurance, etc that are spread across services pro rata.

The descriptions of three of our services would benefit from a short explanation.

*Community communication.* We deal with parishioner requests and queries and look for answers, often by consulting other bodies such as North Herts Council or the county. The Parish Council also needs to keep up-to-date with developments in public services that affect people here.

*Community projects and grants.* In the past, initiatives like the Neighbourhood Plan have taken much time from staff and volunteers alike. This kind of work continues now with the Pavilion replacement project, safer routes to the station, speeding campaign at the school and other initiatives.

*Local representation.* The council is made up of individuals appointed by a democratic process to represent the local community. It promotes the interests of parishioners by, for example, responding to North Herts Council planning applications on their behalf. In doing so, it has to run meetings and keep records.

If you are interested in further detail then please do look on the website <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk>. If that doesn't answer your questions, then you can get in touch as follows:

The Parish Office  
Bear Farm, 6a Back Street  
SG7 5PE  
☎ 01462 743706  
✉ [clerk@ashwell.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ashwell.gov.uk)

**Cllr Norton Mahy**



## Here to help

### Sally Roberts, Parish Clerk

Hello, I am Sally the new Clerk for Ashwell Parish Council.

As Jane's successor I have an enormous task ahead of me trying to step into the shoes of one of the most professional, dedicated and likeable people I know. I will try my very best to continue to serve the interests of Ashwell as Jane did.

I live locally, am married, have three grown children, two grandchildren and another on the way! Next to my family, my other loves are friends, walking, reading, biking, travel and life in general.

I look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible and the task ahead.

An advertisement for BP'S GARDEN SERVICES. The background is a green lawn with a red lawnmower in the bottom right corner. The text is in bold green and black. It lists services: Grass cutting, Hedge cutting, Rotavating, Fencing and fence repairs, and Other garden maintenance. It also provides contact information: Call or email Pete for a free quotation: 07875 099905 or housdenpeter@googlemail.com.

**BP'S GARDEN SERVICES**  
Weekly or fortnightly rounds, regular or one-off jobs

- Grass cutting
- Hedge cutting
- Rotavating
- Fencing and fence repairs
- Other garden maintenance

Call or email Pete for a free quotation:  
07875 099905 or  
[housdenpeter@googlemail.com](mailto:housdenpeter@googlemail.com)



## Nicola Forrester, Deputy Clerk

Call me Nicky. Married with two small children, I live in Letchworth and like swimming, jogging and days out with my family.

I started working for Ashwell Parish Council in November 2023, enjoying my work in the Parish Office and around the village; I'm slowly getting to know people. Previously I worked in Tesco, and before that at Bank of America Head Office dealing with complex PPI complaints.

I bring my family to events in the village, such as the Ashwell Show, the Litter Pick and St Mary's Church Book Fair. My eldest loves, "the place with the stepping stones," ...I'm sure you can guess where that is.

## Retirement of Jane Porter

### The end of an era

In 2024 we welcomed Sally Roberts as Parish Clerk but also said farewell to Jane Porter in that role; one she has held for 22 years. Jane has amassed an astonishing body of knowledge about the village, becoming an authoritative point of reference on all things Ashwell. She has also been an approachable and tireless worker on its behalf.

To mark the hard work and valued contribution during her long service as Clerk, there was a small reception in January 2025 at the Parish Room. At



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this gathering the Parish Council Chairman, Graham Lee, thanked her on behalf of the Parish and presented her with a gift of John Lewis vouchers donated by appreciative parishioners. Thank you, Jane.







### Tom Tyson

#### District Councillor's report for 2024

It has been a year of change for us at North Herts Council. The all-up local elections in May 2024 saw Labour form an administration, albeit without an overall majority (Lab 25 members, Lib Dem 19, Con 7).

The next district elections will be in 2028, assuming, of course, we still have a district by then. At the time of writing, the government seems very keen on reorganising the structure of local government to merge the districts and county councils into new single-tier authorities, each with a mayor. These would then take charge of frontline services currently provided at a more local level, such as housing, planning, waste collection, parks and green spaces, environmental health and leisure services, in addition to everything currently administered at county level. The idea that this will automatically bring savings (which presumably is the point of it all) is debatable.

Many new unitary councils are in the same sort of dire financial trouble as their county council predecessors, for example. They all face massive bills for social care and education, especially special educational needs and disability provision (SEND). The risk that money will be diverted from local services to help pay for them becomes very real if the councils are merged. And, of course, the proposals also take decision-making further away from local communities.

Government references to devolving power are misleading, as this reorganisation would have exactly the opposite effect. Your elected representative would not be able to attend all parish council meetings, for example, as I currently do. The restructuring could take many years to implement, however.

One of the services provided by district councils that has come in for particular criticism from Westminster this year is planning. District councils



are accused of 'clogging up' the system and preventing much-needed homes from being built. However, over the past year North Herts has approved master plans for thousands of homes at major sites allocated in our Local Plan and is processing the related planning applications as they come in.

The Growing Baldock project was held up by Hertfordshire's inability to commit to funding the proposed new Knights Templar School. At the time of writing, the master plan for Baldock has not yet been agreed by North Herts Council but if and when it is we can expect an outline application covering the whole area straight away, followed by individual full applications to develop various portions of the overall site, starting at the North Road end, perhaps in a couple of years' time.

One less radical change we'll be seeing straight away is the start of the new waste contract (in May 2025), with Veolia taking over as our new service provider. Hopefully the transition will be trouble free. To help things get off to a smooth start, the introduction of the new bin collection cycle will not be implemented until the late summer. The new contract should see recycling rates go up with the inclusion of soft plastics in the black bin. Part of Ashwell took part in the successful trial collection of plastic bags, etc. over the past months. Another positive step with regard to waste disposal was the move last year to have all our food waste processed more sustainably at the anaerobic digester on the A505 instead of the composting plant at Cumberlow Green.

If you have any concerns about local issues please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at [tom.tyson@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:tom.tyson@north-herts.gov.uk). You can also find me at Ashwell Parish Council meetings, and all your local councillors are available at our morning surgery outside Tesco in Baldock on the last Saturday of the month.

**District Councillor Tom Tyson**

✉ [tom.tyson@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:tom.tyson@north-herts.gov.uk)



## Steve Jarvis

### Hertfordshire County Councillor's report for 2024

Over the last year I have tried to ensure that I keep in touch with people across the village, attending parish council meetings and producing regular newsletters jointly with Tom Tyson.

I also arrange for a twice-yearly meeting between highways and the parish council at which we can discuss matters relating to the roads in and around the village. These focus on changes and issues rather than routine repairs which are best dealt with via the council's highways fault reporting system (although I am always happy to follow up responses to reports where these do not result in a sensible response).

Although roads are Herts County Council's most visible responsibility more than three quarters of its spending of more than £1 billion a year goes on the care of vulnerable adults and children. These services are often not visible to the rest of the community but are vital for those whose lives depend on them.

Hertfordshire's failure to provide adequately for children with special educational needs and disabilities has received much coverage recently. Whilst many of these problems result from national policy failings it has become increasingly clear that Herts County Council has not done the best job within the constraints that it faces. Along with colleagues I have been working to get this recognised and get some improvements made.

Over the last year the County Council has seen a significant increase in the costs of caring for both vulnerable adults and children which has impacted the amount of money available for other services. Given that the new government is talking of diverting more resources to areas with higher levels of deprivation than Hertfordshire it seems likely that these problems will grow rather than shrink.

As part of plans to save money, the County Council has now concentrated its staff in offices in Stevenage, with County Hall now only used for formal meetings.

Turning to local matters, many people have raised concerns about the speed of traffic in parts of the village, particularly in Kingsland Way and Claybush Road. At the time of writing, I have arranged for speed surveys to be done on both these roads, which should be completed by the time you read this. Based on the results there can then be a discussion with highways and the parish council about potential measures to improve matters. Such discussions are underway regarding Newnham Way, but any work depends not only on identifying viable solutions but also the funds to pay for them.

Traffic travelling the wrong way on the A505 continues to be a problem despite the installation of many additional signs. I am collecting data on when this happens (since otherwise it just appears on various local Facebook groups) which I hope will both help the highway engineers understand the problem and encourage them to provide a solution.

Like all County Councillors I am allocated a budget of £90,000 a year that can be spent on road repairs and improvements, which I try to ensure is spent on changes that address local concerns. Unfortunately, the amount has not increased for more than 10 years and the cost of roadworks has increased dramatically, so it is a challenge to fit all the required work in the available budget.

Please get in touch if you want to know more or if there are issues that you think I might be able to help with.

#### County Councillor Steve Jarvis

☎ 07815 887375

✉ [steve.jarvis@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.jarvis@hertfordshire.gov.uk)



## Parish and other government



### Chris Hinchcliff MP North East Hertfordshire



As your MP, I spend my days balancing responsibilities in Parliament with duties in the constituency. In Parliament, I attend debates, vote on legislation, and participate in Environmental Audit Committee meetings. These activities support the shaping of national policy and laws.

On non-sitting days you will find me in North East Hertfordshire where I spend significant amounts of time meeting with constituents, holding surgeries, and addressing local issues. I am doing my utmost to visit every corner of the constituency and stay connected with the communities I represent.

I also handle a large volume of correspondence from constituents, responding to letters and emails, and making enquiries on your behalf. This casework is a vital part of my role, ensuring your concerns, whether personal or related to national policy, are addressed.

### How to contact me

There are several ways to contact me. Firstly, you can email:

✉ [chris.hinchcliff.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.hinchcliff.mp@parliament.uk)

Or alternatively, you can write a letter to:

Chris Hinchcliff MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA.

I also hold regular sessions known as surgeries where constituents can meet me in person to discuss issues. These are listed on my website:

[www.chrishinchcliff.co.uk/surgeries](http://www.chrishinchcliff.co.uk/surgeries)

It's a great opportunity to have a face-to-face conversation about any local concerns you may have. You have the option to bring a wide range of issues to my attention.

If you're having issues with public services such as benefits, pensions, tax issues, and housing, I will do my best to help. My office can help you to navigate these often complex systems.

Local concerns, such as facility closures, local infrastructure projects, and environmental issues, are also important. I can raise these issues in Parliament or engage with the relevant authorities.

If you're passionate about a particular cause, you can ask your me to support specific campaigns or legislative changes. I can occasionally bring attention to certain issues at a national level.

I can receive over 10,000 unique emails a month, so while I work hard to respond to every constituent, certain matters, such as emergency casework involving impending homelessness, do need to take priority over broader campaign issues, so replies may not be immediate.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can when I visit Ashwell on occasions over the coming year. If you spot me in the area, please do say hi.

**Chris Hinchcliffe MP**  
North East Hertfordshire



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# Community assets



Queuing for flu jabs at the surgery



## Ashwell Village – a community with heritage, heart, and hope

Ashwell is more than just a village: it's a living tapestry of history, community, and a truly unique spirit that brings us all together. What truly makes Ashwell shine though is the sense of community. From our local shop owners to the dedicated volunteers who organise events, there's a sense of togetherness that defines village life. The Ashwell Museum and Village Hall serve as gathering points, where we share memories and make new ones, celebrating both our heritage and our future. Throughout the year, we've enjoyed fairs, markets, and charity events that have brought us all together.

There's nothing quite like seeing neighbours and friends come together to celebrate, support one another, and keep Ashwell's traditions alive. Each event, each gathering, and each conversation builds on the warmth that makes Ashwell truly feel like home. As we move forward, let's continue to cherish what makes Ashwell so special. Each of us plays a role in shaping the future of our village, ensuring it remains a place of warmth, heritage, and connection. Here's to another year of community spirit, shared memories, and making Ashwell the beautiful village we all love.

**Tracy Young**

## Ashwell Village Museum

During 2024 we were awarded Full Accreditation by Arts Council England. This is a national scheme to ensure that museums keep up to high standards. The process involved a lot of work sorting out policies and plans but now we have gained accreditation, access to much needed support and grants is opened up to us. We have met the required standard since 1989.

Accreditation has meant we were able to obtain a grant to purchase a major work by John Mills. John died in late 2023 and we were invited to look over the sculptures in his Hinxworth studio to see if there were any relevant pieces that would sit well in the museum and allow us to remember him and his work. After much consideration we chose a small bronze version of the *Women of World War II*, the full-size version stands over 6 metres tall in Whitehall near the Cenotaph. The purchase was made with a grant from the Hertfordshire Heritage Fund and the remainder from The Friends of the Museum



Museum display at the Ashwell Show

Our Website [www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk/](http://www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk/) continues to invite enquiries from old Ashwellians and their descendants all over the world. We get about one query a week which we answer to the best of our knowledge. The website holds articles of local interest which you can add to, and a database of the entire museum collection and the life histories of all the WWI Veterans.

However, it is always worth keeping an eye on the website for details of upcoming events promoted by the museum and the Friends Association. The regular Makers at the Museum meetings on the second Tuesday of the month are made possible by help from the Ashwell Show. Subjects covered have ranged from postcards and watercolour painting to upcycling and *The Great Fire of Ashwell*.

Throughout the year we are open on Sundays and bank holidays. In addition the curatorial team are usually there on Tuesday afternoons if you want to drop in.

With the help of the trustees, the Friends, the Cleaning Team and curatorial volunteers, we will continue to care for the collection you have placed in our hands for posterity, answer any burning historical questions and welcome you all.

**Peter Greener and Sarah Talks**

Curators

☎ 01462 742956

✉ [enquiries@ashwellmuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ashwellmuseum.org.uk)

## Makers at the Museum

The Makers group meets each month to explore an aspect of art or craft, linked to the collections held at Ashwell Museum. We begin with a short illustrated talk and have a chance to look at some objects or pictures. These are often things from our store that have not been on display. We then move to the



## Community assets

Parish Room for refreshments and the opportunity to take part in a craft activity.

We have more than thirty regular members, but anyone is very welcome to come along. We have been kindly supported by the Ashwell Show with funds for craft materials, and hopefully towards the cost of hiring the Parish Room.

In 2024 we had meetings on spring cleaning, the Great Fire of Ashwell, dressmaking, taxidermy, well dressing, 36 views of St Mary's Church, medicinal herbs, postcards, watercolour painting, The War Memorial, fabric recycling and Ashwell gold. A very big thank you to those who helped to lead a session.

In 2025 we are hoping to have some evening sessions and one weekend event. Do look out on the Museum website, or for posters on the Museum wall. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm.

### Sarah Talks

✉ sarah@sarahtalks.me

[www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk](http://www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk)

## Friends of Ashwell Village Museum



The Friends main aim is to support the trustees and curator in the day to day running of the Museum. We provide Volunteers to open the Museum on Sunday afternoons, Bank Holiday Mondays and any other time

that an opener is required. We also support Ashwell At Home. Our rota includes many Ashwell residents and we manage it by having two people on at any one time opening the Museum between 2.30 and 5pm on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays. Please contact any of the named people below if interested in helping us. Usually volunteers help at five sessions a year.

A dedicated team of excellent volunteers help keep the Museum spick and span for our visitors and from time to time might have a good spring clean which is arranged with our curator.

Once a year we have a Friends and Volunteers Open Meeting, sometimes a coffee morning, but in 2024 we had a wine and cheese evening which was well appreciated.

Fund raising is ongoing with successful coach visits to Knole (National Trust) in Kent in May 2024 and Bury St Edmunds in September. In 2025 we plan to

do a Theatre visit to see *Warhorse* in Milton Keynes. Our daytime events this year were successful with a memories afternoon with four older Ashwell Residents casting back and discussing their lives in Ashwell, the AGM with local resident Chris James talking about her work in Ashwell Quarry and a running of several old Ashwell films in November which we will repeat due to demand in February 2025.

The Museum has acquired John Mill's bronze model of Women of World War Two



The 2025 AGM is planned for Monday 10 March so further details will follow. During the winter we are running the Sunday Teas in the Parish Room with the kind permission of St Mary's Church.

Our purchases from money raised through all our events this year included a small bronze of the larger *Women of World War II* which John Mills created and is installed in Whitehall. John, as many will recall was a local sculptor living in Hinxworth. He died in 2023 but was an excellent supporter of the Museum. We also helped to fund the new carpet.

We have an active committee who are continually grateful for the support given to us.

### Jill Powell

Chairperson

☎ 01462 742318

### David Hall

Treasurer

☎ 01462 743799

### Karen Mills

Secretary

☎ 01462 742155

# Ashwell Village Museum Lottery

Reg Charity 271473

Lottery Reg No LC/LOT 9280

## Lottery Results

After five years of operation, the Museum Lottery continues to be a great success. In the last operating year the total raised for the ongoing maintenance of the museum was £2,275 with the same amount being distributed as prizes. None of the money from ticket sales has been used for administration or expenses.

The lottery is an on-going quarterly draw. Draws take place at the end of March, June, September and December with 50% of ticket money as 3 prizes per draw and 50% donated to the Museum.

The winners for past the year were:

	1st	2nd	3rd
Dec 2023	C Godfrey	C James	H Eden
Mar 2024	R Banham	V Holton	C Leedham
Jun 2024	I Chimes	W Skelding	R Fitzsimmons
Sep 2024	B Field	I Chimes	A Gee

The Museum Lottery makes a vital contribution to the upkeep of the Museum and the Trustees extend their gratitude to those who have taken part.

Join the Lottery now to have your part in the future of the Museum and your chance to win one of the quarterly prizes, tickets are £25 per quarter - the same as the weekly National Lottery - but with better odds. For an entry form and terms and conditions, please contact me:

### Shirley Wardrop

☎ 01462 742861

✉ ashwellvillagemuseum@gmail.com

## Ashwell Archaeology

After a quiet few years Ashwell Archaeology has some news to share. At Ashwell at Home in May we ran a test pit excavation next door to the Museum with the kind permission of the Crump family. It was a hot and sunny day and lots of visitors enjoyed digging under our shady gazebo or washing the finds in cool water.

We found a variety of pieces of pottery that are very typical from a village flower bed. One sherd was Roman greyware though, which was exciting. We also found a slate pencil and a glass bottle stopper.

One piece of very exciting archaeological news came later in the year. Some of you may remember that, in 2020, building work in St Mary's Church revealed a large brick-built vault and a considerable number of bones. We applied for a community grant to have the bones carbon dated and were awarded two funded samples. The dates came back as Saxon 677-881 AD and 677-882 AD, which suggested individuals who died and were buried very closely in space and time.

One likely interpretation for this is a Saxon burial ground around an early Christian church, presumably very close to, or indeed underneath, the present church. The reason that this is particularly exciting is that although we have good archaeological evidence for Roman activity in and around the village, and we know that later in the Medieval period Ashwell was a flourishing market town, we have not been able to find much evidence for Saxon Ashwell. This is partly because their houses would have been wooden.

The discovery of at least twenty people buried close together in a churchyard tells a story of a busy village in the early Medieval period. It would be good to do some more work on the bones and also to keep looking for more evidence of the Saxon village.

For more information or to join Ashwell Archaeology please contact:

### Sarah Talks

✉ sarah@sarahtalks.me

[www.ashwellarchaeology.org/](http://www.ashwellarchaeology.org/)

## Ashwell Village Hall

Ashwell Village Hall has once again had another good year with many people using the Village Hall for a wide variety of activities. We have had a new committee this year and with a new committee has come new ideas.

The new Treasurer and Booking Secretary have made changes to how we run as a Village Hall by introducing a new booking system. The system is very easy to use and users can check if the dates they want to book are available, with just a click of the mouse. With this system we have been able to introduce a clearer system for invoicing, and together with a new accounts system it has saved many hours of work for our Treasurer. With the new booking system also came a new looking website:

<http://ashwellvillagehall.org.uk/>

Sigma Office has kindly designed and managed this for the Village Hall. Sigma have also installed two ring door bells with cameras (one at the main door



## Community assets

and the other by pre-school). This is to help our users feel safer during the dark nights.

With the age of the Village Hall, we have started to see major works that are required. The two main areas needing attention are the outer walls that are starting to crumble and the main hall floor. The main hall will need to be fully replaced as the support beams underneath have started to rot. These are the two major projects that once complete will secure the building for many more years.

With this in mind, the Village Hall Committee would like the help of a person that would be willing to help with managing the maintenance of the building. They would work closely with Andy Dolby the current Chairman. The Committee is also looking for a fundraiser to help the Village Hall raise the money needed to carry out the major work required.

With all that said, I would like to wish you all a good New Year and we all look forward to seeing you at the hall during the coming year.

### Andrew Dolby

Chairman, Ashwell Village Hall

☎ 01462 742783

✉ andyd@sigma-office.net

## Ashwell and Bassingbourn Patients Group (ABPG)



The aim of the Patients Group is to work closely with our Surgery to try and make the patient experience as good as it can be. We meet formally every couple of months but there are many informal contacts to deal with situations as they arise. The Group is made up of representatives of the various villages covered by the practice. The current members are as follows:

Rachel Capay (Steeple Morden),  
Tessa Cathcart (Bassingbourn),  
Peter Chapman (Ashwell),  
Jo Coleman (Practice Operations Manager),  
Bob Davies (Guilden Morden),

## FAMILY HISTORY THROUGH TIME

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Our three lead researchers – Jonathan Rowlands (who grew up in Ashwell), Lauren Bennie, and Kat Feavers – have spent many years researching your favourite genealogy and history TV programmes, such as the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* and *A House Through Time*.

We won't stop at family trees and genealogical records, we'll use the historical detective skills we've developed in our TV documentary careers to scour an array of archived records and historical documents to explore how your ancestors lived and the events that shaped their lives, and reveal the untold story of your family's history – or uncover the history of your house or business.

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Find out more at: [www.familyhistorythroughtime.com](http://www.familyhistorythroughtime.com)

Dr Matthew Jarvis (GP, Senior Partner),  
Harry King (Hinworth),  
Wendy Kitchener (Edworth),  
Graham Lee (Ashwell Parish Council),  
Ruth ten Hove (Ashwell),  
Tracey Potter (Bassingbourn Parish Council),  
Katie Prince (Practice Manager).

This year has seen two major changes at the surgery. The first was the long-overdue replacement of our outdated telephone system. The new version includes a very welcome callback feature which means that patients should no longer face endless waits to speak to a Receptionist. The second change was to introduce a new appointment system widely used in surgeries across the country called Total Triage. This involves patients completing a simple online form explaining their health problem (with help available at Reception for those less confident about IT or who have no online access). These forms are read and swiftly responded to by one of our GPs who makes a judgement about the urgency of the appointment.

This took a while to settle down but now seems to be operating smoothly. At the time of writing the ABPG is working on a new patient survey which we aim to issue in January and which will help us to measure how effective these developments have been.

The Surgery was delighted to host an initial meeting between representatives of St Mary's Church in Ashwell and the Garden House Hospice with a view to establishing a 'Frailty Hub' in the village. Our local hospice has pioneered these hubs which are successfully operating in other North Herts communities. Volunteers are being sought to enable one to be launched here.

A significant problem for our surgery (like many others) is the recruitment and retention of Reception staff. They play a key (and often difficult) role in dealing with patients' needs and when vacancies occur this puts great pressure on the system. We are fortunate in that we have a full complement of clinical staff.

We all know that our NHS is struggling to meet patient demand. Our relatively new government has promised to improve things and this will no doubt take time. However, we hope that by next year we will be able to report on how patients are benefiting from actions taken. In the meantime, a Happy New Year from Ashwell and Bassingbourn Surgery to all our patients.

**Peter Chapman**

Chair

✉ [peterchapman70@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:peterchapman70@yahoo.co.uk)

## Second anniversary at Ashwell Pharmacy



Here we go; another milestone achieved with the support of lovely community. I am grateful to the community of Ashwell and surrounding villages for offering their ongoing support. I am also thankful to the Ashwell Year Book Team for providing me with this opportunity to connect with local communities.

I would like to share some experiences of the year by using this platform. To start with, I am glad to announce that we have managed to acquire the contract of offering an ongoing Covid vaccinations along with Flu vaccinations. This success was achieved after a hassle of going through the series of applications and trainings. However, credit goes to the community for using this service from our pharmacy. I am thankful to the Patients Group for their support in promoting the service to increase the uptake.

As we all are aware, the NHS along with GP surgeries are under a lot of pressure due to lack of resources

Ashwell Pharmacy



Last minute gifts ☐ fragrances up to 50% off



## Community assets

hence the NHS is training pharmacies to offer more services to treat patients in a timely manner. As a result of this move, since Jan 2024, we have started offering the Pharmacy First Service where we are able to treat patients for seven key conditions and offer them antibiotics or anti-virals without needing to see a GP (Please see poster for details of service). Overall, the uptake of this service has been good but unfortunately has not reached to an expected level.

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*I would urge people to use the Pharmacy First Service as much as possible to maintain its continuity and also to open up the option of receiving more services from community pharmacies.*

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I would also like to share some financial and drug shortage challenges that the pharmacy sectors are facing at present. From last year, we are facing an ongoing issue with regards to procurement of some key medications. Shortages and increases in prices of raw materials have increased costs significantly. NHS reimbursements to pharmacies have not kept up with these increases meaning that from time-to-time it is not economically possible to provide certain medications. However, I am grateful that, here in Ashwell, the Surgery has been offering its support by changing the prescriptions to alternative brands or treatments. Moreover, the pharmacy sector overall is facing financial challenges due to increase in inflation and administrative costs. I hope it gets considered by NHS during negotiations of the new contract.

Lastly, I would urge our community to offer their ongoing support and loyalty by utilising all available services at Ashwell Pharmacy. I would also like to assure you all that we are constantly trying to participate and offer more new services at the Pharmacy.

We currently offer:

- New Medicine Service, where we provide support to patients who are put on certain new medications,
- Free Blood Pressure Check Ups for people over the age of 40 without blood pressure medications or on GPs referrals for people with blood pressure medications,
- Community Pharmacist Consultation Service (CPCS), where local surgeries and NHS111 can refer patients to pharmacies for certain minor conditions and, if it is not treatable in pharmacy, they can then be referred to surgery without a long wait,

- Discharge Medicines Service (DMS), where a pharmacy ensures that recently hospital discharged patients get their medications without delay,
- Contraception Service, where we will be able to offer pills on NHS without needing to go to surgery,
- Sexual Health Service, where any female patient from 16 till 25 years can get their emergency contraception free of charge along with free sexual health kits,
- NHS Patient Group Directions (PGDs) for antibiotics to treat: uncomplicated urinary tract infection, Sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bites, Impetigo, Shingles,
- Flu and Covid vaccinations, travel vaccinations, private PGDs for certain conditions, Stop Smoking Service.

### Dhaval Patel

Pharmacist

☎ 01462 742550

<https://ashwellpharmacy.co.uk/>

**Remember: the Pharmacy can help with **seven common conditions** without needing a GP appointment**

- **Sinusitis**  
(Adults and children aged 12 years and over)
- **Sore throat**  
(Adults and children aged 5 years and over)
- **Earache**  
(Children and young adults aged 1 year to 17 years)
- **Infected insect bite**  
(Adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Impetigo**  
(Adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Shingles**  
(Adults aged 18 and over)
- **Urinary tract infection**  
(Women, aged 16 to 64 years)



**Kate E Cumins**  
MAFHP MCFHP

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## Greening Ashwell

The work of Greening Ashwell has continued steadily throughout 2024 with much planting and sowing of wildflowers around the village.

### The Springs

The work of helping to maintain the area around The Springs, our wonderful natural chalk stream (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) has been a regular feature. You might have noticed the ivy covered tree next to the stepping stones has fallen and been removed but much of it has been left on site, tucked away, to decompose naturally and provide valuable habitat and food for a great range of wildlife.

Sadly the July Springs Festival had to be cancelled due to very wet weather but it is hoped we can be part of this celebration in 2025; it really was a magical event enjoyed by the community.

### Younger people



During 2024 we organised and ran a variety of activities for young people in the village. In the winter we worked with both Guides and Brownies to create seasonal wreaths and in the spring they sowed wildflower seeds which they took home to nurture. In the summer we took a youth group on a nature trail along the lane to Partridge Hill. By involving young people we hope to inform and inspire a love of the natural world that they will help protect for the future.

### Ashwell Surgery

Our new project began earlier in the year at the site of the doctors' surgery. In consultation with the surgery management, we hope to improve the grounds and enhance that area of the village



Close-up of planting at the Surgery

which is visited regularly by so many local residents. Hopefully, you will have noticed the new flower bed which the Guides and Brownies helped plant up with the seedlings they had cared for. The flowers certainly added a cheerful and uplifting view from the car park!

North Herts Council have kindly donated £100 towards improving the environment and increasing biodiversity of this area and so our volunteers have been planting spring bulbs on this site. We are looking forward to splashes of colour come spring. We also plan to install bird and bug boxes in this area. All these things help to have a positive impact on the health and well-being of both humans and wildlife.

### Wildlife allotment



The wildlife allotment continues to provide a haven for wildlife with the pond home to frogs, newts and water snails. The berries and seeds from plants there provide a valuable source of food for birds and small mammals. Once again we welcomed visitors during Ashwell At Home who were interested in our projects and keen to share their ideas about environmental issues.





### The Annual General Meeting

In September we held our AGM to appoint our new committee and outline our plans for the coming year. We thanked Fionnuala for her commitment over the last few years and although no longer serving on the committee she will continue to play an active role.

The evening was concluded with a very interesting and thought provoking talk from Katie Shellard our local herbalist and sampling of yarrow tea.

### How to join in

We are very grateful for the support from local residents who provide valuable feedback on our endeavours and for the donations from the Ashwell Show which enables us to purchase resources and equipment necessary for our work.

If you would like to get involved please contact one of our committee; we welcome new volunteers even if it's just for the occasional hour or so. Being outdoors and connecting to nature is proven to be good for our mental and physical wellbeing.

#### Sherran Chalkley

✉ sherranmandrell@hotmail.com

#### Clare Spencer

✉ clarecdocking@gmail.com

#### Kate Blake

✉ kateblake123@yahoo.co.uk

## Foresters Allotments



2024 has proved to be a mixed year for plot holders. Plenty of rain has fallen, but not always at the times when it was most needed to promote good growth. However, heavy rains did deliver benefits later in the season with an abundance of crops, particularly for those who were growing fruit. Strong winds in the spring did cause some damage to trees on the perimeter of the field. Fortunately, no one was injured, and no damage was caused to the property of plot holders or any of our neighbours.

At the start of the year, we had work carried out along our Ashwell Street boundary to allow more light to reach the plots at the northern end of our site and stimulate better productivity. This does seem to have had a positive effect for plot holders this season.

We have had some changes to plot holders during the year with people moving away from the area, but we have been very pleased to welcome new faces onto the field through the year, who have taken on plots with great enthusiasm. We hope that their hard work will be rewarded in the coming months.

Although we do not currently have any vacant plots available, if you would like a plot on the Foresters site please do get in touch on the details below. As plots become available, we will contact anyone who has expressed an interest with further details.

For any enquiries about the availability of plots or to express your interest, please contact:

#### Kevin Ayres

Court Secretary

✉ court9737@forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk

A tidy allotment at the Foresters sets a high bar for the others





Cottage Garden volunteers on a tea break. Next year we might catch them on a work break

## Ashwell Village Trust

The purpose of the Trust is to: promote the permanent preservation for the benefit of the general public and the inhabitants of the Parish of Ashwell, lands and buildings of beauty or historic interest, ecological or scientific importance within the Parish, and generally to protect and preserve the character and amenities of the Parish for the benefit of the public.

Once again, the trustees of the charity that owns the Cottage Garden in Swan Street wish to express their thanks to the group of volunteers who, under the guidance of Martyn Hird, meet on a monthly basis to keep it looking so good - see their separate report below. Martyn's expert and friendly leadership is particularly appreciated. The garden continues to provide a quiet and beautiful place which can be enjoyed by local residents, their families and visitors to the village.

The trustees ensure that the charity maintains a sound financial position and is able to maintain the garden for future generations of Ashwellians to enjoy. Should the situation arise, the trustees could consider bringing other village assets within its remit in accordance with the terms of the Trust.

The Chair of the Trust is Graham Lee, who is also the Parish Council Chair. In accordance with the terms of the Trust there are two Parish Council nominees appointed as trustees in May 2024: David Sims and Vinny Hall. The other trustees are:

Simon Bettany (Treasurer),  
Gordon Hill,  
Claire Moynihan,  
Liz Moynihan,  
Jane Porter.

For further information see the Parish Council website:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/village-charities-and-trusts/-/avt--ashwell-village-trust/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/village-charities-and-trusts/-/avt--ashwell-village-trust/)

And the Charity Commission website (enter the charity's number 294673):

[www.gov.uk/find-charity-information](http://www.gov.uk/find-charity-information)

**Jane Porter**

On behalf of the Trustees

## Cottage Garden 2025



I am pleased to say that it's been another rewarding year organising the volunteers and working in the Cottage Garden. My thanks must go out to all the volunteers who turn up, seemingly with great enthusiasm, month after month no matter the weather or the tasks I set them.

The weather plays an important part in how the garden looks each season, in the last year with all the rain, the plants have thrived putting on lots of lush growth and abundant flowers. Positive reactions from visitors to the garden are always very welcome and I have passed on all the generous comments I have received throughout the year to the volunteers.

**Martyn Hird**

✉ [iona1996@aol.com](mailto:iona1996@aol.com)





# Moss Cottage Homes

Reg. charity 238596

The Moss Cottage Homes in Hodwell were built and endowed in 1904 by George Moss, in memory of his mother Frances. The six cottages continue to provide affordable homes for older residents of Ashwell. We are members of the Almshouse Association.

2024 has been a busy year for the trustees as the individual workload has been quite heavy. We thank Yvonne, our accounts clerk, for providing an invaluable bookkeeping service throughout the year.

During the winter of 2023/24 two exterior bedroom walls at no8 were insulated. Additional work included replacing the bedroom floor and joists, new carpet and a new ceiling. The leaking flat roof shared by numbers 8 and 10 was replaced under the guidance of Trustee John Rhodes and architect Peter Rawlings. The trustees hope to be able to replace the flat roofs to the other four cottages soon.

Tony Oyston, the resident at number 10, sadly passed away in a local care home in May after a short stay in hospital. In June the Trustees contracted a local building firm to refurbish number 10.

We were able to include in the overall contract the upgrading of the shower and toilets at numbers 8 and 12 and improvements to the mains water supply. The works took six months to complete but the trustees feel that those cottages are future

proofed for some years to come. The new resident moved in during November. The front doors of all six cottages and their porches were repainted to improve the external appearance.

Rachel Godschalk stood down as a Trustee in May. We thank her for her participation and her expertise freely given. John Rhodes submitted his resignation in October but agreed to stay on until the November meeting. John has been a mainstay of our financial and project planning. He is pleased that several of the projects to improve the cottages have recently come to fruition.

Steve Fleming joined the Board of Trustees in May. Steve is involved with several village activities and has expressed a particular interest in fundraising.

The current Trustees are:

Rev'd Christine Campbell,  
Steve Fleming,  
Julia Mitchell,  
Jane Munns,  
Phillida Shaw,  
Ann Robertshaw,  
Jon Ruch.

More information about the Moss Cottage Homes is available from:

### Phillida Shaw

Chair of Trustees

☎ 01462 742577

✉ [mosscottages.ashwell@gmail.com](mailto:mosscottages.ashwell@gmail.com)

## Ashwell Housing Association Limited



Ashwell Housing Association owns ten properties in Back Street which were built around 1979. We have two bungalows, four flats (one of which is a small studio flat) and four 3-bedroom houses. All are let to

local people who have very strong connections to the village.

We terminated our service agreement with First Garden City Homes at the end of 2023 and as reported last year we planned to use a small local management company instead.

I am pleased to report that this arrangement is working very well and we are very pleased with the service we are getting. The feedback we have had from our tenants has been very positive.

The new management company has inspected all the properties and this has shown what little routine maintenance had been done by the previous one. We have embarked on a programme of improving all the properties, installing new bathrooms where needed and plan to replace the windows in the near future.

There have been no changes of tenancies during the year and we are acutely aware of the scarcity of affordable rented housing in the village which guarantees priority to local people.

### Liz Fitzsimmons

Chair

✉ [liz\\_fitzsimmons@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:liz_fitzsimmons@yahoo.co.uk)

## Ashwell Community Land Trust Ltd



An inaugural AGM for Members & Directors was held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at the Parish Room. Ashwell CLT Ltd is a 'Not for Profit' Mutual Society with up to 7 directors and an

unlimited number of Shareholder Members. There are currently 22 parishioners who are Members or directors of the Trust.

The purpose of creating Ashwell CLT Ltd was to further the social, economic and environmental interests of people who live or work in Ashwell. In essence that means investing in assets or services in or around Ashwell for the benefit of Ashwell residents.

It goes beyond the 'precept' Council Tax funding and purpose of the Parish Council but like the Parish Council its interest is that of our community. Whatever form of investment via the CLT is considered over the coming years there will be consultation with Ashwell residents to ensure that any project reflects the majority view of those with an opinion on the investment.

Funding for the investment would come from any combination of sources including shareholder investment, grants, donations, mortgage, or third party investment. Currently there are two projects that could be suitable for CLT participation:

- One concerns the potential formation of a Workplace/Community Hub on the site in West End that used to house Gloria's Nursery. This is currently in a research phase with a sample of potential users.
- The other is the potential for a renewable energy generation and district heating scheme for Ashwell. This is currently the subject of a £40,000 Stage 1 grant application to Community Energy England which would be used to fund a feasibility study into Ashwell's energy needs and the best green energy technical approach to take to meet the need.

The grant would also be used for further community communication on the project. Implementation of a major renewable energy scheme would then be subject to a Stage 2 grant for infrastructure specification, to be followed by a construction and funding phase which would require the input of Ashwell CLT..

We would urge other parishioners interested in becoming members to deposit their £1 to secure their official share at the Parish Office and receive a share certificate. Joining Ashwell CLT Ltd is your opportunity to help shape and secure the future resources that you want from Ashwell. Please join us.

### Graham Lee

☎ 01462 742834

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# The Bereavement and Loss Group

## Towards the light

Having worked for the past 23 years as a Church of England Chaplain, upon semi-retirement, I was encouraged by a friend in the village to bring to Ashwell my experience dating back to 2012 of working with the dying and the families who were left grieving their loss.

Bereavement and loss can be a very lonely, dark place to live in and I wanted to help the people of Ashwell and surrounding areas to cope better with their grief, to be able to meet with others who were grieving too and to find some light and hope in their dark place, hence Towards the Light was formed in February 2023.

This was to be an ecumenical initiative for all faiths and for those with no faith at all and I needed somewhere for us to meet. Sian Cook, who runs the Rose and Crown pub, is a very community minded lady and enjoying a glass or two in her pub with friends one day, I spoke about my idea. Without hesitation, Sian said, "Hold your group here Chere." So we had our venue!

I needed helpers who were good listeners. I got three very experienced people, all of whom were DBS checked and had knowledge of Safeguarding. I needed someone who could make posters, because doing things like that is not my forte, but a girlfriend immediately said, "I'll do it." The Risk Assessment was dealt with so efficiently by another friend. I felt so grateful, so supported and very blessed. We had our first meeting last February and 12 people came, which was a great start.

We have 22 people on the roll now with three new members who joined last month and another lady who wants to join the December session. Most people are from Ashwell, but one lady comes from Biggleswade and another from a nearby village.

There is a lot of crying (I supply the tissues), lots of laughter, lots of learning and interesting discussion. Guest speakers who are moving on with their grief help my participants. The light is coming back to their lives, little by little, as they find their 'new normal'. I am so thankful.

Please do email me if you think this might help you:

**Chere Hunter**

✉ chere.hunter1@gmail.com



## The Book Swap

Since the library service ceased to function in Ashwell, the Book Swap facility has taken its place. St Mary's Church provides the Parish Room as the venue, the Parish Council supplied the book shelves and, with a few volunteers, we are now well established and have a steady stream of borrowers. The service is free of charge and there is no signing in or out of books. Just bring a book or two to swap or, if you cannot bear to part with any books, we are happy for you to borrow one.

The Book Swap facility is available whenever the Post Office is open on Mondays and Wednesdays between noon and 3pm and on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10am and noon when the Parish Office is open. It is also available on Sunday afternoons when you can enjoy a cup of tea and piece of cake while browsing. Thanks to the Book Fair we were able to change all our stock of books in October. Teresa King does an excellent job in keeping the books in order and selling those we no longer need for a nominal fee. Any money made goes to St Mary's Tower Fund.

The Book Swap team hosted a Bacon Baps and Brownie event in April and raised well over £1,000 for Jimmy's homeless shelter in Cambridge. Jimmy's is a refuge in Cambridge for homeless men and women. Ongoing help to permanently re-house them and support them is also provided. The charity is small and spends little on administration or smart offices. Donations such as ours make such a huge difference. We were joined on the day by Cat Strawbridge, a Jimmy's fund-raiser, who was able to tell us more about the charity. We are so grateful to Crumps for supplying the bacon, our brownie-makers, servers, washer-uppers and to all of you who came to support us and gave so generously.

**Eileen ten Hove**

On behalf of the Book Swap team

✉ eileen@pyghtle.com

## Ashwell Masonic Lodge and Ashwell Village

It would be fair to say that Freemasonry came to the village of Ashwell in the late 1930s when certain Ashwell men attended the Baldock Lodge. However, in the late 1950s it was decided to form a new lodge bearing the name of the village which was inaugurated in May 1963.

The founding members were all well-known and included Anthony Christy (whose family can claim an Ashwell connection since 1680 and is immortalised in Christy's Corner in the High Street), John Bray of Brays Builders, Tom Pryor the Head Teacher at the village school, and Laurence Pack a farmer. Numerous other local men also joined, the first being local baker Howard Day. Over the following months he was followed by John Reast, Sid Rands, Vic Townsend, Eric Gurney, George Berry, and many from Baldock and The Mordens so that within a year of foundation, the Lodge could boast a membership in excess of forty.

The Lodge met at the Cloisters in Letchworth and enjoyed great popularity, so much so that by 1968, membership stood at 58 and to this day, the Lodge continues to use that venue.



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One of the founding precepts of Freemasonry is charitable giving and over the years much support has gone to Garden House Hospice in Letchworth and other local charities including the East and North Hertfordshire Hospitals Charity where we have raised over £10,000 in the last four years. A few years ago, it was decided that the focus of our charitable work and giving should be the Village itself and we have initially struck up a relationship with the Primary School.

We are proud to say that we have anonymously helped a number of disadvantaged families at Christmas time and have part or fully funded two science projects for the pupils. We are very keen to assist other village organisations in the coming years and would love to receive propositions.

Ashwell Lodge meets on Wednesdays five times a year, in February, April, June, October and December at the Cloisters in Letchworth. If you are interested in finding out more about Freemasonry, we would be delighted to tell you more about what we do.

**Kevan Morrison**

✉ [ashwell.lodge7903@gmail.com](mailto:ashwell.lodge7903@gmail.com)

## Getting involved

If you would like to get involved in community activities, the contact details for the organisations in the above section of the Ashwell Yearbook might be a good place to start. But there are many other ways in which your help would also be invaluable to the village, such as the following, for example:

**Greening Ashwell working parties**, eg at the Springs (p25)

**Youth organisations** (p51)

**Charities** (p54)

**Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve** (p55)

**Church fundraising**: the Flea Market, Book Swap or Christmas Fair (pp125, 30, 133)

**Sunday Parish Teas** (p75)

**Ashwell Music Festival** (p125)

**Ashwell at Home**, the village open day (p127)

**Ashwell Show** (p129)

**Ashwell Village Sports Day** (p36)

**Ashwell Village News**, helping with the production of the village news in 2024 (p75)

**Volunteer driver** for Royston and District Community Transport (p144)

**Still undecided?** Sign up for regular information about the village at:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/)



An aerial photograph captures a group of people participating in a relay race on a green grassy field. The field is marked with white lines, and the participants are in various stages of running and passing a baton. The scene is set outdoors on a sunny day, with long shadows cast across the grass. The participants include men, women, and children of various ages, all dressed in casual athletic wear. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation and family fun.

**Sport**

**The Family Baguette Relay Race**



# Ashwell Academicals Football Club



2024 has been a good year for the Accies. Numbers continue to flourish; we have welcomed a new under 11 girls team led by Andy Binstead, a new under 9 girls team led by Gillian Brooks and we are just starting an under 6 team led by Amy Feltham. We are currently at a

very healthy 13 teams with 220 children registered at the club.



Under 9 girls enjoying a training session.

With all these teams our facilities are stretched to the maximum. We currently play some of our home matches in Litlington and Letchworth to ease the strain as we cannot schedule all the games across the Rec' and Small Gains, our Ashwell locations. We continue to search for more space in the village so if anyone has any suggestions to help with this or know any kind landowners who could help please get in touch.

Our trophy night was another roaring success; the players loved receiving their trophies and the coaches enjoyed having the chance to reflect on their seasons with the teams. We also got to award our Accie of the Year award to Rob Whiteley, a parent who has children in two teams. Rob has been a parent helper across both these teams for over ten years, always there to help set up and set down, running the line and stepping in when needed as referee. His dedication deserved to be recognised so we were really pleased to be able to award him this prestigious trophy.

Off the pitch, a lot of hard work goes on in the background. We have a group of sponsors who we really appreciate; they contribute the money that pays for the children's home kits and allows us to keep our fees down. This special group of companies are: DP Designs, The Rose & Crown, PetFace, Taylor Dolman, Days Bakers, Brilliant Lawns,



Accies sheltering from the weather

Crumps, Ensum Brown, Mynott Bowers Group and Claret IT. Our grateful thanks to them all.

We have also had fantastic contributions from the Ashwell Show that has allowed us to purchase benches and shelters for the club and they've also sponsored our new away kit. A big thank you to anyone who works at the show and nominates the Accies, you can see it really makes a big difference to the club.



Accies showing off the new away kit

This year the Accies is celebrating its 25th anniversary. We are planning end of season celebrations to mark the occasion where we will hopefully see old coaches and players making guest appearances. Look out for more info early in 2025.

Finally, thank you to the committee members, all the coaches and any parents that help out throughout the season. Without these volunteers the club would not be such a success.

Look forward to seeing you in 2025.

Up the Accies!

## Andy Hayes

Chairman

✉ [chairman@ashwellacademics.com](mailto:chairman@ashwellacademics.com)

[www.ashwellacademics.com](http://www.ashwellacademics.com)

X (Twitter): @AshwellAccies

Facebook: [facebook.com/AshwellAccies](https://facebook.com/AshwellAccies)





### Ashwell Cricket club

After the up and down two seasons that preceded 2024, this last year was a steady one where our number one objective was to remain in our division, the Cambridge Cricket Association Junior League Div 1 (South), which we achieved.

Stats as follows: Played 16, 8 wins, 5 losses, 2 cancelled, 1 conceded. We ended up third in the division, avoiding promotion, which was the best thing for the club.

Andy Young skippered the team and had excellent support from George Griffin who captained the team in Andy's absence. Reg Redfern, released from captaincy burden, had yet another stellar year with both ball and bat. 517 runs scored in 9 knocks at an average of nearly 74, and a high score of 104 not out. Magnificent. With the ball he took 14 wickets in the season so once again Reg will keep the top batting and bowling trophies on his mantelpiece. Hard lines to George Griffin who was a close second to Reg in both categories. George made 423 runs, high scored with his maiden ton (108\*) and averaged

53. Bowling, he took 13 wickets and that included one game where he took 6 for 41, the season's best return. A season to remember for him too.

The highest individual batting performance came from Patrick Robinson who made 126 against Rickling Ramblers, an innings some described as chanceless and majestic. In the same game Tom Foot, now firmly inked into the higher middle order, made 64. We trounced the useful Ramblers by 130 runs.

Back in May we had a corker of a game against Birchanger where we won by 5 runs. I recall we had to use part time bowlers at the end but Richard Young, new to the club but of the same name as a retired stalwart, took a couple of crucial catches in the deep. Richard's contribution with bat, ball, and in the field in 2024 was much welcomed and he is firmly seconded into the fold.

In June we put Newport to the sword with G Griffin's 108\*, ably assisted by half centuries from Redfern and Alec Taylor and 31 from Alex Griffin. We amassed 269 and won by 81 runs. Tim Moynihan, our new president and about whom many column inches have previously been devoted, made 66 against Cambridge NCI 2s, but we lost by 2 wickets in a nail biter. We made 221 (G Griffin 76, Redfern 104\*) against Bassingbourn but were ultimately annihilated. In July we battered Foxton Granta 3s by 7 wickets. Alfie Redfern took 3 for 21 then his Dad made 56 and G Griffin 30 and we won in double quick time.

We went on an amazing run thereafter winning every game we played.

Once again the club wishes to thank Jack Busby for running a very popular junior cricket programme. Our Big Bashwell event in July was another huge success, for which thanks to Hugh Carling are due. Thanks also to Hugh, Jack, Bene't Coldstream and Marie Lousie Crossley for arranging the club's premier fund raiser, the ever popular Pop Culture Quiz.

Lastly thanks to all those who make our cricket possible. Those who prepare our pitch, clear out our pavilion, do scoring, put sight screens together, put out boundary ropes etc. You know who you are. Thank you. The club is in a good place but we do still need players so if you fancy a go please contact the undersigned.

#### **Bene't Coldstream**

☎ 01462 742288

☎ 07971 404481

✉ bcoldstream@yahoo.co.uk

## Ashwell Junior Cricket Camp

For the 4th consecutive year Ashwell CC ran its Junior Cricket Camp on Friday afternoons during June and July on the Rec'. The camp is as popular as ever and is attended by children in school years 3-6 and is aimed at younger children who may be discovering the game for the first time. Those that have played before are still more than welcome to join in the fun with their friends.

Original funding from the Henry Colbron Trust enabled the club to hire professional coaches, buy new playing equipment and provide each child with an Ashwell Cricket Camp tee-shirt. In recent years that funding has come from Ashwell CC directly and a new application to the Henry Colbron Trust will be made as the camp typifies the ethos of the Trust. The club has continued to offer this camp free of charge as it recognises it's role in the village and in getting young Ashwellians into playing sport.



Did I mention Line and Length last time?

The coaching team is led by local ECB Qualified Coach David Isherwood and is assisted by his daughter Caroline. David and Caroline bring a passion and enthusiasm that is absorbed by the kids who take great delight in trying to whack a ball into the horse field!

The Friday afternoons are sociable for all - including parents who make the most of the sun and the weekend starting with a glass of something watching the children have fun. New parents are required to help David and Caroline.

If your child is in years 3-6 inclusive and is possibly interested in giving cricket a go, please make contact and we can put you down for next summer.

**Jack Busby**

✉ jackbusby1977@gmail.com

## Ashwell Tennis Club

During 2024 the tennis club had a great turnout in use of the two courts at our Ashwell Street venue. It has been amazing to see both young and perhaps a little older out on the courts knocking around a little fuzzy yellow ball with varying degrees of finesse and competitiveness.



Newly furnished clubhouse

This season we furnished and really started to utilise the club house and will do further work on it during this winter ahead of the new season which will kick off in Spring 2025.

Other great news is that we have signed a new 25 year lease for the club to stay at the existing venue. Thank you to the Schwick family for their ongoing support to the tennis club in extending the arrangement to lease the land for the use of the village community. This gives us a strong basis to further invest in facilities for the site including investigations into power and water.

It was another year focused on getting people out on court whether that was to our Friday morning coaching sessions, to our Thursday evening club night or Friday lunch club sessions (all open to all members) or turning out for the three Datchworth league teams.



What do they put in that Barley Water?

During the year we re-ran the very successful social event, Dancing in the Aisles. An evening under the roof of our very own St Mary's Church which attracted over a hundred Ashwellians to the dance



## Sport

floor with a great evening had by all and DJ'd by our resident tennis club members Hugh Carling and Simon McCutcheon.

The club is continuing to grow and we maintain a low level of membership fees compared to other tennis clubs (£50 for an adult and £95 for a family during 2024). We would love to continue to increase the usage of the courts and the number of people involved so please come and join us.

I want to close this update with a thanks to all of our committee, our captains and our social secretary for all their hard work for the tennis club, I know everyone is very grateful. On to 2025!

### Mark Hurst

Chair

✉ [ashwellsport@gmail.com](mailto:ashwellsport@gmail.com)

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/ashwelltennisclub>

## Cycle Club Ashwell

Cycle Club Ashwell is a busy club with a wide area of interest. Our focus in Ashwell itself is the Godschalk Grass Velodrome at Small Gains. Here our focus is mainly track racing during the Summer months. We hold grass track meetings several times a year attracting racers from around the country. Our races in 2025 will be on 18 May and 13 July.

In addition to track racing we also stage cyclocross races on Thursday evenings in August. Cyclocross can be described as cross country running with a bike. It is an offroad bike race in which various obstacles need to be overcome, such as steep inclines, sharp bends and even hurdles. Having to jump off at some point and run with your bike is part of the sport. Whilst the best machine to use is a specific cyclocross bike, mountain bikes can also be used. The main season starts in the Autumn and runs through the Winter. Our races are a preseason warm up. They are open races, so if you fancy a try, come along! We have races for all ages. Some practice and preparation beforehand is recommended though.

We also host races specifically for children. Part of a local series called Muddy Monsters the races are for

children only allowing the programme to meet their sole needs. Track training for adults is on summer Mondays and for the youth on Thursdays.

We are very grateful to the Schwicks for allowing us to use the field.

**Daniel Doncaster**

**Matthew Brazier**

## Journée Mini-Olympique du Village d'Ashwell



What an awesome afternoon!

It was wonderful to see so many people out enjoying themselves in the glorious Ashwell sunshine.

After the previous year's Coronation theme village

sports day, May 2024 was of course our Paris Olympic and Paralympic athlete training event!

The Olympic running track was laid out with precision and the event had all the latest technology: a huge finish line timing clock, electronic card payment for refreshments, QR codes on the programme. We even had marshals bedecked in berets and stripy tunics, plus an onion or two, though no false moustaches were spotted.

The VIP seating area and the picnic blanket section were filled to capacity. The crowd thrummed with chants of, "C'mon Team GB", which for our participants was great to hear as everyone was Team GB and what gold, silver and bronze medal performances we witnessed!

That perennial Olympic favourite, the family baguette relay race was a highlight and of course the great crowd pleaser, the Olympic themed Dressing Up Race.

Thank you to everyone who came along, took part and cheered on their friends and family. Whether





you took home some Olympic bling or not, we hope you had a wonderful time, and look forward to welcoming you back next year. The day quite literally couldn't happen without the kindness of many. So an extra huge THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered and helped out; whether you were setting-up, transporting, building, line painting, providing equipment and supplies, baking cakes, working the bar, BBQ and cake stall, selling tickets, providing entertainment, marshalling, first-aiding, medal organising, cleaning up, tidying up, or any other job we've accidentally overlooked. Big thanks to our very generous raffle prize donors - the Rose & Crown, Rhubarb & Mustard, Campervan Coffee, Little Shop of Pots, and Hunter Luxury, and a sincere merci beaucoup to the best and certainly most famous boulangerie in the land, Days Bakery, for the baguettes! You are all Olympic superstars. Thank you.

And an honorary medal awarded to our photographer Alan Jackson who is retiring this year. Can you find your friends and family in the photos and videos from 2024? There are 338 of them. Take a look at the dropbox link in our Facebook post: [www.facebook.com/share/p/14qwRcty1W/?mibextid=WC7FNe](https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14qwRcty1W/?mibextid=WC7FNe)

And a loud cheer and a hearty rendition of the national anthem for the 2024 Ashwell Olympic trophy awardees:

Junior trophy - Olivia Simmons  
 Youth trophy - Clemmy Redfern  
 Family Race - Team Gaynor  
 Slow Bicycle Race - Alfie Moss (again!)  
 RTV Youth Female - Eloise Button  
 RTV Youth Male - Eddie Kendrick  
 RTV Women - Harley Shipley-Wilson  
 RTV Men - Mike Banister  
 RTV Master Women - no takers, but rumours some women will no longer be 21 in 2025!  
 RTV Master Men - Guy Reed

Please come and join us at the Rec' again in May 2025. In the meantime follow us on Facebook for news updates, and to share any feedback to improve the event or if you'd like to get more involved:

[www.facebook.com/Ashwellvillagesportsday](https://www.facebook.com/Ashwellvillagesportsday)

Practice the Round The Village Race (with trophies galore) on foot or on your bike, and officially on Strava:

[www.strava.com/segments/23986808](https://www.strava.com/segments/23986808)

**Guy Reed**  
**Gregor Mitchell**  
**Wendy Howard**  
**Laurence Simon**  
**Dawn Sanders**  
**Mike Banister**







## Fit Club

### Building community in Ashwell, one Saturday at a time

We can all agree - Ashwell is a wonderful place to live, celebrated for its vibrant community and rich tradition of coming together for local activities. It's this fertile ground that gave rise to Fit Club - a community based fitness initiative that has become a cornerstone of village life.

Started by Phil Ward six years ago, Fit Club has been held for an incredible 313 consecutive weekends, pausing only once for the Queen's funeral. Each Saturday morning, up to 25 people gather from 10 to 11am on the Ashwell Rec'. Free and open to all, it runs every week, rain or shine, in blistering heat or frosty chill. Attendees span all ages, genders and fitness levels, creating a uniquely inclusive space that bridges gaps between different groups in the village.

Fit Club has even sparked the creation of new sports, making Ashwell the proud birthplace of 'Rugby-Netball', a uniquely homegrown invention. With the rallying cry of, "Next try wins!" it's a game we proudly champion, and Ashwell is home to some of the best players - possibly the best in the world! Who knows, one day it might even reach the Olympics. For now, Ashwell Village Sports Day could be the perfect platform to take it nationwide.

But Fit Club is about more than just exercise. After each session, members gather for coffee, attend community pop-ups, or enjoy a relaxed brunch. Thanks to our Social Secretary, Guy Reed, the group is always finding ways to give back to Ashwell: whether through fundraising, helping with

churchyard chores at St Mary's or supporting the Ashwell Show. If our friendly team can help with your cause or event, please let us know.

During the week, connections continue in a lively WhatsApp group with 50 members; a hub for sharing updates, planning activities, and offering encouragement. If you'd like to join, just ask a Fit Club member for an invitation.

This ongoing connection has also sparked new mid-week initiatives, like 'Techno Tuesday' - not another Bygrave Woods festival, in case you were wondering, but a short, high energy workout that brings the community together. Held, fittingly, on Tuesday evenings, it's a great way to stay active during the week.

Fit Club's welcoming and inclusive nature has made it a vital part of Ashwell life. As Heather Burch says, "I couldn't imagine life in Ashwell without it!"

#### Phil Ward

☎ 07805 126627

✉ Philipward100@gmail.com



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## Walk and Wellness Group



Hello, my name is Lisa, and I live in the village. I have recently started a Walk and Wellness group.

The group is for anyone who wants to get fitter, needs a bit of encouragement or wants to join a group for a bit of company when out exercising. It is an exercise group but nothing hardcore. The aim is to reach a fast pace but not to run. I do like to skip as well. I appreciate that some may not be ready for anything too strenuous so I will cater for all levels.



I walk around the village on Friday and Saturday morning, weather permitting for around 45-50mins. I leave the Bushel & Strike car park at 9am.

I will also host Wellness and Nutrition talks throughout the year for a small fee. I will post on the Ashwell Hub with more information nearer the time.

A bit about me ...I have been in the wellness industry for over 30 years. I am a trained beauty therapist, lecturer, spa consultant, nutritional therapist and wellness coach. I am not a gym-bunny, I have fat bits, I have been through the menopause, and I have recovered from breast cancer.

I have improved my health through nutrition and exercise and I am fit and healthy so now I would like to share my wealth of knowledge to help others to become healthy both physically and mentally.

I hope you can join me.

### Lisa Knowles

✉ [lisa@nutriality.com](mailto:lisa@nutriality.com)

Check me out on Facebook or Instagram@nutriality

## Boxing Day Run

If 2023 was a one off, then in 2024 it became a tradition. Boxing Day saw the return of the run around the village in an attempt to shake off the excesses of Christmas Day and work up an appetite for more consumption. Organised by Matt and Lou Lee and their family, the run takes its inspiration from the Chevin Chase – a popular Boxing Day seven mile circuit of Otley Chevin with Christmas festivities in their native Yorkshire. Matt and Lou decided it would be good to bring some of that tradition to Ashwell and cajoled a dozen or so to join them in 2023.

Boxing Day 2024, however, saw a much larger participation of all ages with over 50 runners, walkers, cyclists and dogs setting off from the War Memorial in various states of Christmas fancy dress. A route out to Bluegates Farm and back into the village gave participants the choice of one lap (5km) or two laps (10km) depending on their ability or requirement to work off the previous days' excess.







High fives, plenty of encouragement and support from other Boxing Day walkers kept spirits high before ending back at the War Memorial.

For those starting to suffer withdrawal symptoms, the post-run debrief and warm down in the Rose & Crown provided the perfect opportunity to chat and laugh about the morning's exertions and enjoy a glass of something.

No doubt we will all be back there again on Boxing Day 2025 at 11am so if you fancy some fresh air and a bit of fun then come along with anyone who wants to join in.

### Jack Busby

✉ jackbusby1977@gmail.com

## New Year's Day Football

In a tradition that has been running since 2006, New Year's Day 2025 saw 30 players, young and old, dust off their football boots and dig out their shin pads, to take part in Ashwell's Boorman Cup on the hallowed turf of Ashwell recreation ground.

The Boorman Cup is a charity football event that was instigated in memory of Jason Boorman, an active member of the community, who sadly lost his fight against cancer far too young. All money raised is donated to the Garden House Hospice, which expertly cared for him.

This year, two teams fought against the elements and each other to have their name added to the trophy and go down in Ashwell sporting folklore. The partisan crowd were treated to some highly entertaining football, with players - many of whom had retired many moons ago - rolling back the

years to delight the spectators with their sporting endeavours.

The winners of the match were Neil Bassill's White Team who came back from being 3-1 down at half time to win 5-3 against the Blue Team captained by Sean Robson. The real winners were the Garden Hospice who received over £700 in charitable donations.

Many thanks to everyone who helped with this event, whether playing, supporting, refereeing or captaining. See you all next year!

For those of you who would like to join in next year or would like to join an over 30s football kick around that happens every Monday, please get in touch.

### Neil Bassill

☎ 07718 110092

✉ n\_bassill@hotmail.com

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Fun on the Year 6 Residential Trip on the Isle of Wight



Visit to the Houses of Parliament for year 6

# Ashwell Primary School 2024



Ashwell Primary School continues to be extremely popular with only a few spaces available in some of our year groups. The school currently has 228 children on roll from Nursery through to Year 6. Our extended Nursery provision caters for 30 hours per week.

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*The school remains true to its ethos and values, Shaping Futures: together we learn, care and grow. We strive to provide a happy, nurturing school where everyone is made to feel welcome.*

---

The school continues to have a fantastic team of dedicated staff who bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the classroom. In addition to this, we are proud and grateful to be able to work with such supportive parents/carers and governors.

During the summer of 2024, as a result of funding from the Henry Colbron Trust, the school was able to create a new outdoor learning area for Year 1, resurface core pathways around the school and resurface our Multi Sports Games Area.

In addition to this, generous fundraising from our PTA enabled us to have a new Amphitheatre scene installed. All of this work has enabled us to continue to enhance our school environment and facilities for children.

Throughout the 2023-24 academic year, the school continued to offer a vast array of curriculum enrichment opportunities including an extensive residential offer. In May, our Year 4 children spent a night at the Celtic Harmony Camp sleeping in round houses. In July, our Year 6 children took part in a week long residential visit to the Isle of Wight. In October we took Year 5 to Burwell House, a Victorian House in North Cambridgeshire.

It continues to be our mission to provide as many enriching experiences for our children as we possibly can. We pride ourselves on the curriculum enrichment offer we facilitate at Ashwell School. These events are a real success and a lot of fun is had creating lifelong memories for both children and staff.

Should you wish to find out more about our school, please visit the school's website:

[www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk](http://www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk)

## 2024 Highlights

**January** – Cheerleading Enrichment Day, Maths Day, Year 2 Florence Nightingale workshop.

**February** – Year 6 visit to the Houses of Parliament, Year 5 Anglo Saxon workshop, Safer Internet Day, Art Day, PTA disco.

**March** – Art Exhibition, Year 1 Toys Workshop, World Book Day, Year 5/6 Shakespeare Workshop, Science Week, Year 5/6 Knex Day, Year 3/4 Production, Neuro Diversity Day, PTA Bingo.

**April** – A rare quiet month!

**May** – Year 6 SATs, Ashwell Music Festival, Year 4 Celtic Harmony Camp, Ashwell at Home.

**June** – Year 5/6 production, District sports, Ultimate Frisbee Day.



## Education

Ashwell stage brought alive with the stars of Year 5 and Year 6 at the end of year production



**July** – Wimbledon Tennis Festival, Year 6 Isle of Wight residential, Sports Day, PTA Summer Fete.

**September** – Harvest Festival, Parent Phonics Workshop.

**October** – Black History Month, Year 4 Zoological Centre visit, PTA Disco.

**November** – Anti-bullying Week, Children In Need, PTA Fireworks event, Football Enrichment Day, Year 3 trip to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Year 5 CCI workshops.

**December** – Christmas Bazaar, EYFS Nativity, Key Stage 1 Production, Whole School Panto visit, Christmas Lunch, Christingle Service in Church.

I would like to thank everyone in the community for their continued support. The school feels very fortunate to be able to benefit from funds raised by community organisations such as the Ashwell

Show committee, Ashwell at Home and, from further afield, the Henry Colbron Trust.

It is a real privilege to be the Headteacher of this fantastic village school. I look forward to ensuring that the school continues to play a central part in the life of the village in the months and years to come.

### Simon England

Head Teacher

☎ 01462 742297

## Art Day

Our annual art day, was held on 16 February followed by an Open Gallery for parents to view on the 1 March. Once again, teachers planned and delivered a number of sessions all linked to the same theme, this year's being Really Wild.



The Hungry Caterpillar brought to life by the staff of Ashwell School on World Book Day





Blue team forging ahead in the obstacle race

Children of all ages across the school came together to learn about various artistic techniques as they explored activities that linked to animals with print. Activities included: recreating existing animal prints using various media, exploring animal camouflage, creating moving animals and spiral pictures, creating animal pictures with hand and foot prints, making animal collage masks!

Teachers across the school reported that children spoke with passion and interest on the day about their learning. The children voiced their opinions, both expressively and sensitively, and used their artistic voices and subject vocabulary to convey their views articulately.

The photographs you see in the gallery on the pages that follow are a collection shared with our school community as a part of a pop-up art gallery prepared by the school staff. As you can see, a huge variety of work and range of chosen media resulted in a fabulous gallery.

**Jennifer Harber**

Art and design subject leader

## Ashwell Primary PTA

The PTA aims to bring parents and staff together to raise funds and provide pupils at Ashwell Primary School with experiences, materials and equipment that help enrich their education.

This year the PTA held three discos, the first being a Valentines Disco in February, with a Hearts & Crafts competition, where the winning hearts were used to decorate the hall for the disco.

We held the Mothers' and Fathers' Day shops in March and June, which allowed students to choose from a range of gifts for their parents or guardians.

At the end of the Spring Term, the Easter Bingo took place. The hall was packed with families, and we had a steady stream of winners for the smaller bingo prizes, until finally we had a Nursery student shout, "Bingo!" and win the giant Smarties Easter egg.

In May, the PTA served lunch and cakes during Ashwell at Home and ran a Fairy Door Trail competition for families to find during Ashwell at Home. We also held our second disco of the year, in May. The students enjoyed showing us their amazing dance moves and best dancers won a prize!

The PTA ran a tombola for adults and children at the Tuns Fest in June, which proved to be very popular and successful.

Resurfaced Multi Surface Games Area funded by the Henry Colburn Trust





## Education



Just before the summer holidays, we held the Summer Fete which ran smoothly with the weather staying dry and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended.

In October, we held our final disco for the year, a Monster Ball Disco. We asked students to show us their spectacular carving skills, with a pumpkin carving competition, where the winning pumpkins were used to decorate the school hall.

The Annual Fireworks Display was held in November, and was hugely popular, once again selling out, with over 900 people attending! The fireworks team put on an amazing show and was our biggest fundraiser of the year.

Our final event of the year was a Jingle & Mingle after the Year 6 Christmas Bazaar, where we served mulled wine, hot chocolate, ran a lucky dip and had a sweets and biscuits table. The students also got to see a living animal nativity.

The PTA has raised an amazing amount of money for the School, which would not have been possible without all the support we have received, which we are truly grateful for!

### Rebecca Day

PTA Secretary

✉ [info@ashwellpta.co.uk](mailto:info@ashwellpta.co.uk)

### School and PTA Contact Details

Ashwell Primary School, Silver Street,  
Ashwell, Baldock, Herts. SG7 5QL

Headteacher: Mr Simon England

School Office: Mrs Tracy Bowen

☎ 01462 742297

✉ [admin@ashwell.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@ashwell.herts.sch.uk)

**PTA:** ✉ [ashwellpta@gmail.com](mailto:ashwellpta@gmail.com)



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## Ashwell Preschool 2025

Ashwell Preschool (formerly known as Playgroup) continued to thrive in 2024 under the excellent leadership of our experienced Level 3 Early Years Educator Natascha Waller, the manager of the preschool. Tascha is assisted by Deputy Manager Sarah Rodway, and staff members Chelsie Ball, Jenny Keeling and Kat Richardson, who all do a wonderful job. We said a temporary goodbye to Kat Richardson in January as she left to go on maternity leave, and were delighted to see Kat and meet baby Daisy when they visited us in early February. Kat recently returned to the setting on a part time basis in December.

Transition work with the village school continued during the spring and summer terms. The children are always very excited to visit the 'big' school and there is no doubt these visits increase their confidence when they start full time at school within the nursery class.

In June, the children went on a preschool trip to Church Farm, Ardeley. The farm staff made us welcome once again, and the children loved looking at the different animals together as well as playing in the adventure playground afterwards.

The 2024 leavers enjoyed their end of term party in July, and we wish them all the very best of luck throughout the next stage of their education.

Autumn term saw a higher than usual intake of new children, with 16 children on the register by Christmas. There is no doubt that the extended access to 15 free childcare hours, which is now available for two-year olds (introduced from April 2024) has had a positive influence on the numbers of children able to attend settings such as ours, which is undoubtedly of huge benefit to them.

We are looking forward to a busy 2025, with a very healthy intake of children on the register. The majority of these children will move up to the Ashwell School as a cohort in September, which helps to make this important transition time easier for them, given that friendships are already forming during their preschool year.

The first fund-raiser of the year for the Preschool is the Duck Race, which is traditionally held after Easter, at Ashwell Springs on a Sunday morning. Look out for the posters and for little yellow ducks on sale in Days' Bakery or Rhubarb & Mustard, which the children can then decorate, ready for race day.

We would like to say a special thank you to the Ashwell at Home and the Ashwell Show Committees, for their generous financial support of the preschool



in return for help at these village events.

We are also very grateful to the Henry Colbron Trust for their continued support of our family support scheme. And not forgetting a BIG thank you to everyone whom has volunteered time or donated funds or toys to the preschool in 2024!

Early Years settings such as our preschool provide invaluable first experience of independent socialisation away from home for 2-4 year olds, and yet are always short of funding, and always looking for more voluntary support. If you feel able to help in any shape or form, please do contact us.

### Merry Pertwee

Treasurer & Trustee, Ashwell Preschool

✉ [merryasmith@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:merryasmith@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.ashwellplaygroup.co.uk](http://www.ashwellplaygroup.co.uk)

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# Art Day 2024



**Wild**



**Really**





**Really Wild**



**Really**



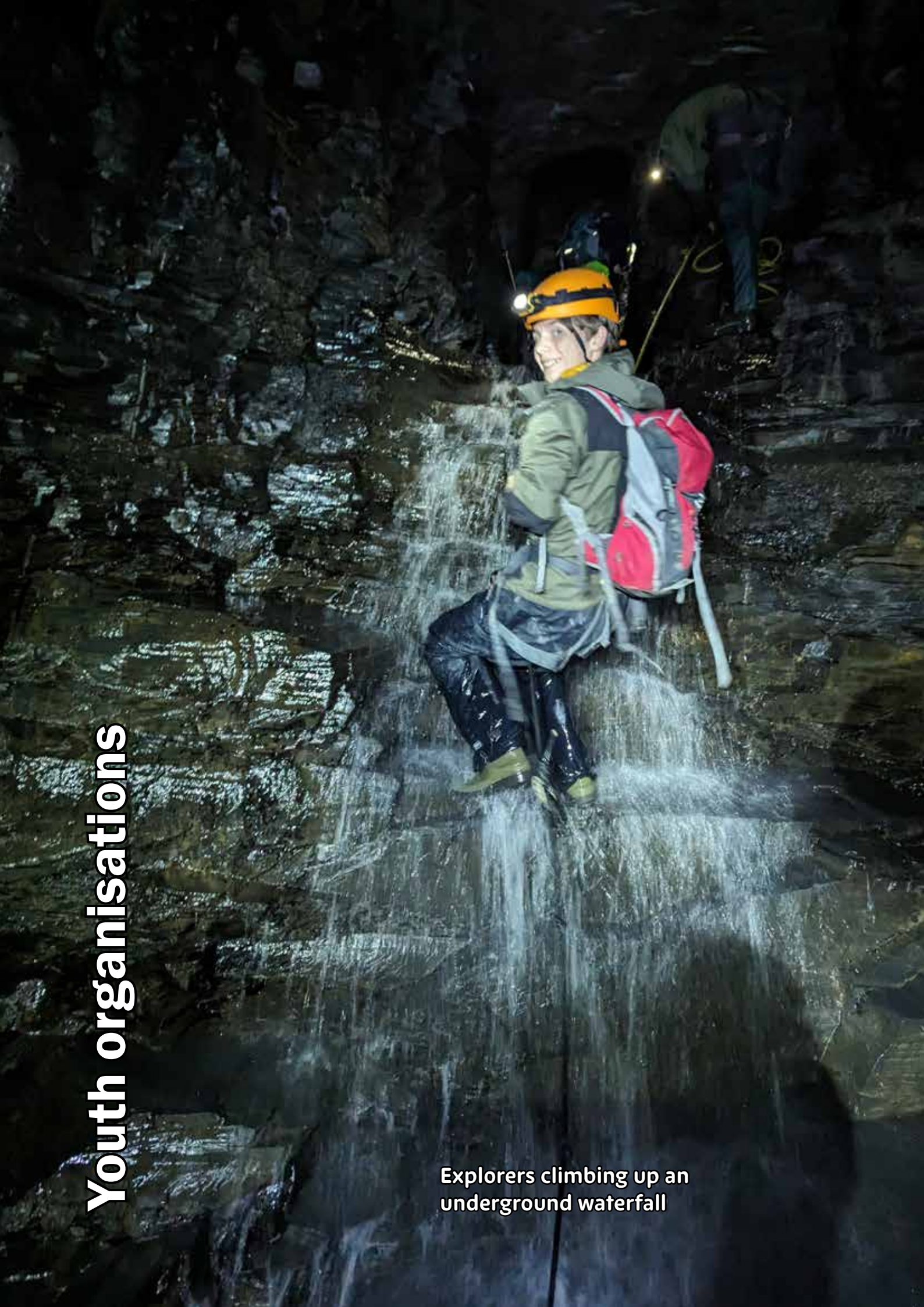
**Art**





# Youth organisations

Explorers climbing up an underground waterfall







Senuna Explorers on the Slip and Slide at Camp!

## 1st Ashwell Scout Group and Senuna Explorer Scout Unit

### EXPLORERS



2024 was another busy and varied year for the young people in 1st Ashwell Scout Group and Senuna Explorers. We provide weekly fun activities and skills for life for over 100 young people and always need more adult help to sustain this.

### Explorers (age 14-18)

Senuna Explorer Unit celebrated its first birthday in September. We now have 22 members enjoying activities on Friday evenings 7.30-9.30pm in Ashwell Village Hall. Several members were not part of Ashwell Scouts and we are keen to welcome new

faces. We have been cooking outdoors, hiking across the surrounding area (with an occasional stop for chips) building our teamwork skills (and some bridges, flagpoles and other structures out of wooden spars), hunting for the best views of the Northern Lights and learning how to repair and maintain our bikes. We entered our first county orienteering competition, Peak Assault, and were very pleased to finish 10th out of 29 teams. We have also been helping out around the village, including supporting the Ashwell Show which has been very generous with its support for this new section of Scouting for older teenagers in the area. The sturdy hike tents and equipment funded by the Show will help us enjoy more camps and adventures in 2025.

### Scouts (age 10½-14)

The Scout section has grown to nearly 40 young people so we have been making the most of the outside space at the Rec' and around the village for our activities, even when this needs coats, hats and torches.

This year we have made chocolates, learnt about photography skills, first aid and fire safety, tried our hand at air rifle shooting and tomahawk throwing, held two weekend camps and spent a lot of time hiking and playing games. We have also joined up with other troops from Letchworth, Baldock and Ashwell District and Herts County to compete in the Nightjar Hike and the Green Beret Challenge camp, and to mark St George's Day in Letchworth.

Around the community we joined in the Remembrance Sunday commemorations and supported Baldock Rotary Club in their Annual Santa's visit to Ashwell.

### Cubs (age 8-10½)

Cubs started the year tackling the circus skills and scientist badges, as well as enjoying feasts for Burns Night and Mardi Gras and working at problem solving challenges, pioneering and craft activities.



Breakfast of Champions before a busy day at Camp



## Youth organisations



Wet and Wild at the OTG Assault Course

When the summer came we got out and about with the cyclist badge, communicator badge, obstacle course challenge and plenty of games. We also helped to keep Ashwell tidy with a litter-picking hike where the Cubs competed to see who could tidy up the most rubbish from our environment. Our camp at Tolmers gave everyone two days of fun and new experiences, sleeping in tents, climbing moving walls of rock and honing our archery skills.

As the evenings drew in we had evenings lighting fires and cooking on them, practicing map navigation and learning about global issues. The year ended with some Christmas crafts and practicing our song for the Village carol concert.

### Beavers (age 6-7)

Beavers have had a busy and fun year leading to the award of lots of badges for our bright blue jumpers – we have explored personal challenge, creative, faith, health and fitness, communicator, air activities and navigation, with some time left over for a Jedi scavenger hunt and to participate in National



Aping around at Shepreth Wildlife Park

Pokemon Day! We got to test our new skills at a lovely camp in June.

The whole group came together for our Annual Barbecue and Awards Day in July when we were able to celebrate our achievements and thank everyone for their support. All of this has been possible thanks to the fantastic enthusiasm of our Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer adult volunteers and the support of our trustees.

---

*Please reach out if you can spare a little of your time, energy and skills! Our adult volunteers are a friendly bunch and very welcoming.*

---

Scouting in Ashwell is in a very healthy state and we are grateful for all the help that has got it there and look forward to an exciting 2025.

#### Stuart Kendrick

Group Scout Leader

✉ [gsl@1stashwellscouts.org.uk](mailto:gsl@1stashwellscouts.org.uk)

## Ashwell Brownies and Girl Guides



Sadly, the Brownie and Girl Guide unit in Ashwell had to close over the summer.

Thank you to all the Brown Owls, Tawny Owls and volunteers who have helped to run Girl Guiding in Ashwell over the years.

If people want their daughters to be involved in girl guiding they can find the nearest units on the girl guiding website:

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

## Friday@5

### St Mary's Youth Group

Our Friday@5 youth group is free to attend for boys and girls in school Year 4 and above. We meet from 5.00 to 6.30pm on Friday afternoons during term time in St Mary's Church.

We are pleased to be able to welcome young people to share the wonderful space that St Mary's Church is able to offer to the community. Our youth groups sessions are usually lively events with a choice of activities as well as plenty of opportunity for the children to make up their own games too. At the beginning of term, we met together to discuss what rules the children would like to introduce to make the sessions safe and enjoyable for all, physically, emotionally and spiritually.



Toasting (or is that scorching) marshmallows? Tasty!

Food plays an important role, whether it be a quick popcorn snack, or a more elaborate cooking activity such as making brownies, decorating biscuits or adding toppings to pitta bread pizza. These are popular activities that are tasty, sociable and usually very messy!!

Outdoor activities such as parachute games or playing tag have been popular too. After a busy week at school, the children are often ready to let off some steam on a Friday evening.

In the summer we took a trip to Arbury Banks with the Greening Ashwell team who kindly arranged a nature treasure hunt with fun things to find and learn about along the way. We are very grateful to

Sherran Chalkley and the team for organising this.

Space to express themselves creatively is also important. Whether it be a 'graffiti wall' for doodles, comments and rhymes, or paper, glue, paints and pens to explore different media, our young people like to get involved. Activities like this are often more popular than more prescriptive craft projects, which are always available if needed.



Setting St Mary's aglow with glow sticks

In November, we shared glow sticks and toasted marshmallows over a small stove in the porch. In their excitement, the children managed to scorch rather than toast their marshmallows, but no-one seemed to mind, they were still yummy!

I would like to thank Emily, Sheelagh and Kayleigh for helping the youth leaders and supporting the children at our sessions.

If you would like more information about Friday@5 or would like to volunteer to help at the group, please contact:

**Rev'd Chris Campbell or  
Jo Adams**

☎ 01763 241587

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# Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve



Regular volunteers at the nature reserve will remember 2024 as the year we did something a bit different! With careful instruction from Tony Chandler, a line of planted hawthorns along the boundary of the reserve car park

in Loves Lane was cut and laid to create, in time, a much thicker hedge which will hopefully provide a nesting habitat for small birds. These work-parties were much enjoyed and we are very grateful to Tony for providing his time and expertise.



Multi-talented Tony bakes a mean cake too

Our other management was as usual and involved the cutting and raking up of the long vegetation in the meadow areas of the reserve not reached by the tractor and mower. The tractor cannot tackle the steeper banks or those areas now quite thickly scattered with the ant hills of the Yellow Meadow Ant, which leaves us plenty to get on with during the autumn and winter.

In contrast to 2023, the summer months were notable for their rainfall. The grass grew and grew! Even the areas which usually have quite short growth of chalk plants were long in 2024. Some of the more particular chalk plants were less common as a result.

Everyone must have heard on the national news about the crash in many species of butterfly in 2024. It was not, therefore, a good year to undertake a

transect survey of butterflies but Emily Campbell, with help from Rev'd Chris Campbell, nobly visited approximately once a week from April to September and recorded all the butterflies they saw. Numbers were indeed down on previous years but they were enough for Emily to learn to recognise the species she saw and so help her to achieve part of her service for the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award. Her records have been sent to the coordinator of all the Hertfordshire & Middx butterfly records and will contribute to the county report for the year. Thank you Emily!

Work parties take place on the third Sunday of the month from 10am until about lunch time. New (younger!) helpers are always welcome so, if you would like to be included in my work party circulation, please send me an email.

Although the nature reserve is private land, visitors are welcome there. A free permit lasts a year and allows you (but not your dog, please) to go for a walk around at any time.

## Chris James

56 Back Street, Ashwell

☎ 01462 742684

✉ [chrisjames56@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisjames56@btinternet.com)

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## Charity groups



Diapalante offers the chance to learn

### Diapalante



2024 has been a year of steady progress for the Diapalante Community Education Centre in

Kaolack, Senegal. The Centre's ongoing projects have continued throughout the year. After-school playground activities by our teenagers help a hundred or so children struggling to master French, the national language, used in schools but not in

daily life. The teenagers themselves come to the Centre to learn French and Maths and use the library and the computers. English lessons are the highlight of the teaching. Very important because English is THE international language and widely used in business at all levels of society. English lessons are taught by the Centre's coordinator, Mamadou (aka Master P), and the two current British teenage volunteers, this year Hannah and Poppy. This team is formidable, and the activities tackle anything from simple science to interview skills to the best footballer in the world. There is also the sewing and computer skills teaching. These classes are a mixing pot, school pupils, traders, teenagers and young adults with no schooling all come to gain useful skills.

There are also one-off activities and challenges. About 400 people, mostly young adults, attended a film about the dangers of migration to Europe. The film was shown in the street and was followed by a discussion with people who had attempted to migrate illegally and survived their failed attempt. Many people thanked the Centre for running this event. Less successful, but a great learning opportunity were the four saplings planted to celebrate World Environment Day. Sadly, none of the trees survived more than a fortnight! The Centre is hoping the lessons learnt from this will lead to

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success in the future.

During Covid some of our returned British volunteers coordinated with teenagers at the Centre to create story books for use in the primary school playground project mentioned above. There are very few Senegalese books for children and storybooks in general are not easily available. The books were written in Senegal about daily life, illustrated by volunteers in the UK and published on [www.AfricanStoryBook.org](http://www.AfricanStoryBook.org), from where they can be read or printed without cost. Recently we heard that some of these books were in a bundle of books distributed to various primary schools across Senegal. It is great to see the wider population benefit from our work.

The education provided by the Centre is free and is provided thanks to the many donations of money, sewing machines and other items we receive. We thank everyone in Ashwell for their continuing interest and support.

**Liz Chandler, Trustee**

☎ 01462 743091

Kirby Manor, 73 High Street

## Ashwell Charity Christmas Card Shop

The Charity Christmas Card Shop opened once again for Christmas 2024. With the postal charges increasing significantly, there was no particular expectation that we'd do very well. This was especially so since we had lost AFAC's local cards and some of the other charities were looking at the proposition of discontinuing the sale of Christmas cards in the future.

This year we had two new charities, Survival International and Pets as Therapy. Due to local bureaucracy on their part we, once again, didn't have Oxfam cards, so 14 charities in all were represented this year.

The shop was very well supported in Ashwell and also with customers from surrounding villages along with a small passing trade. This year our sales totalled over £2,850, more than 10% up on the last two years and a further indication that there is a significant bounce-back in card sales generally. As one customer remarked, "nothing else really works."

Because of a reluctance on the part of some charities to stock new cards, the range of cards on offer was down from almost 200 designs last year to only 114 (that I was able to count). This is still a wide range, and we hope to do better in this respect next year.

During the lifetime of the shop, now coming up to 30 years, it has become a part of Ashwell's village community. We are very grateful for all the support we receive from people in Ashwell and surrounding villages. The social side of the shop continues to expand so that it is again a major centre of conversations in the village. We feel that we are doing our bit to help you support good causes and, by sending the cards to your friends and family, continue to raise awareness about the work of the various charities.

As always, we would not be able to do this without the individuals who, on behalf of the charities, supplied the cards and gave their time to staffing the shop each weekend. We are also pleased that there are now a significant number of volunteers, not associated with the charities, who seem to enjoy helping out.

Liz and I are always pleased to welcome people to 'the Old Post Office' at the corner of Kirby Manor as a proper shop for a couple of months of the year. If you support a charity and would like to be involved next year, phone Ian before September!

We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2025.

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091



## Ashwell Mummers

Ashwell Mummers again performed our famous Christmas Play (Starring THE DRAGON) in January 2024. Unfortunately, the Bushel and Strike became unavailable at very short notice, so we toured the other Ashwell pubs plus Wolverley House and the Waggon & Horses in Steeple Morden.



## Charity groups

We're grateful to Sian and Sam for letting us do both the Childrens' performance and the last performance (which invariably turns into a party) at The Rose & Crown. We'd like to also thank Ashwell Theatre Club for helping us find rehearsal space every year.

We collected £399 during the tour, the highest ever for a Christmas Play tour, which we were able to contribute to Helping Herts Homeless, the charity we have supported over the last 20 plus years. Over the years, our contribution to them has amounted to over £5,700 thanks to the generosity of people in Ashwell. Hopefully the 2025 play will see it go over £6,000.

As I write, preparations are in place for our next Christmas Play, with a full cast and all in fine fettle. Sadly, the Bushel and Strike won't be available again in 2025, but we are hoping that by the time you read this it will be open again.

We're also hoping that we'll get more of a crowd in Wolverley House in 2025. 2024's performance saw us arrive at a dark and locked Wolverley. We finally rounded up a few residents and performed the play to 3 people (with a cast of 10). My son-in-law says it's popular these days for plays to be performed to an audience of one, so perhaps we shouldn't complain, but somehow it doesn't seem the same.

For up-to-date information, follow us on our Facebook Group page:

[www.facebook.com/groups/AshwellMummers/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/AshwellMummers/)

If you'd like to know more about Ashwell Mummers, or the various Mummers Plays we perform, or if you would like us to perform at an event you are organising, please get in touch.

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091

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## Royal British Legion

### Ashwell & District Branch Chairman's Report 2023-24

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*In honour of those who fought, in memory of  
those who fell*

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In 2024 the Poppy Appeal collection took place at points along the High Street and at Carters Pond on the three Saturdays before Remembrance Sunday. The service on Remembrance Sunday was held at St Mary's Church led by Rev'd Chris Campbell followed by the Act of Remembrance led by Rev'd Jim Dalgliesh at the village War Memorial. Many gathered with us to take part in the laying of wreaths and the Silence as we honoured those named from this village who died. Thank you to all who took part.

It is so important that even though we don't personally know the people whose names are inscribed on the Memorial and read out at the ceremony that we still remember them and the sacrifice they made to win the gift of peace.

2024 began with the sad news that Mrs Edna Howe had died following a short illness. Edna was our Branch President and had served the Branch for many years in various capacities. We also heard with sadness of the death of Mr Byron Searle.

Well attended funeral services were held for both of them at St Mary's and the United Reformed Church and tributes were paid to both Edna and Byron for the part they played in the life of the village. May they rest in peace. The collections from both funerals were donated to the Branch and we were able to purchase a new Union Flag to fly at the War Memorial.

One hugely significant date during the year was the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. An act of remembrance was held at the War Memorial on 6 June which was attended by about 40 people.

Coffee mornings were held on 8 June to mark the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings in 1944, and another was held on 17 August.

During the year Sharon Dawson and Paul Miller attended committee meetings – Sharon proposed the creation a Poppy Fall to display at the Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. This was supported



D-Day commemoration

by the Committee and since then knitters were recruited to provide poppies to create the Poppy Fall. Well over 1400 poppies have been knitted.

Thank you to all members of the Branch Committee for the huge amount of work they do to make the Branch such a success. Earlier in the year Jo Huggins, our Poppy Appeal organiser, let us know that she intended to stand down as our Poppy Appeal organiser after six years in this role. Jo was presented with a Branch Certificate of Appreciation. Sharon Dawson and Paul Miller are to take on the

role as joint PAOs.

A huge thank you to those who volunteer through the year to collect for the Poppy Appeal at various points in the village, as well as supporting the coffee mornings and fund raising events we hold. We always welcome new volunteers who offer to take part in our activities and if you would like to help please get in touch.

**Rev'd Canon Lindsay Dew**

Chairman

✉ [lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com](mailto:lindsaycharlesdew@gmail.com)

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# Clubs and societies



Theatre Club performers at  
Ashwell at Home





A call to order in the URC

## Ashwell Theatre Club

Last year was quite a busy one, as we continued our strategy to have a diversified and inclusive club, by developing productions that could attract a range of ages and abilities.

We kicked off the winter with *The Spirit of Christmas*, a collection of vignettes and music, accompanied by mince pies and mulled wine at the URC.

In May, for Ashwell at Home, we decided to try something a bit different, and developed Character Walks, in which classic panto characters roamed the streets of Ashwell posing for photos. Despite the challenges of the unseasonably hot weather, leading to the back end of the camel becoming dehydrated (quickly solved by a visit to the pub), we succeeded in bringing some unexpected happiness to the attendees.

In June we tried something else new, with *Murder at the Manor*. It was our first try at a very immersive production where the audience played an integral part in the drama, and it was sold out. To keep the actors on track, Amanda Collinson our props manager ingeniously integrated scripts into the props, reducing the need for extensive rehearsals.



Banged to rights as the murder mystery is solved

The characters sat amongst the audience who came in 1920s fancy dress in the hall that was transformed into a manor house, helping to solve the mystery of who killed Lord Heathcliff and why. It's a format we'd like to try again in the future.

Autumn has been spent preparing for our pantomime in January. We have a number of first-time members involved in all aspects of the production including directing, acting, sound and music. The production of *Cinderella* will run for four performances in January 2025.

## Get involved

The ATC serves as a platform to enable our members to express their unique creative talents. We are always looking for new members to get involved. Would you be happy to arrange a trip to the theatre? Do you have an idea for a play you would like to direct? Are you interested in acting, making props or helping behind the scenes? We need and want many helping hands to make it all happen. Please email us and let us know how you would like to be involved.

### Diane Jacoutot

Chairman

✉ [ashwelltheatre@gmail.com](mailto:ashwelltheatre@gmail.com)

[www.ashwelltheatre.co.uk](http://www.ashwelltheatre.co.uk)



Getting the hump - a dehydrated camel led astray in Ashwell



## Clubs and societies



Jazz Club evening at the URC Hall

### Ashwell Jazz

2023 was a year of change for the Jazz Club with our relocation to the URC Hall in September of that year. It has proved to be a very successful relocation. We have had the great joy of welcoming new members whilst maintaining the tradition of introducing existing and recently joined members to the huge spectrum that is jazz music. We listen to music recorded in the 1920s to that recorded in 2024, to music recorded in America, Europe, Africa, wherever. As the always-wise Duke Ellington said, "There are two kinds of music: good music and the other kind."

At our Jazz Club evenings individual members present an hour-long CD of their choice with topics ranging from Acid Jazz to 'God is in the house' to 'Crime and Punishment' to 'Big Bands and the Swing Era' and many more. The CD is accompanied by a typed programme with track details (year of record release, names of the artists etc) and any other interesting facts. The time and care taken over the presentations is testament to how much we all enjoy jazz music of whatever flavour. Following the presentation, we take a break to chat, drink and do more socialising before listening to pieces of music brought in by other jazz club members which compliment the theme of the evening.

In June we had our annual BBQ, a super summer evening of friendship and food.

It was wonderful to be name checked by James Pearson during his concert at this year's Ashwell Music Festival, who encouraged the audience to come along to our Jazz Club. If you enjoy jazz or would like to discover more about jazz then please feel free to join us on the second Thursday of each month in the URC Hall. You will be met with a very warm welcome. We start at 7.30pm and finish at 10pm.

Our membership fees are modest (£30 per annum) and a meeting charge of £2 per meeting. Naturally there is no charge for anyone trying the Jazz Club out for the first time.

Please bring your own refreshments and we look forward to welcoming you. If you would like some more information please contact:

**Clive Godfrey**

☎ 01462 742383

**Tony Coe**

☎ 07745 877013

**Melanie Dawson-Dew**

✉ [melaniedawson@btinternet.com](mailto:melaniedawson@btinternet.com)

### Ashwell's Big Sing



Ashwell's Big Sing is a friendly, local community choir where adults can come together and sing to their hearts' content. No vocal training or ability to read music is required,

just a willingness to learn and a love of music. We perform a varied repertoire, from musicals to pop and rock classics. We also do exercises to help develop your singing voice.





Mid Life Crisis Car Club members and their gorgeous machines

We meet every Monday during term time at the Ashwell Village Hall from 8-9pm and fees are charged in advance. All music is provided, as well as links to backing and guide vocal tracks.

The choir enjoys participating in local events such as Ashwell at Home and our very own charity Christmas concerts.

We always welcome new members and really hope to spread the joy of singing to all in the community.

### Liz Townsend

Choir Leader

☎ 07753 754452

✉ ashwellsbigsing@gmail.com

## Mid-life Crisis Car Club



[www.midlife-crisis.org.uk](http://www.midlife-crisis.org.uk)

The 2024 season started with an ever-popular pub run to the French Horn in Steppingley. The next visit was a little bit different for a car club in that it was a visit to the Electra,

an electrically powered canal boat based in Milton Keynes. A group of 12 members had a very pleasant two hour coffee and cake cruise up the Grand Union Canal followed by lunch at a quayside pub. I think we were all quite surprised at the very pleasant countryside along the canal bank.

The next visit was something different again with a trip to view the stunning car collection of a former Ashwell resident who very generously opened up his garage to the club. Based mainly around Ferraris it also includes a Porsche 911 Le Mans replica and a Lancia Stratos rally car. Star of the show was

a Lamborghini Miura which some of you may remember from the Italian Job movie. Best of all they are all runners and not museum pieces.

Next on the list was our annual visit to the Pirton Classic Car Show which has now grown in to quite a large affair with some very rare and attractive cars attending.

A further change of transport came with a visit to the De Havilland Aircraft Museum at London Colney. Lottery money has allowed them to build a new hangar so that there is much more space for their exhibits. A recent completion is a third Mosquito to go with the original prototype which originally flew from Salisbury Hall, the site of the present museum.

The last run of the season was to the Red Lion in Preston through some very narrow (and wet) Hertfordshire country lanes. Although the organiser had recce'd the route the previous day we were surprised to encounter two flooded fords (mini-rivers not cars) en route.

With the Decoke Ramble to come, the penultimate event was the Annual Dinner, held at the Three Tuns with our highly entertaining speaker Amanda Harrison. Amanda had overcome breast cancer and dyslexia to attempt to fly to Australia in her 80 year old Tiger Moth.

So another busy and varied year. As ever we welcome anybody with an interest in motoring and a car which has some sporting intent.

### Chris Scholfield

Hon Treasurer

☎ 01462 742136

✉ chrisscholfield@aol.com





### Ashwell Horticultural Society

Another year, another milestone in the life of the Horticultural Society. Much has happened during this year, including the loss of our beloved Ex-president Fergus Moynihan, at the end of a long and difficult illness. We remember him in a variety of ways – the champion horticulturist, the competitor, the winner of medals and trophies, winning the RHS Banksian medal at least 11 times, and the physician. During his illness, when he was

struggling to speak, he tried to tell me something, and when I was slow to understand, he found a piece of paper and a pencil, and in his doctor's scrawl, he offered a diagnosis, "Your potatoes have blight!"

Several of our monthly meetings were led by members of our society; Maureen Huckle stepped in to lead a quiz when our speaker was ill and Tracy Young spoke of her travels in Sri Lanka. Martyn Hird continued at the AGM with his presentation on the gardens of Morocco.

In May we visited the River Ivel, the second leg of our journey from its source in Baldock, through Radwell and onwards.

The open gardens this year provided us with insights into very different styles of planting, giving us ideas to develop in our own gardens, our thanks to Josie Sheppard, Tony and Annie Coe and Adrian and Judy Walsh for their warm welcome.

Our two shows, held in April and September, proved to be as successful as ever, despite the dearth of tulips in the spring and cucumbers in the autumn.

The allotment team worked as hard as ever, under Tony Francis' watchful eye, providing food for the evening meal at the AGM, a Moroccan themed meal, alongside saffron, inspired by our talk last December about saffron grown locally in Saffron Walden.

As ever, the committee and members of the Society continue to grow their ideas and skills, encouraging us to move forward, caring for our fragile planet. A big thanks to everyone who inspired us in a wide variety of ways. Our thanks also go to Liz Moynihan, who stepped into Fergus' shoes when



Young people get creative for the Show



he no longer felt able to fulfil his role as president, a big thank you to you for your care, support and encouragement.

As a society we generally meet on the first Thursday evening of each month, more details can be found on our website:

[www.ashwellhortics.chessck.co.uk](http://www.ashwellhortics.chessck.co.uk)

### **Margaret Gilliam**

Chair

✉ [aandmgilliam@btopenworld.com](mailto:aandmgilliam@btopenworld.com)



## Ashwell Women's Institute

**theWI**  
INSPIRING WOMEN

I cannot believe that it has been 12 months since my last report for the Ashwell Yearbook. Our membership has increased slightly and as well as our 31 members, we now have two WISHES (W.I.

Supportive Husbands), our thanks go to Peter and Paul for all their help.

We have held eleven monthly meetings, where we have enjoyed hearing from many interesting speakers this year, including a couple of Ashwell residents. Ursula Byrne told us about her time as a headteacher and Alison Gates spoke about how she came to illustrate children's books and showed us some of her lovely illustrations. Other speakers have spoken about cybercrime and how to stay safe online, and Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

In July we made the front page of the Ashwell Village News, when we finally saw the bench that we purchased installed at Angels Meadow.

Other events during the past year included afternoon tea in my garden, an enjoyable afternoon was had by those attending so hopefully this will now be an annual event. We served tea and cakes in the URC Hall raising funds for the church and once again we had a busy day at the Ashwell Show where our members made a lovely selection of cakes and helped serve in the W.I. tea tent. Our summer outing was a trip on a canal boat where we enjoyed Pimms and afternoon tea. Liz Chandler and her team of



## Clubs and societies



Showing off the new bench at Angells Meadow

volunteers cooked and served our lovely Christmas meal.

Several members made poppies for the display at the village memorial for Remembrance Sunday and during a craft session, run by our treasurer Jenny, we made Christmas angels from wired ribbon.

Margie Wallace has completed another year as our President and we are all very appreciative of her continuing in this role. Thank you to Margaret Budgen who has arranged our future speakers and our committee members have several ideas for new events next year, so once again we have plenty to keep us busy.

We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at the URC Hall at 2pm. Visitors and new members are always welcome so please come along and join us, you will receive a warm welcome, a cup of tea and, of course, cake!

### **Sharon Dawson**

Secretary

✉ sharondawson1@hotmail.com

## Border Ramblers

We enjoyed a varied programme of walks during 2024, both around the village and further afield in places like Pirton, Longstowe and Cottered. The outings were usually rounded off with tea and cake in the Parish Room or a good lunch at a local pub. Despite the indifferent summer, the weather was fine...for the most part. It was nice to welcome some new faces as well.

There were two events that clearly stood out as highlights: the early morning midsummer walk and our 'Works Outing'. The idea of starting at 7am for a walk over Newnham Hill in high summer caused a bit of dismay but a good crowd turned out and, after finishing off with a continental breakfast back at base, everybody agreed it had been a fine experience.

The Works Outing took the group to Hassocks on the train and from there we walked, or rather climbed, over the South Downs. It proved to be a great day with stunning views both out over the Channel and to the north with the Sussex patchwork spread out below. And to top it all off we were treated to an impressive double rainbow arching over the 'Jack and Jill' windmills high on the Downs. Yes, it rained. Tired but happy we made it back to a darkened Ashwell around ten in the evening.

We try to cover all the bases on the walks: healthy but gentle exercise, a chance to socialize and to enjoy good food and drink. Apart from special events, the routes are around five miles, which is a distance most are happy with. Come and join us!

### **Norton Mahy**

✉ nortonmahy@gmail.com

### **Gill Duckworth**

✉ gillianduckworth@yahoo.co.uk

### **Ian Thomas**

✉ nextodsey@yahoo.co.uk

For walks from Ashwell see the Parish Council website:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/ashwell/walks-from-ashwell](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/ashwell/walks-from-ashwell)



## Rose & Crown Folk

Ashwell's folk session is now 30 years old, starting in December 1994 with a charity Sing-along-a-thon to raise money for the church tower.

During 2024 we once again had a varied year of music and song at The Rose & Crown. Sian and Sam continue to welcome us and we have had some particularly splendid musical evenings, and especially in June when Harry, once again joined us from Australia (he usually times his visits to coincide with the folk session). The Rose & Crown is back to being a proper village pub, with the concomitant jovial atmosphere and we thoroughly enjoy most of the involvement of the rest of the congregated company. In the main, we have had an exceptional group of musicians and singers, including some old friends, and the variety of music on offer has been amazing. We regularly feature harp, ukulele, mandola, melodeon, mouth organ, concertina, tin whistle, spoons and quite a few guitars, including a 12-string, as well as a variety of singing voices.

2024 didn't quite end, as is usually the case, with a beautiful and varied session of carols and Christmas songs. The weekend after, we held our 30th anniversary Marathon Sing-along-a-thon (we hold one every ten years) and we had a good turnout of

old and new friends, including many of our founder members.

As usual, we have produced a programme for 2025, with a different theme for each month. We also publish a monthly article in Ashwell Village News, so you can keep in touch with what's going on by reading that. You should look out for the posters on the noticeboards and inside the Rose & Crown. We also have a facebook group at:

[facebook.com/groups/RoseAndCrownFolk](https://facebook.com/groups/RoseAndCrownFolk)

We continue to meet on the first Monday of every month from 8.30 to 11pm in the bar of the Rose & Crown. The session is very informal and everyone is welcome. You don't have to be musically talented or confident though it helps if you are inclined to join in.

For details of our folk session contact.

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091

The Committee are (from time to time, and in no particular order)

Mike Holmes, Jon Stark, Brin Siller, Sarah Talks, Ian Chandler,

Ken Hollow, Julia Mitchell, Sandra Barker, Harry and The Murtons



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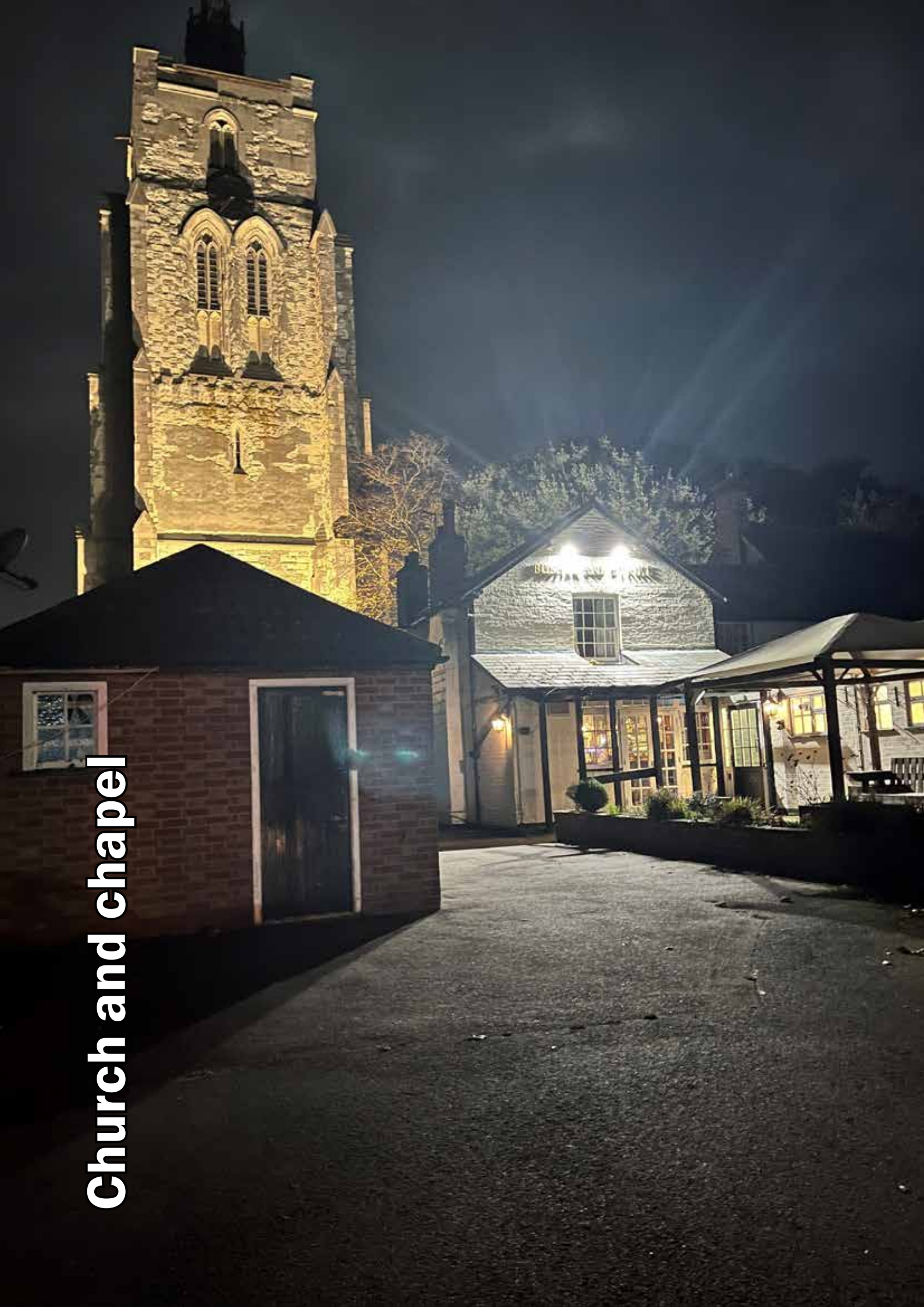
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**Church and chapel**



# St Mary the Virgin

## Ashwell Parish Church

St Mary's vision is to be a welcoming and inclusive church, in the heart of Ashwell, and 2024 has been another busy year in which we have tried to be just that!



As a worshipping community, we have regular Sunday and midweek Services. During the course of the month, we try to offer a variety of different services, some of which are more participatory (like Thank God it's Sunday), some more reflective (like our Sacred Space services) and some more traditional. Alongside these regular services, there have been a number of special services during the year and particular highlights for me have included: our Palm Sunday Passion Play, Maundy Thursday, Dawn Communion on Easter Day, Paulet's First Mass after being priested, a Pet Service and the All Souls'

Requiem Mass. We have also welcomed the school for special Harvest and Christingle Services, and it's always lovely to see the church full with parents and pupils.

As we grow in faith, we've enjoyed challenging sermons, courses on prayer and finding peace, advent discussion evenings and two home groups. And we've taken seriously our role in praying for our community and the world around us.

St Mary's has continued to be a place where people come for important life events and this year we have celebrated weddings, welcomed new children at christenings and, more sadly, said goodbye to much loved villagers at funerals. We hope to be a place for the whole community, in good times and in bad, and if we can support you in 2025 do just ask!

As well as more obvious faith activities, St Mary's is a community of friendship and fellowship; eating together, singing together and even acting together – and this year these included Bring and Share Lunches, a Sri Lankan Harvest Lunch and plenty of tea and cake. Our social events have been enhanced as the church hosted amazing fundraising events, such as the Music Festival, Book Fair, Flea Market, Christmas Fair, as well as a number of charity events for other village organisations.

Nothing in the church can happen without the huge commitment of volunteers, who give their time, expertise, and money to support both the church building and the activities within it. There are far too many people to list here, but a very big thank you to everyone who is involved in the life of the church.

### Rev'd Chris Campbell

Rector of St Mary's

☎ 01462 742277

✉ [chris@revcc.uk](mailto:chris@revcc.uk)



The drama of the Passion Play



# St Mary's Church Fabric Report

Following on from the last yearbook report, which outlined major restoration work identified by the quinquennial inspection, we have now advanced the restoration programme forward with two fabric projects, which hopefully will begin shortly.

The first is the tower and other roof repair works, which will help to prevent rainwater ingress into various roof areas of the church.

The second is the result of the tower stonework inspection by the abseiling team. This will include defrassing, removing loose areas of the facing material placed there by our predecessors, repointing and other repair work. This will help prevent debris falling from the tower face, which at this time has made it necessary to close the path in front of the tower for safety reasons.

Many major and other smaller fabric projects remain to be planned and completed. At the present time projects in the planning are the south porch access improvements, the north west tower buttress and the boiler house repairs.

However, although there will be some disruption and inconvenience in carrying out these necessary projects, as with the tower path, they also give us the opportunity to learn a great deal of interesting history of our church building and even of the people who worshipped there before us.

An example of this is the graffiti, which is incised into the stonework of the interior walls and columns. On many places in the nave and tower walls there

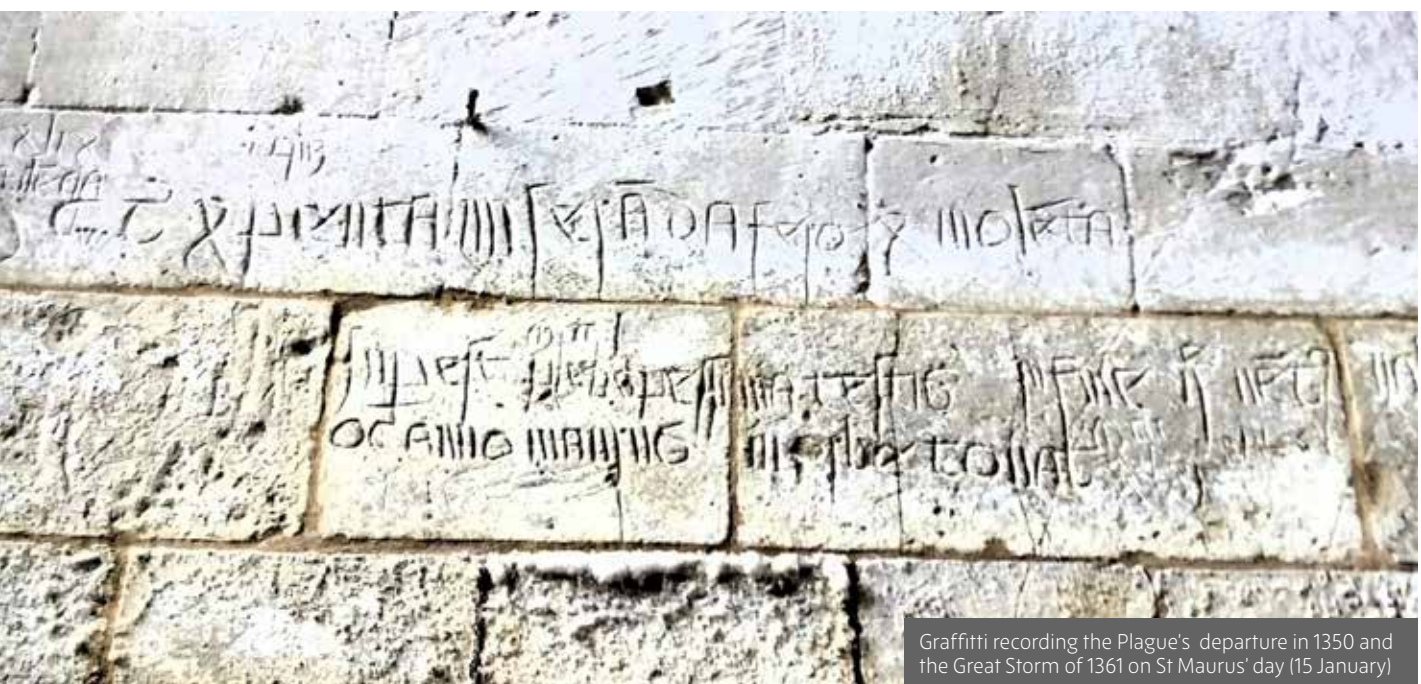
are inscriptions, including drawings, symbols, text and even music scores. Put there by our past clergy and congregation to record events when they were taking sanctuary in the church, as during the Great Plague and Ashwell Storm. Excavations to install the facilities at the north west corner of the nave produced evidence of the Saxon period, before 1066. An ongoing project is recording the graffiti by taking digital images that can be converted into 3D pictures and later using laser scanning to preserve the graffiti that can now be seen. This is the most that we can achieve until the major problem of dampness in the tower area is resolved.

Restoration of old buildings is very expensive and time consuming, but it is a responsibility that we take very seriously at St Mary's, not only to preserve a most beautiful building, but also to make it a welcoming and pleasant place to worship, hold community events and enjoy a visit.

**John D Chilton**  
Churchwarden

## St Mary's Choir

We are lucky in Ashwell to have a choir that averages around 16-20 singers each Sunday. New music this year included *In my father's house* and *For the beauty of the earth* by Philip Stopford and Amy Beach's *Peace I leave with you*. We sang *O sons and daughters* by Walford Davies on Easter Day, another new piece, which ends in the most triumphant verse with full organ and soaring sopranos. Festal Evensong kicked off the Ashwell Music Festival and we sang *Sumsion in G*, Radcliffe responses, and Vaughan Williams' *Let all the world in every corner sing*.



Graffiti recording the Plague's departure in 1350 and the Great Storm of 1361 on St Maurus' day (15 January)



Sadly in 2024 we lost a few of our devoted fold. Jill Taffs, who served the choir for many years as an alto, died in March. At her funeral we sang several movements of the *Faure Requiem*, a piece I know Jill adored. In October Fergus Moynihan died. Fergus sang in the choir several years ago and then rejoined about seven years ago. Singing gave him a great deal of pleasure despite his failing health in the last year. There were more than 400 people in church for his memorial service. We sang *Do not be afraid* by Stopford, a piece that was new to the choir

about three years ago and became one of Fergus's favourites. Finally, Judy Catterick, musical director of the choir for some 60 years, died in November. Simply put, the choir just would not be what it is today without the legacy she left us. She brought so many people forward in their singing and choral music education. We owe her such a debt of thanks. The memorial service contained five pieces for choir only. *O thou the central orb* by Charles Wood amongst them, lifted the roof. We will miss them all.





## Church and chapel

In September we paid tribute to Sheelagh Bennett who has been librarian for the choir for roughly 40 years. Given the number of services and rehearsals per year, I calculated that she put the music out on about 5,000 occasions! Sheelagh has retired from the librarian job but stills sings regularly in the choir. Thanks Sheelagh.

Our Hymnathon (hymn singing marathon) in October raised funds for our new choir stalls. We sang, with the help of many others from the village and from many other churches too, 100 hymns in roughly eight hours. Totally exhausting and exhilarating. I offer my thanks to Ruth ten Hove, who not only chairs the Music Committee, but was the leading light in our quest to buy the new stalls.

At the Christmas Carol Service we sang *Riu riu chiu* (Anon) and Christmas Day brought a new version of *Ding dong merrily on high* and *Lully Lulla lullay*.

Lastly my thanks go to the Rector, Chris Campbell, our excellent organist Pete Eaglesfield, and everyone who made 2024 yet another successful year.

### Bene't Coldstream

☎ 01462 742288

☎ 07971 404481

✉ bcoldstream@yahoo.co.uk



## Ashwell Pantry

The Ashwell Pantry is never going to have a showy entry in the Yearbook. There are no big events to report on, or significant changes. It just sits there, at the back of St Mary's Church, restocked daily by its team of volunteers and providing support to

people who need it. It's been going now for over four years and is very much in its stride.

The Yearbook entry is a great opportunity for us to thank all those who regularly contribute to the pantry - without your help it wouldn't keep going. Also thanks to those who quietly provide us with back up funds or support from the Letchworth food bank, to all at Ashwell Primary for the Harvest Festival gifts, to the Ashwell Show, to Ashwell Village Store for allowing us a collection box there and to Premier Foods for all the rice pudding, custard and instant meals.

If you are struggling to make ends meet and you or your family is in danger of going hungry please help yourself from the pantry shelves. There is a limit of six items per day so we can help as many people as possible, but you don't need to be formally referred.

If you would like to be one of the wonderful people who contribute to the pantry, these are the things we always are glad of: baked beans, tinned meals, tinned veg (not pulses please!), jam, cereal, coffee, table sauces and pasta sauce. Donations can be dropped off at the Village Store or by the pantry in St Mary's.

### The Pantry Team

✉ ashwellfoodpantry@gmail.com

## Bellringing

2024 has been a year of steady improvement for Ashwell Ringers. We were able to ring all six bells regularly for services through the year, with our newer ringers taking an active part in this. We rang to celebrate two weddings during the year as well as ringing after the funeral of a parishioner.

In January, we were very grateful to receive a large donation from the Ashwell Show which we are looking to use to make the bells physically easier to ring, so that more of our ringers can manage the heavier bells.

In June, the Northern District of the Herts County Ringing Association held their monthly ringing meeting at Hinxworth and Ashwell. This gave some of our ringers the chance to practice some more advanced ringing with experienced ringers from around the county.

We ended the year in our usual way, ringing before the village carol concert, then ringing for some of the services over the Christmas period.

We are always happy to welcome new ringers to the tower, whether you are a beginner or past ringer who would like to start again. We practice on Thursday evenings from 8pm, come along to the tower, you will be made most welcome.

### Steve White

Tower Captain

☎ 07981 393110

### Ian Chandler

Secretary

☎ 01462 743091

## Mothers Union

Ashwell Mothers' Union now has 21 members who meet in the Parish Church Room at 10.30am on the second Thursday of the month. We have a varied programme which reflects our ethos of Christian care for families. This year we have had a few changes to our original plan and we have enjoyed some unexpected but very welcome additions to our programme.

The first of these was in January when we were given the opportunity to hear Amanda Roberts from the Garden House Hospice talk about living with frailty. We learned that people suffering more than one illness are able to stay at the hospice for short spells in order to find a way to manage their conditions, thus living well for the rest of their lives.

We enjoyed a viewing of the film *The Swimmers*, based on Yusra Mardini's book, *Butterfly*. Following Margaret Gilliam's enlightening talk about refugees last year, it was a fitting follow up as it tells of Yusra's escape from the atrocities of Syria along with her sister, Sara, in order to become an Olympic swimmer in Germany, a truly harrowing journey. The film was edited by Ian Kitching who lives in Ashwell and who very kindly, after seeking the appropriate permissions, came along to show it to us. We were

interested to hear that some of the scenes were shot not far from Ashwell.

A change from our planned garden party in July was a visit from St Albans Abbey MU. A tour of the museum was followed by a sandwich lunch from Days and a look around our lovely village. They met up with us in church for a short talk from Chris and an organ recital from John Rowlands, followed by tea and cake and fellowship with our members. The afternoon was enjoyed by all.

Our planned lantern making in June was postponed until December and instead we held an impromptu coffee morning which raised some £180 for the MU's literacy and agriculture programmes in Burundi.

As well as other interesting talks throughout the year we also continue to support the Royston refuge with home packs and Lister Hospital with emergency wash bags and cheer up bags. Our packs of knitted baby clothes are also free to new mums and available at the back of St Mary's Church as fast as we can knit them!

### Viv Hollow

Group Contact

✉ [viv\\_and\\_ken@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:viv_and_ken@yahoo.co.uk)

## Church flowers

2024 has been a busy and successful year for the church flower team. We have a great team and spend many happy hours together discussing and organizing the flowers to make our church look beautiful. We would like to take this opportunity to



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thank all the congregation and visitors to the church for their kind comments regarding the flowers, they really are much appreciated.

Despite there being only one wedding in 2024, which we were not involved with, we have been kept busy with many memorial services. Although these are sad occasions we have been very privileged to be involved and to help the families make the church look beautiful for their loved ones.

We are always most grateful for the kind donations we receive throughout the year for the flowers as without these we would be unable to achieve what we do, especially now as the cost of flowers has increased considerably. If anyone would like to make a donation in memory of a loved one, particularly around a specific date, please get in touch and we can discuss specific flowers and the wording of a notice to go with the arrangement.

If you would like to discuss the flowers for any occasion or would like to be involved with our team please contact one of the following:

**Caroline Feast**

☎ 01462 743233

**Suzanne Humbert**

☎ 07941 529849

**Michelle Notley**

☎ 01462 742556

## St Mary's Church Discoverers and Children's Activities

"All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace," Isaiah 54:13.

Throughout the year, children and families have been warmly welcomed and encouraged to join in a variety of activities in our church. Chris, Sarah and Jo were thrilled to welcome Paulet to the team, helping us to offer age appropriate, engaging crafts, games and worship.

Discoverers (Sunday School) sessions for children aged 3 to 11 are offered during the 10.45am service on three Sundays out of four. We link our activities to seasonal themes and Bible readings. When the weather permits, we like to make use of our outdoor space too. We share our learning with the congregation and are able to display our artwork on a noticeboard for all to see. We enjoy learning from each other, often discovering new thoughts and ideas from our children and young people.

The participation of children in our all-age Thank God It's Sunday services is much appreciated. We

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do our best to find flexible ways of worship to appeal to a range of different styles and age groups.

Our Easter egg hunt in the churchyard was once again well attended on Easter Saturday. We enjoyed refreshments and an interactive story from Chris.

Holiday drop-in sessions in August focused on creation and the environment, with crafts to take home and a large collaborative banner which can be used as an altar frontal at special services such as the Pet Service, Climate Sunday and Harvest Festival.

Several of our children and young people have been trained as acolytes to assist the priest and the deacon during communion services by carrying a candle, or helping with other tasks.

Two big events for Ashwell Primary School were the Christingle service in December and the Harvest Festival in September. Both services saw the Church packed with children supported by their teachers and lots of parents too. It was a great pleasure to host these at St Mary's.

Our Church is open daily for visitors of all ages. There are books, toys and stories for little ones to enjoy in the children's area, as well as plenty of space to explore the building or to sit quietly and soak up hundreds of years of spiritual history.

If you would like to find out more about our children's activities, please go to our website, [www.stmarysashwell.org.uk](http://www.stmarysashwell.org.uk).



[stmarysashwell.org.uk](http://stmarysashwell.org.uk) speak to our Rector Chris or contact Jo Adams.

### Rev'd Chris Campbell

☎ 01462 742277

✉ [chris@revcc.uk](mailto:chris@revcc.uk)

### Jo Adams

☎ 01763 241587

✉ [adams561j@gmail.com](mailto:adams561j@gmail.com)

## Sunday Teas



Sunday Teas in the Parish Room continue to be a popular summer feature for both locals and the many visitors that Ashwell attracts. Not only does it provide teas, homemade cakes, scones and pastries, but it also enables people to settle down for a bit, relax and chat with others

should they so wish.

For the six months between 7 April and 29 September we have baked and served our way through the summer courtesy of the 40 or so volunteers who have stepped up to help us - it could not be done without these people. The tea baton is handed to Ashwell Museum who continue the good work during the winter.

This year £2,745 was raised during the summer. This much needed money has been put towards the Restoration Fund which is used to maintain the fabric of St Mary's Church.

If anybody is interested in getting involved next year, please contact the number below, we would be delighted to hear from you.

### Judy Banham

Parish Tea Coordinating Team

☎ 07580 154020

## Ashwell Village News

*Ashwell Village News* is a monthly magazine produced by St Mary's Church, which features village organisations and local information. The magazine allows local charities, teams and groups to advertise their activities and events. It also contains useful information on local businesses, the work of the Parish Council and local councillor. Each edition is illustrated with photographs, cartoons and word and picture puzzles. You can buy a paper copy in village shops for the bargain price of £1, or look at an online copy, details below.



## Church and chapel

It is important to acknowledge the many years of dedicated service given to the AVN by Judy Catterick who died this year. She would regularly work through the night as the deadline for printing arrived. I have only been in charge for four years, but I have very much enjoyed working with all our contributors and thank them for their support. I will miss being the first to hear about the exploits of Sir Barks a Lot or read about an exciting future event.

The time has come to hand over to a new editor and by the time the Yearbook comes out, Christa Bosch should be established in that role. I wish her well with that, and I'm sure she will bring fresh ideas and a creative vision too.

I must also thank the team at AVN. Richard and Tracy for delivering the magazine around the village, Mark and Julia who manage adverts and all the regular and occasional contributors. A very special thanks to Alfie who has worked tirelessly every month to create the layout which gets sent to print. His technical expertise has been really valuable.

### Sarah Talks

Any contributions email:

✉ [Ashwellvillagenews@gmail.com](mailto:Ashwellvillagenews@gmail.com)

Online AVN, including past copies:

<https://anyflip.com/bookcase/usoit>

## Ashwell United Reformed Church



In May 2024, we welcomed our new Minister, the Reverend Stan Chatikobo. Rev'd Stan has come to Britain from Harare in Zimbabwe to continue

his Christian ministry along with Victoria, his wife, and student son Stan. Ashwell is in a combined pastorate with churches at Walkern and Knebworth which means that Rev'd Stan will lead worship at Ashwell roughly once a month. Stan and Victoria have become very fond of Ashwell already and wish they could live here, but the available Manse is at Knebworth so they are based there.

Our beautiful Victorian chapel is open on two Sundays each month for church services when everyone is welcome. In May 2024 visitors from far and wide dropped in at Ashwell at Home and one of the Music Festival concerts was held in the church hall. On Saturday afternoons in June and July the church was open as a quiet place whilst tea was being served in the hall. In November, a fund-raiser was held for Diapalante and in December, Ashwell's Big Sing raised the roof.



Come and Meet Each Other (CAMEO) at the URC Hall

Other regular events included CAMEO (Come And Meet Each Other) on the second Wednesday of each month in the afternoon. Between 15-20 people enjoyed getting together, sometimes doing crafts or listening to music. Sometimes there was a speaker, but there was always tea and cake and a thought for the day. We held Lent and Harvest Lunches, and Spring and Autumn Coffee Mornings. The Spring one came with Pancakes!

The church hall is in regular use by a number of local groups and for children's parties. It is an important and attractive resource much valued by the village community.

Our services are led by Rev'd Stan or by local lay preachers. Worship is generally in a simple style with hymns, readings, prayers and a short message - we try not to call them sermons! On the second Sunday of the month we worship in a more relaxed style, with members of the congregation choosing hymns, perhaps offering specially topical prayers or joining in a discussion about a particular bible theme. Bread and wine are shared during worship on the fourth Sunday of the month.



We welcome our new Minister, Rev'd Stan Chatikobo

Regular worshippers are rather few now but we still maintain a warm and friendly presence on the High Street. Do come and join us on Sundays or Wednesdays and not forgetting the occasional Saturdays for lunches, if you are interested in exploring your faith with us. All are welcome. There is always more information about our activities in each monthly edition of *Ashwell Village News*.

### Rev'd Stan Chatikobo

Minister

☎ 07823 961895

### Chris James

Church Secretary

☎ 01462 742684

### San Carswell

Hall Bookings

☎ 01462 742757

## Zoar Baptist Chapel

### Gardiners Lane

Service times:

Sunday 10.30am and 2.30pm

Tuesday 7.15pm

All are most welcome at our services.

We believe the Holy Bible is God's word, and the message it contains is central to our worship. We use the authorised (King James) version. Our services are simple and reverent, and are conducted by visiting ministers.

## From our Registers

### St Mary's Church

#### Baptism

2 June Arthur Stanley Reeve

#### Marriage

9 June Laura Boulton & Adam Gilbey

#### Funerals

9 January Brian 'Dougal' Bonnett (North Herts Crematorium)

16 February Edna Margaret Howes

19 February Peter William Willmott

1 March Patrick John Anson Coldstream

12 March Geraldine Crump

19 March Graham John Swallow

24 April Jill Taffs

26 June Derek Cyril Skingsley

#### Memorials

16 March David Collinson

31 August Patrick Holmes

### St Mary's Church

2 November Fergus Moynihan

8 November Margaret Robinson

22 November Judy Catterick

### United Reformed Church

#### Service of Thanksgiving

19 January Byron Richard Searle

### Ashwell Parish Council

#### Interments

19 January Byron Richard Searle

16 February Edna Margaret Howes

19 February Peter William Willmott

1 March Patrick John Anson Coldstream

19 March Graham John Swallow

24 April Jill Taffs

26 June Derek Cyril Skingsley

31 August Patrick Holmes

3 October Ernest John Bird

12 October Fergus Moynihan

7 November Geraldine Crump (ashes interred)

9 November Susan Wakefield



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Those we have lost







## Judy Catterick

b. 1937

One of Ashwell's longstanding distinguished characters, Judy Catterick, died on 14 October 2024. Born in Letchworth Hospital on 3 August 1937 she grew up in the village on Dixies Farm, the daughter of Evelyn and Mauri who was always known as 'Farmer Brown'. Here her love of cats originated. The farm always had outside cats to deal with rodents, and at one time there were as many as thirteen living there. Judy attended school first in Ashwell, then Grove House in Baldock and St Francis in Letchworth. Qualifying in bookkeeping and shorthand and typing, after finishing her education she returned to teach keyboard skills at Letchworth College where she had trained. Judy had a passion for music, playing both the piano and organ skilfully, and possessing a fine soprano voice, winning gold medals at the local music competitions.

When Jack Catterick arrived in Ashwell as Rector in 1953, Judy helped him develop the choir and start the annual Ashwell Music Festival. In 1968 Jack married Judy, following the death of his wife Eileen the previous year. As well as directing the choir, Judy was the Church secretary and edited the Ashwell Village News. When Jack retired in 1977, they moved to Guilden Morden for a couple of years before returning to Ashwell and buying the bungalow 'Beckets' in Hodwell, which they enlarged by adding an annex in which Judy's mother, now a widow, could live. Judy at that time worked as a bookkeeper for a company, ironically in her former home, Dixie's Farm, where the outbuildings had by then been developed into office spaces.

Judy cared for Jack during his final illnesses and after 15 happy years of marriage he passed away peacefully in the Lister Hospital in May 1983. With her mother still living in the annex, Judy decided to set up her own bookkeeping and secretarial business which she ran from the hallway in the bungalow. Here the Ashwell News would faithfully be produced month in and month out. There was always a steady stream of visitors, not just for work purposes, but for social occasions which would frequently incur lots of tea and cake. Judy's mother died in 2003 at the grand age of 99, and Judy continued to work from her office in the bungalow well past normal retirement age until her early 80s.

Many people moving into Ashwell might well remember their first encounter with Judy being greeted with the words, "Do you sing?" and more particularly to the men, "Do you sing tenor?" Her relentless commitment to the choir, and dogged determination to develop and maintain its high musical standard earned her, in 2013 after 60 years directing the choir, a well deserved MBE for services to church music in Hertfordshire. She didn't finally relinquish the baton until nearly ten years later!

Judy was a loving step-mum, grandma and great-grandma to Jack's four boys, Peter, Christopher, Michael and Anthony and their families. Ashwell became very much the 'ancestral home' and with Beckets just a stone's throw from the famous Ashwell Springs, family visits always featured a paddle in its ice cold waters for the younger members.

Judy was blessed with a great number of good friends in Ashwell, and determined to live out her days in her bungalow, she achieved this with the invaluable help of carers over the last couple of years of her life. She was able to stay with her beloved cats, her family and her friends visiting frequently. She celebrated her 87th birthday in August 2024 with tea, cake and a room full of friends and family, just as she always liked.





## Patrick Coldstream

b. 1934

For some years Patrick and Janet Coldstream had enjoyed visiting friends in Ashwell when, in 1998, Marie Whitby built a new studio and they were able to buy the barn in Gardiners Lane. The barn was converted into a house by 2000 and they spent only some weekdays in London, becoming full time members of the community in 2020. Patrick had, by then, been teaching the youngest class in St Mary's Discoverers; he was often the leader of the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. If you ever heard his cries of, "Glory, glory, glory," and saw the children rapt in imagining angels filling the skies, you will never forget it.

As an enjoyer of words, Patrick spent much time reading and writing poetry, sitting in his little separate office in the garden with the Church tower leading up to the sky. At school he had done a good deal of acting, from a weasel in *Wind in the Willows* to *Antigone* in the Greek Theatre. He and Janet would often hold readings of Shakespeare plays where friends from the village would come and read a whole play,

with supper not until well into act four. Patrick was a truly expert reader and would read books aloud to his appreciative wife as she did the ironing or peeled vegetables, usually with a glass of wine to hand.

He was also a meticulous weeder of lawns, but especially clearing the front gravel entrance. Walkers would stop and chat, as indeed would those in the High Street on his many willing shopping expeditions. He was always interested in people and got much pleasure from these conversations.

Patrick's career began as a leader writer on the Financial Times – and the first journalist to interview The Beatles! For a brief period he went into investment banking, and then, through a desire to promote what is now called corporate responsibility, he chaired The Council for Industry and Higher Education. Their report, *Towards a Partnership* in 1987, offered a picture of a well educated society as a context for a sophisticated business sector. This later attracted trustees of the Church Urban Fund as they struggled to divert resources into the poorer parishes, and Patrick was asked to chair an enquiry into the causes and possible solutions of unemployment. His final appointment was as Chairman of The Church Times.

Patrick's interests never moved far from writing, the church and those he thought of as less privileged than himself. He was a truly modest man, loved poetry, music and his family and, in a very quiet way, tried to change aspects of our society for the better.





## Geraldine Crump

b. 1928

Geraldine was born 26 September 1928, in Union Lane, Cambridge, to Redfearn and Edith Walker, sister to young Redfearn. While she was young the family moved to Sandon, to join the family shop and business on Roe Green. From there she attended the village school, followed by Letchworth Grammar, which she cycled to every day.

She loved to work behind the shop counter when she finished school and at weekends, and baked cakes and bread when she could. The shop was a grocers, bakers, and butchers so she learned the skills that would be useful to her for all the years helping Phil and the boys in Crumps.

She married Phil Crump at Sandon Parish Church on 2 April 1956, and they moved in to 3 Mill St, next to the Butchers shop, where they had their three boys, David, Jonathan and Richard.

In 1988 they built their new home and moved in to Swan Street, next to the Museum, and started to hand over some of the shop duties to David and Jonathan. As retirement arrived, she and Phil had time to make some great trips around the world, largely to Australia where they had family, and often with an interesting stop over on the way or way home.

Cakes for the PTA and Church stalls, Cricket Club teas on a Saturday, Village days for any celebration she and Phil were always involved. She will be remembered by many behind the deli counter at the butchers, or running the cash desk in the office through the hatch. She was in charge of tea break and sandwiches in the shop, and the Cottage Gardeners were always pleased to see her with her tray of coffee and biscuits.

Geraldine was loyal and protective; her commitment and dedication to all her Boys was number one... a truly devoted wife to Phil, and Mum to David, Jonathan and Richard. She adored all her Grandchildren, loved to see them and hear what they were all up too.

In 2003 she sadly lost her lovely Phil, and then suffered more great sadness when she lost her eldest David to cancer in 2012.

The Church played an important part in Geraldine's life, and in 2017, in her 90th year, she was thrilled to finally be confirmed in Ashwell Church.

For the last few years Geraldine suffered from dementia and became gradually more muddled, but with the wonderful care and support received from dear friends, neighbours and the Village at large, she was able to stay at home, as she wished, where she passed very peacefully on 21 February 2024.





## Felicity Eaton

b. 1953

Felicity Margaret Borrowdale was born on 1 September 1953 in Cheadle Hulme, South Manchester. Her father, Gordon, who hailed from the Lake District, hence the name, was a bank manager in Manchester and her mother Jenny, an ex-primary school teacher, was a home-maker who did a lot of voluntary work for the Red Cross.

Margaret, as she was then known, attended the local primary school and from there she won a scholarship to the local direct grant grammar school, Cheadle Hulme School. Here she flourished academically and won an Exhibition in Natural Sciences to Girton College Cambridge. Here she specialised in biochemistry and it was through this she met Mark who was a fellow student.

Romance blossomed and they were married on 2 July 1977 at St Mary's church Disley. Mark was working for ICI in Manchester and they began their married life together living in Bramhall, South Manchester. Margaret went into information science and worked for ICI at their Pharmaceuticals Division site at Alderley Park.

Career moves for Mark took them then to Teesside, where David was born in 1981 and then to Ashwell, arriving here in 1985. Nick was born in Ashwell in 1986 and the family lived there for nine years. Both were active in St Mary's, Mark on the PCC and Felicity (as she now preferred to be known) leading the Mothers Union after the retirement of the Mulletts.

In 1984 they moved to Bishop's Stortford as David and Nick went to the college there. Mark always wanted to move back to Ashwell but sadly by this time he and Felicity had grown apart somewhat and they divorced in 2005. Mark moved back to Ashwell with Nick in 2006 and since then, Felicity was a frequent visitor to Moules Yard.

After they separated Felicity settled back in Grange-over-Sands in the Lake District and became involved with charity shops, running one for a while.

Early in November 2023 Felicity was diagnosed with cancer at an advanced stage. This progressed rapidly and she passed away peacefully on 23 November in a nursing home in Kendal with Mark at her side.





## Edna Margaret Howes (Edna) b. 1934

Edna Margaret Thorn was born on 20 August 1934 in Shefford, growing up in Langford, alongside her sister, Janet. She was five when War broke out, but oddly had mostly happy memories of it - enjoying hearty allotment food and candy thrown by American soldiers travelling on the train that passed the house. Never a fan of school, she helped with the harvest or anything to avoid it! Anxious NOT to pass the 11+ she 'missed' the bus to Bedford, failed the exam and left school at 15, joining Janet at Kayser Bondor in Biggleswade as a machinist. Edna loved 'The Bondor', with its family atmosphere and became a supervisor, later training as a designer.

She met Peter (then Factory Manager) and they married in 1967, with the wedding reception in The Engine pub. They moved from Westbury Cottage into 54 Back Street which remained their home for the rest of their lives.

They loved entertaining, hosting regular parties for family and friends. They enjoyed a 40th wedding anniversary with a marquee in the garden crammed with relations, old work colleagues and village friends. Many New Year parties with the Searles, Colemans, Winters and Percival families included homespun entertainment, waving to the Wallace family at midnight and a New Year's Day walk to Hinxworth to meet the Hoffmans, Moores and Longs. Happy memories.

Edna took her role as 'Auntie Edna' seriously and over the years has provided a listening ear, tea and a hug for many real and extended family members. Her advice was always honest, her door always open and the kettle ever ready.

Edna's world was family, friends and this wonderful village. She was a practical supporter of community - the Ashwell Show, the Theatre Club, the Church, the hairdressers and her beloved Royal British Legion. Peter was involved in the show all his life and everyone joined in on show weekend making bunting, painting signs, inventing names for donkeys in the donkey derby; all alongside a team of local families. A proper village event!

Edna joined the Legion in memory of her Dad who was gassed during WW1. As Ashwell's Poppy Lady, she drafted family to assemble hundreds of poppies delivered each year. When clearing the house, Louise and Neville found several long service awards and letters of commendation for her tireless commitment to the British Legion. Edna loved working locally at the Strawberry Fields and Crumps; both excellent opportunities for catching up on village news.

Appearance was important and Edna took great care of her hair and regularly painted her nails. She visited Bradley's almost every week since it opened and her biggest concern during lockdown was, "How do I wash my hair?"

Church remained a constant in Edna's life. Her faith was uncomplicated but sincere and when walking became hard, she was delighted to be offered communion at home by Chris and Lindsay.

Aunty Edna, Aunty, Ma Howes, Mummy Howes, Edna, just Mum - she was loved by many - giving everyone the same sunny smile. She became a hit with the (other) Wallace family when Louise married Rob in 2001, and with Suzanne and Kris, Alex's parents, after he and Neville married in 2021. Edna lived life gently but loved life deeply. After Peter died in 2012, she said she was never lonely and always felt loved. After a fall at home, she spent her last days with family and friends keen to hear news of village life. She is deeply missed but fondly remembered.





## Fergus Moynihan

b. 1940

Fergus was born in Ashwell in January 1940, a month so cold it never went above freezing. His parents John and Sheila Moynihan were the village doctors and lived at Ashwell House above the springs. Fergus had an older brother, Peter and sister Wendy.

Initially Fergus went to school in the village but at the age of eight he went to Port Regis a school in Dorset. A long way from home and the regime was harsh but Fergus made two lifelong friends there and enjoyed sport and music. At 12 he moved on to Bryanston which was a more creative and relaxed school, so relaxed he failed his physics A level which he needed for medical school.

Going to Letchworth Grammar school for retakes he met Elizabeth Fletcher and they were pretty much inseparable from then. Studying medicine at Charing Cross in London, sharing London life with Liz, Wendy and Roger Billington, Fergus worked hard but played hard too, rugby mostly.

In 1963 Fergus and Liz married in Willian church, Letchworth and in 1965 they moved to Ashwell to help run the medical practice as Dr John was in poor health. In 1966 Sarah was born and Tim followed in 1967 and the family moved to the Manse in Kingsland Way in 1968.

Fergus worked very hard supporting and building up the practice, extending the cover over surrounding villages and opening a new surgery in Bassingbourn. Despite long hours at work, Fergus found time to join lots of committees and groups that were active in Ashwell. The Parish Council was one, and he was a councillor for over thirty years and Chair for a number of those. Always active, he turned his hand to tree planting, litter picking and much more.

At home Fergus and Liz enjoyed renovating their homes at the Manse and Popes Farm, and Fergus grew a wide range of impressive vegetables. A keen member and President of the Horticultural Society, the high point of his year was the Autumn Show and the chance to show giant onions, perfect sweetcorn and runner beans.

After retiring in 2000, Fergus spent a lot of time playing golf which he loved, and he and Liz made the most of travelling, often with a wildlife or nature theme. Fergus also rejoined the choir at St Mary's Church which brought him great joy,

The last few years were not easy. Diagnosed with a rare form of dementia, Primary Progressive Aphasia took away his voice but not his understanding. Lastly a second rare liver cancer was found and no treatment offered. Fergus packed so much into his life. He had many friends, loved his colleagues and patients, was an Ashwell man through and through. He was a much-loved husband, dad and grandfather. He will be hugely missed.





## Anthony Albert Oyston (Tony) b. 1949

Tony was born at Buttway Cottages, on 24 May 1949, to an Ashwell family. His mother, Elsie, an Ashwell girl, had been in the WRNS during the war. His father, Tony, also born in Ashwell, worked for Bluegates Farm. There were seven children brought up at Buttway: Brian, Tony, Patrick, Noreen, Deborah, Nicola and William. Buttway Cottages are surrounded by fields, with a stream running in front of the cottages. It was a lovely place for the children to grow up. Noreen and Debby have very happy memories of playing with Tony in the nearby woods. Tony went first to Ashwell Primary School and then to the Meridian School in Royston.

When he left school, Tony's first job was working at Notts Bakery in Letchworth, until it shut down in 1966. When he was 18, Tony signed up for the Merchant Navy, left the village and travelled the world, working on several P&O cruise ships as a steward. When the Falklands War broke out, Tony was working on the P&O ship *The Canberra*, known as *The Great White Whale*, which sailed to the Falklands Islands, where she became a supply ship and a hospital. After the war, Tony received his first War Medal.

He eventually came home to live at Buttway again with his family, and continued to enjoy serving passengers on their cruises. In August 1990, during the first Gulf War, Tony found himself aboard RFA *Fort Grange*, as it sailed out as a supply ship to the Middle East. Again, Tony received medals for his service. His final job was as a waiter at Heydon Grange Golf Club, until his retirement at 65.

Tony's final home was at Moss Cottages, in Hodwell, Ashwell, where he was very happy. He loved being back in Ashwell and close to his family and friends. Sadly, Tony became ill and died on 19 May 2024, aged 75. He is very much missed by all his brothers, sisters and friends, especially by Noreen, Debby and Nikki, who still live locally and saw him often.

He was such a lovely, kind, gentle and warm man, who was always smiling.





## Margaret “Maggie” Robinson

b. 1954

Margaret, who was known to most as Maggie, was a relative newcomer to the village along with her husband Neil and Irish Terrier puppy Ozzie, having moved into Ashwell in 2018.

She was born in Hexham and was a devoted sister to Pat, Denis and Roger who were brought up together on the family farm in the village of Simonburn in Northumberland.

From an early age it was obvious Maggie was concerned with helping others and not surprisingly she decided to become a nurse. She started her career in 1973 in Shotley Bridge, eventually settling in Hull in

1976 where she met her husband-to-be Neil. She eventually rose to become the senior Theatre Sister specialising in neurological and cardiothoracic surgery.

They went on to have three children: Hannah, Thomas and William, and moved down to Sevenoaks in Kent in 2000 when Neil's job took him to London. Whilst initially quite a wrench for everybody to leave Yorkshire, eventually this became quite an adventure and to this day two of the children still live in London.

It was during this period that Maggie had her first brush with cancer but after facing all the various treatments with her usual positive outlook she was given the all clear in 2005. During this period she was the heartbeat of our very exciting and somewhat chaotic family life, from helping with (and doing) homework to throwing herself 100% into every celebration from birthdays to Halloween to her very favourite, Christmas.

Maggie continued to live life to the full, notwithstanding she was diagnosed with terminal sarcoma in 2018, and she continued to defy the odds during this period seeing Hannah married, three grandchildren arrive, a big birthday and a 40th wedding anniversary.

And as her health began to deteriorate and as hard as her treatment became, she refused to let it define her, was never angry and freely admitted she was happy with her lot. Indeed, at her memorial it was clear many people hadn't appreciated how poorly she actually was.

And her humble, playful nature and wicked sense of humour coupled with her strength and indomitable spirit will always stay with us, although we will all miss her more than words can express.

Maggie passed away peacefully at home on 12 October surrounded by her whole family and a joyful celebration of her life was held at St Mary's on 8 November.





## Graham John Swallow b. 1941

Graham was born on the 28 September 1941 in Royston to William and Gwendoline Swallow. Graham had an older sister Shirley, who still lives in Royston.

Following primary school in Royston, Graham attended Garden Walk Secondary School, where he met Sheila Wilkins who he eventually married on the 9 March 1963 in St Mary's Church, Ashwell.

Graham worked at the Eastern Electricity Board after finishing school at 15 and in 1958 achieved a place on the apprentice training scheme, and he attended the North Herts Technical College. This led on to forming his electrical business in 1968 becoming G Swallow & Son Electrical Installations, carrying out domestic and farm work in the Ashwell area including the church,

where he and David installed the Church tower floodlights in 1991 that illuminates the church to this day.

Graham and Sheila had two sons, David who was born in 1964 and Andrew who was born in 1967. David sadly passed away in 1992 from an accident at work aged 27. Andrew is a retired train driver and currently lives in St Neots.

Graham became Chair of the PTA and then Chair of Governors between 1981 to 1992. He was particularly involved in fundraising for the swimming pool and the development of the new hall and classroom. He was also a member of the Parish Council and a Scout Leader for many years.

In the 80s Graham and Sheila renovated the old Dennis Butchers shop which then went on to become Christies Corner electrical & confectionery shop.

The family originally lived in Bear Lane Ashwell, then moved to Hinxworth, before returning to live in Ashwell again. After Graham retired the family moved out of the village to Langford and finally to Little Paxton. On retirement Graham spent many holidays in his villa in Spain with the family and found his love for golf and his trips with Sheila and Andrew to Africa, Graham loved wildlife and made sure he was never far away from it.

Graham struggled over the last few years of his life with cancer and passed away on the 19 February 2024 at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, leaving his wife Sheila and son Andrew.

Wherever Graham lived he was always involved in the community, helping people out and getting in projects, he touched a lot of people's hearts, he will be sadly missed.





## Derek Cyril Skingsley

b. 1939

Derek died at his home in Wolverley House on Saturday, 1 June. He and his wife Jennifer had lived in Ashwell for over 9½ years. They moved down from Sheringham, Norfolk to be near family because of Derek's deteriorating health. They both knew this area well. His parents lived in Railway Cottages, Ashwell where his father worked for the railway. After his father was promoted to Signaller at Baldock station they moved and Derek was born. He had one brother, John.

He attended Letchworth Grammar School and met his wife when he was 17 and she, aged 14, joined St Mary's Church, Baldock's choir, where he had been a chorister since he was a boy. They courted since then! Married for nearly 61 years, they celebrated their diamond wedding in Jersey in June 2023 and enjoyed

a family party in the July. Their boys David and Ian have given them five grandchildren and three great grandsons. They were the light of his life and as he put it, "my legacy".

He was an adored husband, beloved father and loved by all the family and friends. He will be greatly missed. He had such a positive outlook on life and was always smiling even throughout his illnesses. Rest in Peace Derek.



## Jim White

b. 1934

Jim's family lived in Ashwell for over 60 years. Both his parents are buried in St Mary's Churchyard. Jim was an only child. He went to boarding school and then to Magdalene College Cambridge, where he read engineering. He also spent time in the Royal Engineers gaining the rank of Captain, serving some of that time in Cyprus.

He lived and worked as a Banker and Financial Adviser in central London until he retired to his parents' former home in Ashwell. Jim loved living in Ashwell, and for a short time had a beautiful ginger tom cat called Harry whom he adored.

Jim was one of the older residents of the village. He was very supportive of the Conservative Party and

would campaign vigorously, leaflet dropping etc during election time, and was very disappointed Nikki da Costa didn't win last time. Jim was also a keen member of the Ashwell Branch of the Royal British Legion.

He had a number of interests, loving working in the garden with Kevin the gardener and handing out pears from his trees and holly at Christmas. Jim is remembered by neighbours as a sprightly gentleman, climbing ladders and gates, even into his eighties! Unfortunately, he was very hard of hearing having shot competitively for the army and also at Bisley. Up until July 2024 he was busy running his affairs, and shopping around the village in Crumps, Days and at Tesco and garden centres. He cooked his own meals three times a day often with his home grown produce. Sadly, after a short illness he passed away on 11 December 2024 aged 90 years. He will be very much missed by all his friends and extended family who loved him dearly. R.I.P.





## Jill Taffs

b. 1939

Jill was born on 17 May 1939 in Birmingham to Vivian and Winifred O'Brien. John and Peter were older brothers and Wendy her younger sister. Jill could remember the wartime bombing of Birmingham, while her father was away abroad serving in the RAF.

Jill attended the prestigious King Edward's Grammar School and excelled at sports, especially gymnastics and tennis. Jill's other great passion was music, singing in choirs and playing the piano. Her greatest ambition was to become a gym mistress, but had to leave school and began work in a local Barclays Bank branch.

She became friends with the manager, Bob Jennings, and romance blossomed. They were married on 20 September 1958 and settled in Hall Green, Birmingham. Jill loved her tennis and played regularly at the Solihull Arden Club. Jill gave birth to Vivienne Anne on 13 February 1960 and Caroline Margaret on 8 July 1962. Jill had fond memories of family summer holidays in Goran Haven in Cornwall. Unfortunately, disaster struck on 21 October 1968 when Bob suffered a fatal heart attack at a Barclays dinner in Birmingham. Widowed at the age of twenty nine, with two young daughters aged eight and six, Jill bravely survived this traumatic episode, helped by her strong Christian faith. After three years as a widow, Jill married the Reverend Phillip English, but after four further years, living in the Cotswolds, that marriage ended in an acrimonious divorce.

In March 1979 Jill met Mike Taffs, a dentist on a skiing holiday in Italy and once back in England, they began a whirlwind courtship. They were married on 22 September 1979 and Jill, Vivienne and Caroline joined Mike with his two boys, Richard and Chris to live in Harpenden. Jill managed a two-tier family and became an enthusiastic member of Harpenden Ladies Circle. In April 1982 the family moved to Avenells Manor in Guilden Morden and Jill began restoring the huge ancient house into a wonderful home. Jill organised fund raising jazz lunches and gaming evenings, in the house and gardens, raising funds for St Mary's Church and Letchworth Ladies Circle and Round Table. Jill sang in St Mary's choir Guilden Morden and organised and led it for several years. In 1988 Mike and Jill opened a part-time dental practice in Avenells, operating as a branch of Mike's Luton practice. Jill enjoyed working as practice manager and surgery assistant. Jill also organised lavish weddings for Vivienne and Caroline in Avenells.

By 1995 all four of the children had flown the nest and Mike and Jill decided to sell Avenells and moved to a bungalow in Dubbs Knoll Road in Guilden Morden. The house was reconstructed and a surgery wing was added with garages and car parking. For a year Jill, Mike and the dental nurses operated out of a purpose built portakabin before the new surgeries were finished.

In 2006, Mike retired, and they moved to The Meal Barn in John Sale Close, Ashwell. Jill joined the choir at St Mary's Ashwell and sang regularly at morning services, evensong and special events. Throughout her life, Jill was a keen lover of golden retrievers, owning Rupert, Gemma, Ben, Rory and finally Frodo. She was also twice president of Letchworth Tangent, the senior club of Ladies Circle. Jill was also an excellent skier, continuing until she was seventy. Jill continued to enjoy eventful holidays, including a memorable pilgrimage to the Holy Land under the leadership of the Reverend Simon Chambers, cruising and time at Broadways, their bungalow on the River Thurne in the Norfolk Broads.

Unfortunately, as age crept on Jill's health deteriorated and she suffered from cancer and immune deficiencies and was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in October 2023. Jill had a wonderful final family Christmas in Devon but suffered a paralysing stroke on 25 January 2024 and passed away peacefully in March, two months short of her eighty-fifth birthday. As Jill had requested, the Choir of St Mary's gave her a rousing solemn funeral based on Faure's Requiem. Jill is now at rest in the Village Cemetery after a long life well lived. Jill is survived by her husband Mike, four children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.





## Susan Mary Wakefield b. 1948

Susan was born on 23 July 1948 at Osterhills Hospital, St Albans to Charles Arthur and Susan Anne Sophia Winter. The early years of her life were spent at Woodend Farm Cottages midway between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.

The family moved to Ashwell in 1953 when Charlie got the position of herdsman for Bill Wallace of Bluegates Farm. She lived at Ferndale on the site of the old Bluegates Dairy in High Street (now Bacon's yard). After attending Ashwell Primary School, she moved to Meridian Secondary School in Royston.

Susan enjoyed growing up on the farm and had a happy childhood. She was full of fun and mischief as a child and especially enjoyed visiting local friends'

houses and playing games in and around the village. She was very proud of her older brother and the achievements he made in his field.

Susan married Basil Wakefield on the 2 September 1967 at St Mary's Church in Ashwell before moving to Letchworth in the 1970s where they had three daughters: Claire, Laura and Vikkie.

After bringing up her daughters Susan had several jobs including working at the Home Office Immigration Centre in Oakington and the Nature Conservancy Council where she used her keen interest in conservation to good effect particularly in the protection of the local habitat for wildlife including badgers and foxes.

Her hobbies included reading, listening to music and playing scrabble. She often played scrabble with her family on holidays and always impressed her grandsons with her excellent knowledge of two-letter words.

In later life she became interested in motor cycles and enjoyed attending local rallies often volunteering as a warden to help manage events. She always had a smile on her face and a joke or a story to share up her sleeve.

Susan was interested in local politics and was a champion of Women's Rights, and those with Special Educational needs. She loved her precious dog, a King Charles Spaniel named Christy, who became her constant companion in recent years.

Susan died peacefully in Lister Hospital in May 2024 with her youngest daughter, son-in-law and beloved grandsons beside her. She will be missed by her family for the warmth and love she so freely shared with those around her. She is survived by her three daughters, five grandchildren (twins Nathan and Zac, Tarun, Kish and Thomas and one great grandson, Harrison).





## Sylvia Wallis

b. 1923

My mother, Sylvia Wallis (nee Elias), died in April 2024 aged 100, lived an extraordinary life. She was a wife, grandmother, organiser, a witness to history. She often quoted Sean O'Casey, "Life is an invitation to live!"

Sylvia was born into a working-class family in Cardiff in 1923. Her father, Sid Elias, was a Communist Party member. In 1926 the family moved to Gateshead, where he was an organiser for the National Unemployed Workers Movement and led hunger marches from deprived areas. Later they moved to London to continue NUWM work. In 1932 Sid was jailed for three years for, "causing disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects".

Due to her mother's ill-health, the party arranged foster care for Sylvia and her younger brother. The experiences stayed with her. One carer was an alcoholic. Guilt stricken at his drunkenness, he handed an axe to Sylvia, bent his neck, and told her to cut his head off. Sylvia grabbed her brother by the hand and ran. "We were then individually farmed out to whoever would have us." Eventually returning home, Sylvia saw her father released from Pentonville.

By 1936, the family were in Leeds. As a 13 year old, Sylvia saw violent confrontations between Moseley's Blackshirts and counter demonstrators at the Battle of Holbeck Moor. Sheltering beneath horse-drawn wagons as mounted police charged the crowds, hooves throwing sparks off the cobbles, Mum would fear horses for the rest of her life.

She played cards with a young Jewish activist, 'Philly' Ellis, before he left to join the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. "We laughed all evening because we won every game." Philly died at Jarama in Spain on 13 February 1937.

Sid was expelled by the Communist Party in 1938. Unable to find work, the family found lodgings in London where Sylvia became the breadwinner, "My wages were 12 shillings and sixpence. I gave ten shillings to my parents and had 2/6 for travel, clothes ..."

After the outbreak of war, the family moved to Guiseley, near Leeds, where Sylvia worked 12 hour shifts in a camouflaged aircraft factory as a bomb-gear inspector. At a town hall dance, she met her future husband Reg Wallis, a Wireless Operator / Air Gunner in RAF Bomber Command. He later served on RAF Air-Sea Rescue boats. The pair married in 1946 and moved to Wisbech. Sylvia administered coal rations for the local council in the harsh winter of 1947. Later there were picnics at Wisbech cricket ground, pageants, relaxing at Hunstanton. It was a time of optimism and hope.


They moved back to Yorkshire and made trips across Europe on a 150cc Lambretta scooter nicknamed Mirador. Reg was a printer at the Yorkshire Post and also entertained with his siblings as The Wallis Family. Sylvia was a council rent collector. She credited her health to the miles walked in all weathers and cold showers. In 1976 Reg was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He died in 1978.

Commuting by bus because she never learned to drive, Sylvia worked until she was 83, advising widows. Mum also ran social groups for single people. She only retired after slipping and breaking her wrist. My wife and I lived in Ashwell and persuaded her to move. She made many friends in Wolverley House and in the village and enjoyed seeing her granddaughters, Emily and Anna, thrive.

In 2022, Sylvia broke her hip. She bore it stoically – staying interested in world affairs, science, culture, the lives of her family. Profound, intelligent, argumentative, a contrarian, Sylvia loved art, theatre, glamour and dance. In Mum's case, life definitely was an invitation to live!

**Jeremy Wallis**



A group of people, including adults and children, are gathered outdoors for a sports day event. In the foreground, a woman with a yellow headband and sunglasses sits on the left, while a woman in a black dress and straw hat sits in the center, smiling. To her right, a man in a blue shirt and green cap is looking down. In the background, a boy in a blue jersey with the number 13 is visible. The scene is set on a grassy field with trees in the background.

Ashwell people

Sports day is a great occasion for spectators too



## Our people

Ashwell's great fortune is its people. A small community of around 2,000 hosts an astonishing array of skills and individuals who have made a huge contribution to its well-being. Here are the stories of a few of them.

### Cliff Jenkinson

#### A Servant to the Community



Ashwell at Home, now in its 40th year, originally took place to fund the first extension to the museum. One man, Cliff Jenkinson, has been involved in one way or another every year since that first Ashwell at Home, which is an amazing achievement! As Cliff stands down as chair of the Ashwell at Home committee, handing over the reins to David Hoar, we take a look at the man for whom community has always come first.

Cliff and Vanessa first visited Ashwell in 1978. Cliff was a teaching at a school in Gravesend, and he and Vanessa lived in Dartford. They had met through the local Amateur Dramatic Society. At that time, he was mentoring a probationary teacher, Kate Oxley (nee Morris), whose mother lived in Ashwell. Kate invited Cliff and Vanessa to 'the little village in Hertfordshire' for a weekend, and the rest is history. Cliff and Vanessa fell in love with Ashwell. A few years later, Cliff started to look for Headship positions in Hertfordshire. When the headship at Ashwell Primary School became vacant, Cliff applied and was successful. In January 1984, Cliff became Headteacher at Ashwell School, a role he held for 26 years. Cliff was an exceptional Headteacher who managed to be respected, admired and liked by pupils, staff and parents alike.

Cliff and Vanessa moved to Ashwell in 1984 with their daughter, Katie, and rented a cottage in Mill Street. A second daughter, Helena, followed 9 months later. Their family grew over the years, the two girls being joined by Joe, Orlando and Harry. From Mill Street, they moved up to Woodford Close, interestingly into a house where a previous Headteacher, John Bushel, had lived. They were almost next door to Peter Chapman, Head of Knights Templar School and the close became known as 'Headmasters Close'. They finally settled in Cambridge Villas in the High Street in 1991 and still live there today. For Cliff and Vanessa, family is very important and they are especially enjoying being grandparents to their six grandchildren.

As part of Ashwell at Home, Cliff was proud to open up the whole school for the local community to visit and see the work that children had done. Every classroom was open to visitors, with lunches and afternoon tea being served in the dining room. Cliff would be at the front door of the school from the minute the school was opened, until the last visitor left, welcoming the community to the school. One year he also staged a production of Noah's Flood outside the Museum, which included children who had attended an animal mask making workshop in the morning. Wearing their masks they were the animals in the Ark.

When Cliff retired from his role as Headteacher, he continued to be heavily involved in Ashwell at Home. As chair of the committee, he ensured that the day was always full of amazing displays and activities for the public to get involved in, and a number of gardens were open. He would be seen walking around the village from early in the morning until the end of the afternoon, checking in on the various venues and ensuring that everything was running smoothly and everyone was enjoying themselves. We would love to know how many steps and miles Cliff has walked around the village during Ashwell at Home.

However, Cliff's continued commitment to the community does not stop at Ashwell Primary School and Ashwell at Home. Cliff has always played a key role in village life, and has been instrumental in advancing many village traditions, like the Turkey Dinner, which sadly no longer takes place. He has also been a trustee at Ashwell Museum since 2011 and, until last year, he was an editor on the Ashwell Yearbook team, a role he had held for 10 years. He was also a Trustee of Moss Cottages in Hodwell for a number of years.

Over the years, Cliff has enjoyed taking part in many productions with Ashwell Theatre Club. Roles have included Abanazar, the Sheriff of Nottingham, Hercule Holmes in *Dick Whittington*, Nanny Nelly



## Ashwell people



in *Freezin'*, and most recently as Baron Hardup in *Cinderella*. A very talented man indeed! As well as amateur dramatics and enjoying spending time with his family, Cliff is an avid gardener. Maybe one day we might see the garden opened as part of Ashwell at Home?

When Cliff and Vanessa first came to Ashwell, and Cliff took up his post as Headmaster, he told Vanessa that his aim was to be a 'Servant to the Community'. Well I think Cliff has fulfilled that aim several times over. Cliff, on behalf of the community of Ashwell, thank you.

**Tracy Young**

## Tony Francis

### Expert Gardener

Tony Francis is a keen, knowledgeable, and experienced gardener. He says that he is often accused of being out in the garden too much, but he is of the opinion that he'd rather be out there if the weather is right as there is always something to do irrespective of the size of your garden.

His love of gardening dates back to his childhood. Tony was born in Ashwell in the house next door to Rhubarb & Mustard. His granddad had an orchard

that ran from opposite Plait Hall on the High Street to Silver Street. In the orchard there were – in addition to the fruit trees – pigs, chickens and geese. All of this proved to be particularly useful during the Second World War when food was rationed. As a child, Tony was given the job of filling a wheelbarrow with chicken manure from the orchard and then pushing it up to the allotments on Station Road where his granddad, dad and uncle all had plots. This proved to be a welcome source of income as he was paid for each delivery! The money he got from doing this work allowed him to pursue his hobby of stamp collecting which started when he had scarlet fever when he was younger. He used to order his stamps through the post on approval and he would add them to his collection which he still has today.

Gardening was clearly in the blood as Tony's mother came from Everton where the family were market gardeners. There were 14 children, and all seven boys worked in the family business. The sandy soil in the area meant that it was a particularly good place to grow cabbages and cauliflowers. The produce was sold to customers in London via a company in Pottton. It was a challenging and demanding job as the customer requirements were strict. The cauliflowers couldn't be too big as they wouldn't fit in the customers' boxes and the runner beans had to be dead straight.

He hasn't been gardening as much over the past year as he has been repainting the windows on his house. He has also been frustrated by the amount of rain that we have had, which hasn't helped with the growing of vegetables. The soil in this area is poor because of the chalk which lies just below the surface. He has countered this by building several raised beds in his garden in which he grows his vegetables. He makes his own compost – which is made in rotation in four compost bins in his garden – and this is used in the raised beds. He also adds horse manure as needed to the beds to help produce good conditions for growth.



He says that he always seems to win when he enters carrots in the Horticultural Show. He grows his show carrots by sinking tubes into the raised beds and then sprinkling in carrot seeds along with his home-made compost. This means that he can successfully grow impressive shapely carrots. His view is that the real secret to success with gardening is to put regular effort into encouraging plants to grow.

Last winter he was growing some carrots (not show carrots) in the raised beds, and they had appeared to be doing well. One day however, he noticed the carrot heads appeared to be drooping. He was initially inclined to blame his two cats as he had seen them playing on the raised beds. The real culprits were rats that had eaten all the carrots leaving just the tops with empty tapered holes where the healthy carrots had been. And when the rats had finished with the carrots, he noticed that they had moved on to his parsnips.

Tony has been a Member of the Ashwell Horticultural Society since it started in around 1977. Tony said that he believes the standards in the Ashwell Horticultural Society to be very high and the Annual Show has had many compliments from visiting judges. He feels that the move to St Mary's Church from Ashwell School as a venue for the main show in September has been very positive. There is plenty of space for the exhibits and visitors can move freely around and after the show the people who have been involved in running it all get together and enjoy a communal meal.

Tony clearly has a great love for and affinity with gardening and commends it as a means of relaxing. It clearly gives him great pleasure and there is always something to do, whatever the size of the garden. And, to use Tony's words, he will happily ramble on about it for as long as anyone is interested!

**Dave Wallace**

## Andrew Baguley

### The hi-vis hero for SERV Herts and Beds Bloodbikes

In the heart of our community, there are some dedicated volunteers like Andrew Baguley. In addition to volunteering with the Ashwell Show setup this year, Andrew is a long-standing volunteer for SERV Herts and Beds Bloodbikes - a remarkable voluntary organization that ensures lifesaving blood products, patient samples, human donor milk, medical equipment and essential drugs are delivered to NHS hospitals in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire free of charge, and out of hours.



As a completely voluntary organization, their funding primarily supports vehicles and bikes. Therefore, every contribution, like the one from the Ashwell Show, plays a vital role in their operations. Recently, Andrew put Ashwell Show funds to good use, and purchased a new branded high-visibility jacket, enhancing not only his own safety but also the visibility of SERV's important mission.

The purchase of this hi-vis jacket is a small but significant step forward for Andrew and SERV. It represents not only his commitment to the role but also the community's support that allows the organization to thrive. In the images below, you can see Andrew proudly wearing his new jacket, ready to embark on his vital deliveries.

"It's more than just a piece of clothing," Andrew commented, "It's a reminder of the support we receive from our community and the trust placed in us to deliver critical supplies. Being easily identifiable helps us connect with hospital staff and emphasizes our role in supporting the NHS."

As SERV Herts and Beds Bloodbikes continues to rely on the generosity of local supporters, we encourage everyone to consider how they can help. Visit [www.servhertsbeds.org.uk](http://www.servhertsbeds.org.uk) to learn more about volunteering, or how to donate. Every bit of support enhances the capability of this remarkable team, ensuring they can keep delivering lifesaving services around the clock.

**Margaret Townsend**

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[info@oldgranarycottage.co.uk](mailto:info@oldgranarycottage.co.uk)  
Nicki Holmes 07957 285286



# Weather and farming

2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Rainfall (mm)	33.6	75.9	40.5	52.4	72.0	17.8	70.2	18.9	119.0	36.9	35.8	29.4	602.4
Average rainfall 1976-2020 (mm)	51.9	38.8	40.7	46.7	50.2	54.3	53.2	54.2	50.0	64.0	57.7	54.6	616.2
Days with rain	14	19	15	15	11	11	16	5	20	19	14	19	178
Max. temp. °C	13.4	16.2	16.9	20.4	26.3	29.2	30.9	32.9	27.4	20.2	16.6	13.7	
Min. temp.	-4.9	-0.3	0.8	1.9	7.0	7.1	9.5	10.6	4.7	3.6	-1.1	2.7	
Average max °C	7.7	11.2	12.3	14.1	18.8	20.4	22.4	23.4	18.7	15.0	9.9	9.0	15.2
Average min °C	2.5	5.9	5.8	6.9	10.9	11.2	13.7	14.6	11.6	9.3	5.7	5.4	8.6
Av max °C 2014-20	7.4	8.6	11.2	15.2	18.7	21.3	23.2	21.8	18.9	14.5	10.3	8.9	15.0
Av min °C 2014-20	2.5	2.7	4.3	5.8	9.1	12.2	14.5	13.9	11.6	8.9	5.5	4.6	8.0
Days with min 0°C or below	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	11
Sunshine hours (Heathrow)	71.4	48.6	94.9	126.3	164.2	205.7	178.2	188.6	121.9	80.6	52.7	20.5	1353.6
Average sunshine hours 1996-2020 Heathrow	59.0	79.4	119.0	171.5	197.2	194.9	204.2	187.4	153.0	109.1	69.5	53.1	1597.3
Cambridge 1996 -2020 average	59.1	78.8	106.7	136.8	163.6	160.0	160.2	143.4	128.5	100.1	70.9	60.7	1368.8



## Ashwell Weather 2024

As ever, the UK weather has provided us with much variety, partly a consequence of climate change. Temperature and rainfall records were broken throughout the UK, but Ashwell was spared the extremes. Ashwell largely avoided the effects of the eight named storms in 2024, but places close by were not so lucky. For example, in September Bedfordshire was badly hit when the A421 flooded after a pump failure, and in November, Northampton suffered severe flooding when the River Nene burst its banks.

The table gives the full weather statistics for the year 2024. Those familiar with earlier years may have noted that I've had to use sunshine figures from London Heathrow rather than Cambridge, because the Cambridge weather station is no longer reliably maintained. The two sets of readings are surprisingly different; the sunshine averages for both places show that Heathrow is gloomier in the winter months than Cambridge, and sunnier for the rest of the year.

The sunshine hours overall were below average, as shown in the monthly totals, for all except January, June and (marginally) August. Compared with the average we lost over 240 hours of sunshine, which is more than we usually get in any single summer month. Despite this, the average maximum and minimum temperatures were higher than average, though the peak summer months of June and July were cooler than usual.

Rainfall here for the year was only slightly below average at 602.4mm, though some months were unusually wet, notably February and September, and some unusually dry, June and August.

January brought a couple of dry and sunny spells with overnight frosts for a few days but was otherwise quite warm. For ten of the last eleven days in the month the maximum temperature was in double figures and the overnight low averaged at almost 5°C.

February was unusually wet, especially in southern England where there was well over twice the average rainfall. In some places it was the wettest since 1836, but our 75.9mm was nowhere near our recent record of 105mm in 2014.

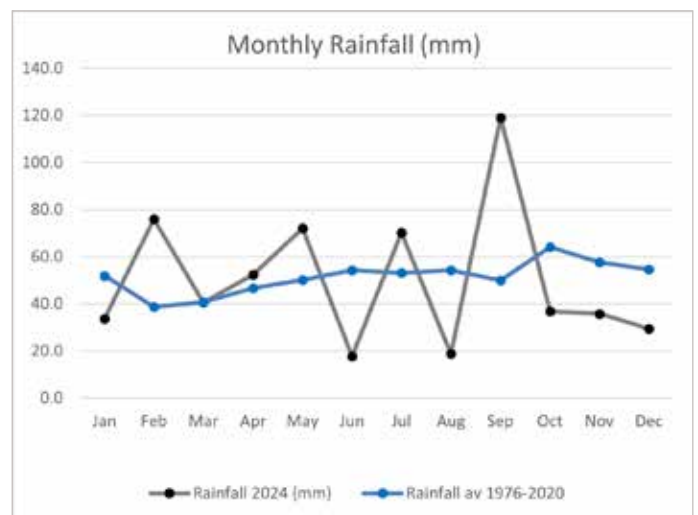
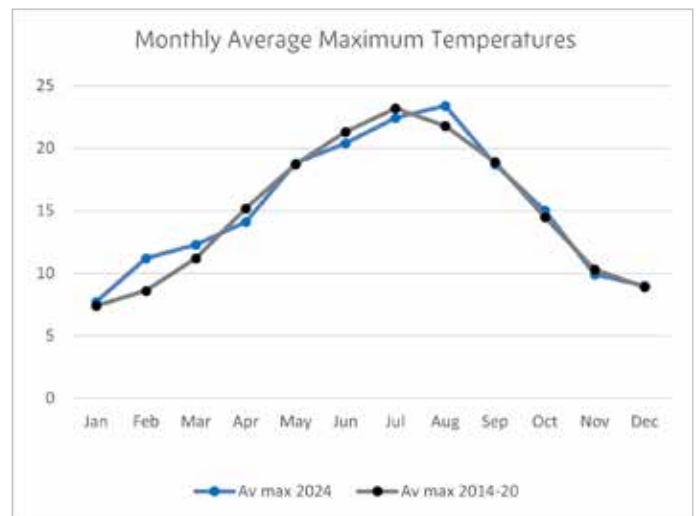
For the following three months the total rainfall was about 20% above average and the sun remained elusive, leaving many fields waterlogged, such that farmers were unable to sow seeds for the summer crops. June saw some respite with rainfall down and sunshine a little up compared with the average, but in July the gloomy and wet weather resumed.

August did see the highest temperature for the year, 32.9°C, on 12th, and there was a dry spell with temperatures above 25°C from 28 July to 2 August. Generally, though the summer was cooler than we have become used to.

In September it was back to rain and cloud, with the monthly rainfall nearly 140% above average. On the 26th we had 30mm (more than an inch), plus 10.3 mm on the 8th, and 23.2mm on the 22nd, towards a total of 119mm for the month. Seriously wet!

The pattern for the final three months of the year was below average rainfall, about 60% of the usual total, along with significantly less sunshine than normal. There was a light dusting of snow around north London on 19 November but none in Ashwell. December was particularly gloomy, with only a little over 20 recorded hours of sunshine. But it wasn't cold. Unusually, there was no time that month when the temperature reached freezing. Those who thought that nearby snow in November might precede a white Christmas in 2024 had their hopes dashed again - the three days around Christmas day were very mild with a maximum of 11.7°C and minimum 5°C.

### Bob Carswell





## Northern Lights

### The Great Auroral Storms of 2024

This last year has seen an unusual peak in episodes of the Northern and Southern Lights being seen much further away from the Earth's magnetic poles. This was particularly evident on the night of 10 and 11 May, when an aurora was seen over most of Britain, including Ashwell.

The underlying cause of aurorae is the ejection of charged particles from the Sun in solar flares, which are magnetic storms on the surface of our star. Many of these particles reach the orbit of the Earth where they interact with our planet's magnetic field and are accelerated towards both magnetic poles. There, at altitudes from about eighty miles up to several thousand miles, they interact with atoms and molecules in our upper atmosphere. The excitation of the atoms and molecules of gas causes them to glow, producing the coloured sheets, waves and curtains of the aurora. Different atoms glow with different colours – oxygen glows green, nitrogen glows blue, purple and pink. When we see a red or scarlet aurora it is caused by very high-altitude oxygen interacting with intensely energetic particles.

Particularly intense storms are called CMEs – Coronal Mass Ejections - when billions of tons of plasma and particles are ejected from the surface of our star at speeds of up to two million miles an hour. CMEs can cause more spectacular and intense aurorae, extending further away from the poles. They may cause interference with Earth-orbiting satellites, obstructing communications and even damaging their delicate electronic components.

The Sun has been studied by astronomers more regularly since the invention of the telescope in 1609. It is now known to have an eleven year cycle of activity between maximum levels of activity, when sunspots and flares are more common. However, this has not always been the case. In 1894, the English astronomer Edward Walter Maunder noted from sunspot records that there was a prolonged 60 year period from 1645 to 1715 when the Sun was continuously relatively inactive. This coincided with the Little Ice Age, when the Thames froze over each winter and Ice Fairs were held. Viking settlers also abandoned Greenland during that period. The period from 1645 to 1715 is now known as the Maunder Minimum. With global warming a big problem just now, perhaps another Little Ice Age would be welcome!



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The Sun was at its last maximum in 2014 and has been passing through an extended period of minimum activity since then, until a year or so ago. Solar activity is now increasing, with more sunspots and flares visible and CMEs being seen leaving the surface of the star. This is the presumed reason for more aurorae being seen further away from the magnetic poles in places like Britain and Ireland in the Northern Hemisphere and Australia in the Southern Hemisphere. Solar activity is now predicted to reach a maximum again sometime in 2025. Thus, we should expect to see more aurorae at our latitudes over the next couple of years. Keep an eye on the weather forecasts and the media for predictions of more Northern lights, especially during the coming winter months while the nights are longer.

**Mike Taffs**

## Farming and the Environment

Finding a symbiotic relationship between producing food and caring for the environment is one of the challenges of being a farmer in the 21st Century.

The difficulty faced by the farmer is that all environmental groups seem to pull us in different directions. For example: an initiative which may improve global emissions may be detrimental to the local landscape, biodiversity and wildlife.

In my opinion, to obtain the correct balance we must be as efficient as possible on the capable productive land where yield is maximised and then commit the less productive marginal land to environmental good. This is on the basis that a poor yielding crop of wheat at five tonnes per hectare has the same impact (pesticides, fertiliser, diesel, seed, machinery and man hours) on the environment as a good yielding crop of ten.

Over the last two years we have carried out the following practices, to try and improve our environmental credentials:

- we have established over 200 acres of over winter green cover crops, these reduce nutrient leaching and water erosion, they provide habitat and cover for birds and insects, they are ploughed into the soil in the later winter as a green manure to improve the long term soil structure
- we have started providing weekly pork deliveries to Crumps butchers to reduce farm to fork food miles.
- to minimise our reliance on synthetic fertilisers, we continue to spread the manure from the pigs

on to the fields

- other than the straw we bale and use to bed the pigs, we try to chop as much of the straw as practically possible and incorporate it back into the soil.
- we have adopted satellite steering on one of the tractors to ensure field operations are not wasted by overlapping.
- we have established an area of wildflower meadow on a field corner near the village which was awkward to farm.

Next year we will be fully entered into the government's Sustainable Farming Incentive under which we have allocated further land for pollen and nectar plots, winter bird food plots and wildflower strips around the edges of some of the fields.

I have recently downloaded the Merlin Bird Identification app on my phone, this is a great tool to establish the number of bird species on the farm, over the next year Vicky and I hope to try and take a moment to stop on the farm and record the bird species around us at various times of the year. We urge you to do the same when you are out on your walk, and perhaps we can exchange notes next year!

**George Tait**



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# Aurora Borealis







A close-up photograph of a branch with clusters of bright red berries and green leaves against a clear blue sky. The berries are small, round, and densely packed in clusters. The leaves are elongated and green. The background is a solid, clear blue sky.

**Weddings and  
anniversaries**





## Laura and Adam Gilbey

On Sunday 9th June 2024 Laura Boulton and Adam Gilbey were married at St Mary's Church in Ashwell.

Laura, from Louth in Lincolnshire, and Adam, from Ruislip in West London, met at Lincoln University in 2012. From living together at the same uni accommodation, to a long-distance relationship, to Laura moving in with Adam's family (which was a long way from home), Laura and Adam found their picturesque countryside village and bought their first home together in Ashwell in August 2022. Adam proposed in April 2023 amongst the bluebells in the woodlands near Ashridge Estate, which is one of their favourite walking spots.

Laura and Adam, having settled into village life, could think of no place better to marry than at home in the magnificent St Mary's Church. It was a day filled with love and joy, celebrated with their closest family, friends and neighbours. Following the ceremony, the reception was held at The Barns at Redcoats which was full of laughter, chatter and rustic charm. Local florists, Barbara Lohoar and Fiona Paxton, supplied the gorgeous wildflowers which adorned the farmhouse tables. Following an afternoon of great food, fantastic speeches and photos in the beautiful corn fields, everyone danced the night away with a ceilidh under the twinkly lights of the barns.

A massive thank you goes out to Reverend Chris, who took the time to get to know Laura and Adam in the lead up to the wedding and performed such a wonderful and personalised service. One of the most memorable parts of the ceremony was the music, with a special thanks to the exceptional Ashwell Choir for their lovely harmonies, Pete Eaglesfield the talented organist for offering a sense of grandeur and tradition, Robert the pianist who wrote and composed bespoke renditions of their favourite songs, Lucy who accompanied on the violin and the Ashwell Bell Ringers who welcomed Laura and Adam out of the church as newlyweds to the sounds of the impressive bells ringing out across the village. The whole day was like a real-life fairytale!

Laura and Adam had their minimoon at their family cottage in Embleton on the Northumberland coast, a stunning part of the country which holds special meaning to them both. They are excited for their honeymoon in St Lucia in Spring 2025 and are looking forward to building a life together in Ashwell for many years to come.





## Georgia and Matthew Rowlands

Georgia and Matthew (son of Gaye and John Rowlands) celebrated their wedding with a ceremony and celebration at Battersea Arts Centre in South London on Saturday 17th August 2024.

Matthew grew up in the village and attended Ashwell JMI before going on to Knights Templar in Baldock. His childhood memories include catching bullhead fish at the Springs with other village boys, endless games of football after school, and having to endure untold temptation whenever the fairground stopped by thanks to the proximity of his parents' home to the rec.

Before heading off to university, he was a familiar face behind the tills at many of the village shops, having worked in Days, Crumps, the Bushel, Charley's Flowers, and Ashwell Garage.

He proposed to Georgia during a visit to Ashwell in April last year and the village will forever hold a special place in the hearts of the newlyweds.

Their wedding day itself was blessed with glorious sunshine, with a small group of family and friends gathering for the ceremony and a larger, more raucous group joining later for an evening of speeches, dancing, and merriment.

Matthew's brothers – Jonathan and Mark – were his best men and Ashwell's Morgan and Owen Stark his groomsmen. Georgia's bridal party was similarly made up of family and life-long friends, with her cousin Tas acting as the celebrant and guiding the emotional couple through their vows. For once, John Rowlands did not play the organ at a wedding, but Gaye gave a wonderful reading.

Food was provided by the Camberwell pub where they went for their first date, with highlights including the courgette, pickled peach and burrata salad, the seven-hour slow-cooked lamb, and a series of enormous spinach and feta filo pies. The wedding cakes were conjured up by Georgia's chief bridesmaid Sara – with whom she opened a bakery in London's Herne Hill that has since gone viral on social media – with the flavours taking inspiration from different aspects of their joint heritage (Victoria Sponge, Mango and Coconut, and Earl Grey Tea).

They were delighted that so many loved ones were able to join them on their special day – many of whom had travelled from overseas – along with fellow Ashwell JMI alumni made-up of representatives from the Carswell, Jenkinson, Boggild, James, Jewell, Coote, and Lee families.

The couple, who live in London's Crystal Palace, plan to indulge their shared love of ramen, sushi, and tonkotsu during their honeymoon in Japan next Summer.



## Sharon Dawson and Paul Miller

Finally, after 14 years as a couple, Sharon and Paul were married on the 26 July at South Farm, Bassingbourn. The sun shone and family and close friends joined them at this lovely venue.

Sharon and Paul have known each other for 18 years having met at work, where Sharon was Paul's boss ...so nothing has changed! They moved to Ashwell in October 2022 and are enjoying retired life here.

The wedding was a relaxed, informal day, where Sharon and Paul met their guests on arrival. Their granddaughters, Lexi and Maizi were their flower girls and led the way up the aisle. The weather was kind to them; they were able to have the ceremony outdoors.

They had a belated honeymoon in Cyprus and are now looking forward to many more happy years in Ashwell.



## Grace and Tom Simmons

On 5 October 2024 Tom Simmons married Grace Albrow at a beautiful wedding ceremony in the Nash at Kew Gardens.

Tom moved to Ashwell with Mum, Dad and Brother Dom when he was 5 years old to the then brand new development in West End. Tom attended Hartsfield and Knights Templar schools, played football for Ashwell Accies and cricket for Ashwell, Letchworth, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Academy. He went to Leeds University where he studied and obtained a first in International Business.

Grace studied at Bristol University, but Tom and Grace's paths crossed through a Leeds cricket buddy mutual friend's birthday bash. At this party, Grace, to make conversation, asked Tom what date his birthday was

and lo and behold they both share the same birthday, 2 January! The romance flourished and 12 years later they finally tied the knot.

The wedding ceremony was followed by a vintage Routemaster bus ride to the reception venue in Acton where yummy food was provided by gourmet food trucks. The wedding cake was made from 150 jam doughnuts supplied by Days of Ashwell. The evening rocked with a nine piece swing band. It was a day full of love, laughter and wonderful memories with family and friends.





## Geraldine and David Watling

### Diamond wedding anniversary

Geraldine and David moved to Ashwell in 2015 from the Isle of Wight where they lived for nearly 40 years. They lived, and were married in 1964, in Woodford Green, Essex where they met on the tennis court – David admired Geraldine's forehand. David worked as a mechanical engineer on satellite propulsion systems for Marconi and Geraldine was a housecraft advisor for the Electricity Board until their move to the Isle of Wight where she ran a small hotel for 20 years.

They have three daughters Julia, Claire (Moynihan) and Frances and are grandparents to Jack, Tom, Rachel, Rosanna and Charlie. David can often be seen on the roof of their Ashwell home or tinkering under a car, while Geraldine has involved herself in all aspects of village life.



## Mavis and Mick Fox

### Diamond wedding anniversary

Ashwell girl, Mavis McBeal, who grew up in Silver Street and Bygrave boy, Mick Fox, were born six months apart in 1944 and have always known each other. At sixteen, they started courting and their first date was at the pictures to see *GI Blues* with Elvis Presley, a particular favourite of both.

Mavis worked at the Garden City Press and Irving's and Mick on the farm. They married 3 years after they started courting and honeymooned in Cambridge before moving in with Mick's parents in Bygrave where their first daughter was born. Mavis worked at the bacon factory in Letchworth when they first married. They moved into a farm workers cottage in Bygrave where their second daughter was born. Mavis missed being in Ashwell and being close to her mum, so they moved into a caravan in Moules Yard in Ashwell until they were given their council house, where they still live. Their third daughter was born there about a year later.

Mavis started working at the school, later at the Bushel & Strike and then at Days the Bakers; Mick started with the Post Office delivering the post for many years, as well as doing the street cleaning job for the Parish Council. Their finances improved, and they started to travel. All over America (including a trip to Gracelands naturally), Europe, cruising to many different destinations (including a trip on the QEII – a dream of Mavis' for many years), coach holidays all over Europe and the UK and many family holidays to Scotland and Minehead.

They have five grandchildren but are also 'nanna and grandad' to many children, and two great grandsons. Mick turned 80 in April and Mavis turned 80 in October 2024. In September 2024, they celebrated 60 years of marriage.

They have had a wonderful life, being part of the village, its many organisations (WI, Museum, United Reformed Church, British Legion to name just a few) as well as socialising with friends and family at the local pubs.





## Sylvia and Martin McBeal

### Diamond wedding anniversary

Sylvia Ann Cordell, aged 16, met Martin McBeal, aged 20, at a dance in Baldock. At the time, Martin lived with his parents in Silver Street, Ashwell. Martin was born in Ashwell. His father, Athol McBeal was a Drill Sergeant, stationed at The Maltings, during the Second World War. Like many soldiers then, he married a local girl, Kathleen May Bryant, from one of the old families of Ashwell. They had four children, Martin, Valerie, Mavis and Kate. Martin worked for Brays, the Ashwell Building Firm.

Sylvia lived at The Lodge, Rosehill Hospital, between Letchworth and Hitchin. It is now The Letchworth Centre for Healthy Living, but in those days was a Children's Isolation Hospital, where Sylvia's father was Head Gardener for most of his working life. Sylvia had two older sisters, Dorothy and Daphne and one brother, Ray.

Sylvia worked with Martin's cousin, Olive Anderson, first at Letchworth Post Office, then later at Hitchin Telephone Exchange as a telephonist.

Sylvia and Martin were married on 4 May 1964, at Hitchin Registry Office. Sylvia wore a navy spring coat and dress. Sylvia's mother organised all the food for the reception, which was held at their home, at The Lodge of Rosehill Hospital. Both Sylvia and Martin came from big families and it was a very happy occasion. After the wedding, Sylvia and Martin had a lovely honeymoon by the sea at St Osyth in Essex.

Their first home was with Martin's mother in Silver Street, until they were given a Council house in Dixies Close. Their final house is in Station Road. They have lived in Ashwell for all their married life.

Sylvia and Martin have two sons, Stuart and Athol, and two daughters, Deborah and Denise. They also have seven grandchildren, five boys and two girls, who are all now working. They celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary quietly on 4 May 2024. They received many cards and flowers from their family and friends as well as a special card from the King and Queen. As Sylvia had been very ill and Covid was still around, they decided not to have a big party. Sylvia and Martin cannot believe how quickly the last sixty years have passed.



## Sue and Gordon Hill

### Diamond wedding anniversary

Sue and Gordon met in 1963 while on a youth holiday in Norway. Gordon was living in Hitchin and Sue across the Thames in Surrey. They married in June 1964 in Weybridge. After their honeymoon in Jersey (the popular honeymoon isle of the time), they moved to their first home in Back Street, in Ashwell.

Their son, Ellis and daughter Penny, were born in their Back Street home. They moved to Woodforde Close in 1971, where they still live. Their children enjoyed growing up in Ashwell, where Ellis, after a brief spell out of the village, returned to bring up his own family of three. He and his wife, Anna, have recently moved to Guilden Morden. Penny, her husband Paul and their three children, now live in Cranleigh, Surrey, but enjoy returning to Ashwell for visits. Gordon and Sue have very much enjoyed their six grandchildren, who are now adults and moving out into the world along various paths.

They still go along for the monthly sessions in the Cottage Garden and also help to clean the Museum. They have resigned from the Horticultural Committee, after thirty years, but still enjoy attending the monthly meetings. They host the making of the annual Well Dressing in their garage, where Gordon is roped in for any practical problems. They still enjoy the company of their many friends, although some of them, sadly, have died. They don't envisage moving from the Village as they are very attached to Ashwell and where they have enjoyed sixty years of happy married life.





Carrot cake for me, please

## Our house, your house

As Ashwell has grown, it has become a mix of old and newer houses. However, each of these houses has a story to tell of the people that have lived in them over the years, the families that have grown and moved on. They are not just a collection of bricks and mortar, but each and everyone of them is a home, full of lifetimes of hopes and dreams, tears and laughter. Here we look at two homes in the village, Cambridge Villas at 86 High Street and Flint Cottage, and take a look at how the homes have changed over the years, and the people that have lived in them.

### Cambridge Villas, 86 High Street



#### The Rowley Jones

Sue and I moved to Cambridge Villas (our second house in Ashwell) in 1979 along with our children, Jo, Gemma and Katie; Emily arrived the following year.

Some newer houses had been built earlier in the decade but there was a lot of competition if an older, larger house came on to the market and Cambridge Villas, built in 1892, certainly ticked that box. Gwenda Westrope, the erstwhile village midwife, lived in number 86 and my dear former colleague, Dr Fergus Moynihan, effected an introduction. Gwenda assured us that when she was ready to sell, we would have first refusal for two reasons: one, I was in the medical profession and, more importantly, I was Welsh, as she was.

The house had a vast loft space – in those days shared with next door – so with expert guidance from Bob Swain we were able to create two further double bedrooms. This was the first of eleven projects undertaken with Bob in our two subsequent

houses in the 47 years we have lived in the village. There was much more that had to be done. We demolished an old barn in order to extend and convert the coal shed into a utility room and log store, and refitted the kitchen.

I can only describe myself as extremely artisan when it comes to DIY but I did manage to re-tile bathrooms and redecorate. I was very proud of the sitting room, which I wallpapered, only to be told by my wife that I had the flowers upside down – I dispute this as in my memory it happened in an earlier house! Whichever version is correct we employed a professional to deal with the hall and landing, which was just as well as one complete roll of wallpaper was needed for the longest drop.

After a relatively short time, the Coladangelos moved to the other half of the house and we changed the configuration of the gardens from long and thin to short and fat. As their children were about the same age as our younger two, we installed a gate so that they could all come and go as they pleased; it was a very happy time. Our neighbours on the other side were the Walters family: Sue, Ian and their two children along with Ian's parents, Nannie and Dai – a proper Welsh enclave.

We lived in Cambridge Villas for 4 years, moving again for more space for our growing family. We loved living there and it was a great advantage to be able to keep up with the village gossip living on the High Street, compared with our next house on the edge of the village – where we lived for 33 years!

#### Dai Rowley Jones

#### The Jenkinsons

Vanessa and I moved to Cambridge Villas in September 1992 because we had outgrown our previous house in Woodforde Close. We brought Katie, Helena, Joe and Orlando with us. We knew the house already because the Leonards, who owned the house after the Rowley Jones family, had been involved in the PTA at school and sometimes held meetings here. Once we were established here Vanessa soon became a friend of Gwenda Westrope, a fellow nurse and midwife, and the former longstanding resident of number 86, who now lived in a bungalow in Bacons Yard. Our Harry appeared in 1995 when the little front bedroom above the porch made a perfect nursery for him.

This house is a very good family home, with opportunities for getting together and the chance to get away from it all if that's how you feel. Like the Rowley Jones family, we have made changes over the years. We enlarged the utility room and added a downstairs shower room and brick shed in 1996, in collaboration with the Lees, then at number 88,



## Ashwell life

who were doing something similar. By this time our Joe was already firm friends with Matt Lee and they used to bang and shout messages to each other through the rather thin bathroom wall at bath times. By now there was no gate for them to get from one garden to the other. They just went straight over the wall.

In the winter of 2023-24 we extended the kitchen and remodelled the original dining room, always known as the playroom to us. We now have a room big enough to accommodate the entire expanding family.

When I retired from the school I did very little for the first year or so, but I did build a pond in the garden, the previous one having long since disappeared when my sons and their friends rode their bikes through it as part of a scramble course. Although there had been no pond there for nine years and the garden is completely walled, as soon as I filled the new pond, three or four frogs immediately appeared from nowhere and their descendants have been cheerfully overpopulating it ever since – bit like us with the house, really.

We have now lived happily at number 86 for more than 32 years and, although we should be downsizing by now if we had any sense, we love the house and have decided to stay here for as long as we possibly can.

**Cliff Jenkinson**

## Flint Cottage memories

The Collins



Mum and Dad, Joyce and John Collins, moved from Kingsland Terrace up the hill to 1 Flint Cottages (later named 32 Ashwell St) in the summer of 1962. Nine months later I was born in the house, joining my siblings Brian, Graham and Brenda.

Before Woodforde Close was built in about 1970 our garden stretched right down to the Manse: it was

large enough that we had big bonfires and fireworks there. The road at the front of the house wasn't a road, rather a continuation of the Ruddy and I remember my Dad bringing home a lorry load of old cinders from the power station where he worked and shovelling them into the ruts.

Mum tended the front lawn and garden, she loved her flowers, whilst Dad looked after the 'top lawn' fruit trees and vegetables. He was really adept at stringing onions which would hang in a line near the barn. The barn housed so many tools and wooden trays of cooking and eating apples that had been harvested from the garden.



Along the side of the house was a glass topped veranda, where the washing was hung to dry and mum leant her trusty old bike so it didn't get rained on.

The house was cold, there was no central heating and often frost would form on the inside of the bedroom windows. We had a Parkray fire in the kitchen, a coal fire in the front room and in the end room, though that one was only lit at Christmas. Thankfully the bathroom had a paraffin heater, but you had to walk through the freezing cold scullery to get to it.

I didn't appreciate it at the time but looking back, it was a wonderful place to grow up. I lived there until I got married in 1982. Mum and Dad moved to Back Street in 1984.

**Rita Collins**



## The Smithsons



We (Clare, Ben, Freya and Finn) moved to Flint Cottage three years ago from Royston. It's had two extensions since Rita's family lived here but a lot remains the same.

Thankfully we have central heating now but we still light the fire in the front room at Christmas. The fireplace in the end room is now used as a board game cupboard. The kitchen has been moved to the back of the house but the veranda with its

washing line is still there.

The garden is smaller now but the fruit trees and vegetable patches on the top lawn are still there and we even found some old wooden trays in the shed when we moved in that we use to store apples (probably not the same ones but you never know.) There are also a lot more trees along Kingsland Way than there used to be!

We love the house and feel very lucky to live here.

### Clare Smithson

## Why do people choose to live in Ashwell?

There are generations of families who have lived in Ashwell over centuries and still do. However, there has recently been much movement of new families into Ashwell. Why do people choose Ashwell as a place to live?

### Sharon and Paul



Sharon and Paul Miller are two such people, who moved to Ashwell recently. This is their story.

After many years of living as 'Townies' following retirement we were ready for a quieter life, away from the hustle and bustle. We didn't want to move further away from the family with grandchildren, so we looked at the map and drew a circle with a 12 mile radius of where they are living. Many months and pub lunches later, having ruled out villages that had no or very limited amenities, we chose Ashwell. We felt it had everything we needed on our doorstep. Several people have asked if we miss living in a town, but we now live closer to many facilities, e.g. the pub, doctors, dentist, butchers than we did before.

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## Ashwell life

After almost two years waiting for a suitable property to buy, we moved here in October 2022 and have absolutely no regrets. We know more people in Ashwell than we knew when living in a town. Ashwell people are friendly and welcoming.

There is absolutely no reason to be bored with village life and we are probably busier now than we've ever been. We have joined the Ashwell branch of the Royal British Legion, and help at their fundraising events, we are Friends of the Ashwell Museum, Sharon joined the Ashwell WI and is now Secretary, she helped with the Well Dressing at Ashwell at Home.

Paul has joined the Ashwell Show and we help serve teas in the Parish Room on Sunday afternoons, have helped at the Book Fair, Christmas Fair and Flea Market. We have attended many fun events here, the annual Duck Race, pantomime, Makers Market, music events at the Church. The list is endless and we wonder how we ever had time to go to work!

Would we want to move back to town living? That's a definite, "NO".

**Sharon and Paul Miller**

### Tom and Sophie

When Sophie convinced me to move to Ashwell in 2021, I must admit that I was sceptical. Sophie grew up in a village and had always dreamed of a rural life, whereas I clung to the idea that I was still, somehow, an urban sophisticate (I wasn't).

Having spent my twenties living in London, I was used to the pace, the culture, and the convenience of city living. When I moved back to Letchworth, to which my parents had relocated when I was a teenager, I had assumed it was simply a temporary exile. Alas, I met Sophie and somehow now found myself working in Cambridge and rejecting with scorn house after house that I was forced to view in various local villages (I shan't name them here).

However, as Sophie pointed out, Ashwell was different. It was not just any village. It was a place we both already knew through dog-walks, attending the Ashwell Show, and, in my case, a few old rugby connections; and a place that was objectively attractive enough to win me over. The location sealed the deal: an easy commute into work, sufficiently proximate to London that it didn't feel isolated, and near - but not overwhelmingly so - to both of our families.

Reluctantly, I relented, telling myself it was the sensible choice. In any case I had realised that I was destined to lose the 'village' argument. If I were to resign myself to becoming The Provincial Man,



I decided I might as well do so in a place that was beautiful and seemingly self-sufficient.

Three years later, I have been forced to admit that any apprehension on my part was misplaced. Ashwell is no sleepy backwater. It's more of a paradox; a quintessentially English village that somehow feels extremely worldly. Yes, the high street is picturesque, the church majestic, and the Springs tranquil, but scratch the surface and there is an unexpectedly vibrant social scene. For every idyllic country walk, there's a pub quiz or a house party; for every quaint-seeming village activity - many of which I'm now unashamedly desperate to become involved with - there are events like Dancing in the Aisles and the, let's face it, an utterly degenerate Pre-Show. And while Crumps and Days have, frankly, ruined my waistline, they have also become part of a routine I never knew I would enjoy so much.

Sophie has embraced the village with characteristic enthusiasm. She has joined Saturday morning Fit Club, runs rugby-netball sessions in the summer and has discovered about three dozen local routes in which to walk Claude, our golden retriever. For my part, most of my social life now takes place in the Rose & Crown and I have somehow been cast as an ugly sister in the Theatre Society's pantomime which, following a turn as Judas in this year's Passion Play, leads me to fear being typecast as a local villain. I even sometimes find myself staring at the wall for hours in febrile anticipation of the next Banger Challenge. I have a fair few ideas.

Ashwell has surprised me at every turn. The calendar of events and activities, of which there are too many to fully list: from Big Bashwell to Ashwell Book Week and the Ashwell Grand Prix to Ashwell at Home, never fails to delight (nor omit the word Ashwell it seems - perhaps this is indicative of our communal pride.)

Almost everyone that Sophie and I have met since we moved to the village have been kind, generous, and interesting. We have made dozens of genuine friends here across all generations and could never have expected the community to be so welcoming.

Sophie and I have truly fallen in love with Ashwell and intend to start a family here. The village has become an anchor in our lives and I think it unlikely we will ever leave.

When I proposed to Sophie there was no question that we wouldn't have the whole event in the village. We were married last year at St Mary's and had our reception fifty yards away at The Bushel and Strike with many of our new friends from the village in attendance. From fearing that we would be isolated here, I now resent leaving the - excuse the cliché - 'Ashwell Bubble' for whatever reason. Sophie always knew it would be a perfect fit for us, and I hate to admit it but she was right.

**Tom** (overseen by Sophie)

## Arty Ashwell

The Ashwell community is a diverse and rich mix of people blended together. It has always drawn gifted artists and musicians to its heart. Ashwell is fortunate to include in its fold a cornucopia of very talented artisans, whether that be basket weavers, potters, wood carvers, artists, dressmakers to name but a few. Here we find out a little more about three of them.

### Alison Gates

Alison Gates is truly Ashwell's one-of-a-kind maker and mender. With a degree in 3D design, Alison trained as a jeweller and shared her skills for 16 years as a teacher and evening class instructor.

Feeling restless in the jewellery world and struggling with numb fingers that made intricate work difficult, Alison embraced a family move to Dubai in 2007, prompted by her husband's job. Unable to work there herself owing to visa restrictions, she turned to sewing and pottery, with sewing quickly becoming her creative lifeline. She began making clothes for her children, who became walking adverts for her skill, and soon found herself busily sewing custom pieces for others.

Dubai's fabric shops became her playground, inspiring her creativity. Motivated by the work of a local tailor, Alison took on an impromptu apprenticeship, honing her skills and eventually selling her creations at craft fairs.

When the family returned to the UK, first settling in



Gloucestershire, Alison launched Green Cat Design, a business specialising in children's clothing and alterations. Her tailoring skills quickly gained a loyal following, and her work became increasingly in demand. In 2014, the family moved to Ashwell, where Alison closed her formal business but kept her creative spirit alive with new projects. Seeking fresh inspiration, she began an MA in Children's Book Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art in 2016. Her work earned accolades in illustration awards, but like so many, her aspirations were interrupted by the pandemic. Drawing remains her cherished creative outlet and a source of solace.

Alison is very much Ashwell's go-to 'fixer', tackling everything from wedding gowns and prom dresses to holiday outfits and well-loved soft toys in need of a little love and attention. She's even crafted mice in coats with tiny sleeping bags. Embracing sustainability, Alison often repurposes fabric from





## Ashwell life

old coats, curtains, and throws, giving new life to items that might otherwise be discarded. Alison's remarkable talent for transforming and crafting has earning her a cherished place in the community. Her imagination and skill show how the ordinary can become extraordinary and that it's often possible to give old items new purpose and renewed beauty.

### Kate Heiss



Kate Heiss is a skilled printmaker based in Ashwell, known for her limited edition linocut prints. Her work features local landscapes, flora, and countryside scenes, crafted with meticulous precision. Each colour in her multi-block prints is individually carved and printed – a time intensive process that is truly a labour of love. Carving each design in reverse and seeing the final image emerge from the press is an experience she describes as endlessly surprising and satisfying.

Kate's journey into printmaking reflects a lifelong passion for art, nature, and fashion. After earning an MA in Textiles from the Royal College of Art, Kate began her career designing textile prints for fashion. Moving to Ashwell in 2005, she sought a creative outlet that fitted around family life and discovered printmaking.

Kate took an intensive printmaking course and was captivated by linocut's detailed, hands-on process, which resonated with her textile background. After converting her garage and acquiring a printing press, Kate established her own studio in Ashwell. From there, she creates limited edition prints for galleries and exhibitions while also designing for licensing projects which sees her work featured on homewares, greeting cards, and book covers.

One of Kate's most treasured pieces is her Hoopoe print, inspired by the unique and mystical Hoopoe bird, which has featured in folklore across cultures (a stuffed specimen of which is on display at the Ashwell Museum for those interested). The bird's mystique deeply resonates with Kate, and her depiction of it holds a special place in her home and heart. Ashwell's natural surroundings are a constant source of inspiration, especially the view from her studio overlooking Forrester Allotments. The Ashwell skyline and rural landscapes often appear in her work, reflecting the deep connection she feels to the village and its surroundings. Kate also finds



creative spark in vintage treasures, ranging from old tins and matchboxes to Liberty textile prints, sometimes even uncovering gems at events like the Ashwell Book Fair.

Beyond her own artistic achievements, Kate has played a pivotal role in enriching Ashwell's creative community. In 2018, she co-founded the annual Ashwell Makers Market, offering a platform for local artisans. Kate also launched the beloved Live Advent Windows tradition, which fills the village with festive cheer each December. Through her prints and initiatives, Kate's artistic passion and talent truly enrich Ashwell's cultural tapestry and leave a legacy of creativity and community spirit.

### Alice Sparkes

Ashwell based potter Alice Sparkes began her journey in clay after being gifted by her parents a set of throwing lessons from local artist Annie Hull. Already well versed in fine arts through university studies and a career in publishing, she found clay offered a new and captivating form of expression.

What began as a creative experiment quickly grew



into a passion, leading her to join a community pottery group where she connected with fellow enthusiasts. Her love for clay deepened, eventually leading her to play a role in founding Letchworth's Made With Clay Studio, where she now works as a tutor. In 2016, Alice launched her own ceramics studio, Little Shop of Pots, inspired by her deep appreciation for the natural and grounding qualities of clay. In her studio, Alice produces functional homewares, yet infuses each piece with conceptual design, using humour, text, and playful patterns that lend a unique charm.

"Clay is essentially mud," Alice says. "It is a fundamentally natural material. Working in clay is a 'flow' activity - you can only really concentrate on the task at hand, so it's very mindful." Among her many pieces, one particularly meaningful work stands out: a large, sculpturally intricate lamp base.



This piece, which she crafted during her early years in pottery, represents her transition from traditional fine art to the more tactile, meditative nature of clay work. In this piece, Alice discovered the therapeutic qualities of working with clay, grounding her connection to nature and, by extension, her village community.

Ashwell has been integral to Alice's journey, offering both inspiration and a nurturing environment for creativity. Through her co-organisation of the Ashwell Makers Market, she has fostered collaboration among village creatives, including ceramicists, printmakers, and designers, highlighting Ashwell as a unique and vibrant artistic hub. Pottery for Alice is both a practical art form and an opportunity to experiment, always learning and engaging with a community of fellow artists. Her journey with clay, which began as an unexpected gift, has since evolved into a dedicated practice, blending artistry with community.

As Alice professes, "Ceramicists are always learning and are keen to share and discuss their ideas. We are a very friendly bunch!"

As told to:

**Wendy Hagues**



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## Ashwell Hairdressers

### A Cut Above The Rest

In Ashwell we are lucky to have a number of businesses which serve the community. Many of the businesses have been open for years and have a loyal customer following. Two of these businesses are the hairdressers, Sue Birch on the High Street and Bradley's. This year they both had milestone celebrations of serving the community, Sue Birch for 50 years and Bradley's for 40 years. As we thank Sue and Jane for providing a service of keeping Ashwell folk looking their best, we take a moment to hear how they came about, and some of their trials and tribulations over the years.

### 50 good years of hairdressing on the High Street in Ashwell



Sue Birch with her client Mary Haggart

Towards the end of August 1974, I moved from Yorkshire with my young family to take over from Alice Anderson as Ashwell's only ladies' hairdresser. Mrs Anderson, as she was known, had been hairdressing for 25 years when we bought 56 High St. I believe a Miss Potton was also hairdressing here at some time. If anyone knows when I'd love to know.

We found the shop and Ashwell due to an incredibly lucky, happy and God-given fluke. I'd had another unsuccessful weekend house hunting for somewhere we could afford. It definitely did not include Ashwell. The wife of one of my husband's colleagues lived up Newnham Hill and had invited

me round for coffee before I went back to Yorkshire. Her next door neighbour was there and happened to be married to one of Peacock's estate agents. I little dreamt my query about the cost of a haircut in the south compared with the north would lead to her telling me that the village hairdresser was retiring and selling. She had not put up a For Sale sign so as not to affect her business. My search was over. The rest, as they say, is history. I exchanged living in Wharfedale, one of the most beautiful places there is, for the life of a village hairdresser, in one of the best and most vibrant places I had the good fortune to find.

The purchase included the shop and the lock but not the stock or the barrel. However, it did include basins, hood dryers and chairs. Luckily my mother, who had a cracking good hairdressing business in Ilkley, gave me a small cardboard box containing a bottle of shampoo, some perm lotion and a can of hairspray. So, I was all set.

Generously I was given the goodwill of the business, so I inherited and was welcomed by a lot of lady customers. Many more came through the salmon pink door in the first weeks to see what the new bod on the block was like. I brought fresh ideas, modern cuts and styles and often a classical individual look which caters for all-comers.

Soon an assistant was needed. Over the years I've employed 12 or more 'girls', most of whom I've trained from scratch. Their growing children gave them the opportunity to learn a skill they had always wanted to have. They were all of them invaluable. Alison Stockley was the first, followed by Wendy Evans, Tricia Kirby. Rachel Searle and Michelle Haynes, Sara Pickerill and Liz Cheyney were all Saturday girls. Then there was Sammy Pope, Peta Mancey and Di Coleman. Liz came back as did Rachel when they were qualified, Joyce Sharp, Louise Bailey and Dahlia, a Syrian refugee, also helped me.

When we bought 7 Swan St to be the family home, the business spread to use all the ground floor and, at any one time, as many as five of us worked together, some part time. I converted the two upper floors into a flat. It usually made a first and temporary home for young locals - at various times a busker, a Polish baker who worked at Days and a barman at the Rose & Crown, to name a few. I've lost count how many there were!

Hairdressing has changed massively in 50 years. Very few come weekly these days. Mostly people now come for cutting and styling. My mother steered my sister and me into learning the craft. "You will always have work," she told us and, in these uncertain times, I can't see a robot cutting hair just yet.

There have been hundreds of customers on the books, far too many to mention by name but Geraldine Crump came regularly for her haircuts, until she died recently. She was one of my very first customers. Mary Haggart our one-time postie has been a customer for over 45 years, and still counting. She has a weekly shampoo and set and recently, when I was perming her hair, we totted it up. It was probably her 160th perm! I'm a sole trader now and part time. Every day is different. I enjoy taking each day and everyone as they come.

Hairdressing has to be one of the most rewarding of all jobs helping people to go out looking and consequently feeling better than when they came in. The shop is also a talking shop with laughter and tears and stories to tell. Thank you, all my past and present customers, for your loyalty and friendship. You have helped to make it all possible.

### Sue Birch

## 40 years of Bradley's Hairdressers

Bradley's Hairdressers first opened its doors in October 1984. I remember, as a child, being at the bus stop with my mum and one of the other passengers was talking about the Hairdressers opening. She said it'll never last, and here we are 40 years later still going strong. I became a client not long after the salon opened, but it was 1986 when my real journey began. I started as a Saturday girl working for Lynn Bradley. I hadn't realised it would become my job for life! Lynn was a great boss and hairdresser, and I feel so lucky to have been taught this skill in these great surroundings.

In 1987, the big hurricane hit, and the village lost power for a few days. We carried on as we had managed to borrow a petrol generator. The only problem was it would regularly cut out and I and

the other junior, Sarah, would have to go out and try to restart it. Anyone watching would have probably been in hysterics at our attempts. One of our clients even came over with a bucket of hot water so she could get her hair washed. She came from Wimpole so not just round the corner!

I had often been asked if I would like my own salon and I had always responded, "yes, as long as I could take over this one." In 2000 I was lucky enough for my dream to become a reality.

We've weathered ups and downs over the years. We have made it through recession and Covid, to name just two: thanks to all our lovely clients continuing to support us. Covid was obviously a difficult time for us all. I had to make the incredibly difficult decision to close before we were forced into lock-down. The thought of letting everyone down was horrible. Liane and I were in floods of tears calling clients to cancel their appointments; I think the emotion in my voice was evident when I recorded that first Covid answer phone message. That tax year we had to be closed for nine months in total. When we finally had a date to reopen after that first lockdown, we were able to start making phone calls to get everyone rebooked. It was wonderful and everyone was so happy to hear from us. These phone calls caused more tears for Liane and me, but this time they were happy tears.

Over the years, staff have come and gone. Liane (my hero) went and came back. We've watched clients grow up and then have their own families. My wonderful clients are a part of my family. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank of them. You make it a pleasure to come to work. Here's to many more years to come!

### Jane Nicholson



Liane and Jane like to relax between clients



# Notable Nineties







## Betty and Arthur Harris Notable Nineties

Betty was born on 6 May 1928 and Arthur on 17 December 1927. Betty is 96 and Arthur is 97. In the 1980s they ran Ashwell Post Office; Arthur was the Post Master and Betty ran the shop.

Betty grew up with one brother in Barking, East London. Arthur grew up one of eight children, in Plaistow, West Ham. They belonged to the same church in Plaistow but had never met as they went to different services. It was on a two week parish holiday to Barry, Glamorgan that they first met. Arthur sold his bike to pay for one week's holiday and this changed his life. Within a month, Arthur had asked Betty to marry him. They were married the following year on 15 March 1952.



They saved hard for a deposit on a brand new two bedroom semi-detached house built where bombed houses had stood. It cost £1,325. Arthur's salary at that time was around £7 a week and a wife's salary was not considered when applying for a mortgage. After several years and two children, Andrea and Peter, Betty and Arthur moved to Hitchin because of Arthur's work.

Their goal was to buy a shop so that they could work together, which they loved. In 1978, Betty and Arthur moved into Ashwell Post Office and shop. Betty's mother lived with them for the last three years of her life. "We felt so welcomed by the village people and soon felt at home. Generous customers gave us vegetables and eggs," remembered Betty. They loved Pension Day and chatting to everyone. Betty recalls that when the school buses arrived, many children

would pop in to say hello and talk to them, often not buying anything. When older children came and wanted to buy cigarettes, instead of selling them, Betty tried to persuade them not to smoke!

Betty and Arthur enjoyed taking part in village life. They worshipped at St Mary's Church, joined the Horticultural Society and Mothers' Union and attended village events. Running a Post Office and shop is a big commitment and they had not been able to take a holiday for over three years. In 1986, as their 60th birthdays approached, Betty and Arthur started to think about retirement. Their daughter and son-in-law were living in New Zealand and invited them to visit.

"So, when we had sold the business, which, on reflection had been the happiest time of our working life, we decided to go." They moved back to Hitchin and are now living independently in a retirement flat.

"We still have dear friends who live in Ashwell and have had many wonderful holidays, especially with Sylvia and Michael White, who enjoyed caravan and motor home holidays also." Until fairly recently, Betty and Arthur would regularly come to the Ashwell Christmas Fair and the Music Festival. When they can visit, they enjoy seeing friends who still live here. "In fact, the people of Ashwell will always have a special place in our hearts," said Betty.

In March 2022, Betty and Arthur celebrated their Platinum Wedding Anniversary (70 years). They have three cards now from the Queen – Gold, Diamond and Platinum. Their recommendation for a long, happy life together is: Love, Laughter and Loyalty. They are a wonderful couple who are living by this advice.





## Olive Anderson

### Notable Nineties

Olive was born on 1 November 1934 in the house she has lived in all her life. Wow! Known back then as Kingsland Terrace on Lime Kiln Lane, we now know it as Kingsland Way. She is part of a large extended family (with a vast number of cousins, many called Bryant). The youngest of three children, Olive has fond childhood memories of her Dad from the wartime: as an ARP warden; he had a stirrup pump, which in one very hot summer he used to spray their house roof to cool the bedrooms down.

Olive went to Ashwell Primary School and then onto the Merchant Taylors school (in Mill St). She was a pupil there when it shut in 1947, so finished her schooling at Baldock Secondary Modern (now Knights Templar).

Keen on sports such as long jump, running and netball,

Olive won the inaugural School Tennis Championship in 1949, the year she left school.

Olive started her working life at the Co-op offices in Letchworth, working her way up from general duties to Switchboard Operator. Enjoying this job, Olive applied to the GPO (now BT) for a telephonist's job. She started off by connecting callers manually, plugging each call through when people rang the operator. Later on, Olive retrained on the engineering section, testing lines and checking out faults on the mechanical Strowger Exchanges. After long service, she retired from BT in 1998.

Olive's main interests are music and travel. She joined St Mary's Church choir in 1954 and still sang with them weekly until 2020 – 66 years' service, taking part in the Ashwell Music Festival in each of those years. In the 1970s she participated in the choir's recording onto an LP record. Many happy choir holidays were enjoyed, singing in places such as Kirby Stephen, Cartmel and Hawkshead. Closer to home, Olive could be found selling tickets at the often-run donkey derby tote, when that was a feature of the Ashwell Show.

Olive has holidayed widely in the UK and knows every place you may ever mention. Scotland has been a particular favourite. Olive's lifelong interest in trains drew her to the Settle–Carlisle line in particular, and the Yorkshire Dales more generally. Two special holidays were highlights – attending the Passion Play in 1960 at Oberammergau and a wonderful trip on the Glacier Express at Christmas 2000.

Olive is an outgoing gregarious person who walks round the village every day (in Wintertime in her brightly coloured coats). Consequently she knows everyone and for a special number they are 'her children' as she provided childcare to a goodly number since her retirement. So no surprise that on her 90th birthday last November, Olive had 3-4 drop in visitors per hour from 7.30am until 8pm. Thank you, Olive, from all of us.



## Michael White

### Notable Nineties

Michael was born on 20 October 1934, in Prittlewell, Southend. His parents were Gladys and Percy White and Michael was the middle of five children. He attended Southend High School, leaving at 16 to join the Royal Air Force to follow a three-year Apprenticeship in Instrumentation.

It was while he was stationed in Buckinghamshire, aged 17, that he met his future wife, Sylvia, at dancing classes on her 16th birthday. They were married on 17 September 1955 in Aylesbury, aged 20 and 19. Michael and Sylvia had two daughters, Terry and Carol, five granddaughters and 12 great-grandchildren.

Michael stayed in the RAF until he was 30. During this time, he volunteered to be an Instrument Fitter on

the Queen's Flight, maintaining the instruments in the cockpit, the automatic pilot and the instrument landing system. It was a great honour to be selected. Michael serviced the plane before its journeys. The day before the flights, the plane had to be hand polished outside. The team carried out their technical jobs first and then had their patch to polish. They were also responsible for rolling out the red carpet. Michael worked on the Queen's Flight for four years, during which time he went on the three-week royal tour of Nigeria, accompanying the Queen and Prince Philip. At the end of four years' service, Michael was awarded the Royal Victorian Medal at Buckingham Palace, for Personal Service to the Sovereign.

After leaving the RAF, Michael worked in computer engineering and management. Then he studied for qualifications in Personnel Management and worked in Personnel until he made himself voluntarily redundant and was able to retire at 57.

Sylvia and Michael moved into a brand-new house in Angells Meadow, Ashwell, in 1976, where Michael still lives. He is a faithful member of St Mary's Church and is a past Church Warden. Michael has many friends in the village and a large, closely-knit family who meet up regularly and phone daily. His beloved wife, Sylvia, died eight years ago. Marrying Sylvia was, "the best thing I ever did."

Here are some of Michael's thoughts on reaching the age of 90.

"Since Sylvia passed away peacefully, I have been practicing meditation. One of the meditations is to wish well to others. We wish them to be safe and free from suffering, to be as happy and healthy as they possibly can be and to have 'ease of being'. To have ease of being means to be totally happy and content and at ease with things as they are at this moment. I am very blessed to be able to say that is how I feel about my whole life. I am happy with who I am and what I am. I am happy with what I achieved in all three careers and in retirement. I have no outstanding disagreements with anyone. I have no regrets. Right now, I do have ease of being. If there is a secret of living a happy and contented life, it includes the love and care and happiness received from family and friends, and from my Faith. I am looking forward to the next chapter."



# Events

Sunrise on Ashwell Show day







## Ashwell's Famous Flea Market

On a bright but chilly day, just like Harrod's sale, a long queue formed early for Ashwell's Famous Flea Market stretching all the way to the main gate.

We had quite an array of donations with the usual plethora of children's toys, pictures, china, mugs, glassware, jewellery, jigsaws and at least 30 plant pots along with deck chairs, a stair gate, an easel, some dining chairs and golf clubs. Without counting we must have had nearly 2,000 items laid out for sale. Thank you to all those who raided their cupboards to donate.

Business was brisk and we raised a total of £1,931.80 - over £100 more than last year. This will go to the St Mary's Restoration Fund. Not bad for 3½ hours selling in one morning and an amazing amount.

None of this would have been possible without the numerous volunteers. They worked tirelessly promoting the event beforehand, sorting and laying out all the items over two days beforehand and helping on the day with selling, and serving tea and coffee. Also, a wonderful team helped with the momentous task of putting the Church back to normal at the end and getting rid of any leftover items - with donations going to various charities.

The event would not have been successful without all their hard work so a huge thank you to all those volunteers for their help.

Thank you also to those that joined us on the day making purchases and enjoying tea and coffee. See you all in 2025.

**Karen Rogers**

☎ 01462 743338

## Ashwell Music Festival

The Festival opened on Sunday 5 May with Festal Evensong. We were delighted to welcome as guest preacher Rev'd Catherine Williams, writer, editor and voice of the CofE's Daily Prayer App, and the choir prepared a feast of music for us too, which included a wonderful anthem by Vaughan Williams, alongside Stopford, Sumsion and Radcliffe. This was followed on Tuesday with the Young Persons Concert. The sheer quality and musical ability of the young people never fails to amaze the audience. Many thanks to Bene't Coldstream for putting this concert together. We were then entertained by Hertfordshire Constabulary Choir, whose repertoire included both modern and older songs. They perform for zero fee, allowing all proceeds from the concert to go directly to St Mary's Restoration Fund. A huge thank you to them!



The Rockin' Chair Band is a popular act

The Dave Rance Rockin' Chair Band returned for the third year running to entertain a sold out URC hall for an afternoon concert. Lots of fun and laughter was had by all, including the performers. We were also lucky to have amazing tea and cakes available during the interval, provided by Judy Banham and her team of erstwhile helpers. Many thanks to them.

In the evening, Ollie Gearing performed live for an online concert. The members of the audience were able to access the concert free at their own homes through YouTube and interact with him with their requests. Thanks Ollie for doing this for the Festival once again!

On Friday, 10 May James Pearson returned back to his roots. He and his accompanists were kind enough to perform in the afternoon for Ashwell Primary School. On a scorching hot day, the children all walked down to the church and for 40 minutes learnt a little about jazz music, the different ways in which a piano can be played, and four of the children were lucky enough to go on stage and conduct James! Despite being a hot, Friday afternoon, all of the school children were



## Events



impeccably behaved and a credit to Ashwell Primary School.

In the evening, James played to a packed church. His skill on the piano is second to none, and in between the musical pieces, he entertained us with stories of different jazz pianists. The evening will certainly go down as one of the best in the history of the musical festival.

Two handbell workshops were held on Saturday morning, when 16 brave 'musicians' learned how to play as a group. Much fun was had by all! The festival was closed by Soul Kinda Wonderful, a multi award winning group playing songs by The Drifters, Four Tops and Motown. By the second song, the audience were up on their feet dancing and singing. What a way to close the festival!

Many thanks to all who helped to put the festival together this year, not only during the festival week, but also during the whole year. A big thank you to all of our supporters who bought tickets and were

entertained. We have all made it possible to raise just over £3,500 for St Mary's Restoration fund.

Planning is already taking place for the 2025 Ashwell Music Festival. Dates for your diaries:

4 May Festal Evensong

6 May Young Persons Concert

7 May Dave Rance Rockin' Chair Band in the afternoon

9 May The Hitchin Band and,

10 May Festival close with Temple - dance music from across the decades

### Tracy Young

Chair of Music Festival 2024



SAVE THE DATE

# ASHWELL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sunday 4th May -  
Saturday 10th May  
**2025**

Confirmed acts include:  
Dave Rance and his Rocking Chair Band,  
Hitchin Big Band and  
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For tickets and more information, visit:  
[www.ashwellmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.ashwellmusicfestival.org.uk)

Or to get involved, email Chris: [chris@revcc.uk](mailto:chris@revcc.uk)





## Ashwell at Home

This year's theme was Hidden Ashwell, and for the second year in a row the event was blessed with the weather, which ensured a great turnout from visitors far and wide. It might surprise some that we counted Sussex, Kent, and even North Yorks as places where people had travelled from to spend the day in Ashwell. Those who made the trip were treated to several regular firm favourites, including the 17 open houses and gardens, local traditional arts and crafts, and glimpses into less well-known hidden historical facts about our beautiful village.

Visitors witnessed pop-up performances from The Welwyn Harmony Ladies Chorus, Tudor dancers and local Morris men. This year, members of The Ashwell Theatre Club were also seen roaming the village, putting on small skits to promote their upcoming pantomime. Other attractions included exhibitions, talks, trails, fun activities, more music from acoustic band The Outliers, art and crafts demonstrations and workshops, as well as our traditional programme of open gardens. Children's activities included a mini funfair on the recreation ground which also hosted the Rural Police

Team with their quad bikes and car. An Alice in Wonderland themed lunch at the school, and fairy door treasure hunt which was also big hit!

Those who wanted to really get hands-on with digging into Ashwell's archaeological hidden past could do so by digging a test pit and learning more about the previous important finds via a special exhibition nearby at the Museum. There was also a guided walking tour investigating the village's hidden past. As always, there were far too many attractions to list here, but there was something for everyone.

A big thanks to all the village volunteers for making the day a big success again. Monies raised from ticket sales and donations are split between different community groups and charities. This year £10,300 was distributed to Ashwell Museum, Ashwell Primary School, St Mary's Church, The Village Playgroup, and United Reform Church. The event continues to grow from strength to strength, and we are always on the lookout for help and support, big or small, either on the organising committee or if you can volunteer some time on the day for stewarding or generally helping out. Please get in touch if you would like to know more.





## Events



2025 will be a very special year as we celebrate 40 years of Ashwell at Home, some achievement in itself. The chosen theme will be The Best of the Last 40 Years, where we will look back through the archives to find the most popular attractions and events to put on, celebrating our village's personality over the years.

Finally, it would be remiss not to mention someone who has ensured the village open day continued to be a success for many years. On behalf of the committee and the whole village, I would like to give heartfelt thanks to Cliff Jenkinson, who recently stepped down after forty years on the organising committee and the last ten as Chair. Thanks again, Cliff!

**David Hoar**

☎ 07584 100612

✉ dave.hoar@gmail.com



### Our Village Open Day

Sunday 11 May 2025

Entry to all activities by wristband

£10 per adult (£8 in advance)

Children free

[www.ashwellathome.org.uk](http://www.ashwellathome.org.uk)



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## Ashwell Well Dressing



As usual the Well Dressing team met early in the year to discuss the theme for 2024. This year the subject was almost a forgone conclusion with the Olympic Games taking place in Paris. However there were many other things to consider especially with the number of different sports, how could we decide which ones to depict? Hopefully we managed to represent the major disciplines and by drawing stick people we could include quite a few.

The Olympic rings obviously needed to be included but the colours did pose a bit of a challenge because of the flowers available at that time of year but we managed in the end. One problem that we always face is the small, or in this case the narrow bands, as most of the petals at our disposal are far too long so careful thought had to be given to that. Alder cones worked well but black beans were a bit of a disaster since as well as swelling up which we accounted for, many of them started to go mouldy and had to be replaced at the last minute.

My thanks as always go to Lynda Spencer who drew the design, taking into consideration all the comments and suggestions that the rest of us made. I would also like to thank Sue and Gordon Hill for the use of their garage for the week and the numerous cups of tea and coffee that they so kindly provided. But without such a committed and enthusiastic team we couldn't create the Well Dressing so thank you to everyone. It now seems that the Well Dressing has become an annual event for Ashwell at Home. I must say with the appreciation and positive comments that we receive it make it all worthwhile.

If you know of anyone who would like to help next year then do please ask them to get in touch.

**Maureen Hersee**

✉ [maureenhersee@btinternet.com](mailto:maureenhersee@btinternet.com)

## Ashwell Show 2024

What a Year It Has Been!



After the fantastic success of the 2023 Ashwell Show, we knew it would be a challenge to top it in 2024. But guess what? We did it! The Show

was a hit once again, raising a good amount to support our community and local charities.

### Highlights of the 2024 Ashwell Show

This year was packed with fun and excitement. Here are some of the highlights:

- Vintage Tractors and Cars. These beauties took us all on a trip down memory lane,
- Horse Show and Dog Show. Our local animals and their handlers showcasing their talents, and lovability
- Rides and Slides. The kids (and some adults!) had a blast,
- Food Court. So many delicious local treats to try,
- Human vs. Tractor Tug of War. This was a crowd favourite and brought out everyone's competitive side,
- The WI Tent. The tea and cake tent was a hive of activity, with many enjoying the home-baked goodies. It was a perfect spot to rest and recharge.

One of the standout moments was the performance by The IMPS, a military-style motorcycle display team. The dedication of the children, and their speed – zooming past the crowd on their bikes – was truly inspiring and garnered much admiration.







### Join the Ashwell Show 2025 Team

Got some time or skills to share? We'd love to have you on the Ashwell Show team! There are lots of roles to fill, and we appreciate all kinds of help. To volunteer, just drop us an email.

### Our Commitment

The Ashwell Show is run by local volunteers and operates on a non-profit basis. All the money we raise goes back into supporting local clubs, societies, and organizations. Over the past 16 years, we've donated over £200,000 to local causes.

This includes £21,000 from 2024, which was distributed to the following clubs, societies and organisations:

Beneficiary	Amount	Details
Ashwell Accies	£1,895	New goals
Ashwell Baby & Toddler Group**	£500	Running costs
Ashwell Bellringers	£500	Consultancy costs
Ashwell Cricket Club*	£1,600	Mobile cage and net
Ashwell Fit Club	£648	Replacement equipment
Ashwell Food Pantry	£600	Contribution to ongoing supplies for local people in need
Ashwell Museum	TBC	TBC
Ashwell Pre school	£1,563	Running costs
Ashwell School	£1,582	EYFS resources, SEND room & SEND resources and 3 x atlas sets
Ashwell Scouts, including Explorers	£2,594	Explorers' 1st aid training, tents, parachute and other equipment
Ashwell Tennis Club	£1,286	Exceptional costs re lease extension

Beneficiary	Amount	Details
Ashwell Theatre Club	£1,750	Repair stage curtain and track ready for Panto
Ashwell Village Hall	£585	Loft window replacement and central heating frost protection
Ashwell Well Dressing	£200	Clay & flowers
Ashwell Womens Institute	£1,000	2025 trip
Bloodbikes	£300	Insulated boxes
Greening Ashwell	£330	Lockable storage box, plants and bulbs
Hinxworth Baby & Toddler Group**	£500	Running costs
Makers at the Museum	£199	Room hire costs
Moss Cottages	£980	Porch and door refurbishments
St Mary's Church	£500	Parish Church Room refurbishment
St Vincent's Newnham	£200	Church repairs
Various	£2,000	Defibrillator provision and maintenance in the village
<b>Total</b>	<b>£21,312</b>	

\* Inclusive of unclaimed amounts from 2023

\*\* Includes contribution for running messy play tent at the 2024 show.

### Special Thanks

A huge thank you to Sam Shepard, who generously allows us to transform Elbrook Meadows and helps prepare the showground. We couldn't do it without you, Sam.

Thank you to everyone else who helped out and attended; for being part of our wonderful community and making the Ashwell Show such a cherished tradition.

We're already planning for next year and taking all your feedback to heart. We're especially focused on making the day more fun for teenagers. Keep an eye out for what's coming. Here's to another fantastic year ahead!

## Interested in applying for funding from the Ashwell Show?

Distributions from Ashwell Show 2024 have now been finalised. If you are interested in applying for funding next year, please email the committee (✉ [info@ashwellshow.co.uk](mailto:info@ashwellshow.co.uk)), who will work with you to co-ordinate volunteering and a funding application.

### The Ashwell Show Committee

✉ [info@ashwellshow.co.uk](mailto:info@ashwellshow.co.uk)



## The Great Ashwell Show Bake-Off

### In the WI Tea Tent



Another successful year for the Ashwell Show saw lots of keen entries to the Great Ashwell Show Bake-Off.

Whilst we had plenty of entries in both the Adult category and the 11 & Under it would have been nice to see more from 12-18 category – maybe next year. It was lovely to see the efforts of all the wonderful bakers with their different styles and flavours - from bee themed and beach themed cakes, to cupcakes; from chocolate to carrot cake.

Our thanks to the judges Connie Chambers and Clive Day of Days for their efforts in choosing the winners.



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Star Baker, Heather Holmes



## Events

### 11 & Under:

Star Baker, Ella-Mae Earl  
2nd place, Marly and Phoebe  
3rd place, Ocean-Rose Earl

### 12-18 Years:

Star Baker, Emily Campbell  
2nd place, Madison Spooner

### Adults:

Star Baker, Heather Holmes  
2nd place, Tracey Cook  
3rd place, Merissa Davis

Congratulations to the winners and all those that took part. Thanks as well to Days Bakery who sponsored the prizes.

Our thanks also go to everyone else that kindly donated cakes for sale in the WI Tea Tent and to the numerous people that gave of their time setting up the tent, serving cakes and drinks, clearing tables, taking the money and clearing up at the end of the day. None of it would be possible without you.

**Sheila Hogan**

**Teresa King**

**Karen Rogers**

## 24th Ashwell Book Weekend

**5 and 6 October 2024**

2024 saw another successful Book Weekend with an amazing collection of fiction, non-fiction, and children's books – something for everyone.



Despite slightly fewer visitors than last year the Church was buzzing and there was plenty of browsing and buying over the two days as well as enjoying tea, coffee, and delicious homemade cakes.

A lot of hard work goes into the event, from advertising, and putting posters up, to posting on Facebook, and then with setting up, sorting, and pricing all the books. All of which is time consuming but made easier by the volunteers who give of their time and energy throughout the week as well as at the weekend baking cakes, taking money, serving refreshments, and clearing up at the end, resorting and repacking the all the left-over books. It goes without saying that we are very grateful to all the wonderful volunteers without whom the whole event would not have been possible.

The success of the Book Weekend is down to those many volunteers and our thanks to you all for your efforts.

We had plenty of books left over and we were again able to donate books to Wimpole Hall and the Garden House Hospice, as well as to the Ashwell Book Swap in the Parish Rooms. We then used an online marketplace to sell some of the leftover stock. David's Books bought the remaining fiction books this year which helped swell the total and the company Book Rescuers have now collected the rest. They will sell these on so that they can enjoy a new lease of life as well as raise funds for their charity partners, The Rainbow Centre, which supports children in southwestern Sri Lanka, and the Doorstep Library, which is dedicated to bringing the gift of books and the joy of reading into the homes of children across London who need support.

This all means that the books that were donated for the sale will go to help many other charities as well as St Mary's.

Overall, a great success. A problem with the online marketplace meant we overestimated the amount of money we would receive and despite a very generous anonymous donation we ended up making just over £4,970. Still a fantastic total for The Friends of St Mary's.

If anyone is interested in getting involved in next year's Book Weekend, please let us know even if you can only spare a few hours here and there – we are always looking for new helpers.

The 25th Ashwell Book Weekend will be held on 4 and 5 October 2025. Please make a note in your diary and start saving those books!!

**Karen Rogers**

☎ 01462 743338

**Teresa King**



## Ashwell Makers Market

### A Sparkling Start to the Festive Season

The 2024 Ashwell Makers Market opened its doors on the evening of Thursday 14 November at The Three Tuns, marking its fifth year of celebrating local creativity. This year's market was filled with new talent, showcasing a wonderful variety of handmade products - from ceramics and prints to plant terrariums and handcrafted leather jewellery.

Our new hosts at The Three Tuns made everyone feel incredibly welcome, offering seasonal mulled wine and delicious food to enjoy while browsing the stalls. Dale and the team were generous in allowing us to take over the entire pub for the evening, with stalls set up across both bars and the dining room. It was the perfect setting to kick off the festive shopping season in style.

As always, the evening was a true pleasure, and we're deeply grateful for the continued support



from the village community. The positive feedback from our visitors was overwhelming, including this kind comment, "What a FABULOUS market! Love the new venue and the extra stalls. Thank you SO much for all your hard work in making it happen. Brilliant!"

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event. If you're interested in participating in future markets, please contact us at:  
✉ ashwellmakersmarket@gmail.com

**Kate Heiss**

## Ashwell Christmas Fair

Christmas is such a special time at St Mary's, with all the extra services, events, concerts, singing and decoration. And the first of these is the Christmas Fair.

It's lovely to see the church full of people enjoying being together, looking around the stalls, buying presents, enjoying a glass of mulled wine and hearing the sound of the organ and choir blasting out (very tunefully) the old familiar carols.



2024's Christmas Fair was on 30 November and was again very well attended, raising £2,887 for St Mary's. A big thank you to everyone who came along, to the stallholders and to those who generously gave up their time to volunteer. The decorations of greenery and red paper chains were beautiful, the Christmas trees were in place (and lit, despite a last minute lighting malfunction), the refreshments delicious, the quiz fiendishly difficult and the game stalls fun. Diapalante were providing bacon sandwiches, the gift stall was laden with items and the toy tombola bursting at the seams. It's a big effort to make it all happen and everyone's contribution is truly valued.

**Julia Mitchell**  
Churchwarden



# Advent windows



57 High Street



Vine Cottage, 20 High Street



55 Station Road



Bear House



84 High Street





9 Philosophers Gate



Foresters Cottages, 16 High Street



Oversprings



18 Swan Street

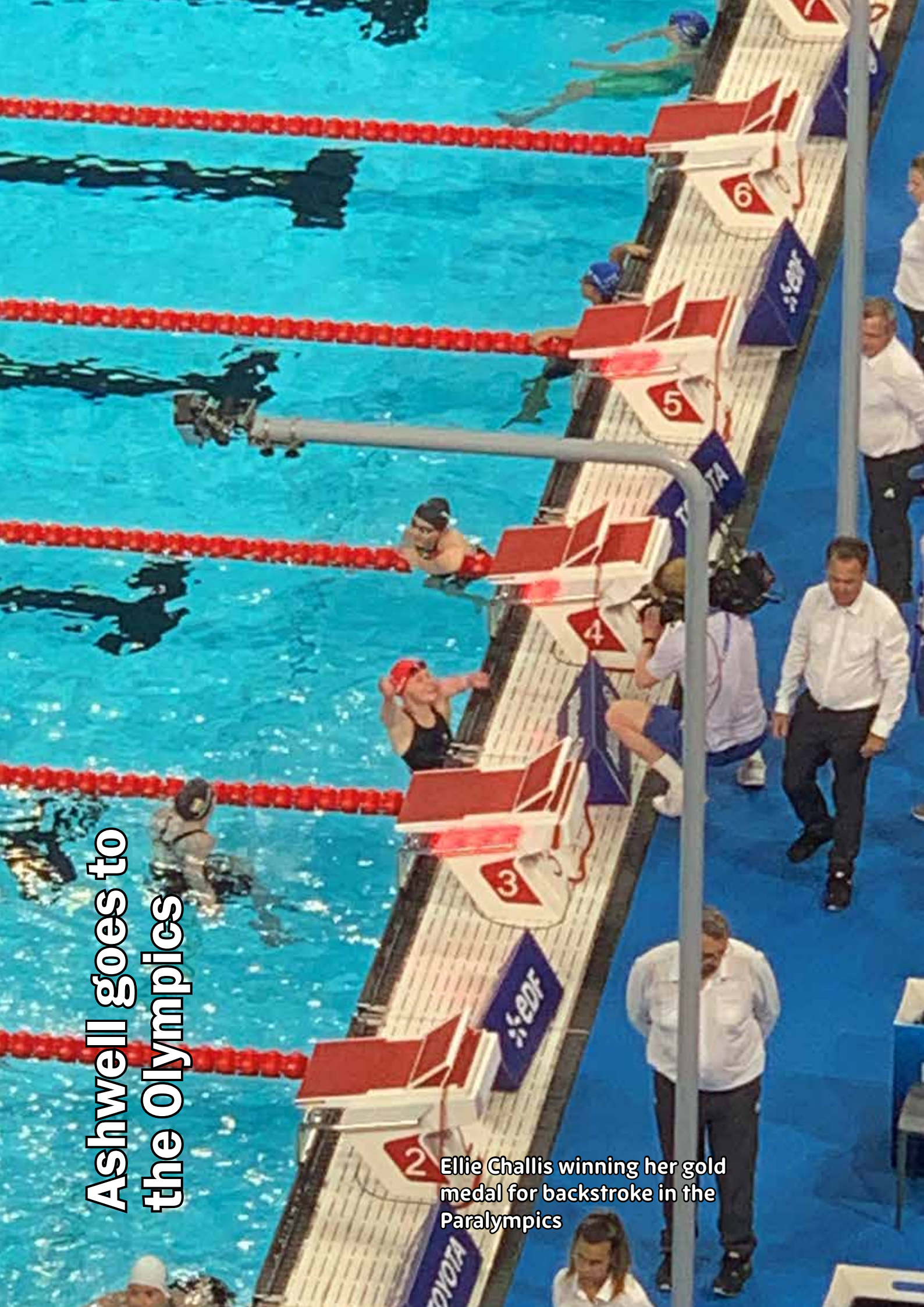


Museum



# Ashwell goes to the Olympics

Ellie Challis winning her gold medal for backstroke in the Paralympics







## Paris Olympics

In August, Michelle and I were fortunate enough to spend five days in Paris during the Olympics. We saw various events including beach volleyball underneath the Eiffel Tower, road cycling through the heart of the city and swimming in the Seine (no thanks).

On the track we saw the mens' 100m final with its dramatic photo finish and the mens' 1,500m final where the Josh Kerr versus Jakob Ingebritsen gold medal battle was won by neither of them.

In the pool, we found ourselves getting carried on the tidal wave of support for local favourite Leon Marchand and I actually cheered for a French sportsperson. Madness.

At the gymnastics we witnessed the amazing Simone Biles graciously bowing to Rebeca Andrade after the Brazilian won the floor exercise gold medal. A generous sporting moment that encapsulated the entire games.

It was a real treat to be in Paris at a time then the entire city seemed uplifted by the Olympic spirit. People bearing the flags and colours of their countries mingled in the stadiums, in the streets, and inside the cafes, wishing each other well and congratulating each other on their victories.

Public transport worked perfectly, the sun shone throughout, the locals were super friendly, and naturally the food and wine were delicious. An unforgettable experience.

**Mike Banister**



## My Olympic journey ...in Japan

My journey began in Australia this year but strangely ended in Kyoto, Japan.

I was staying in Australia so obviously I did get slightly biased broadcasting but I love the Olympics so much that I was okay with that. Then after the final ceremony it was time to say, "goodbye Olympics," for another four years.

However a few days later I travelled from Sydney to Tokyo and then by bullet train to Kyoto. On the way to visit a famous shrine I encountered a friendly, young Italian couple. We engaged in conversation and, lo and behold, the young lady was a silver medallist in gymnastics from the Paris Olympic Games. Her boyfriend was also a gymnast but didn't get a medal.

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For the long jump we joined the Uzbekistanis in cheering on their compatriots



What an unexpected surprise to meet a medallist in the flesh after initially seeing the Games from 10,000 miles away! It made my day and it was a real privilege.

**Sheila Hogan**

## Our trip to the Paralympics in Paris



It all started with a casual question to Francoise Chapman in Rhubarb and Mustard. "I guess you will be making a bomb renting your Paris flat out during the Olympics later in the year?" She shrugged her shoulders, "We hadn't really thought about it." "Well, could I stay in it for a week of the Paralympics?" "Of course," was the reply.

So on 29 August, my daughter Lynsey and I set off for Paris. We had pre-booked two sessions of swimming, two athletics and one tennis. This left us some time to be tourists in Paris too.

At the time of booking, we didn't know that one of those swimming sessions would have a special meaning. Lynsey works for a charity called Cosmic, based at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington:

<https://cosmiccharity.org.uk>

Ellie Challis, the backstroke paralympic swimmer was treated there, aged 16 months, when she contracted meningitis which resulted in above the knee amputation of both her legs and below the elbow amputation of her arms. Ellie is now 20 years old and her family have stayed in touch with Cosmic ever since.

Lynsey let the family know that we would be in Paris, and so we met up with them before and after the 50m final. Ellie won her gold medal in dramatic fashion, leading from the halfway mark. What a joyous occasion to witness, especially knowing the incredible back story.

Our other sessions had no personal connections, but we often got adopted by enthusiastic groups

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of fans. At one of our athletic sessions, we had seats overlooking the long jump pit. No British participant, but we soon became honorary Uzbekistanis.

The long jumper from Uzbekistan and all his compatriots were wearing striking headgear in the front row. Every time their guy ran up to jump, they all turned around and got the whole block cheering for him.

We were also lucky enough to see Alfie Hewett and Gordon Reid win their quarter final match en route to their gold medal in Wheelchair tennis. Peter Chapman told me to enjoy the fact that the postal address of Roland Garros is Avenue Gordon Bennett!

There was an amazing atmosphere throughout Paris, and we were so lucky to be able to be part of it and to enjoy the enormous success of our own British athletes. Seeing these people overcoming their disabilities made us return home feeling very small and humble.

**Margaret Budgen**



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## Local services

### Here to help you

Knowing who to get in touch with when you need help is important, so here's a handy guide of the different services Hertfordshire County Council and North Herts Council support you with. Note: if Local Government is re-organised, this will change



**North Herts Council**

- Waste collection & recycling
- Street cleaning
- Environmental health
- North Herts Museum & Hitchin Town Hall
- Community safety & environmental crime
- Benefits incl. housing & council tax reduction
- Parks & greenspaces
- Licensing
- Housing advice & homelessness support
- Community grants
- Council Tax & Business rates
- Planning
- Parking

[www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk) 01462 474000



**Hertfordshire**

- Highways & transport
- Adult social services
- Children's social care
- Schools & education
- Fire & rescue
- Libraries & archives
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- Trading standards
- Public Health
- Registration Services

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## Hertfordshire County Council

### General enquiries

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk  
☎ 03001 234040



### Children's services

The county council has oversight of educational provision in Hertfordshire.

For enquiries about schools or child protection:  
☎ 03001 234043

For enquiries about free school meals  
☎ 03001 234048  
✉ freeschoolmeals@hertfordshire.gov.uk

### School admissions

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk) click on school admissions

### Ashwell Primary School admissions

☎ 742297  
[www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk](http://www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk)

### Early education and childcare

✉ childcare@hertfordshire.gov.uk

### Disabilities

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## Social care help

**To apply for a social care assessment**, go to:  
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### Emergency out of hours contacts

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☎ 03001 234043

Adults' social care emergency, out of hours service:  
☎ 03001 234042  
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Enquiries:  
csc.concessionarytravel@hertfordshire.gov.uk  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk) then click on Bus passes.

To apply for or renew a bus pass, including 11-25s Hertfordshire SaverCard (half-price bus travel):  
☎ 03001 234050

HertsLynx on-demand bus service. Download the HertsLynx App (Android or Apple), or:  
☎ 01992 555513, or  
<https://bookings.hertslynx.co.uk/login> (bookings)

## Fire and Rescue Service

In an emergency contact:

☎ 999

Fire safety enquiries:

✉ [cpd.customerservices@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:cpd.customerservices@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

☎ 03001 234046

For non-emergencies: Baldock & Letchworth Fire Station, Weston Way, Baldock, which also connects to the district office at Stevenage:

☎ 01438 847313

## North Herts Council



### General enquiries

[www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk) or

✉ 474000 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday)

Textphone/Minicom 474800

### Deaf or hard of hearing

Use the Relay UK App: 18001 followed by ☎ 01462 474000.

### Customer service centre

NHC Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF. Please book an appointment online.

### Payments service

[www.north-herts.gov.uk/pay-online](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/pay-online) or

☎ 03004 560535 (24-hour service)

### Emergency out of hours service

Homelessness, environmental health, street cleaning, parks, public buildings, car parks:

☎ 03007 774125

### Postal correspondence address for all services

Excluding Electoral and Legal:

North Herts Council, PO Box 10613, Nottingham, NG6 6DW.

### Electoral and Legal Services:

Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF.

### Follow NHC on social media

Twitter: @NorthHertsDC, Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr

For Hertfordshire County Council services please see separate entry and for other local services please see overleaf.

## Refuse collection

At the time of writing the normal refuse collection day for Ashwell is Monday, except in Bank Holiday

weeks. Bins should be left at the front of your property by 7am on collection days.

**Food waste** (small brown caddy) is collected weekly.

**Recyclable material** - glass, tin cans, cardboard, brown paper and plastic other than rigid plastic or plastic bags (large, grey bin) and paper (blue/black box) - is collected fortnightly.

**Household rubbish which cannot be recycled** (purple bin) is collected on the alternate fortnights, with a change to 3-weekly collections planned for 2025.

**Garden waste** (large brown bin) is not collected free of charge. It is collected fortnightly on the same day as recyclable waste. To find the cost, register and pay for this service, go to:

[www.north-herts.gov.uk/garden-waste](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/garden-waste)

### To report a missed bin collection:

[northhertsenquiries@urbaser.co.uk](mailto:northhertsenquiries@urbaser.co.uk), or

☎ 474000, and choose the 'Waste' option

**Household waste recycling centres** - our nearest recycling centres are at: Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, SG6 1HB (closed Tues and Wed), and Beverley Close (off York Road), Royston, SG8 5HF (closed Thurs and Fri).

## Street cleaning

This is the responsibility of the North Herts Council. A sweeping lorry visits and public litter bins are emptied every four weeks. Additional visits are made to clear fallen leaves in the autumn, with manual sweepers where needed. If you feel that additional visits are needed, or that any work is not being done properly then please report it online at:

[www.north-herts.gov.uk/street-cleaning](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/street-cleaning)

☎ 474000

## Planning

The responsibility for planning matters is held by the North Herts Council. For the full range of planning services, see:

[www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning-reception](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning-reception)

The planning officer responsible for Ashwell at North Herts Council can be reached on:

[planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk), or

☎ 474000

**If parishioners write to the Council with comments**, either in favour of or against a planning application, Ashwell Parish Council asks them to send copies, please, to the Parish Council Clerk ([clerk@ashwell.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ashwell.gov.uk)) so that these comments can be taken into consideration by parish councillors when they meet.



## Local services

### Citizens Advice

A local charity, available to all, offering free confidential help and support:

Office open Monday to Thursday 9.30am-4pm

49 Station Road,

Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3BQ

☎ 01462 689801

<https://northhertscab.org.uk/services/>

### Police

In an emergency, when there is a danger to life or a crime is actually taking place:

☎ 999

Based at Royston Police Station, the local Police team for Ashwell is:

**PC Tom Woollard**

**PCSO Chris Brabrook**

**PCSO Hannah Moss**

The team is managed by:

**Sergeant John Hickmott**

For non-emergencies where police attendance is required, to report a crime, to report any other incidents or to speak to either Sergeant Hickmott or PCSOs Brabrook or Moss, please phone:

☎ 101

To contact the local Police team please email:

✉ [royston@herts.police.uk](mailto:royston@herts.police.uk)

**Please do not use social media as a channel of communication in any of these circumstances.**

### Public transport from Ashwell

**Information correct as at 20 December 2024.**

#### Buses



Hertfordshire travel information is available from Intalink at:

☎ 03001 234050

[www.intalink.org.uk](http://www.intalink.org.uk)

By post:

Intalink Passenger Transport Unit,  
County Hall CHN101,  
Hertford, SG13 8TJ

The HertsLynx demand responsive bus service can be booked via the HertsLynx app from Playstore

or the Apple Store, on the website or by telephone. Bookings:

☎ 01992 555513

Online login:

<https://bookings.hertslynx.co.uk/login>

Travel information can also be found on the Traveline:

☎ 08712 002233 (premium rate number)

[www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

Bus timetables are displayed opposite the village stores on the wall outside Bear House, and at the bus stop opposite the Three Tuns.

**Route 90**, Letchworth Broadway to Royston Bus Station via Bygrave, Ashwell and Ashwell & Morden Station.

**Route 91**, Letchworth Broadway to Royston Bus Station via Newnham, Ashwell and Ashwell & Morden Station.

**The rush hour bus service between the village and the station no longer operates.**

### Trains



Ashwell & Morden Station is at Odsey, just over 2 miles from the centre of the village. Railway timetables, maps, journey planners and tickets can be found at:

☎ 03450 264700

[www.thameslinkrailway.com](http://www.thameslinkrailway.com)

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

#### Royston and District Community Transport



Door-to-door transport for people living in Royston and the surrounding villages who are unable to use conventional public transport or do not have the use of a car.

Our volunteer drivers can help with all types of medical journeys, and, when they are available, social or shopping trips. Our current charge is 60p per mile and there is a minimum charge of £6 for journeys of ten miles or shorter. As well as volunteers with cars we also have wheelchair accessible MPVs and mini-buses.

**New volunteer drivers are needed urgently.**

[www.roytrans.co.uk](http://www.roytrans.co.uk)

☎ 01763 245228

## Health & Independent Living Support



The Meals on Wheels service is provided by Health & Independent Living Support (HILS). It operates across Hertfordshire, 365 days of the year and delivers hot, ready to eat meals at subsidised cost between 11.30am and 2pm. Each visit includes the cost of delivery and a wellbeing check.

HILS' main lunch menu offers a wide range of hot, nutritious choices, catering for different dietary requirements. Your main meal and dessert would be delivered hot and ready to eat. As well as the standard menu, they can also cater for Kosher, Asian, Halal, and West Indian food. HILS also provides texture modified meals for people who may have difficulty swallowing. In addition to the hot meals, HILS provides tea and breakfast packs - but this service is only available to people receiving hot meals.

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*Prices are liable to change. For the latest information on any of the services, you can telephone or visit the HILS website.*

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HILS also provides a wide range of additional support services to help older and vulnerable people stay happy, healthy, and independent at home. These include:

- A Nutrition and Wellbeing service, offering free nutrition and dietetic support for our meals on wheels clients
- Medication prompts - for meals on wheels and pop-in clients
- Active Ageing - one-to-one exercise support in your home or via video call
- Home from Hospital packs - three days' worth of groceries, delivered to your home or the hospital upon discharge
- Dementia fun clubs and support
- A keysafe installation service to help you stay safe
- Food for lunch clubs and groups, delivered hot and ready to eat
- Advocacy to help people make decisions about their care and support.

All HILS services are delivered in a way which includes the use of personal protective equipment, such as face masks and gloves, and contact-free

delivery where appropriate. For more information about HILS please contact:

### Health & Independent Living Support

☎ 03302 000103

✉ [info@hils-uk.org](mailto:info@hils-uk.org)

<https://hils-uk.org/>

## Community housing

Settle (formerly North Hertfordshire Homes) is responsible for Wolverley House, some cottages in Back Street, and some of the houses and flats in Dixies Close, Ashwell Street and Station Road.

Wolverley House in Gardiners Lane provides retirement living accommodation. Facilities include 30 flats, communal kitchen and lounge/dining area, guest facilities, laundry and garden. There are regular social activities for residents. Contact:

### Settle

Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 1HA  
customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk

☎ 03303 430016

[www.settlegroup.org.uk](http://www.settlegroup.org.uk)

### Ashwell Housing Association and Moss Cottage Homes:

Please see p29 and p28.

## Post Office

The Post Office has changed the opening times for its service in the Parish Room, Alms Lane. The new times are:

Monday	Noon-3pm
Wednesday	Noon-3pm

It provides most of the Post Office services, including banking.

[www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder/3204715/ashwell](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder/3204715/ashwell)

airbnb.com/h/crow-crag-barn  
crowcragbarn@gmail.com



If you're thinking of  
selling or letting your home,  
get in touch & have a free valuation.



**Find out the possibilities with our experienced team.**

Ashwell 01462 742077 | Baldock 01462 895061