

**Ashwell Yearbook 2026**



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## Welcome

This is the 38th edition of the Ashwell Yearbook. Yet again it's been prepared 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 and informative 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 insights and reports for us all to read.

The Yearbook is distributed without charge to every household and business in Ashwell.

It is only with the support of advertisers and the Parish Council that we are able to do this. 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 Yearbook. 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 contact details of service providers and activity groups in the village.



**Graham Lee**  
Parish Council Chairman

## The Yearbook team

- Norton Mahy**, team leader
- Tracy Young**, editor in chief
- Wendy Browne**, editor
- Margaret Budgen**, photography
- Gaye and John Rowlands**, weddings, anniversaries, golden generation and obituaries
- Dave Wallace**, editor and proof checking
- Joan Yates**, advertising

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## Front page

Well dressing celebrating the 40th 'Ashwell at Home', Photograph by **Oliver Barnett**.

## Acknowledgments

Ashwell Parish Council would like to thank those who kindly contributed articles and who gave permission to use their photographs. It also thanks the volunteers 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 publisher, Ashwell Parish Council.

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### Parish information

Please sign up for regular emails with 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/)

Scroll down to the bottom, enter your details and click on the "Submit" box. Announcements are also posted on the Ashwell Hub.

If you don't want to or cannot sign up, you can contact the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Chairman or individual councillors. **The parish office is usually open from 9.30 to 2.30 Monday to Thursday.**

### Parish council meetings

Meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month in the Parish Room and start at 7pm. Everyone is welcome to come and there is an opportunity to speak in the 'open forum'.

Our district councillor, Tom Tyson, and county councillor, Steve Jarvis routinely attend. Draft meeting minutes are posted on the website as soon as possible afterwards. An archive of approved past minutes can also be found there. The website also has general information about the parish and its history.

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. The main parish council notice board by the Rose & Crown, the Ashwell Hub and parish website display copies of this summary for one month. 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. However, a reorganisation is now expected in 2027 when responsibilities will change. Lookout for details on the District and County websites.

For details of services provided by Ashwell Parish Council please see pp<?>-<?>, for Hertfordshire County Council and North Herts Council please see pp<?> and <?>. Contact details for other local services can be found on pp<?>-<?>.

### 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 can make statements on relevant matters during the meeting. Resolutions passed do not bind the parish council but it could consider them in future meetings.

Further details and draft minutes of the 2025 meeting are on the parish website:

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

Scroll down to the 'The Annual Parish Meeting' section and click the relevant option.

Parish and other government



If you would like to see your organisation's report and photographs in the 2027 edition of the Yearbook, please contact the parish office before the end of November 2026  
✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk  
☎ 01462 743706

Ashwell Parish Council Hertfordshire  
Annual Parish Meeting, 18 March 2026, 7pm at the school (big hall), all welcome  
Agenda  
1 To approve the 2025 Parish Meeting minutes  
2 Matters of report from the 2025 Parish Meeting  
3 Chairman's Report  
4 Financial Statement  
5 Parish council and working groups reports  
6 Reports from others  
7 Parish affairs  
Signed  
*Graham Lee*  
Graham Lee  
Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council  
**Please remember to bring your Yearbook.**



**Graham Lee**

Chairman

Spade Acre, 59 Ashwell Street  
 ✉ graham.lee@ashwell.gov.uk  
 ☎ 01462 742834  
 📞 07751 343096



**Martin Hoffman**

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 ☎ 742567



**David Sims**

92 Station Road  
 ✉ david.sims@ashwell.gov.uk

*Parish Council members*



**Chris Button**

24 Silver Street  
 ✉ chris.button@ashwell.gov.uk



**Joan Yates**

✉ joan.yates@ashwell.gov.uk



**Ian Duffy**

4 Townsend Meadow  
 ✉ ian.duffy@ashwell.gov.uk



**Norton Mahy**

Vice-chairman  
 40 Silver Street  
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 ☎ 01462742677

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

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

*Chairman's report*

Although I would like to open my report with some uplifting news, I'm afraid 2025 has not been entirely positive. A number of our parish councillors have been struggling with ill health forcing one member of our team to retire, and another to take a long term absence from duties. At the time of writing this report we have two vacancies. So if anyone can spare what can literally amount to a handful of hours in a month to help the work of the parish council it would be most welcome. Please contact any of the councillors or the Clerk to enquire further about joining us.

There are a number of different media options used by the Ashwell community to find out about matters that may interest them. But, if you feel that you're not adequately informed about issues being addressed by the parish council then the easiest way to keep abreast of all the news is to sign up to receive our regular newsletters or topic specific items by email. To do this simply go to the Parish Council's website and enter your email address where shown at the bottom of the Home page: <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council>

I'm pleased to advise that the parish council has made some significant progress on the following projects during 2025:

*Zero Carbon Ashwell*

In October 2025 we received formal agreement from the government's Great British Energy Community Fund to receive a £39,600 grant. The bulk of this grant is being used to pay for a firm of consultants who specialise in community owned renewable energy systems. They will assess Ashwell's future energy needs and suggest a series of options for Ashwell to generate power which can then be used to heat our homes. Residents and businesses will be invited to a public meeting in March 2026 to hear about and comment on the options they suggest. None of these would go forward without the community's support.

We are also gathering information about what individual householders can do to reduce their energy needs and reduce their carbon footprint.

We are passionate about protecting nature too and want to encourage wildlife in our gardens and the local environment. Helpful advice, case studies, tips and trusted contacts and suppliers will be added to the ZCA website: [www.zero-carbonashwell.org](http://www.zero-carbonashwell.org). Additional ideas are most welcome.

These initiatives are designed not only to reduce carbon usage, but also to help reduce our individual household energy costs and improve our comfort levels, health and quality of life.

If you would like to help us or have any suggestions or questions please contact the Parish Council, or use our website (see above).

*Progress on the Pavilion*

Following the October 2024 Survey a Working Group was formed of representatives from the existing Sports Clubs, other community volunteers, and three Parish Councillors.

We began by researching the Pavilions that other relatively local villages were providing or upgrading. It became clear that Ashwell's current pavilion was among the smallest and most limited in terms of facilities. Since the original Pavilion was built in the 1960s Ashwell's population has doubled, and the number of children taking part in Clubs or group activities has grown substantially. That has led existing and potential Pavilion users to suggest more space and more facilities in an upgraded Pavilion. So rather than limit the upgrade to just a like for like space suited only for Cricket and Football players to change and shower in, the Working Group is developing a specification and design that will provide a community pavilion that should appeal to a wider range of users. We have already started informal consultation with all Ashwell village clubs and user Groups, and this will lead on to refinement of the specification and creation of a draft design for a complete Ashwell household consultation in the Spring or early Summer.

*Neighbourhood Plan*

Ashwell's Neighbourhood Plan was officially adopted by North Herts Council in their Local Plan in 2022. 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 has referred to Neighbourhood Plan policies on a number of occasions this year when considering planning applications and seeking to influence the decisions to be taken by NHC. A copy of the Neighbourhood Plan can be read on our website: [www.ashwell.gov.uk](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk)

### Doctors' surgery

The Parish Council continues to liaise with the Ashwell and Basingbourn 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.

Thank you

**Graham Lee**  
Chairman

### The Lock-Up

Much like previous years there are no notable changes to report. The lockup is a listed building and remains a charming glimpse of a small part of Ashwell's history.

It is worth taking note of its clunch construction. This is a soft material but buildings made from it have survived a long time. St Mary's is a good example of its durability as is the 14th century church of St Mary Magdalene at Caldecote.

**Cllr Norton Mahy**



Springs before removal of oversized trees

### The Springs

The Springs are a fundamental part of the Parish's history. The name Ashwell comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Aescwellan', 'aesc' meaning ash, 'wellan' meaning well or spring. Ash trees remain a prominent feature there.

The site consists of a series of freshwater springs, which form a source for the river Cam. It is designated as a Site of Strategic Scientific Importance (SSSI) for its rare freshwater invertebrates including flatworms (such as **Crenobia Alpina** and **Polycelis Felina**) and caddisfly (**Apatania Muliebris**).

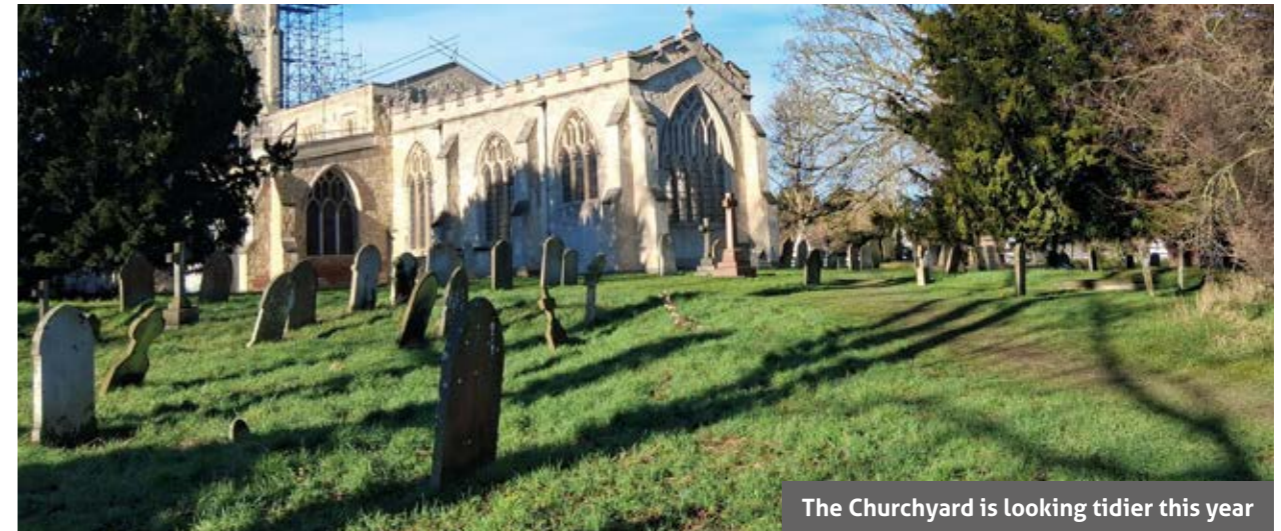


Some of these species may be relics of Ice Age fauna, surviving as isolated populations. They are dependent on the Springs' high quality cold water which comes from a hard band of chalk

known as Tottenhoe Stone or Clunch. For more information, view the video via the QR code.

Over the past year, four trees have fallen in the Springs, all safely removed by local company HBN Trees. Fencing has also needed repair due to normal wear and tear, which was carried out by a local workman.

The Parish Council recently received the ROSPA safety report. While no major risks were identified, minor maintenance will be undertaken to keep the area safe and enjoyable.



The Churchyard is looking tidier this year

As for hedges, HBN Trees pruned the one on the Springhead/Springs boundary twice in 2025: once in early spring and once in late September, either side of the bird nesting season. This hedge regularly attracts comments as it becomes quite overgrown by late summer.

In the coming year hedges will be managed more proactively with pruning scheduled immediately before and after the bird nesting season to help keep it under better control.

Looking ahead, the Parish Council will implement recommendations from the long-standing management plan. A clump of oversized trees will be replaced with smaller native species to improve ground-level light and enhance biodiversity.

The Tree Safety and Condition report has been completed, and depending on its findings, further safety-related tree work may take place in the coming months.

The Springs are for the enjoyment of the community but can be easily damaged. When there:

- Please keep all dogs on a lead
- Use bins provided for clean non-food waste, taking any food waste home to avoid attracting rats
- No camping, BBQs or fires

It is a natural environment; when there, please look after your own safety and the safety of those in your charge.

**Cllr Martin Hoffman**

### St Mary's Churchyard

Because the Churchyard is closed for burials the Parish Council must by law maintain the grounds, with the Parish Church Council maintaining the graves and lych gate.

Since April 2025, The Parish Council has engaged a new grounds maintenance contractor, resulting in a noticeably tidier churchyard. This has been supported by Greening Ashwell and the community service team. The long grassy area will now be permanently kept short, with the new long grass area located south of the tower. The Tree Safety and Condition report has been completed and its findings used to identify further safety-related tree work. This will take place in the coming months.

As a point of interest, you may like to know that St Mary's tower is strikingly tall: reaching 176 feet, topped by a distinctive 'Hertfordshire spike' (a leaden spire lantern), making it the tallest church tower in the county. If you were to wander inside the church, you would find vivid examples of medieval graffiti and carvings at the base of the tower and on nave pillars.

**Cllr Martin Hoffman**

### Small Gains

The allotments at Small Gains continue to be a well-used community amenity. An overgrown allotment patch has been cleared, and a new isolation valve has been installed at the water supply after issues with the stopcock.

**Cllr David Sims**



## The Church Clock

The Parish Council decided in its meeting of September 1916 to take on responsibility for winding the clock and its repairs. This does not appear to have happened and only following a petition from the Rector in 1919 and intervention by Phylliss Fordham did the Parish take it on. It is unclear when full responsibility passed to the Council but public contributions appear to have continued until 1929 at least. However, it is certain that, by the time the clock had a major upgrade to partially electrify it in 1971, it was fully funded by the Council.

This year St Mary's cherished clock has had a few breakdowns and a chime malfunction. In every case the Parish Council arranged for specialist repairs and at the time of writing the clock and chimes were functioning perfectly, continuing to be a beloved feature of Ashwell.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk

## Keeping Ashwell tidy

Our grounds maintenance and environmental cleansing officer supplements the work of North Herts in keeping streets clean and tidy, and keeps vegetation down in twitches. He also looks after our Parish owned spaces.

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

Prompted by renegotiation with its contractor and following consultation with the Parish Council, North Herts reduced the number of litter bins from 17 to 10. Occasional walkabouts suggest that this has made little difference to the level of litter, though this may be a matter of opinion.

### Litter picks

Those living in the Parish can help keep Ashwell neat and clean too. **The Spring Litter Pick will be on 25 April 2026.** It will be a couple of hours on a Saturday afternoon in the fresh air. Even those with young families can take part – there are rounds in traffic-free areas like the Recreation Ground and the Springs. If you can't make it on the day and would still like to do some cleaning up, there is litter picking equipment available on loan from the Parish Office (open 9.30am to 2.30pm Mon-Thurs).

### Thank you

Last November a parishioner, Max Patterson, came forward on his own initiative and organised a litter pick. He managed to drum up a large number of volunteers who combed the village and roads outside to collect a very significant quantity of refuse. The Parish Council warmly thanks Max for his efforts, and all those who turned out on the day.

### 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**



## The War Memorial

At the Lucas Lane/Station Road junction, The Parish Council worked with County Cllr Steve Jarvis to address issues with vehicles mounting the pavement near the War Memorial. As a result, bollards were installed to prevent damage, and Cllr Jarvis, also helped to solve the pooling water issue on the pavement by getting Hertfordshire Highways to install a new drain. The Parish Council thanks Cllr Jarvis for his efforts in maintaining this important site.

The Annual Service of Remembrance on 9 November was led by Rev'ds Lindsay Dew, Chris Campbell and Stan Chatikobo. This moving service was well-attended by British Legion members, local organisations and parishioners. Chairman Cllr Graham Lee and Vice-chairman Cllr Norton Mahy laid a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council. A smaller service took place on 11 November at the appointed time.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk

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The path to Ashwell End: one of the many we have

## Public Rights of Way Footpaths

The Herts County Council Officer for Countryside and Rights of Way is responsible for footpaths. There are two items to report from 2025:

**Track 16 – Ashwell St / Ruddery between Woodforde Close and Station Road:** during the year an application for the development of 14 houses in the field known as Hunt's Close was approved on appeal by the Government Inspector.

Access to the homes will be from this BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) which 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.

The proposed access point to the development

is approximately 25 metres to the East of the current field access gate. For the currently unpaved section of the Ruddery the proposal is for the track to be widened to five metres and hard surfaced through to the site entrance. The Parish Council will try to limit the hard surface treatment to a finish other than tarmac – perhaps a resin bound 'gravel like' treatment with bollards to restrict vehicles from the development and others from continuing beyond the site entrance along the Ruddery through to Station Road. This would help to achieve pedestrian safety and protect the track from increased wear and tear.

**Footpath to Ashwell & Morden Station:** the North Herts Council plan to build 3,200 homes in Baldock is raising concerns about the possibility of additional usage of Ashwell Station by Bygrave and Ashwell residents if the proposed transport plans restrict existing access routes to Baldock Station. The Parish Council is trying to get North Herts Council to agree to allocate infrastructure funds from the Baldock development to contribute to the much needed extension of the Ashwell Station footpath / cycle path beyond the Hertfordshire / Cambridgeshire boundary.

**Info Sources:** for details of access to public rights of way throughout Hertfordshire, use the following link: <https://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.

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

**Cllr Graham Lee**  
Chairman



Newly pollarded limes in the central avenue



Graves revealed during a clean-up

## The Cemetery

The Parish Council opened the Cemetery when all the plots in the Churchyard were taken. Interestingly, the the first burial in the Cemetery was the body of a German prisoner of war in 1918.

Thanks to the new grounds maintenance contractor and Cllr Norton Mahy's Cemetery Tidy-Up group, the cemetery is looking significantly neater than twelve months ago. In the process it uncovered nine previously grass-covered graves.

The group continues to clear shrubs under the tree next to the Chapel of Rest, and self-seeded bushes in the Old Area are gradually being reduced, with the view to eventually removing them. So far the work done has revealed a dozen graves previously buried under grass and vegetation.

More remains to be done and volunteers are welcome to join the Cemetery Tidy-Up group by emailing [norton.mahy@ashwell.gov.uk](mailto:norton.mahy@ashwell.gov.uk). Sessions happen on an ad-hoc basis outside the growing and nesting season.

The Tree Safety and Condition report has been completed and its findings used to identify further safety related tree work. This may take place in the coming months.

**Nicola Forrester**  
Deputy Clerk

## Arbury Banks

Arbury Banks is one example of approximately 150 hillforts dating back to the eighth and ninth centuries BCE. It is a scheduled monument and Historic England has information about it on its website: [historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008981?section=official-list-entry](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008981?section=official-list-entry)

There have been no changes at Arbury Banks this year.

**Cllr Martin Hoffman**

## Parish Council Finances

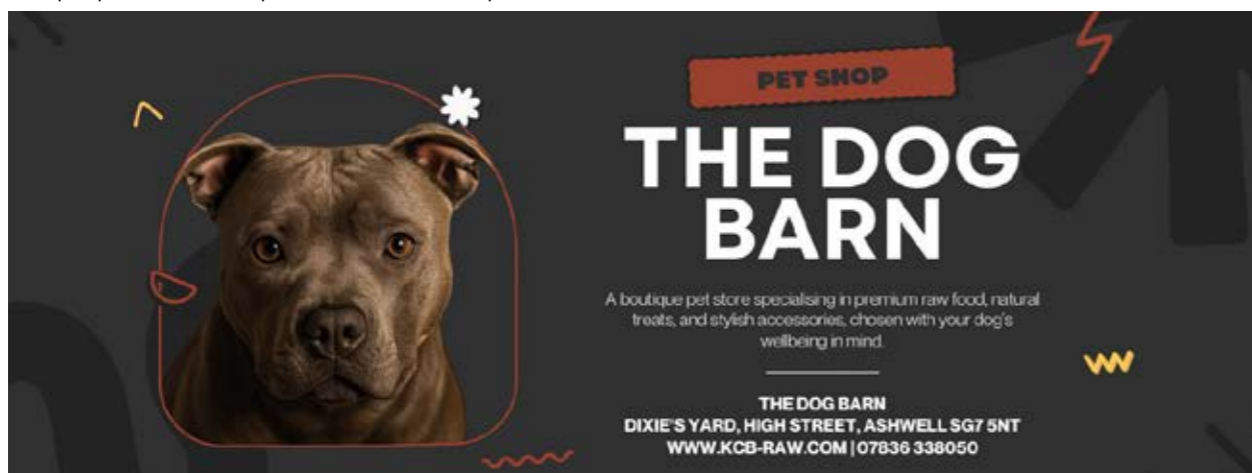
### Actual spend 2025-26

As at 19 December 2025 the forecast outturn for the year ending 31 March 2026 was £133,577 compared with a budget of £128,068; £5,509 more than originally planned. The principal reasons for this were:

- An increase in expected audit costs arising from objections to the 2023-24 accounts (9,500)
- Paying for printing the Yearbook 2026 in the current financial year, not the next one (note: from now on the timing is expected to be the same, so there is no corresponding saving in 2026-27) (5,040)
- Additional tree works at the Cemetery (3,490)

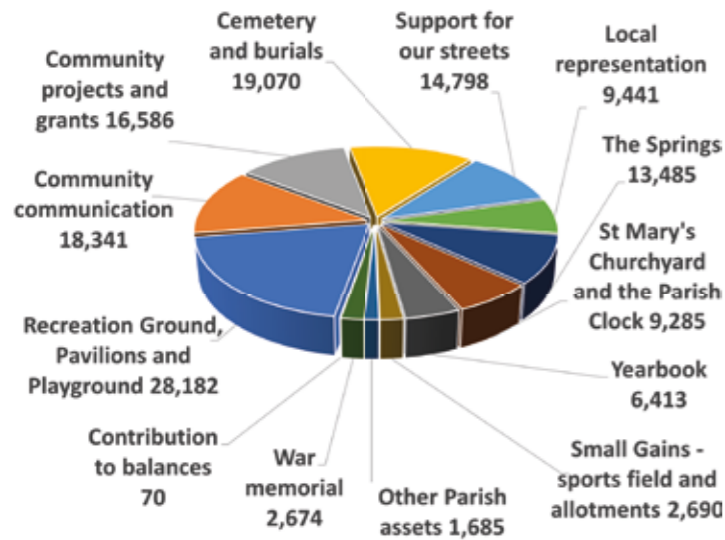
These overspends were offset to a degree by savings in the following areas:

- Contract costs for grass cutting, general



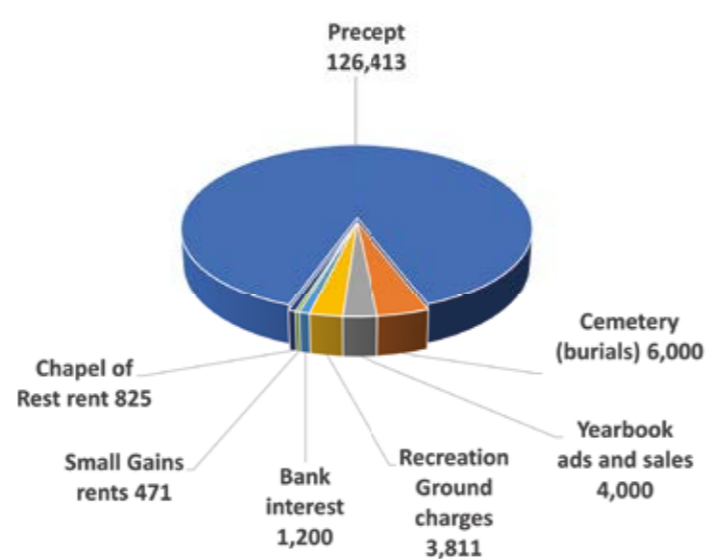
## 2026-27 EXPENDITURE

£142,720



## 2026-27 INCOME

£142,720



grounds maintenance and Recreation Ground costs (-6,416)

- Lower administration costs for staff, fewer s1.137 grants and a lower provision for election expenses (-6,053)

Other minor 'overs and unders' accounted for the remaining £52 difference.

### Budget 2026-27

Once again, the original aim of the budget planning exercise for 2026-27 was to keep any increase in the precept equal to inflation while keeping up the level of service. Fees and charges continued to be reviewed to ensure they achieved an equitable balance between users and council tax payers. However, the agreed expenditure increase was £14,652 (11.4%), which translates into a gross precept increase of 10.8% to be met by council tax payers. In November 2025 the retail price inflation rate was 4.6%.

The effect is that households in Band D properties will pay £137.36 in the year for parish services as part of their council tax, an increase of 10%.

The parish council considered maintaining the level of service to take priority and this was the level of spend needed to do that.

The main variations in comparison with last year's budget (i.e. not in comparison with the 2025-26 outturn) are increases as follows:

- Grounds maintenance and streets (6,687)
- Tree works at the Springs, Cemetery and Churchyard (5,075)
- Expected audit costs (3,500)
- Spending on the Pavilion project (2,500)
- Trade waste at the Springs (640)
- War Memorial (540)

Savings in other areas reduced the increases:

- Clerk, Deputy Clerk and accounting costs (-3,451)
- Fences, gates and boundaries at the Churchyard (-1,000)

A number of small increases and savings made up the balancing amount of £161, which includes a small contribution to balances (70).

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. This cost is 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 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  
 ✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk  
 ☎ 01462 743706

### The Parish Office

Sally Roberts, Parish Clerk



I am approaching my second year as Clerk to Ashwell Parish Council. The job has been challenging but I have enjoyed working in, and for, the village.

Please do get in touch if you need assistance. Nicky our Deputy Clerk or I will be very pleased to help you whenever we can.

I have the support of the parish councillors who, in addition to participating in council meetings, do other work for the benefit of Ashwell. Likewise, our district and county councillors, Tom Tyson and Steve Jarvis, help significantly on behalf of the parish too.

Sally Roberts  
 Parish Clerk

Nicola Forrester, deputy clerk



I am Nicky Forrester, Deputy Clerk for Ashwell Parish Council. I have worked here for two years and live in Letchworth with my family. My responsibilities are: property management, including overseeing the cemetery, assisting residents with reporting Highways issues, handling general enquiries, and supporting Sally, the Clerk.

Nicola Forrester  
 Deputy Parish Clerk



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*Tom Tyson*

*District Councillor's report for 2025*

For North Herts Council, the civic year began in May 2025 with a major development - the implementation of the new bin contract with Veolia. After a settling-in period of several months, the contractors launched the current system of three-weekly collections in August.

In Ashwell, the changeover went smoothly for most, but not all, residents. First, there was the surprising revelation that the village had two separate collection routes. This only became clear when people in neighbouring streets found themselves putting out different bins on the same day and wondering if they'd been given the wrong information.

Other villages experienced various levels of chaos as crews gradually familiarised themselves with the new routes. In some cases, they couldn't complete their rounds within their allowed working hours and had to come back at weekends (at Veolia's expense). Residents in narrow lanes, those who qualify for two-weekly collections and people in flats with communal arrangements were all regularly missed as the new system took time to bed in.

The Growing Baldock project progressed further during the year. In June, North Herts Council voted to approve the strategic masterplan, and the application for outline planning permission was submitted by Urban and Civic in November. The consultation received large numbers of responses, many from villagers concerned about the transport implications of the development – how will Baldock be accessible in future to the people outside the town who depend on its services? Ultimately, the outline application will



come to the Council's Planning Control Committee for a decision, possibly sometime in the summer. If that permission is granted, the next stage will see the first detailed applications come in for the development of individual parcels of land.

Meanwhile, the lack of housebuilding in North Herts continues to leave us vulnerable to opportunistic and predatory planning applications, as refusals are more likely to be lost on appeal under the government's revised planning legislation, which favours the developer far more than previously. The Council is having to approve developments it and residents might otherwise wish it could refuse.

The push towards Local Government reorganisation has continued this year and we are awaiting the government's decision on the future of our councils. We know that the current system will be replaced by single-tier local government.

Hertfordshire's existing eleven councils submitted their proposal for two, three or four unitary authorities to the government in November. A decision will be taken in London on the system they think will work best for us. Elections will be held in 2027 to form shadow councils to run alongside the existing ones for a year before those are dissolved. It will be interesting to see how that works out – it's sure to be a complex and challenging year for council members and officers.

Meanwhile, I'll continue to work hard with residents and parish councils to ensure the services provided by North Herts Council are available as they should be and to respond to your questions and requests promptly and effectively.

**Tom Tyson**  
District Councillor  
✉ tom.tyson@north-herts.gov.uk



*Steve Jarvis*

*County Councillor's report for 2025*

It was a great privilege to be re-elected as Ashwell's County Councillor in May and to be able to continue representing the village and help residents whenever I can.

After the election a minority Liberal Democrat administration replaced the Conservatives at Hertfordshire County Council; the first change in 26 years. This resulted in my election as Leader of the Council.

I now have many Hertfordshire-wide responsibilities, but it does mean that we can begin to make changes and improve things for people. At the same time I remain committed to representing local people, as always.

Much time and money has been spent reacting to the government's decision to replace counties and districts with unitary councils. In the long run this will bring benefits but in the short term it will cost many millions and risk diverting attention from delivering services needed by communities.

The new county council has set priorities for improving services for children, fixing roads and bus services, delivering sustainable growth and supporting the most vulnerable.

The first is to improve provision for children with special educational needs. While waiting for the government to fix the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system we have engaged with parents and schools to improve how the system works in Hertfordshire.

We are also moving toward housing more of the children we care for in council homes locally rather than in commercial homes many miles



away. This process will include a small home in Ashwell in addition to one already in Hinxworth.

Although these services are vital for those who need them, roads and buses are the ones most visible to all. To get more done, we have run trials to find ways of mending potholes more efficiently, such as fixing all nearby holes in a single visit. This will be rolled out more widely in coming months. Also, road repairs assessed as having the biggest impact will be done first. I was pleased to get the long-standing potholes on the Baldock bypass fixed as a result.

Changes to the speed limit policy will make it possible to introduce 20mph limits in Claybush Road, Newnham Way and Station Road which were left out when the limit was introduced elsewhere in Ashwell because they did not qualify under the previous rules. When this can be done depends on available funding. Meanwhile I have commissioned design work to look at installing a pinch point on Newnham Way.

I am pleased it has been possible to improve the 91 bus service which now runs to both Letchworth and Royston hourly on weekdays and two-hourly on Saturdays. This also provides a bus to the station – although lack of evening services limits its usefulness for commuting.

I hope that we can continue making progress on improvements that benefit Ashwell residents. Please get in touch if you want to know more or have issues that I might be able to help with.

**Steve Jarvis**  
County Councillor  
✉ steve.jarvis@hertfordshire.gov.uk  
☎ 07815 887375

Chris Hinchcliffe MP  
North East Hertfordshire



Dear resident,

It's been a busy year, and I want to share some of the progress we've made together on issues that matter most to Ashwell and our surrounding villages.

Locally, one of my biggest priorities is making the A505 safer. Too many lives have been lost on this road, and following the recent tragic accident near the Cat Ditch Road junction, I pressed the County Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary, and the Roads Minister for urgent action.

I'm pleased that progress is being made on this, and with the support of Ashwell's community, I'm determined to make this road safer for everyone.

For those who commute, there's good news on the rail network. After repeatedly raising concerns about poor service over the past year, I welcome that Govia Thameslink Railway has finally introduced modern trains and a new timetable that means faster, more comfortable journeys.

There will be extra peak-time services between Cambridge, Letchworth Garden City, and London King's Cross, and quicker journeys - up to seven minutes faster on some routes.

These changes will make a real difference for local people heading to work or visiting London, and I'll keep pushing for more investment in local stations, particularly to improve much-needed accessibility.

Bus services have also been a major concern, especially for rural communities where cuts have left many without reliable transport. That's why I've voted for new legislation and funding that give councils the power to run or franchise services that meet local needs. Hertfordshire County Council has been granted £12.2 million to protect rural routes and improve frequency.

Ashwell residents who completed my survey on better buses earlier this year called for longer service times for the 91, and for it to complement the railway timetable - perfectly reasonable requests that the council should consider as part of their overhaul.

I also want to thank everyone who has raised other important issues with me - from protecting our precious wildlife to tackling the ongoing NHS crisis, your voices make a difference, and I'll keep working hard to make sure these concerns are heard in Westminster. Together, we can make Ashwell and North East Hertfordshire an even better place to live.

Wishing you all the best in 2026.

Chris Hinchliff MP

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

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- [yvonne@thewrightaccounts.com](mailto:yvonne@thewrightaccounts.com)
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*The Cottage Garden offers an opportunity for quiet contemplation and relaxation*

Community assets



### *Community Assets - introduction*

According to the dictionary, community action is the collective effort of residents working together to improve their local area, address social issues, support voluntary groups, and influence local decisions. The reports in this section show that Ashwell is a village with true community spirit.

### *Ashwell Village Museum*

2025 was another very full year at the museum. The most visible aspect has been the re-limewashing of the exterior. This helps to preserve the structure of the building.

We have also had some exciting donations. The most notable of which was the Square Piano which was bought in 1802 by the Rev'd Henry Morice who became vicar of Ashwell. The Broadwood company, who made the piano, had it in their warehouse and on searching their old account books could see who the original purchaser was and connected him to Ashwell from information on our website. In another coincidence the foremost conservator of square pianos in the country is Lucy Coad who just happens to have been brought up in Ashwell. She came to look at the instrument and on her advice we have decided to retain it in its original condition.

2025 was also a bumper year for donations from metal detectorists, not only those regularly searching local spots but also the Detectival

festival in Newnham. The most important find has been the Odsey Bronze Age Hoard of 66 copper-alloy fragments dating to the late Bronze Age. It was found in 2019 but has taken this long to pass through the treasure process and we are pleased the owner thought that we were a suitable place to care for it.

As you can see from the square piano experience our Website <https://www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk/> continues to reach out across the world. The website holds articles of local interest, which everyone can add to, and a database of the entire museum collection. In commemoration of VE day, in the 'Roll of Honour' we have added to the life histories of the WWI Veterans all the information we have about those who served in WWII. You can also find us on Facebook and Instagram.

Progress has been made on education initiatives with the re-opening of the primary school class visits, drop in events, and Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteering.

We are open on Sundays and Bank Holidays but also on Saturday mornings in the summer. The curatorial team are 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

## Friends of Ashwell Museum

The Friends of the Museum exist to support the Curator and Trustees in the running of the Museum. We provide volunteers to open the Museum on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays, and at any other time for groups, schools or special events such as Ashwell at Home. These are usually done in conjunction with the Curator as Peter may do many of these groups himself. We also have a devoted team of people who keep the Museum clean for our visitors.

New volunteers are always very welcome and we would love to see some younger people joining our teams. Cleaning is not arduous, we only try to keep on top of the flies, wipe the glass on the cabinets, brush and wipe down the stairs and the floors. Those who do it say it can be done in just over half an hour and the time is fitted in to suit yourselves. If you want to help please contact Sue Hill on [✉ gordon.hill@pyghtle.com](mailto:gordon.hill@pyghtle.com). For volunteering on opening times please contact Karen Mills and if you prefer hands on work with the Museum please contact the Curator, Peter Greener, [☎ 01462 742956](tel:01462742956).

We usually hold an open event in the Museum once a year for everyone, either a coffee morning or a wine and cheese evening. During 2025 we had a wine and cheese evening in September.

The Friends also arrange events including a couple of coach trips a year to assist with fund raising. In 2025 we went to Milton Keynes, some to see War Horse and others to shop. In September we went to Oxford and are now considering a visit to the National Trust Textile Conservation Studios in Norfolk. This will be on Thursday 21st May but the deadline for booking places was Christmas 2025.

Our talks in the URC Hall this year included 'Ghosts with Links to Ashwell' in March and in November Peter Greener gave us a very stimulating talk on 'Cob, Clunch and Claybat', ie the building material of so many old Ashwell Houses.

The Parish Room Teas have continued throughout the year with the Museum taking over from St Mary's on 12th October. We will do them until

5th April 2026 and as ever rely on our team of volunteer cake bakers and helpers. All profit from the teas goes to the Museum. Thank you to all those helpers and also to our visitors who enjoy the social side of the afternoon.

We are as you can see 'The Friends of the Museum' and you can join us by calling in at the Museum when open or by contacting any Committee Member. We are quite a busy group with an active Friends Committee and are happy to talk to anyone who may want to join us. We must also thank those who come along to our events as all that helps raise money to support the ongoing success of our Museum.

**Jill Powell**  
Chairperson  
[☎ 01462 742318](tel:01462742318)

**Karen Mills**  
Secretary  
[☎ 01462 742155](tel:01462742155)

**Paul Miller**  
Treasurer  
[☎ 01462 742222](tel:01462742222)

## Makers in the Museum

Makers in the Museum has flourished in 2025, and we have been able to offer two evening talks and some family drop-in sessions over the summer holidays as well as our monthly afternoon meetings. Our topics this year have ranged over many different areas. Toys and games, folk lore, myth and magic, Ashwell schools, hairdressing over many years, Percy Sheldrick, and much more. One of the new developments this year has been the greater involvement of the group in providing stories and objects from their homes to share. In January our first meeting of 2025 was 'Here is one I made earlier' which was an opportunity for people to bring things they had crafted or created. We had books, jewellery, woodwork, fabric creations, glass and many wonderful things to talk about.

We are very grateful for the funding support from Ashwell Show which covers our rental of the Parish Room and some of our materials. Many of our group paid back this support at the show in August, baking cakes and running activities and stalls for visitors.

Everyone is very welcome to attend Makers, which is on the second Tuesday of every month at 2.30pm in the museum. We have a short talk, look at some of the museum collection and then move to the Parish Room for refreshments and crafting. We will also hold some evening meetings in 2026. Look out for more information in the new year.

### Sarah Talks

## Ashwell Village Museum Lottery

Registered Charity 271473  
Lottery Reg No LC/LOT 9280

After six years of operation, the Museum Lottery continues to be a great success. In the last



Ashwell Museum Heritage Fundraising

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:

	First	Second	Third
Dec 2024	V Moore	C Godfrey	D Richards
Mar 2025	A Gee	C Jenkinson	R Banham
Jun 2025	V Holton	D Boardman	C James
Sep 2025	D Wallace	C Leedham	D Richards

Proceeds of the Museum Lottery make 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. Pick up an entry form in the Museum or contact me for forms, terms and

conditions.

**Shirley Wardrop**  
[☎ 01462 742861](tel:01462742861)  
[✉ ashwellvillagemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:ashwellvillagemuseum@gmail.com)

## Ashwell Archaeology

After a pause, we are looking to get Ashwell Archaeology activities going again in 2026. At the Ashwell Show, we ran two archaeological test pits, one for visitors to have a go in and one run by volunteers. The finds were consistent with the meadow being used for grazing for many years, with a deeper layer of mixed finds suggesting ploughing and manuring in the Medieval period. It was a very hot day, and the wind blew our gazebo away which was not ideal, but visitors seemed to enjoy the display of previous finds.

Metal detecting is a very popular hobby, and we have been working with local detectorists to record their finds. You must have the landowner's permission to detect on land and there are places where you may not detect, for example on Arbury Banks and other scheduled monuments. Responsible metal detectorists record all their finds as the information they collect is very interesting and important for working out the history of the village. Sometimes the items found are declared Treasure and then offered to local museums for a fee. Treasure does not always mean gold or silver as early metal work like bronze can be significant too. We are always happy to talk to people about finds they have made metal detecting, gardening or walking around Ashwell. Contact by email as below, or via the museum.

At the museum we have recently had a grant to buy a new wall display case to show some of these finds. In the new year we will be running an evening session with a finds expert to help us catalogue recent finds but also many objects that have been in the museum collection for years. We hope this might lead to an event celebrating local finds.

To learn more about the evening sessions, or Ashwell Archaeology please email me.

**Sarah Talks**  
[✉ sarah@sarahtalks.me](mailto:sarah@sarahtalks.me)



Working hard on the Cottage Garden

## Ashwell Village Trust

The Cottage Garden sits on the corner of Gardiners Lane and Swan Street, an oasis of calm and a beautiful green space to sit in nature, or play. Now more than ever this small tranquil garden provides a place for everyone young and old to enjoy.

The trustees are very grateful to Martyn Hird, who leads and guides the tireless and enthusiastic group of volunteers and gardeners who meet once a month to weed, prune, plant and clear. Martyn and our volunteers deserve our thanks. His report is the next item in this Yearbook.

Created over many years on derelict land, by neighbouring Ashwell resident Albert Skerman and his wife Alice, an early case of guerilla gardening? When the land was threatened with development the local community raised funds to save it.

The Ashwell Village Trust was created in 1986 to administer the cottage garden on the death of Alice Skerman. Ashwell Village Trust is in a sound financial position and able to maintain the garden for future generations of Ashwellians to enjoy.

The trustees are Graham Lee (as chairman of the Parish Council), Joan Yates (parish councillor), Simon Bettany (Treasurer), David Sims, Claire Moynihan, Liz Moynihan, Jane Porter and Ian Thomas.

## Ashwell Cottage Garden

The gardening year seems to pass by faster and faster, perhaps it is the passage of time or I am just getting older? The volunteers who tend the garden on the villages behalf, turn out month after month, whatever the weather and are happy in their endeavour.

We are always grateful for the positive feedback we get from passers-by and the many visitors to our village who often use the garden. We hope that 2026 brings us some good gardening weather and if anyone would like to join us please get in touch.

**Martyn Hird**

✉ lona1996@aol.com

## Greening Ashwell

The Greening Ashwell team has continued their commitment to enhance and improve our environment for the benefit of both wildlife, local residents and visitors. It has been a busy year with much to celebrate but with a few disappointments.

A flower bed was created at the surgery with bulbs, drought tolerant plants and a sprinkling of wildflower seeds, which have added colour and interest to an otherwise rather bland but green space. The daffodils emerged in the spring providing some cheer, more have since been added to the grass verges. Our aim is to make the flower bed low maintenance but good for pollinating insects. It is not clear yet whether the



Encouraging wildlife, Photo: Chris Smith



Greening Ashwell working party at the Springs. Photo: Chris Smith

bird boxes that were installed back in the spring were used but hopefully they will be this coming spring.

In memory of Dr Fergus Moynihan we helped to plant a new tree at the surgery, funded by staff there. A bench will be added soon funded by Greening Ashwell and Fergus' family.

Throughout the year regular maintenance sessions at The Springs have helped to keep areas clear for visitors. This is a site of Special Scientific Interest. Work included: cutting back brambles and overhanging branches, removing nettles that obstruct pathways, clearing steps of weeds and debris, much of which was added to the dead hedge thus increasing habitat and refuge for small mammals and invertebrates. Clearing litter and debris from the water and indeed the whole area was also a necessary job.

Greening Ashwell volunteers have begun to explore connections with The Cam Catchment Partnership organisation that helps to monitor, preserve and improve the precious natural resource of chalk streams unique in this area. This is an on going project.

The wildlife allotment at the Forester's site continues to be an area of colour and activity throughout the seasons. In the spring wild garlic, native bluebells and foxgloves thrived in the shady areas.

Management of brambles and nettles has been needed to ensure food resources for wildlife but allow human access. Regular maintenance of the flowerbeds was required to remove unwanted

plants but also adding more resilient species that can cope with the more extreme conditions that climate change is creating. Gardeners in general are discovering that with these unpredictable changes in our weather they are having to adapt and learn new ways of gardening.

The pond needed regular attention with careful removal of unwanted growth. Frogs and newts seem to be thriving there alongside water snails such as Ramshorn. During the dry summer months the water level kept falling and so top-ups were needed on a regular basis. Our efforts at Ashwell At Home resulted in a very successful day with many visitors especially children who tried their hand at making simple bug hotels and a fortune teller game that was both an enjoyable and informative craft activity. The discussions with all those who participated was a great way to increase awareness and promote ideas on how we can improve biodiversity and encourage insects in our environment.



Greening Ashwell at the Ashwell at Home

Two new crab apple trees were planted at Ashwell Garage with permission but unfortunately were later removed because of security issues. Two existing trees that were planted a few years ago are not looking healthy and will probably need replacing.

The Wildflower patch at top of Bear Lane proved to be a big disappointment as just as the wildflowers were beginning to appear, and despite a sign asking for the area to be left uncut, council workers came and cut the area. However, we have plans for this area this coming year. Watch the space!

At the Annual General Meeting we thanked Clare Spencer for her work over the years as she stepped down from the committee, although she will continue to be involved in Greening Ashwell. The evening's programme was followed by an excellent talk from The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust entitled 'Gardening for Wildlife'. The speaker was both inspiring and informative. It was very well attended and hopefully everyone went away with ideas about how their gardens can help wildlife.

Our team of volunteers have also helped to maintain verges and hedges at both Chalk Bank and the recreation grounds. We are developing and coordinating links with the museum herb garden and St Mary's churchyard teams. Importantly we are establishing close links with Zero Carbon Ashwell acknowledging our common aims whilst promoting a sustainable ecosystem that benefits the health and wellbeing of the community and nature.

We are a friendly group who welcome new volunteers so please do contact any one of our committee members for more details.

Alternatively visit our website: [www.greeningashwell.org.uk](http://www.greeningashwell.org.uk)

**Sherran Chalkley**

✉ sherranmandrell@hotmail.com

**Anne Fletcher**

✉ anne.fletcher4btinternet.com

**Susie Smith**

✉ sjsangells@gmail.com

**Claire Moynihan**

✉ info@clairemoynihan.co.uk

*Foresters Allotments*

*A Year of Growth and Change*



This year started with a little tree surgery. Some of our older trees had reached the end of their

life and a few had grown too large for the site. To keep the field safe and protect neighbouring properties, we called in a local expert to carefully remove them.

We've also introduced a new way of doing things. For years, plots were passed on by word of mouth, but from October 2025 we now have a formal tenancy agreement. This isn't about red tape, it's about making sure everyone knows their responsibilities and helping us keep the allotments a welcoming space for all.

Sadly, time catches up with us all, and a few long-standing tenants have handed back their plots. The silver lining? We now have space for new faces. If you've ever thought about growing your own, now's the perfect time to try.

Why take on an allotment?

- Enjoy fresh, home-grown produce.
- Stay active and healthy in the great outdoors.
- A chance to meet new people from the local area.
- Reduce food miles and support sustainability.

Interested? Drop me an email.

**Kevin Ayres**

Court Secretary

✉ court9737@forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk



**Ian Lawrence**

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*Ashwell Village Hall*

Ashwell Village Hall has had another successful year, with many people using the hall for a wide variety of activities. As a village, we are very proud of our hall, but it has begun to show its age. This year's focus has therefore been on giving the building a much-needed new lease of life.

We began with the wall by the outdoor play area, which had started to crumble. Water was seeping through and causing damp and mould in the hallway. This wall has now been fully repaired and looks fantastic.

The next project was the kitchen area through to the main hall door. This space needed a facelift due to the damage caused by the faulty exterior wall. It has now been decorated and fitted with a new floor, transforming the area and making it feel fresher and more modern.

We also enhanced the outside of the hall by hiring a gardener, who has made a huge difference. The hanging baskets and planting in the gravel area have helped bring the space to life and create a welcoming, vibrant look that encourages people to use the hall.

Looking ahead, the Village Hall will continue its programme of repairs and maintenance. The main project for next year will be to restore the large wall facing the fields, which is now in the same condition as the play area wall was before repair.

The hall is in a strong position, thanks to the many people who use it daily and, importantly, to the officers who work so hard behind the scenes. I would like to thank them for their dedication - the hall is buzzing, and it looks fantastic.

We are, however, a small team and are always looking for additional support. If you are able to spare a little of your time, please contact Andy Dolby, our current Chairman.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very happy New Year, and we look forward to welcoming you to the hall throughout the coming year.

**Andrew Dolby**

Chairman, Ashwell Village Hall

✉ andyd@sigma-office.net

☎ 01462 742783



Dr Matthew Jarvis has retired

*Ashwell and Bassingbourn Patients Group (ABPG)*

Last March we said goodbye to Dr Matthew Jarvis who had been a GP at our surgery for 32 years, latterly as Senior Partner. We also bade farewell to Jasmine, our Physician's Assistant, and to Julie, a long-serving leading member of our dispensary team. We thank them for their loyal service and wish them well for the future. Doctors Hussain and Khan have replaced Dr Jarvis and have quickly become welcome additions to our clinical team.

We were pleased to see that our 2025 survey showed increased satisfaction levels. Great notice is taken of patients' opinions and comments and helps our surgery improve the way it works and the services it offers. We aim to establish feedback stations in our waiting rooms to make it easier for patients to make comments. The 2026 survey will be digital. One of the great successes of 2025 was the creation of the Wellbeing Hub. Led by Ruth ten Hove (an ABPG member). The hub now welcomes some 20 regulars each week supported by a dedicated team of volunteers. It meets every Thursday afternoon in the URC Hall offering gentle exercise and social activities. It is greatly enjoyed by participants and open to all who feel they might benefit.



Tree planted in memory of Dr Fergus Moynihan

In November we were delighted to receive two new wheelchairs from the Guilden Morden charity 'Wheels For Martin's Friends'. These are now available in both surgeries so that personal wheelchairs no longer need to be unloaded when visiting the surgery. Many thanks to the charity for this generous gift.

Autumn brought a new requirement from Government that online appointment forms be open all day and not be paused when surgeries consider capacity has been reached. This is of course a boon for patients but, with no extra funding, surgeries across England are struggling to meet demand and our practice is no exception. We are doing our best to manage the situation but our resources are at full stretch.

And finally, in November a tree was planted in the grounds of Ashwell Surgery to commemorate the long, distinguished and hugely appreciated service of Dr Fergus Moynihan. Many in our communities will remember him with great affection.

From all of us on the Patients Group and all who work at our surgeries we wish you a happy and healthy new year!

**Peter Chapman**

Chair

✉ peterchapman70@yahoo.co.uk

*Ashwell Pharmacy*

This year marks a very special milestone for us - our 3rd business anniversary! Three years ago, we took over and maintained continuity to keep our doors open with a simple mission: to provide trusted healthcare, more NHS commissioned services and a welcoming space for our community.

Since then, we've had the privilege of serving countless families, offering not just medicines, but guidance, compassion, and support. Every smile, every thank-you, and every conversation has been part of our journey, and we couldn't have done it without you - our valued customers. Your trust and loyalty inspire us to keep growing, innovating, and finding new ways to care for you. Thank you for being part of our journey.

We would especially like to thank everyone for supporting us in increasing the uptake of all NHS commissioned services (Flu and covid vaccinations, Pharmacy First, Blood Pressure check, providing oral contraception and emergency hormonal contraception, New Medicine and Discharge Medicine, Stop Smoking). We have managed to administer over 1,200 flu vaccinations last year and over 1,000 flu vaccinations this year. We also managed to provide Pharmacy First services (which includes treatments for Sinusitis, throat infection, urinary tract infection, shingles, impetigo, insect bite and earache) to 35 to 40 patients every month, these treatments also included antibiotics or any other first line treatments that are normally prescribed/recommended by GP or the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

We would like to stress again this year that NHS England is expecting us to increase uptake of all those services and if uptake is good it may add to them in future. We are willing to participate in every single service that gets commissioned by NHS England as long as we get good support and interest from our local community.

Moreover, we are trying to keep up with demands for the items we stock. But if you think you need something that we do not have, please approach me or my staff and we will try to get your medications/items as soon as we can. We truly value your support and efforts to keep us alive.



The Pharmacy: a family concern here for you

Like I mentioned last year and a year before, we are still facing challenges to source some prescribed medications at the price that the NHS pays us. Despite having an account with 10 plus wholesalers I am still struggling to source some of them at the price that NHS pays us.

The unfortunate thing is, medication shortages are creating an extra financial pressure on us and ultimately forcing us to lose on our margins. I would urge you all to support us in this hard time when we face difficulty in sourcing your prescribed medications.

I would also request you all once again to use your local pharmacy as much as you can for the services that have been accredited to it. We are offering most of our services on a walk-in basis without needing an appointment.

Lastly, I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support and we look forward to serving you all in the forthcoming year.

**Dhaval Patel**

☎ 01462 742250

*Ashwell Housing Association Limited*



Ashwell Housing Association owns 10 properties in Back Street which were built around 1979. We have 2 bungalows, 4 flats (one of which is a small studio flat) and 4 x 3-bedroom

houses. All are let to local people who have very strong connections to the village.

I reported last year that we have signed an agreement with Green Door, a small local management company, who are now overseeing all our repairs and maintenance, an arrangement which is working very well. This past year has been a very busy one for the committee as we have continued carrying out improvements to all the properties. We have upgraded a few more bathrooms and have had the exterior of the buildings decorated, something that was long overdue. The front doors to the terraced houses have been replaced – and now look very smart. In addition, new double-glazing units have been installed throughout.

I would like to thank Yvonne Wright who collects all our rents and does all our bookkeeping for us, and also Natalie, our clerk, who books all our meetings and takes the minutes. We could not manage without them.

We lost Jack Busby from the committee at the beginning of the year due to him having too many other commitments, but we thank him for his input over the years that he was with us. However, Rachel Searle, Caroline Leyland and Stuart Skerman have all joined us which is very gratifying. Of particular interest is the fact that all three are local people who grew up in the village. Other committee members are George Tait, Gary Feast and Joe Vallyley. Our tenant rep is Lisa Gill.

There have been no changes of tenancies during the year and we are always 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



Moss Cottage Homes in Hodwell

## Moss Cottage Homes

Reg. Charity 239596

The Moss Cottage Homes were built and endowed in 1904 by a local resident, George Moss, in memory of his mother, Frances. The six one-bedroom cottages continue to provide homes for older residents of Ashwell at an affordable weekly charge. The Moss Cottage Homes is a charity and a member of the Almshouse Association.

We are fortunate to have the same residents for 2026 as for 2025 with no refurbishment projects required this year. We have been able to concentrate on buildings maintenance. The rainwater goods along the frontage were replaced and the barge boards repainted. Clear protection was applied to the timbers on the gables.

The stone sill at No. 12 was replaced and was funded by a grant from the Ashwell Show committee, to whom we are very grateful. Ashwell Show is also generously grant aiding a Spring 2026 project to jetwash, repair and reinstate the shared pathway and yards behind the cottages.

In October Paul Morris of Templars Building Surveyors conducted a quinquennial survey. This identified a few concerns which are being addressed. The quinquennial survey also assists the trustees with long term planning, especially important in order to maintain our standards at this time of increasing costs.

During 2025 Paul Miller joined the Board of Trustees and is a welcome addition with considerable expertise in buildings management. In November 2025 Steve Fleming succeeded me

as Chair of Trustees. I step down as a trustee in January 2026 after seven years' service, the last three as Chair. I am proud of the improvements we have made during that time. There is always more to do to ensure that these affordable homes remain safe places for local people of limited means to call home.

The Trustees for 2026 are:

Rev'd Chris Campbell  
 Stephen Fleming (Chair)  
 Paul Miller  
 Julia Mitchell  
 Jane Munns  
 Ann Robertshaw  
 Jon Ruch  
 Phillida Shaw, Trustee (to Jan. 2026))

More information about the Moss Cottage Homes is available from:

### Jon Ruch

Trustee/Secretary  
 ✉ Jon.ruch@btinternet.com

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## The Book Swap

The popularity and success of the annual Book Weekend demonstrates how much we value books. It was therefore a very sad day when, some years ago, the library service ceased to function in Ashwell. However, the Book Swap facility has taken its place. St Mary's Church provides the Parish Church Room as the venue and the Parish Council supplied the book shelves. In order to promote the new facility, a few volunteers formed a 'Book Swap Team' and held coffee mornings at the Parish Church Room. However, the Book Swap is now well established and has a steady stream of borrowers so the Team has disbanded.

The service is free of charge and there is no signing in or out of books – bring a book or two to swap or, if you cannot bear to part with any books, just borrow one. The Book Swap facility is available whenever the Post Office is open on Mondays and Wednesdays between noon and 3pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays 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 a piece of cake while browsing.

Thanks to the Book Weekend the entire stock of books was changed 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. Thanks to Teresa and her partner, Lynda, there is also a book swap facility specifically for children. This is the Book Shed. It is located opposite the Quaker graveyard and can be reached by taking the grassy path up from Silver Street to Angell's Meadow. It is always open! And, again, there is no need to swap a book - simply borrow one to read and enjoy.

### Eileen ten Hove

✉ eileen@pyghtle.com



Books free to borrow in the Parish Room

## Ashwell Community Land Trust Ltd



Ashwell CLT Ltd was formed by the Parish Council in 2022. It's a 'not for profit' mutual Society with up to seven 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 the CLT 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. Whereas the parish council provides services for the community funded by the community from a fixed annual local tax (the precept) the CLT could create and manage a community asset on a commercial, but 'not for profit', basis with initial funding from any combination of sources including shareholder investment, grants, donations, mortgage, or third party loans.

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.

Currently there are two projects that could prove to be suitable for CLT participation:

- The 'affordable housing' element (4 houses) out of the 14 houses to be built adjacent to Hunts Ridge with access from the Ruddy / Ashwell Street. This would be subject to agreement with the developer and a housing association, and North Herts Council, and the CLT itself
- The other is the potential for a renewable energy generation and heating scheme for Ashwell

The heating scheme is currently the subject of a £40,000 Stage 1 grant which has been secured from the Government's Great British Energy Community Fund. The grant is being used to carry out a feasibility study by a specialist renewable

energy consultancy into Ashwell's energy needs and the best technical approach to take to meet the community's need. A village meeting will be arranged for March / April 2026 to present the options identified by the study. Implementation of any major renewable energy scheme would then be subject to a Stage 2 grant to create an infrastructure specification, to be followed by a construction and funding phase which would require the input of the CLT.

The benefit of such a project would be to reduce carbon based energy consumption in the village, but also to help homeowners to switch from gas or oil to 'green electricity' and to minimise home running costs relative to typical energy supplier prices.

Joining the CLT Ltd is your opportunity to help shape and secure the future resources that you want from Ashwell. You can become a member by depositing £1 at the Parish Office to secure an official share and receive a share certificate. Please join us.

**Graham Lee**

✉ graham.lee@ashwell.gov.uk  
☎ 01462 742834



*Ashwell Community Leaders Forum*

A warm and productive gathering of nearly twenty of Ashwell's community leaders, took place on Saturday 10th January. Rev'd Chris welcomed everyone and thanked them for the energy, care and commitment they bring to village life. She explained that the initial aim of the new Community Forum was to share experiences and insights, learn from one another's successes and challenges, strengthen connections between groups and explore future collaboration and support. Importantly, she and Ruth ten Hove stressed that the forum's future should be shaped by the groups themselves, based on what they would find most useful.

Each community leader then introduced themselves, their group, one success from the past year and one challenge. There is much to celebrate: strong local support for events, impressive fundraising and grant successes, and a real commitment to keeping activities fresh, welcoming and inclusive. From packed events and thriving clubs to innovative approaches, the village's community spirit is clearly alive and well.

However, shared challenges were just as striking. Almost every group struggles to recruit and retain volunteers, particularly for leadership and committee roles. Many spoke of an urgent need for succession planning and the difficulty of attracting younger people into sustained involvement. Burnout among small core teams is a real concern, with many people happy to help occasionally but reluctant to take on ongoing commitments. Financial pressures and limited external support add further strain.



Small group discussions, led by Ruth, generated a wealth of constructive ideas. There was strong support for continuing the forum, perhaps quarterly, alongside better communication through a shared email or WhatsApp group, a whole-village calendar, welcome events for newcomers and skills-sharing. The overall mood was positive and hopeful. While each group represents just one part of village life, together we form something much bigger. The forum felt like a first step towards an even stronger, more connected community for everyone.

The forum is open to all of Ashwell's community leaders. If you would like to be involved, but were not on the original invite list, please do get in touch.

**Attending:** Rev'd Chris Campbell; Melanie Dawson Dew, Ashwell community lunch; Ann Fletcher, Zero Carbon Ashwell; Sherran Chalkley, Greening Ashwell; Margaret Budgen, WI; Rev'd Lindsay Dew, British legion; Peter Chapman, APPG; Diane Jacoutot, Ashwell Theatre Club; Viv Hollow, Mother's Union; Gemma Allen, Ashwell show; Ali Etherington, Ashwell School PTA; Dave Hoar, Ashwell at home; Graham Lee, Parish council; Chris James, URC, organist and property steward, Voluntary warden at quarry; Ruth ten Hove, Ashwell wellbeing hub; Phil Ward, Ashwell fit club; Jack Busby, Ashwell Accies; Bene't Coldstream Cricket club; Al Jacoutot, Tennis club.

**Ruth ten Hove**

✉ ruthtenhove1@gmail.com

*Ashwell Freemasons*

Sadly, our initial entry in The Yearbook last year did not result in any of the voluntary organizations in the village approaching us for

help. However, our door remains open to funding requests for the immediate and medium term.

We completed our pledge to East & North Herts Hospital Trust to donate £10,000 over four years with a cheque presented to the Breast Cancer Unit at QE2 Hospital, Welwyn Garden City a short while ago. We expect to give further help to patients who have had breast surgery by funding the cost of post operative underwear, which is essential for a good recovery.

As ever, do not hesitate to make contact either about membership or funding for voluntary bodies.

**Kevan Morrison**

AshwellLodge7903@gmail.com



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Border Ramblers day out to Ely

Clubs and societies



A bit of fun with the Easter bonnet competition

### Ashwell Women's Institute



It gives me great pleasure to report that, despite the national trend for membership numbers to be in decline, Ashwell WI is growing and we now have 36 members.

We have enjoyed another busy year with interesting speakers at our monthly meetings, including talks from Peter Greener and Sarah Talks, who told us about some of the items in the museum and then tested our knowledge with a quiz. Ruth ten Hove gave us lots of tips and advice on how to maintain strength and balance in later life. We had a visit from Dudley, a lovely dog who is a hearing dog for his owner Zoe, who explained how Dudley helps her with her day to day life. We also heard from David Duker, a local author, Tony Leigh who was a photographer to the stars and Adrienne Massey who showed us how to make some amazing flower arrangements.

We held an Easter bonnet competition, with some very creative entries. Margie Wallace won first prize.

Our AGM was held in May and we all enjoyed a fish and chip lunch prior to the business meeting. Margie Wallace stood down after serving many years as our President. Margie was thanked for all her hard work and commitment, and was presented with gifts and a lovely cake.

Our June meeting was organised by member Sue

Birch; our members provided lovely refreshments and some of the newer members gave us a summary of their lives. What an interesting group of people we are.

We now have two sub-groups that meet on a monthly basis. Our games and quizzes group meets at members' houses and have so far learnt to play Rummikub and Triominos. The 'Ladies Who Lunch' group meets in the local pubs during the winter months, but will venture further afield in the Spring.

Our annual outing this year was to Kathy Brown's Garden in Stevington. We were lucky to have a warm sunny day and enjoyed a guided tour of the beautiful gardens followed by afternoon tea on the lawn. We were able to subsidise the cost of this trip, thanks to a donation from the Ashwell Show.

Once again, many members baked cakes for the tea tent at the Ashwell show and some members helped serve, wash up and take the money in the tea tent. It was a very busy day.

We have another busy year planned, thanks to Margaret Budgen who arranges the speakers and we look forward to another interesting and varied programme.

If you are new to the village or have recently retired and would like to know more about what we do, please come along to one of our meetings. You will be made very welcome. We meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm in the URC hall.

**Sharon Dawson**

✉ ashwellwi@outlook.com



## Mid-Life Crisis Car Club



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

The Mid-Life Crisis Car Club entered its 33rd year of operation with the Annual General Meeting held at the Bushel and Strike. A very pleasant meal was followed by a

not too taxing quiz. The first run of the year was on 'Drive it Day' with a visit to the Shuttleworth Collection for a coffee followed by lunch at a riverside pub, the Kingfisher, near Bedford.

The next run was a bit of a misnomer as although it was called the 'Roses' run it was too early for the flowers, which in any case had been ravaged by the local muntjacs. However Quy House proved to be most interesting with a guided tour provided by the very enthusiastic owner. The House redeemed itself by having a room decorated with painted rose murals.

A good selection of cars was presented at the Village Hall for the Ashwell At Home day and this always generates interest in the club. The next trip was a run through some very pretty Essex countryside followed by a guided tour of the Great Chishill windmill, provided by their very knowledgeable volunteers. The evening was rounded off by an excellent meal at the Pheasant at Great Chishill.

Then it was on with the miniskirts and leather jackets for a visit to the famous Ace café where much nostalgic banter was the order of the day. As these words are written we have two more meetings to come. The first is our annual dinner

where we are lucky to have a former Ashwell resident to talk to us about 'My journey through the supercars'. This will be followed by the traditional 'Decoke Ramble' just after Christmas where we have a walk with mincepies and mulled wine en route followed by a pub lunch.

If this sort of activity appeals to you and you have a vaguely 'sporty' car then please contact me.

### Chris Scholfield

Hon Treasurer

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



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## Ashwell Horticultural Society

It seems to me that we are often talking about AI – Artificial Intelligence – so I thought I would find out what AI considers a horticultural society to be. It tells me:

"an organisation dedicated to the study and practice of growing cultivated plants... promoting the joy of gardening, sharing knowledge and supporting environmental initiatives through activities such as shows, educational programmes and research."

Throughout the past year we have certainly fulfilled all these things.

Through our open garden visits in June - to Mary & Michael, to Jo and Jack, and to Karen & David – all very different gardens, all within a two mile radius of the village.

We have had the opportunity to share knowledge; thinking especially of Meril Deal's talk in October

'Coping With Drought' – a synopsis of which can be found on our website - and Katy Cheetham's presentation on the National Gardens Scheme. Chris Fraser Smith talked about photography in the garden. Our December meeting was appreciated by all, when Vanessa Browning demonstrated making a centrepiece for the table and Jen Anness a Christmas wreath for the door.

The allotment continues to expand and develop and Tony keeps his team in order, masterminding and largely planting all that we grow.

At our Spring Show in April and our Annual Show in September we saw a wide range of fruit and vegetables on display, in spite of unusual weather conditions.

All of these events did not happen by themselves, they are largely due to the hard work and commitment of volunteers and committee members. My thanks, as always, go to these faithful folk and to our members, so encouraging and positive, without which we wouldn't have such a successful horticultural society.



A perfect basket



Show category: best Lego garden. Who'd have thought it?



The Horticultural Society Committee

Two of our committee members retired from their roles, Michael White, after 40 years on committee, and Gill Racher who was the 'Keeper of the Cups' as well as part of the refreshments team. Our thanks to both for their hard work and dedication. We are fortunate to welcome two new committee members, Annie Coe and Tracy Young. Both have already showed their commitment to the ethos of the society.

After 13 years as Chair of the society, I also retired at the AGM in November and want to say a personal thank you to all our members for your encouragement, support and friendship. I have enjoyed my time in this position very much, but now look forward to attending meetings, sitting at the back and chatting afterwards over a welcome cuppa.

For information about the Horticultural Society, please visit the website [www.ashwellhortics.chessck.co.uk](http://www.ashwellhortics.chessck.co.uk)

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Grantchester walk: statue of Rupert Brooke

## Border Ramblers

Apart from the couple of walks in the depths of winter, this year we found the weather consistently dry and fine but not too hot, ideal for walking in fact. Then, with the added incentive of tea and cake or a gastropub visit, walks have attracted around a dozen or so each time. Skipping the walk and just coming for food and drink is perfectly acceptable, although maybe accompanied by a pang of guilt?

We're a sociable group that enjoys a relaxed outing. It means sometimes we get spread out but nobody minds pausing now and then to let others catch up. Distances average six miles with some longer, and the occasional shorter walk.

The group can't claim to be 'Border' ramblers any more. Apart from Christmas and the midsummer pre-breakfast stroll our walks in 2025 took us to far-flung places like Chrishall in Essex and Grantchester. Likewise our two longer days out. The first was to St Ives, getting there and back by car and the guided busway. Though the days of school outings are long past for us we can still count a bus trip as fun. It was a gorgeous day weather-wise too. The second took us on the train to Ely: sauntering alongside the Ouse and back to the station via the Cathedral and a good lunch of Turkish food.

Come and join us.

**Norton Mahy**

✉ nortonmahy@gmail.com

**Gill Duckworth**

✉ gillianduckworth@yahoo.co.uk

**Ian Thomas**

✉ nextodsey@yahoo.co.uk



Singing boosts mental well-being and reduces stress

## Ashwell's Big Sing



Ashwell's Big Sing is a welcoming community choir where adults can come together and sing for pure enjoyment. For over ten years we've fostered a strong group

while always inviting new members - no singing experience or music reading skills necessary, just enthusiasm and a passion for music. Our repertoire spans musicals, pop and rock classics, and we offer exercises to help you strengthen your voice.

2025 marked a special milestone as we expanded our concert series, hosting our first ever summer performance in partnership with the Classical Musical Melodies Choir at a concert in Hitchin. We also broadened our song choices, performing pieces like Eric Whitacre's *Sing Gently* and the Welsh folk tune *The Ashgrove*.

To further broaden our repertoire, we began the winter term with a Sea Chanty workshop led by guest tutor Simon Bailes from Dunton Folk, even achieving a 'bob'.

Joining a choir is a fantastic way to meet new people and form lasting friendships, all while enjoying the uplifting experience of singing together. Singing in a group has been shown to boost mental wellbeing, reduce stress and improve confidence, making choir sessions both a joyful and beneficial addition to your weekly routine. We rehearse every Monday during term time from 8 to 9pm at Ashwell Village Hall, and

fees are paid upfront. All sheet music is supplied, along with links to backing tracks and guide vocals. The choir regularly takes part in local events such as Ashwell at Home and holds its own charity Christmas concerts. We're always eager to welcome newcomers and share the joy of singing throughout the community.

**Liz Townsend**

Choir Leader

✉ ashwellsbigsing@gmail.com

☎ 07753 754452

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## Ashwell Jazz

2025 has been a wonderful year for Ashwell Jazz Club, happily settled into the URC Hall. We have had the great joy to welcome new members. Our evenings introduce existing and new members to the huge spectrum that is jazz music. We listen to music recorded as early ago as the 1920s, to the very latest genres, to music recorded in America, Europe, Africa and 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 programme of music of their choice on topics ranging from 'Let's hear it for the girls' to 'The Duke and his Orchestra' to 'Jazz in films' to 'A Quincy Jones tribute' and many more varied and fascinating themes. The music is accompanied by a typed programme with track details (year of record release, names of the artists etc) and any other interesting pieces of information. 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 the remaining 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.

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). Naturally there is no charge for anyone trying the Jazz Club 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

## Rose & Crown Folk

Ashwell's folk session is now 31 years old, starting in December 1994 with a charity 'Sing-along-a-thon' to raise money for the church tower.

During 2025 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 very pleasant musical evenings. The Rose & Crown is a proper village pub, with the jovial atmosphere which goes with that, 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

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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.

2025 ended, in the usual way, with a beautiful and varied session of carols and Christmas songs. 2026 will start with a celebration of Twelfth Night and the following months will see a variety of themes, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

As usual, we have produced a programme for 2026, with a different theme for each month, which you can see in the entrance to the Rose & Crown and also on our facebook group. We also publish a monthly article in Ashwell Village News, so you can keep in touch with what's going on by reading that. Our facebook group is at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RoseAnd-CrownFolk>

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.

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

for details of our folk session contact:

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091

## Ashwell Theatre Club

It was all hands on deck this year, because it was a panto year. Pantomimes are not only fun for the audience, but they provide an opportunity to pull together the skills and abilities of many different generations so it's fun for the Club too. It is, however, a lot of work, which is why we do them every other year.

Our panto, Cinderella, was directed by first time directors Kath Drees-Coninx and Simon Jeffries, who were guided by experienced members David Rance and Jo Eggleton-Rance, and it was completely sold out. This Panto was a real handful with two dames, a smoking donkey, super-fast set changes, many dozens of costumes, a huge cast and lots of evolving songs and lines to learn. The team pulled through and, like Cinderella, we had a ball.

Our Christmas and Summer socials were well attended, with more members able to make them this year than last. A special thanks to the Robertshaws who offered and prepped their garden, this year as in previous years, only to be foiled by the weather. Our membership is increasing year-on-year and we welcome the opportunity to celebrate it.

As we march towards the end of 2025, we have not one but two productions in the works. To develop the skills of future generations we have a Children's Workshop Production in late November called **Who Knows How?** directed by David Rance and Jo Eggleton-Rance. At the other end of the spectrum in early January 2026, for



I didn't know there was a dwarf called Stroppey

our experienced thespians and mature audiences we have Agatha Christie's **And Then There Were None** directed by Paula Merrill.

Looking further forward, 2026 marks our 50th anniversary and we plan to celebrate it with members both past and present through a 70s themed party in July. Because who doesn't like a bit of fancy dress and a disco? After that, we will be planning for the next panto in early 2027. It seems a long way off, but in terms of pantomime timelines, it's practically tomorrow. Oh yes, it is!

We are a local AmDram group, by and for our local community, and the Club would like to thank the Ashwell Show for their continued support. Over the past two years Ashwell Show funding helped us buy safety steps for the side entrance to the stage, a new backdrop and remote-control blackout blinds for the very high up windows at the Village Hall. Our members enjoy supporting the Show through volunteering, and we in turn appreciate the Show's support to enhance the fabric of our venue, enabling us to continue entertaining the village.

Our Theatre Club always welcomes new members. This year we have a specific urgent need for more people who can develop and direct productions both big and small. We also have a need for one or two photographers for our



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productions. If you have any of these or any other skills to share, we would love to hear from you.

**Diane Jacoutot**

Chairman  
 ✉ ashwelltheatre@gmail.com

*Ashwell Theatre Club - an AGM to Remember*

Ashwell Theatre Club paid a very special tribute to Christine Scholfield at their recent AGM on Thursday 25th September 2025.

Christine was the longest serving Chair of the ATC as well as a regular performer in many of the productions.

Fellow Club member, Connie Chambers, gave a wonderfully witty, and heartfelt speech about



Christine Scholfield with her tribute

Christine. She talked about the many roles Christine had played over the years from our late Queen Elizabeth II delivering her Christmas Speech to Wishy Washy in Panto, via Miss Marple and Mrs Sowerberry in Oliver to name but a few. She was often willing to take on the part no one else wanted or was willing to do or fill a gap in the company – even stepping in as one of 'two gentlemen' in A Christmas Carol.

Her composure, level-headedness and ability to remain calm, as well as her administrative skills, will be remembered.

The Theatre Club chair, Diane Jacoutot, then presented Christine with an Honorary Lifetime Membership in recognition of her contribution to the Ashwell Theatre Club and with great appreciation for her years of continued support.

Thank you to Christine for everything she has done and continues to do for ATC.

**Karen Rogers**

Secretary  
 Ashwell Theatre Club

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A typical English class

### Diapalante



Diapalante is a small Ashwell-based charity supporting the Diapalante Community Education Centre in Kaolack, Senegal. For more than 20 years, the generosity of Ashwell

residents has been vital to our work, through financial donations as well as gifts such as sewing machines, unlocked mobile phones, laptops, craft items and football strips. We would like to extend a warm thank you to everyone who continues to support us. This year's fundraising efforts have included catering for parties, funeral and wedding refreshments, Christmas and other celebratory meals, and our annual garden party. We were also delighted to welcome Mamadou (Master P), the Centre's co-ordinator, to Ashwell, where he enjoyed meeting supporters at the garden party.

The Diapalante Community Education Centre plays an essential role in Kaolack. It offers a welcoming place for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn. Many adults in Senegal have had limited schooling and many children still struggle to complete primary education. With three full-time equivalent staff and a dedicated group of volunteers, the Centre provides 500 people each year with free access to classes, a library and computers.

Lala, who lives with her mother, four brothers and her mother's co-wife, has been a regular visitor for eight years. Following her father's death, she remained determined to achieve her goals. The Centre has helped her build computer skills, strengthen her French and English and develop her confidence. Now a Young Leader herself, she supports primary school children with French, maths and writing. This year, she passed her baccalaureate and will begin university next year.

Another learner, Mbagnick, aged 44, was unable to read or write just a year ago, which made managing his shop difficult. By attending the Centre for around 15 minutes most evenings he has rapidly gained literacy in French and begun learning English useful for his trade. He has now secured a visa to travel to China to source goods directly, opening new opportunities to support his family. Stories like Lala's and Mbagnick's show how transformative the Centre can be.

At present, the Centre operates from a rented ground-floor flat, but the building is ageing and a suitable alternative has not been found despite two years of searching. As a result, we have purchased a plot of land and are now exploring the design and construction of a purpose-built community education centre that will serve the local community for years to come.

**Liz Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091



Multiple Sclerosis Society exercise class

## Multiple Sclerosis Society



I am Susan Scott and have lived in Ashwell or nearby for more than 30 years. I volunteer for the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society at the national level as a patient representative on their clinical research

into finding treatments for progressive MS - the Octopus trial mentioned on the BBC last year. I am also the fundraising volunteer for the local North Herts group of the Society.

MS is a condition that affects nerves in the brain and spinal cord. In MS, myelin which is the 'insulation tape' surrounding the nerves, is damaged. It happens because the immune system makes a mistake and starts attacking the myelin. This damage means that messages travelling along the nerves are disrupted. They can slow down, become distorted, or not get through at all. As well as losing the myelin, the actual nerve fibres can be damaged too, which causes more lasting symptoms over time. This is what happens in progressive MS.

MS can cause many different types of symptoms depending on which part of the central nervous system is affected. It could be problems with vision, balance, mobility, bladder, bowel, thinking or emotions. MS is different for everyone.

The North Herts group of the Society has around 150 members for whom we run several activities. There is an exercise class for those with limited mobility on a Wednesday morning in Letchworth, followed by a cooked lunch and a good opportunity to chat. The class is run by a neuro-physiotherapist, with another neuro-exercise instructor assisting. We also run weekly yoga classes specialised for people with MS both in-person and online.

We subsidise monthly trips to local restaurants for members to provide a social, friendly space to make friends and share tips. Our annual Christmas lunch in a local hotel is always well attended. When funds permit, we organise a summer outing to a local attraction. We keep everyone informed by issuing a quarterly newsletter.

The funds for these activities are raised by various events including biannual quizzes (Crumps and Days have generously sponsored these), collections in local towns and supermarkets and donations from supporters. We recently successfully applied for a grant from the Community Fund (part of the National Lottery) which pays the professional exercise instructor fees until the end of 2026.

If anyone is interested in joining the group or the committee or helping with collections, please email: [northhertfordshire@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:northhertfordshire@mssociety.org.uk)

**Susan Scott**

Village organisations turn out for the Remembrance service



## Royal British Legion Ashwell & District Branch



It has been a busy year for the Branch. We held our usual Poppy Appeal collections at points along the High Street and at Carters Pond on the three Saturdays before

Remembrance Sunday 2025. The service on Remembrance Sunday was held at our URC Church led by the minister, Rev'd Stan Chatikobo, followed by the Act of Remembrance led by the Rector Rev'd Chris Campbell at the village War Memorial. It was good to have the uniformed groups joining in both the service and the Remembrance. Many gathered with us to take part in the laying of wreaths and the silence as we honoured and named all those from this village who died.

During the year we were sad to hear of the deaths of Mr Edward White and Mrs Mollie Aldridge. Both supported the work of the Branch. May they rest in peace.

Significantly this year saw the 80th anniversaries of both VE and VJ days. Wreaths were laid on May 8th, VE Day and Aug 15th, VJ Day.

The work of the Committee focussed fund-raising events through the year. These were coffee mornings on May 3rd and August 16th commemorating VE and VJ Days respectively. My thanks to all members of the Branch Committee and officers for the huge amount of work they do

to make the Branch such a success – their ongoing support and organising of events is very much appreciated. For a small village community we do very well when compared to branches in larger towns in the county. Our Branch membership stands at 49.

Finally, 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 volunteers who offer to take part in our activities and if you would like to help, please get in touch.

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

**Rev'd Canon Lindsay Dew**

Chairman

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

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## Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve



**Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust**

Yet another year has passed by! In March 2025, I was complaining about all the summer rain that made the grass grow too much during 2024. This last summer we had exactly

the opposite weather conditions with the long drought shrivelling up all the grasses and flowers by the end of July. It remains to be seen how these desiccating conditions will have affected populations of insects, in particular their larvae including caterpillars which, of course, help to feed other species further up the food chain.

Towards the end of June however, a moth expert brought his light traps to the reserve. We put out three traps from about 8.30pm until 2.30am.

Trap used in the moth survey at the Quarry



These attract moths (and quite often other insects such as hornets) to UV light. The moths drop down into the trap and hide away under egg boxes until they can be examined much later – usually the following morning – and released.

Quite astonishingly for a small site, relatively isolated from other natural vegetation, the traps caught almost 200 different species of moth. Many moths need particular plants (for example the rarer chalk species) for their larvae to feed on, so if the plant is present, hopefully the moth will be also. But if that plant occurs only in limited places, the moth species will be very restricted in where it can survive. So, the wide range of plants in the quarry must be helping to support these 200 species. But where else in the locality might they find similar habitat into which to expand? End of Ecology lesson!

As usual, our volunteers carried on cutting and raking at various times. The tractor came to cut the flatter areas in early September, and in November we started coppicing some older bushes at the west end of the reserve to let some more light in over the meadow area. Full-time staff from the Wildlife Trust accompanied 'Green Team' volunteers who brought their scrub-cutters to cut some thicker vegetation on the very steep areas, all of which helps to maintain the conditions preferred by the chalk plants and to prevent the quarry turning back into a scrub-filled pit. They also replaced three wobbly benches with new ones.

**Work parties take place on the third Sunday of the month from 10:00 am until about lunch time. New (younger!) helpers are always welcome, so if you would like to be included in the work party circulation, please send an email to the address at the end of this article.**

Although the nature reserve is private land not owned by the Wildlife Trust, visitors are welcome. 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

Voluntary Warden

✉ chrisjames56@btinternet.com

☎ 01462 742684

56 Back Street, Ashwell



Samaritans supporters outside their office

## North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans

Since 1971, North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans have been supporting people across North Hertfordshire, including Hitchin, Stevenage, Letchworth, Baldock and the surrounding towns and villages. Our mission remains the same: to ensure someone is always available to listen when life feels overwhelming.

Over the past year our dedicated volunteers have filled 1,800 telephone shifts, taken more than 20,000 calls, spent around 6,000 hours on the phone and responded to over 85 online chat requests each month, and taken part in 600 different chats.

Every ten seconds, Samaritans answer a call for help, offering listening without judgement, whatever someone's background, belief, faith or identity. Our Listening Volunteers complete rigorous Core Training followed by mentoring, and we are grateful to everyone who supports them in this journey.

The strength of our branch is built on the commitment of our Trustees, Deputy Directors, Support Volunteers and, above all, our Listening Volunteers, who give their time generously to be there for callers in crisis or feeling suicidal. Their dedication extends beyond shifts, with volunteers delivering talks in schools, community groups and workplaces, raising awareness of our work and how we can be supported. Our growing

engagement with local communities includes partnerships with Network Rail at local train stations and regular presence in places such as the Lister Hospital.

Fundraising has remained vital to sustaining our service. North Herts & Stevenage Samaritans are entirely self-funded, and local supporters and volunteers continue to raise essential funds to increase the number of volunteers on shift at any one time.

We are also deeply grateful for individual initiatives, such as the remarkable fundraising efforts of Sarah Graham, the Hitchin based artist. She created an extraordinary collection of 'Samaritans' paintings, which were sold to benefit our branch. She later went on to produce a beautiful book, the proceeds of which again supported our work. Her creativity and generosity have made a truly meaningful difference.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence, knowing our branch is sustained by the compassion, commitment and energy of our volunteers. Together, we will continue to be here day or night - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - for anyone who needs someone to listen.

**If you wish to make a donation**, the link is: <https://samaritanscommunity.enthuse.com/samaritansnorthhertsstevenage/profile>

**If you need support**, you can call Samaritans free on ☎ 116 123.



The Dragon is the Christmas Play's star character

## Ashwell Mummings

Ashwell Mummings once again performed our famous Christmas Play (Starring **THE DRAGON**) in January 2025. This year, there was an addition to the cast in the person of **Old Beelzebub**. He proved very popular, so we intend to continue with him. Unfortunately, the Bushel & Strike was unavailable and so we toured the other Ashwell pubs plus Wolverley House and the Waggon & Horses in Steeple Morden. 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 £426 during the 2025 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 well over £6,000 thanks to the generosity of people in Ashwell. Hopefully the 2026 play will see it increase further, especially as we will hopefully be using a card reader.

As I write, preparations are in place for our next Christmas Play, with a slightly reduced cast this year. Sadly, the Bushel & Strike won't be available again in 2026, though it is now open and trading successfully. We're also hoping that we'll get more of a crowd in Wolverley House in 2026. The audience for 2025 was an improvement over

2024 but it still isn't anything like the 'old days'!

For up to date information, follow us on our Facebook Group Page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AshwellMummings/>


**If you'd like to know more about Ashwell Mummings, or the various Mummings 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


## Ashwell Charity Christmas Card Shop

The charity Christmas card shop opened once again for Christmas 2025. With the ever increasing postal charges, we were concerned that we might not do too well this year, especially after a bumper year in 2024. We did, however, have a secret weapon - our new card reader, which allows people to pay with both cards and their phones.



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Because we give the charities **all** the money from card sales, we had previously felt unable to use these as there is a commission. We have however, over the years, amassed a small buffer of cash in the bank, so felt we would be able to do this as an experiment for at least a few years.

This year we had one new charity, **Friends of the Holy Land**, though we lost **Pets as Therapy** temporarily. We also had a special display of **Ruth Rowntree Cards**, the proceeds from which will be given to a local dementia charity. 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 just short of £3,000, about 5% more than last year's £2,850. It looks as if the bounce-back in card sales is continuing. Also, the range of cards on offer was up from 114 designs last year to 133. In previous years there have been almost 200 designs, but it's still as wide a range of cards as you'll see anywhere,

During the lifetime of the shop, now over 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 as 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 2026.

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 01462 743091



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Saturday 9.15am – 4pm	

Jane Nicholson  
Proprietor

*Arr... 'tis Pirate Day*

## Education and youth organisations



### Ashwell Primary School

Ashwell Primary School continues to be a thriving and extremely popular school with only three spaces available in total at the time of writing. The school currently has 232 children on roll from Nursery through to Year 6. Our extended Nursery provision caters for 30 hours per week and continues to go from strength to strength.

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 2025, as a result of funding from the Henry Colbron Trust, the school council was able to see its visions for improving their recreational facilities come to life as it planned, designed and oversaw the installation of a new adventure trail, spanning the full length of the outdoor space. All of this work has enabled us to continue to enhance our school environment and facilities for children.

Throughout the 2024-25 academic year the school continued to offer a vast array of curriculum enrichment opportunities, including an extensive residential offer. In April we took Year 5 to Burwell House for two nights; a Victorian House in North Cambridgeshire. 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. 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)

#### 2025 Highlights

**January** – Rocktopus Music and Sports Workshop, Road Safety Workshops, Maths Day, Musical Theatre Day.

**February** – Mental Health Awareness Week, Neurodiversity Day, PTA Disco, Safer Internet Day, Art Day.

**March** – World Book Day, Science Week, Year 5/6 Knex Day, PTA Bingo

**April** – Year 5 Burwell House Residential, Year 3/4 Production, Laser Tag Workshop, Year 1 visit to Shepreth wildlife park.

**May** – Year 6 SATs, Ashwell Music Festival, Year 4 Celtic Harmony Camp, Year 2 Scooter training

**June** – Year 4 MTC, KS1 Phonics check, Year 5 Duxford trip, Year 6 Houses of Parliament trip, District sports, Lacrosse Day.

**July** – Year 6 Isle of Wight residential, Year 5/6 production, Sports Day, PTA Summer Fete, Music concert.

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

**October** – Black History Month, Year 4 Zoological Centre Visit, Tag Rugby Enrichment Day.



Year 1 visit to Shepreth



New outside area



Dance Club at the North Herts Festival



Year 6 at the Needles, Isle of Wight

**November** – Anti-bullying Week, Children In Need, PTA Fireworks event, Year 3 trip to Fitzwilliam Museum.

**December** – Christmas Bazaar, EYFS Nativity, Key Stage 1 Production, whole school visiting panto, 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

### Ashwell Primary PTA

The PTA aims to bring parents, grandparents and teachers together to raise funds and enrich the education of every student at Ashwell Primary School by funding experiences, materials and equipment.

We kicked off the year with a Valentines themed Disco in February and ran a 'Hearts and Crafts' competition for the children, where they could create a heart out of anything they wished to. We then decorated the hall for the disco with all the amazing hearts.

In March, we held two PTA events. We ran our annual Mothers' Day Shop, which gives the children the opportunity to choose a gift independently for their mums. We also held the Easter Bingo, which packed the hall with families, with lots of chocolate eggs being won.

This year, we moved away from serving lunch during Ashwell at Home and instead held the very first PTA Spring Market. The weather was perfect, and we had a constant stream of people coming to look at all the amazing stalls catering to everyone's preferences, from 3D printing, to jewellery cleaning, to multiple cake and sweet stalls.

We also held our summer disco in May, with the children showing us their best dance moves and a bittersweet moment as the year sixes all got together for the last song of the night as their final primary school disco came to an end.

In June, the children were able to come and choose a present for their dads at our Fathers' Day Shop.

The weather was on our side again this year for our Summer Fete, which was held in the middle of July. This event was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with the fan favourite activity being 'splat the teacher'.

Our biggest fundraising event was our popular Fireworks Night, which sold out again this year. Over 900 of you came and supported us and watched an amazing display put on by our very talented fireworks team, who have been setting off fireworks for the PTA for over 25 years now!

To kick off the festive season and finish the year of PTA events, we held two wreath making

workshops at the beginning of December, where parents, grandparents and teachers enjoyed some mulled wine and yummy mince pies as they created some truly spectacular wreaths.

We have raised an amazing amount of money again this year and truly appreciate all of your support.

**Rebecca Day**  
PTA Secretary

School and PTA contact details:  
Ashwell Primary School, Silver Street,  
Ashwell, Baldock, Herts. SG7 5QL  
Headteacher: Mr Simon England  
School Office: Mrs Tracy Bowen

✉ admin@ashwell.herts.sch.uk  
☎ 01462 742297

PTA: ✉ ashwellpta@gmail.com

### Ashwell Preschool



Ashwell Preschool (formerly known as 'Ashwell Playgroup') celebrated its 50th birthday in 2025. Reflecting over fifty years, whilst many wonderful leaders have come and gone and the educational framework has expanded and become more formalised now that we are an Ofsted registered Early Years setting, the ethos of the setting remains unchanged, having always been built upon simple dedication to the care of the children on roll.

The preschool is embedded in the community of Ashwell, and this is always apparent during the four main fund-raising events we hold, when so many locals comment on the value of a preschool education as that first step into independent socialisation. We are so grateful for the goodwill and support we receive from the local community and would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the past fifty years.

I am proud to report that the preschool continues to run smoothly, thanks to a stable, valued staff of five, led by our Settings Manager Natascha Waller and supported by Deputy Sarah Rodway. With Jenny Keeling bravely embarking upon her Early Years Educator's course during 2025, we are on track to have a staff of four qualified members by the end of 2026. As the government tightens up the ratios required of qualified staff to children, it is ever more important to have a flexible team of qualified staff at the setting.



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Soft playtime at Pre-School

Preschool's rebranding is in full swing with the reconstruction of our new website and signage, both of which have been generously sponsored by a grant from the Ashwell Show.

The preschool is always looking for more voluntary support. If you feel able to help in any shape or form, please do contact us.

The first fundraiser 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 in Spring 2026, which the children can then decorate, ready for a best dressed duck competition on race day.

**Can you volunteer to help run this brilliant, oh so cute and funny morning?**

Our second fundraiser of the year is running a tea and cake station at the Village Hall and organising and manning the car parking during Ashwell at Home, for which we receive a generous donation from the proceeds from the AAH committee.

If you can spare even one hour on Sunday 10th May, please do get in touch!

We would like to say a special thank you to Days bakery, and to the Ashwell at Home and the Ashwell Show Committees, for their generous financial support of the preschool in 2025.



Early Years settings such as our preschool provide invaluable first experience of independent socialisation away from home for 2-4-year olds. We appreciate that not every child who could benefit from attending the setting is eligible for funding. If you would like

a confidential chat regarding our family support scheme, please do reach out.

**Merry Pertwee**

Treasurer & Trustee, Ashwell Preschool

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



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

EXPLORERS



1st Ashwell Scout Group and Senuna Explorers provide weekly fun activities and skills for life for over 100 young people. Here is a taste of what our young people have been up to in 2025:

**Explorers (age 14-18)**

Senuna Explorer Unit is up to 27 members enjoying activities on Friday evenings 1930-2130 in Ashwell Village Hall. We have been cooking outdoors, hiking across the surrounding area (with an occasional stop for chips), building our teamwork skills (and some bridges, tables and other structures), learning about money skills, making music and playing favourite games such as werewolf and taskmaster. We have again enjoyed supporting the Village Show which has been very generous with its support for this new section of Scouting for older teenagers in the area. A contingent of us are joining an expedition to a jamboree in Denmark in July 2026, so you may see us busy fundraising around the village over the next few months,

**Scouts (age 10½-14)**

The Scout section remains healthy with nearly 40 young people and we have had a busy year.



What do you mean, "My turn next"?

We've had weekly meetings undertaking various scouting activities including air rifle shooting and axe throwing, orienteering, night hikes, building campfires, toasting marshmallows and making s'mores, and more food with a one-pot cook off challenge on trangias.

We also had time for a community/eco project at Ashwell School, clearing overgrown bushes and shrubbery, and when the summer got hot we invented Dunk Rounders, where you have to dunk your head in a bucket of water at each base as you round the bases.

We had a joint summer camp with the cubs at Bradfield Park which was a lot of fun. We built dens, did archery and air rifle shooting, sang



Scouts' Summer Camp 2025



round a campfire and kept cool with a waterslide and paddling pool.

**Cubs (age 8-10½)**

Cubs started the year celebrating Burns Night with our own Burns Supper. Then we made the most of the dark evenings to complete the Astronomy badge over 2 weeks. We have not only been learning new skills but also teaching them, with each Cub teaching something to one of the others. We also found good ways to stay cool in the summer with the water slide at camp and hose pipes at the obstacle course. As the evenings drew in we celebrated Diwali, visited Baldock Fire Station and got painty and sticky with some Christmas craft activities.

**Beavers (age 6-7)**

Beavers celebrated Chinese New Year and then dived into a two-week invent-a-machine activity

which resulted in some ingenious inventions. We then had a mixture of craft activities, food activities (pancake mountains) and worked off the calories with sports activities. As the weather improved we worked on our nature badge including wildlife walks and building 'seed bombs' to help grow some more meadows in Ashwell. We joined up with other Beaver colonies from Letchworth, Baldock and Ashwell District for the Bangers 'n' Bash fun day. This term we have had fun for Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night before getting busy with more crafts for an Ashwell Advent Window.

The highlight of the year was sending Explorers, Scouts and leaders to the district camp at Lochearnhead station in Scotland. Scouts and Leaders took part in mountain walking, canyoning, white water rafting, cycling and sailing. It was a fantastic week.



All of this has been possible thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment of our adult volunteers and the support of our trustees. 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 2026.

*We always need more adult help to sustain our activities. 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.*

**Stuart Kendrick**

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

*Fridays @ 5 - St Mary's Youth Group*

Our Fridays@5 youth group was provided for boys and girls in school year 4 and above in the Spring and Summer terms. We met from 5.00 to 6.30pm on Friday afternoons during term time in St Mary's church.

It has been great to welcome young people for friendship, fun, lively games and quieter crafts. The children have been involved in helping to choose the activities which have taken place both in our wonderful church building and the green space outside. We have worked hard to offer the young people plenty of choice and ownership of the various activities while ensuring the sessions are safe and enjoyable for all, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Creative activities this year have included:

- Making pitta bread pizza, toasted sandwiches, chocolate nests and paper flowers for Easter. We also painted stones and decorated a giant heart as we discussed love, friendship and kindness. Fun with shaving foam, a crisp tasting competition and collaborative, free-flow painting were also very popular
- Outdoor activities such as frisbee, football, a skipping competition and playing tag have been a great way for the children to expend some energy after a busy week at school.

- Indoor games including a quiz, giant jenga, lego building, table tennis, a selection of board games as well as some games invented by the children themselves.

It has been a great pleasure getting to know our young Fridays@5 members, but sadly we have had to temporarily suspend these youth sessions since September due to a shortage of available youth leaders. In the meantime, we encourage our young people and their families to join us for some of the other activities available at St Mary's.

I would like to thank Chris, Sarah & Paulet for leading the Fridays@5 sessions and Emily, Sheelagh and Kayley for supporting the youth leaders.

If you would be interested in joining the children & youth leadership team, please contact:

**Rev'd Chris Campbell**

☎ 01462 742277

**Jo Adams**

✉ [adams561j@gmail.com](mailto:adams561j@gmail.com)  
 ☎ 07756 921199

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## Herts Performing Arts

*A performing arts stage school with heart*



Herts Performing Arts is an independent company in Ashwell offering week long holiday schools for children aged 5-12 during the Easter and

summer breaks. The programmes include acting, singing, dancing, and crafts, with students making stage sets and props for the show. The week culminates in a finale performance to family and friends and celebrates a week of hard work and fun.

The stage school classes are designed to be engaging and fun, encouraging children to express themselves whilst learning new skills. Typical sessions might include:

- Acting: Drama games, character work, script reading, and improvisation exercises help children develop their imagination and ability to work as a team.
- Singing: Group singing, vocal warm-ups, and learning popular songs or musical theatre numbers
- Dancing: improving coordination and rhythm whilst adding movements to the songs

While some children may go on to pursue professional careers in the arts, the benefits of stage school extend far beyond the footlights.

Children develop:

- Confidence: Performing in front of others helps overcome shyness and builds self-assurance
- Social Skills: Working together on productions fosters friendships, teamwork, and communication
- Discipline: Learning lines, choreography, and routines teaches commitment and focus
- Creativity: Stage school inspires imagination and out-of-the-box thinking

We'll be running two stage schools in 2026 at the Ashwell Village Hall. The Easter stage school, Monday 30th March to Friday 3rd April 2026, and Summer stage school, Monday 3rd to Friday 7th August 2026.

Every day runs on a consistent schedule, beginning at 9.30am and ending at 3pm. All classes are taught by teachers who bring industry experience as well as university credentials, and who have completed DBS checks and safeguarding training.

Enrolling a child in our stage school can be a transformative experience, unlocking new skills, friendships, and a lifelong love for the arts. Whether your child is a budding star or simply looking for a creative outlet, Herts Performing Arts offers opportunities to grow, learn, and have fun. So why not let your child take centre stage and discover their potential?

**Liz Townsend**

HPA Manager

✉ [hertsperformingarts@yahoo.com](mailto:hertsperformingarts@yahoo.com)



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**Births and weddings**



*Ernie Edward Steve Roberts*

Born on the 9th September 2025 weighing 7lb 12oz to parents Oliver and Florence; a brother for Reggie, one month after the family moved to the village from Essex!



*Aurora Lien - Talks*

It's been a very special year for our family with the arrival of our daughter, Aurora, who was born on 30th July 2025. She's keeping us on our toes already, and we're enjoying every moment of getting to know her. It's lovely to see how quickly she's growing and how much joy she's brought to everyone around her.

Just a couple of weeks after Aurora's arrival, Amina celebrated her 30th birthday on 12th August. It made for a memorable summer, a new baby and a milestone birthday within days of each other.

We also have another special weekend as Aurora Jade Elizabet was baptised on her grandfather's 60th birthday on December 7th. More cake!



*Artemisia Stockton*

Our daughter Artemisia Stockton was born in Washington, D.C. in February 2025. We were delighted to have her baptised at St Mary's Church in August. Surrounded by family and friends, the Rev'd Chris Campbell delivered a wonderful service; the food and venue were organized by Martin at the Bushel & Strike and the photos by local photographer, Bianca Valentine. Overall, it was an intimate, beautiful and really special occasion.

**Rachel and Kevin Stockton**



*Jeannie Day and James Darrington*

Jeannie Day (nee Fox) married James Darrington from Potton, Beds, on 15th January 2025 in a short ceremony at Stevenage Registry Office attended by the bride's parents, Michael and Mavis Fox.

The couple held a party at the Rose & Crown, Ashwell, on the Saturday evening with their families and friends.

The following day they started their epic two-month honeymoon to Australia which included a two-week cruise around New Zealand. Jeannie had spent the previous months researching and booking their entire itinerary.

Jeannie's sister Allison worked from the couple's house during their honeymoon so that she could look after the family dog along with Jeannie's son Steven. The couple are so grateful to the both of them for enabling them to take such a long trip.



*Amelia Humbert and John Holroyd*

On 9th August 2025, we were lucky enough to celebrate our wedding in Ashwell. Having both grown up in Ashwell (John since birth and Amelia since the age of two), it felt incredible to be married in St Mary's Church, a place that has been very special to us both for as long as we can remember.

The church was transformed into a floral wonderland thanks to Suzanne, Amelia's mum, a wedding florist, who gathered the help of her talented floristry friends and the wonderful church flower team. Together, they created displays that looked like something from a Midsummer Night's Dream. Sunlight even streamed through the stained glass windows at the very moment we exchanged rings, which was magical.

We were extraordinarily fortunate to hold our wedding breakfast inside St Mary's itself, thanks to the kind support of Chris, Guy and the Parish Church Council. Sharing our first meal as husband and wife within those ancient walls, surrounded by family, and friends, felt nothing short of magical. Later, we continued the celebrations with dancing at The Bushel & Strike – a fitting choice, as it was where we had our very first date.

Although we first met as very young children, it wasn't until we were both studying at the University of Nottingham that we became a couple. Seven years later, to be able to return to Ashwell to marry was a true dream come true. Our wedding day was everything we could have hoped for.

**Amelia and John Holroyd**



*Sarai Bisseling and Joshua Maynard*

Following an intimate civil ceremony in Wageningen in November 2024, local boy Joshua Maynard and Sarai Bisseling celebrated their marriage in style with family and friends at the Uilenburger Synagogue in Amsterdam on August 24, 2025. The celebration featured the exchange of personalised vows beneath the chuppah, a vegan meal, and dancing to a lively klezmer band. It was a truly joyous occasion.



### Katherine Taylor and Ciaran Mullin

Katie and Ciaran celebrated their wedding in two ceremonies: a registry office ceremony in St George's Hall, Liverpool, with just close family and then a larger, Irish celebration for extended family and friends, on an island, Lusty Beg, on Lake Erne, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland on Saturday, 20th September 2025. Here they exchanged rings, vows to each other in front of us all with Katie's brother, Benedict, as the celebrant.

Katie grew up in Ashwell, the third child of Marcia and Peter Taylor. She was baptised, confirmed and sang in the church choir of St Mary's Ashwell. She went to Ashwell school, then school in Letchworth before taking a gap year to travel with two school friends to see some of Southeast Asia and to visit family in Australia.

She then headed off to University of Liverpool to read a degree in physiotherapy then taking up a career in physiotherapy in Reading, then back to Liverpool to continue her career. Here she met Ciaran Mullin a year before the COVID lockdown. Ciaran had come to Liverpool John Moore University to read a degree and masters in quantity surveying and architectural drawing.

Before and after COVID lockdown Katie and Ciaran liked to spend their spare time hill walking in North Wales and the Peak District. Ciaran grew up in Beragh, a small town near Omagh, Northern Ireland and is one of six children, five boys and a girl, so they also visit Ireland regularly. They are very fond of the hills of Donegal and it was on one of these visits that Ciaran asked Katie to marry him.

At the wedding his brothers were the groomsmen and his childhood friend, Brendan was his best man. The day dawned dry and sunny, Katie was attended by two close friends, both called Alex, and her two nieces, Eleanor (13) and Charlotte (8), daughters of her brother Matt and his wife, Becky.

The ceremony was followed by drinks on the terrace then a delicious meal produced by the venue, Lusty Beg. This was followed by dancing by friends and family into the early hours, music supplied by a great local band - a true Irish party. This was followed the day after, by another party, this time in a bar in Omagh belonging to Ciaran's cousin. Here we were entertained to some traditional Irish music.

The bride and groom then returned to Liverpool before setting off to the Azores for their honeymoon.



### Beverley Quab and Matthew Pearch

Beverly, and Matthew son of Mike and Rosemary Pearch, were married in St Mary's Church Ashwell on Saturday the 20th September 2025. Matthew attended Sunday school in the village and has fond childhood memories of the Harvest Festival so couldn't have picked a better weekend.

Matthew moved to Ashwell with Mum, Dad, two brothers Douglas and Ben and sister Ellie when he was five and attended Ashwell primary school before going to Knights Templar and eventually the University of Hertfordshire to study Economics. Along the way, like his brothers and sisters he worked in the Ashwell pubs – holiday stints at the Three Tuns and the Rose and Crown.

Like most people today Matthew and Beverly met via a dating app. They were both dragged on by encouraging friends and had their first date at Sketch in London. Once the conversation, laughter and teasing had started that was it! 16 months later Matthew got down on one-knee (and, reassuringly, up again) proposing on a surprisingly warm October evening at the top of the One World Observatory in New York.

The wedding day was bright and warm. The ceremony was beautifully and thoughtfully performed by Rev'd Paulet Brown-Wilsher overseen by Rector Chris Campbell whose address really captured the strength of feeling on the day. The happy couple really felt the love and joy surrounded by their family and friends, many of whom commented on how genuinely brilliant and wonderful the whole ceremony was.

Ellie Pearch and Helen Leslie touchingly delivered truly moving readings. The choir, led by Bene't Coldstream, was exceptional including a spine-tingling performance of '*Ubi Caritas*' with wonderful arrangements throughout by organist Peter Eaglesfield. Delicious tea and cakes were provided at St Mary's by the Chandlers and their helpful volunteers to support the Diapalante, a charity running a Community Education Centre in Senegal, West Africa.

Many of the guests got to enjoy two classic buses in convoy – a 1960s Routemaster double decker and a 1950s single decker - to the stunning reception venue at Brocket Hall, Welwyn Garden City. The food, wine and service were all fabulous including duck for the main, perfectly timed drink absorbing canapés and a delicious classic tiered wedding cake. Delightful and abundant flowers were everywhere – in the church, at the entrances, on the staircases and in the magnificent Ballroom in Brocket Hall where the six-piece band kept the party dancing till late into the night.



### *Alexandra Feast and Archie Pearson*

Alexandra, daughter of Caroline and Gary Feast, married Archie Pearson in St Mary's Church on Saturday 8th November, which happened to be the most glorious sunny autumnal day, followed by a reception at Redcoats Farmhouse.

Alexandra spent her teenage years growing up in Ashwell and went to school at Haileybury College in Hertford before heading off to Durham University where she studied philosophy. During the holidays Alexandra could be spotted pulling pints at The Bushel & Strike and was a much sought after babysitter in the village.

After university she went off to live in North London to pursue her career in PR and threw herself into hard work and London life, vowing never to move from North to South London. However, in January 2023 she met Archie who lived in Balham, having grown up in Bath, and things were about to change. It wasn't long before Alexandra packed her bags and moved South!

Archie proposed to Alexandra in Norway in December 2024 and then the wedding plans began in earnest.

A huge thanks must go to our Rev'd Chris Campbell for conducting the most beautiful wedding ceremony in Ashwell Church, the perfect setting for such a special day.



### *Stephanie Taylor and Robert Young*

On 11th October 2025, Robert Young and Stephanie Taylor were married at the picturesque Botley Hill Barn in the Surrey Hills.

Rob moved to Ashwell with his family at the age of 11 in 2003 and attended primary school in Stevenage before continuing his education at Knights Templar in Baldock. A keen sportsman, he was a familiar face on the local pitches, playing football for the Ashwell Accies and cricket for the village team.

After school, Rob went on to study mathematics at Durham University, where he met Steph, who was studying sociology with law. Their paths first crossed when they were placed in the same university college in 2011 and became close friends, though it wasn't until 2020 that friendship turned into romance.

Originally from the South Coast of Devon, Steph moved to London after university, where she and Rob now make their home.

Their wedding day in the Surrey Hills was a truly memorable occasion, blessed with a beautiful sunset that made for some stunning photographs. Surrounded by friends and family who had travelled from near and far, Rob and Steph were deeply grateful to share such a special day.

Following their celebrations, the couple enjoyed a mini-moon in Sicily and are looking forward to their honeymoon adventure in Chile and Argentina later in 2025. They also look forward to many more visits to Ashwell, where Rob's family still live.



*Trevor Dann, founder of the Accies, talks to the assembled throng*

Sports clubs and groups

## Ashwell Academicals – ‘The Accies’



2025 saw our village youth football club celebrate its 25th season. The club continues to have a wide reach - squads for 197 young boys and girls aged between 6 and 18 played this year, with our positive reputation

attracting players from outside the village to join us.

Girls involvement at the Accies continues to grow and we now have around 40 girl players involved in two teams playing in the Hertfordshire Girls league (under 15s and under 12s). In May 2025 the older of the two teams won the Hertfordshire Girls League Under 14 Junior Shield, beating a very determined Harpenden Colts team in the final 3-1, with goals from Ella-Jane Hurley (x 2) and Nina Carling. It was a fine team performance and capped off what had been a great season.

To celebrate the end of Accies’ 25th season, our young players led a celebration of football for anyone in the village. **Ashwell’s 25 Hour Village Football Challenge** ran from 5pm on Friday 13th June to 6pm on Saturday 14th June 2025. The aim was to keep at least one game of football going on the Rec’ for 25 hours to celebrate our 25 seasons. The challenge was open for anyone in the village of any age to join in. It was not a tournament, it was about playing football for fun

with friends and with people you didn’t know. We had teams join in from local businesses, other clubs in the village and groups of friends. There was also a brilliant response when we had to ask, “Can anyone join a game right now?”

Over the 25 hours at the event at the Rec’:

- **487** goals were scored,
- By **688** players (between the ages of four and 62),
- Who made up more than **50** matches across our four pitches.

That summary misses out a lot of stories – more are on [www.ashwellacademicals.com](http://www.ashwellacademicals.com)

Highlights included the event starting at 5pm on the Friday with the Accies Under 8s playing the Under 9s on the pitch in front of the pavilion. There was a countdown to start, and we had a big yellow digital clock from Ashwell Sports Day that could be seen all round the Rec’. Games varied in size over the 25 hours. We had one 2 vs 2 game all the way up to the eye-watering 116 vs 14, yes 116 young Accies all played the club’s coaches and committee ending on the final 25th hour. Mixing up teams and age groups in games was brilliant to watch, including parents/families playing alongside their young Accies. Every match referee was a young Accie, a brilliant group of volunteers who kept the spirit of the event going throughout.

The games under floodlights overnight were a unique experience. They featured a memorable reunion of former Accies players whose Under 16s squad had to fold last year. We had a short spell of rain, but they played on. One valiant group



Midnight play under floodlights: still 18 hours to go



What an amazing turnout for the challenge

of 15 children and adults kept playing between 2-5am. We had the 'Early Doors' squad of mums who were happy to play at a quiet time of 6-8am. A lot of intense play and laughing was followed by a hard-earned breakfast. Players and supporters shared memories about the Accies throughout the event, signing two commemorative shirts.

Other highlights needing a mention include the Cambridge Utd Women's First Team Manager, Sean Greygoose and First Team keeper, Lauren Webb, joining our girl's squads and young Accies being interviewed live on BBC Three Counties Radio twice during the event, describing why this was an exciting challenge. There was a brilliant spirit throughout the event, mainly due to young members of the club helping other age groups, starting games and keeping everyone going! One visitor said they were delighted by, "the joy it brought to participants, their families and public spectators".

As mentioned earlier, during the final hour of the challenge we arranged that every Accie available played the club's committee and coaches on the main pitch in front of the pavilion. This final game started with the Under 17s on the pitch,

and the squads got younger and younger, so that the youngest Accies in the club were playing the committee and coaches when we all reached the 25-hour target. All the other players and supporters surrounded the pitch to watch and cheer the Accies on – the final countdown was deafening!

Trevor Dann, who founded the Ashwell Academicals club in 1999, shared some stories of the club's early days. It was brilliant that he could join us, and he was thrilled at how the club was still thriving. The event raised £3,000 for the Club, which was far more than we could have hoped for, and which will be used to help keep the club affordable for families.

The club wants to thank again local residents and the Parish Council for helping us plan the event, and we are enormously grateful to every player and supporter who came to the event and threw themselves into the spirit of this landmark. We have loved hearing people share their memories of this event throughout the rest of the year.

**Nick Denham**

<https://facebook.com/AshwellAccies>



Still looking keen after six hours



... and then a new day dawns



The rain's stopping: back on court

## Ashwell Tennis Club

Ashwell Tennis Club is over 100 years old and ageing nicely, hidden away down Ashwell Street is our small clubhouse and two tennis courts. The club has a steady membership with an increasing number of pickleball players beginning to use the facilities on a regular basis, see separate article from Al Jacoutot.

Thanks to the members who joined us for the social tournament, BBQ and AGM on 5th October, we are now planning to open the 2026 season with similar plus an open day accessible to all villagers over the Easter period, hopefully launching some new coaching opportunities for youth and adults alike.

Our ladies coaching sessions on a Friday morning have continued to be well attended and, on good weather, Thursday club nights saw casual social play amongst some Datchworth league team preparations.

We ran three teams in this year's Datchworth Summer League, and are proud to report that the second team won its division and gained promotion. Our wonderful team captains Stu Endacott, Simon Mcutcheon and David Summer thoroughly deserve to be remembered for all their hard and relentless work organising.

If you don't play in one of the teams already, do know that new players are very warmly welcomed!

We are delighted and relieved to report that the lease on the land where our courts reside has been successfully renewed for a further 25 years. This gives a real boost to future plans to invest in and expand the use of our valued courts and is thanks to valued behind the scenes work by a

number of past and present committee members and the support of the owners of the site to make this possible for the village.

Here's to an amazing 2026 - perhaps come and hit a fuzzy yellow ball? Membership is great value, watch out on Ashwell Hub for information on the club open day this Easter time. Follow the link to our club website below:

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/AshwellTennis-Club>

**Mark Hurst**

Club Chairman

✉ ashwellsport@gmail.com

## Cycle Club Ashwell

This year we said goodbye to Max Pendleton, who died having suffered from Parkinson's disease in the last few years. Max was instrumental in setting up Grass Track racing at Ashwell and he will be fondly remembered for his energetic enthusiasm, good humour and unwavering dedication to the sport.



Max Pendleton on the right helping out at an early CCA youth session on Ashwell Rec before we moved to our home at Smallgains. A youthful Andrew Leveton (far right) became Grass Track 400m Open Champion in 2025. Photo; Mark Wyer.



Coaching session. Photo: Judith Parry Photography

On the track itself we have had a great year with younger riders starting to ride on fixed wheel bikes and the more established youngsters finding more pace and stamina. Our first promotion was a glorious day in May; well attended by riders of all ages from around the country. The photograph shows the start of a youth Keiren race. In such a race the riders are led out by a pace maker which the riders cannot pass until the allotted time. Normally this pace maker is on a special moped, but instead we used an old man on a bicycle. We finished the season with a Madison race (a sort of chaotic relay race); this is not often run on grass but it was very well received and proved most successful.

As the summer drew to a close we ran a cyclocross mini-series which, once more, was enjoyed by those attending.

Our youth section continues to go from strength to strength, with coached sessions, racing and social activities. Club adults help (when they can keep up) chaperoning our over 12s on our fortnightly 10 mile Time Trial, while our inaugural Youth Tour took place over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. Coaching is on each Thursday evening during term time, but this just represents the tip of an iceberg of engaging activities as we strive to encourage parents to ride with their children both on and off the road, whilst also recognising the huge importance of ensuring we provide social rides to complement race and skills focus.

If you have a child (of any age) who may be interested in cycling, or would like to join the adult activities we offer please send us an email on:

✉ enquiries@ccashwell.com

## Ashwell Cricket Club

In the Cambridgeshire Cricket Association Junior League Division One (South) we:

- Played 16
- Won 3
- Lost 10
- Conceded 2
- Cancelled 1

A season that means we were sadly relegated. Sorry to start with negative vibes, but needless to say much fun was had, and my word limit on this report dictates how many highlights I can give you.

George Griffin ended up skippering the team in 2025, and despite being injured halfway through the season, he carried on manfully almost throughout. Indeed, he topped the bowling stats with ten wickets. Other mentions go to his brother Alex, who opens the bowling week in week out (and so bowls against the best batsmen), with nine wickets. And your correspondent (and indeed chairman) who somehow took 6 for 38 in one match and had a suitably large bar bill afterwards! Sam Cunningham's 5 for 36 in the last game of the season is also worthy of ink on the page.

Batting honours for the umpteenth time were headed by Reg Redfern. Although not as utterly dominant as he had been in the last few years, he made the most runs (263 of them) and had the highest individual score of 123, even though that was in a tense but losing cause against Buntingford. A big shout out to Nick Worsnop, whose debut season this was at Ashwell. Nick kept wicket and opened the batting in nine games. He was second highest in runs scored

(221) and second in highest individual score (101) which was also sadly in a losing game. To Nick: thank you most sincerely for your smart keeping, your flamboyant batting, and for moving to the village. Every team needs an Aussie in their side (arguably more than one) and we've finally got one.

Few, who were there, will forget Alex Griffin's 95 not out against Great Chishill. With less batting depth than normal, Alex was sent in to open and showed us all what a versatile allrounder he is. Such a shame he couldn't quite get to the elusive three figures.

Favourite games in the year included a close victory (by two wickets) over Ashdon in May where we sped to chase 186 but very nearly threw the game away in the process. There was a comprehensive win over Chesterfords in late August where Tom Daniell 'wore' one on the cheek but still made 62 as if he had not a care in the world. And the last game where Reg made 80, George 29 (on one leg) as we limped to 191 all out in just 29 overs. Ickleton in reply were 106 for 1 in reply after only 14 overs. Writing on the wall? Not so readers, Sam Cunningham's wily and dogged spell snaffled five Ickleton scalps

including their dangerous opener who made 96, and they were all out for 160 as the wickets tumbled. Down the pub early that day.

A few thanks yous; firstly to the Ashwell Show. The cricket club is an annual supporter of the Show by enthusiastically helping run the bar, and the Show supports the club by helping fund projects when it can afford to. The most serious project this year has been the state of our pitch. It is lovingly (!) mowed and rolled each week, but its very substance has declined. We have employed professional assistance to make it a fairer playing surface, and without the Show's help we simply wouldn't be where we are right now.

Our ever-popular Big Bashwell night in July where players of all ages descend upon the Rec' from far and wide and play ten over cricket until the sun goes down was another huge success in 2025. Many helped preparing the ground, serving at the bar, flipping burgers, but the club is mostly in debt to Hugh Carling who masterminds this event each year. Yes, it will happen again in 2026.

Players are still in great need. We don't have enough. I thank you all for playing this year. Just a few shout outs: Nick (see above), Aaron Acworth,





Sports Day has events for all ages

Lucas Inman, Harry Daniell, Harry Crossley, Ben Busby (you'll never forget that first wicket for the club, mate) – these are players who have helped so much this year and are either more junior in age, or simply they have started playing for us on a more regular basis. I sincerely thank you. Please come back for more.

Tom Foot, club treasurer and reliable all-rounder, seems to find wicket keeping easy and played more games than anyone - legend territory. Paddy Robinson, ten appearances, bowls and bats with consummate ease and is by some distance the best fielder – also legendary. To those who make it possible to play, who prepare our wicket, sort out the pavilion and do the jobs many don't want to do – I thank you too.

We strive each year to make our cricket enjoyable and yet we still don't actually have quite enough players. If you are in the slightest bit interested in playing or helping out in any way, please don't hesitate to contact me.

**Bene't Coldstream**

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☎ 07971 404481

*Ashwell Village Sports Day 2025*



What a day! Ashwell Village Sports Day returned to the Rec' on Sunday 18th May 2025, and if you were there, you'll know we were treated to the kind of weather that organisers

dream of: sunny, dry, perfectly warm, with just enough cloud to keep the competitors from melting.

From the moment the BBQ was lit, to the final sweep of the finishing straight, the Rec' buzzed with the wonderful mix of friendly chaos, community spirit and gentle competitiveness that makes this day such a highlight of the village calendar.

The afternoon saw brilliant participation across the board, from tiny racers with giant determination, to grown-ups discovering that the Slow Bicycle Race is considerably harder than it looks. The cheers, laughter and dramatic photo

finishes were exactly what makes Sports Day such a joy.

Huge congratulations to our 2025 trophy winners, who now hold eternal village bragging rights:

- Family Trophy: **The Gaynors**
- Slow Bicycle: **Ed Sparkes**
- Junior Trophy: **Leo Vallely**
- Youth Trophy: **Dougie Keam**
- Senior Ladies RTV: **Sue Kemp**
- Ladies RTV: **Eloise Button**
- Girls RTV: **Isla Button**
- Senior Mens RTV: **Mike Banister**
- Mens RTV: **Murray Heal**
- Boys RTV: **Arthur Arkwright**

Whether you walked away with a trophy, a medal, a slice of cake, or just a warm glow, we hope you had a fantastic time.

As ever, the event could only happen thanks to a huge cast of volunteers who gave up their time (and in some cases, their hamstrings). A massive thank you to everyone who helped with setting-up, transporting gear, line painting, baking cakes, working the bar, BBQ and cake stall, selling tickets, DJing, marshalling, first-aiding, organising medals, cleaning up, tidying up, clearing equipment and more.

Special applause for our piano player - wasn't he amazing - who provided a soundtrack that magically improved everyone's running form, and somehow kept eggs perfectly balanced on spoons.

A big shout-out as well to our brilliant sponsors and raffle prize donors:

- The Rose & Crown
- Rhubarb & Mustard
- Cambridge United Football Club
- Campervan Coffee Co, and
- Hunter Luxury

If you'd like to relive the day (or check whether the camera caught your heroic finish), make sure you follow us on Facebook and Instagram for photos, updates, and news:

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

<https://www.instagram.com/ashwellvillagesportsday/>

Your generosity keeps the event running and the raffle table groaning under its own weight.

And mark your calendars - we'll be back in May 2026 for another afternoon of fun, free, and friendly competition. Details will be shared in the New Year, so keep an eye on the socials. We're already looking forward to it.

Thank you again to everyone who came along, took part, supported, cheered, volunteered, or simply brought good vibes to the Rec'. Ashwell Village Sports Day is truly a community creation - and we couldn't do it without you.

The AVSD Committee:

- Guy Reed**
- Gregor Mitchell**
- Wendy Howard**
- Laurence Simon**
- Dawn Sanders**
- Mike Banister**
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The Round the Village Race is the main event



Fit Club members are outstanding in their field

## Fit Club vs 2025

### Match Report

**Final Score:** Fit Club 366 – Year 7

**Venue:** Ashwell Recreation Ground (and occasionally Suffolk)

**Kick-off:** Every Saturday, 10:00am sharp

Fit Club came out firing this year, chalking up an astonishing 366 consecutive sessions since formation - a streak broken only by the Queen's funeral, which even we agreed counted as an official timeout.

The squad looked sharp from the first whistle, building on seven seasons of development since Head Coach Phil Ward founded the club. What began as a small, hopeful side has grown into a formidable community team, held together by grit, friendship, good humour, and questionable bear crawls.

With momentum on our side, Fit Club surged forward into the season's first major highlight...

#### Fit club on tour: the away fixture

In July, as the Lions went on tour – so did Fit Club! July saw the team travel for their first-ever away weekend in Suffolk. Local residents (especially the poor accommodation site owner) were left wondering what exactly had hit them. The away fixture featured:

- A special Fit Club on Tour training session
- Bike rides
- Kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding
- A tense Lions vs Australia viewing

- A dramatic, weather-dominated walk in Aldeburgh that can only be described as 'waterlogged extra time'
- And some very questionable yoga, led by our own (flexible) James Burke, whose cool-downs are as legendary as they are unpredictable

This away performance set a powerful tone for the rest of the season.

#### Second half: rugby netball dominates possession

Back on home turf, rugby netball seized control of the midfield. Starting in April, Sophie Tyler ran a five-month Tuesday-evening series that proved unstoppable. Matches continued until it was indisputably too dark to see the ball and even Claude, her dog, made regular squad appearances.

Not to be outdone, Tarek Hard organised the first Friday lunch-break rugby-netball session, marking it the first Friday kick-off in Fit Club history.

All this extra training paid off. Tom Foot evolved into an intercepting gazelle, terrorising passing lanes everywhere. His lunge form, however, remains under review by the officiating committee. And Linda Schumann stepped up to the mark when we were short of players, making her debut as our first ever player to run for both sides - keeping everyone's minds and footwork sharp

In November, momentum shifted again as Heather Burch introduced the club's first padel session, drawing an enthusiastic crowd - there may well be more to come.

#### Key player performances

There were, however, some standout displays from across the season:



Well-earned rest

- In April, Jack Busby completed the Barcelona Hyrox in 1:31- a flawless away performance
- In September, Alex Tunbridge and Tom Foot battled through threatening weather to conquer the London to Brighton bike ride
- November saw five Fit Clubbers take on the Bassingbourn Belle 10-mile race - Arran Heal stormed to a personal best of 1:09 and Stephen Fleming powered through the freezing cold in an impressive 1:28
- Duncan Brumby continued his reign as ParkRun veteran-in-chief, inspiring others to attempt the fearsome ParkRun-Fit Club double-header
- And in the development squad, there was brilliant news: two Fit Club pregnancies!

With the next generation already warming up, attention naturally turns to the future...

#### Full time reflections & looking ahead

Before the whistle blows, we take a moment to salute the man who started it all: Phil Ward - our founding coach, chief motivator, and the only person who can make a 10am Saturday burpee sound like a brilliant idea. After seven years leading the charge, Phil is stepping back from his weekly leadership role, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and energy. A huge thank you from the entire team as we welcome a new rota of volunteer leaders - a strong sign of squad depth and long-term stability

New kit, including two Fit Club flags and improved equipment funded by the Ashwell Show has added polish to our matchday presence.

Finally, a special shout-out goes to Rhubarb & Mustard, our unofficial clubhouse, for allowing a

parade of muddy boots to occupy their outdoor seating week after week. There is simply no better post-match analysis than one done over coffee.

As we head into a new season, we're ready to welcome new faces and returning regulars alike. All you need is a pair of trainers, a sense of humour and a willingness to give it a go.

Happy New Year!

**Margaret Townsend**

margaret.townsend34@gmail.com



BRITISH WHEEL OF YOGA TRAINED.

HATHA YOGA

CHAIR YOGA

ONE TO ONE TUITION

WORKSHOPS

RETREATS.

[emmacovingtonyoga@gmail.com](mailto:emmacovingtonyoga@gmail.com)



@EMMACOVINGTONYOGA

## Ashwell Chase - Boxing Day Run

Now in its third year, the 2025 Boxing Day Run has firmly established itself as a popular (and much needed) Ashwell tradition. Once again, villagers gathered to shake off the indulgences of Christmas Day and ready themselves for some festive exercise.

The event, organised by Matt and Lou Lee and their family, draws inspiration from the Chevin Chase – the well-known Boxing Day seven mile circuit of Otley Chevin, harking back to Matt and Lou's Yorkshire roots. Boxing Day 2025 saw an impressive turnout, with more than 120 runners, walkers, cyclists, and dogs setting off from the War Memorial, some still sporting their Christmas hats.

Participants chose between one lap (5km) or two laps (10km) on the scenic route out to Bluegates Farm and back, depending on their energy levels or desire to burn off the previous day's consumption. We even had two Accies U10s (Hugo Lee and Sam Kemp) complete the 10km in under an hour.

There was plenty of bonhomie, encouragement, and enthusiastic support from fellow Boxing Day walkers, keeping everyone in good spirits.

What makes the event so special is the family feel and atmosphere it generates. Rather than a race to win, it's a run that sees dads and daughters, sons and mums and even whole families running together and encouraging each other round. Of course there is always a bit of inter-family



The Dad and daughter team

competition that takes place!

For those experiencing the first pangs of festive withdrawal, the post-run gathering and cool down at the Rose & Crown was the perfect opportunity to swap stories, share laughter, and enjoy a well-earned drink. Judging by the smiles and good cheer, it's clear the Boxing Day Run is now a firm fixture of the village Christmas calendar.

We'll be there again next Boxing Day at 11am, so if you're up for some fresh air and a bit of fun, do come along – everyone is welcome to join in whether it's run, walk or ride.

### Jack Busby

✉ jackbusby1977@gmail.com

## New Year's Day Football

New Year's Day 2026 marked the 20th anniversary of the Ashwell New Year's Day Charity Football Match, competing once again for the much-loved Boorman Cup. The village turnout was fantastic and perfectly fitting for the occasion - even the weather was on our side, with the rain kindly staying away.

The Boorman Cup was created in memory of Jason Boorman, a very active member of the community who sadly lost his battle with cancer far too young. The match continues to raise money for Garden House Hospice, whose care and support meant so much to Jason and his family.

This year to encourage even more village involvement, the match kicked off with a half-hour 'Golden Oldies' session, exclusively for players aged 45 and over — including one remarkable 76 year-old still showing how it's done! After 30



New Year's Day 20th anniversary line-up

minutes, the youth of Ashwell joined the action, and the pace and flair noticeably stepped up.

Spectators lined the touchline in force, with families, dog walkers and those seeking some fresh air after a lively New Year's Eve all soaking up the atmosphere. After three 30-minute thirds, Sean's Blues emerged 3-1 winners, but Andy's Whites put in a heroic performance, rattling the crossbar twice and creating several nail-biting chances.

While there was a trophy lifted, the real winners were Garden House Hospice, who received almost £800 in donations thanks to everyone's

generosity.

A huge thank you to everyone who played, supported, refereed, captained, or helped make the day such a success. See you all next year!

If you'd like to get involved next time - or fancy joining the friendly over-30s football kick-around every Monday - please get in touch.

### Neil Bassill

✉ n\_bassill@hotmail.com

☎ 07718 110092



The run starts from the War Memorial

## St Mary's Church

St Mary's vision is to be a welcoming and inclusive church, in the heart of Ashwell, and 2025 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, the Pet Service, the All Soul's Requiem Mass and Midnight 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.

But church services are just a small part of life at St Mary's. Over the course of the year we have also enjoyed eating together on Maundy Thursday, Harvest and through a number of Bring and Share Lunches, and growing in faith together through our Home Groups, Advent Courses and screenings of The Chosen. The church has also hosted some amazing events, including the Music Festival, the Flea Market, the Christmas Fair, the Book Fair and a wonderful performance of Handel's Messiah, which was organised by the Friends of St Mary's.

This year has also been a busy one for 'life events' - we have celebrated five weddings, baptised 11

babies, children and adults, and, more sadly, said goodbye to a number of much loved villagers at funerals. We hope to be a church that continues to be there for you at all of life's big moments, so if you would like to mark any of them with us in 2026, do just ask. As well as baptisms, weddings and funerals, we are able to offer confirmations, renewals of vows, wedding blessings, memorial services and more.

As a community, we are always looking for ways in which we can live lives with deeper integrity and greater service, supporting both our world and our local community. This year we challenged ourselves to become a more environmentally conscious church and received our Bronze Eco Church Award.

We also supported the foundation of the new Wellbeing Hub, and were thrilled to see how well that has flourished. During the summer, we reviewed our Mission Action Plan, and we have a number of new initiatives coming in 2026, which will hopefully include launching a new Baby & Toddler Group, something which is now missing from our village.

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

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

☎ 01462 742277

Church and chapel



Easter



Nativity

Friend's Messiah concert. Photos: Chris Smith



## The Friends of St Mary's Church Ashwell

The Friends is a registered charity which was founded in 1995. The Friends' sole purpose is to raise money to help maintain both the fabric and the contents of Ashwell's glorious parish church, St Mary's.

We are fortunate to have such a large, striking and beautiful church at the centre of our village. We are all the beneficiaries of the hard work, craftsmanship and skills of past generations, who were considerably poorer than us, and who first built St Mary's and then maintained her over many centuries. The Friends exist to help continue the work of these past generations.

The Friends is not part of the Church or the Church of England but is an independent charity which acts on its own initiative and which raises its funds by holding events throughout the year and by receiving donations from its generous donors. Many of our donors are not otherwise involved in the life of the Church but are concerned that St Mary's is preserved, and indeed enhanced, for the enjoyment and use of future generations. We are very grateful to them all.

We have been fortunate in the last year to welcome a number of new trustees to the Friends whose skills and hard work have enabled us to hold a number of events throughout the year, including a performance in May of Handel's

Messiah conducted by Bene't Coldstream with a professional orchestra and soloists and a record-breaking Book Fair in October. We already have several events planned for 2026.

There is always more work to be done to St Mary's fabric and we anticipate being called on to assist with the costs of further repairs and maintenance in the very near future.

If you are interested in joining the Friends and becoming a regular donor to preserve our lovely parish church, please let us know by contacting me or Karen Rogers. We look forward to hearing from you and to welcoming you to our events in 2026

### Stephen ten Hove

Chair, Friends of St Mary's Ashwell  
✉ [stephenthove@icloud.com](mailto:stephenthove@icloud.com)

### Karen Rogers

✉ [karenr@wsrllp.com](mailto:karenr@wsrllp.com)



## St Mary's Church Buildings

2025 was another eventful year in the life of our beautiful church. Over the summer a team of expert abseilers completed some 'defrassing' work on the tower, removing the loose material that was in danger of falling. Although they did a fantastic job, sadly it showed there is much more still to do to preserve the tower for years to come, and we continue to be mindful of that in our planning of future works; sadly the path must remain closed around the tower for safety reasons for the foreseeable future, with regular inspections of the walls.

In December an impressive scaffolding structure went up, giving access to both the tower and side-aisle roofs for long-awaited repairs to the lead covering. It took some time to plan and erect the structures for work expected to be completed before the Peregrine Falcon nesting time in the early part of the new year.

2025 was also a time for saying thank you and farewell to two people who have contributed much to the ongoing care and preservation of the church. John Chilton has stood down from leadership of the team who plan for the building and maintenance works and Iain Frearson, our architect, has also reduced his work commitments. We owe much to both John and Iain for their commitment and hard work.

We are delighted however to have appointed Katherine Robinson from the RH Partnership in Cambridge as our new architect; Katherine brings significant experience of working with

churches such as ours and the challenges clunch brings! We look forward to working with her in the years ahead, and specifically on the project to significantly improve access for pedestrians, vehicles and those with mobility issues.

There have been changes in the churchyard too. Towards the end of 2025 it was agreed that the area adjacent to Hodwell and Church Path would no longer be kept long, as despite the best efforts of hard working volunteers wildflowers had not established themselves, and it was proving difficult for people to access graves. So going forward this will be kept short and instead we will establish a 'meadow area' south of the tower, where we will try again with wildflowers, and also, thanks to a grant from the North Herts Council Sustainable Communities fund, place birdfeeders and picnic tables to make the churchyard more appealing to birds and humans alike! We are grateful to the Parish Council who organise the grass cutting and tree surveys, to Greening Ashwell who provide helpful advice and practical help regarding biodiversity, and to the Community Payback teams who visit monthly and, among other jobs, help keep paths clear of weeds now we no longer use herbicides.

Finally a huge thank you to all those who contribute so much time and energy to looking after St Mary's, whether it is cleaning, keeping an ear open for the roof alarm at night, locking up, being on the Fabric Committee and all the many many other jobs which make it a living, serving, welcoming building for everyone.

### David Richards

Church Buildings Group  
✉ [dbr99@btinternet.com](mailto:dbr99@btinternet.com)



'Defrassing': removing deteriorated surface stonework



The Flower Arranging Team creates beautiful displays for the Church

## Church Flowers

2025 has been a very busy and exciting year for the church flower team. We have enjoyed many new challenges together and more importantly the camaraderie this has brought with it.

This year we provided flowers for four weddings in the Church, three of which were daughters' of the flower team, all very different but beautiful in their own ways. These weddings allowed us to be more creative than ever before and fill the church with stunning displays for everyone to enjoy.

Sadly there have been several memorial services this year for members of our congregation but it is always a privilege to be involved with the families and to help by making the church look beautiful for their loved ones.

We are always most grateful for the kind donations we receive throughout the year for the flower fund and this year we have been able to purchase some new containers which will benefit our flower arranging techniques hugely. If anyone would like to make a donation in memory of a loved one, particularly around a special 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 in our team please contact one of the following:

### Caroline Feast

☎ 07703 321088

### Suzanne Humbert

☎ 07941 529849

### Michelle Notley

☎ 07967 444591

## St Mary's Choir

The choir remains a great strength at St Mary's. In fact, as I write this, I know we have attracted at least five new singers in 2025. We have performed new music and are supported by a highly accomplished organist.

During Lent we sang **Ave Maria** by Dubra (brand new), and another highlight for me was **Mother of God, here I stand** (Tavener). Easter Day was phenomenally well attended, and we sang **Surely** and **The Hallelujah Chorus** (both from Handel's Messiah) as well as crowd pleasers **Cantate Domino** (Pitoni) and **This Joyful Eastertide**. Festal Evensong in early May contained Henry Ley's **A Prayer for King Henry VI, Noble in B Minor** (almost my very favourite Mag and Nunc setting), and Balfour Gardiner's **Evening Hymn** (aka **Te lucis**) which is a favourite lung buster in the slightly niche world of sacred choral music.

Many of the choir helped form the chorus for a performance of Handel's **Messiah** in mid-May which I won't make further comment on as it will have been mentioned in the Friends of St Mary's section. But thanks to those who made it a memory few will forget.

A small tradition now exists that our last rehearsal in the academic year (in mid-July) is a requests evening. In 2025's request night we sang 18 pieces of music which spanned six centuries of composition. Yes, we retired to the Bushel afterwards!

Christmas was predictably busy, and to give you some insight I start thinking about repertoire before the supermarkets have started playing Jingle Bells in September. Our Carol Service included **The Rose** (Gjeilo) which was brand

new, **I sing of a maiden** (Berkeley), **Cradle Song** (Rutter) also new, and **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day** (Gardiner) which is fiendishly tricky! Christmas Day included much loved favourites **Lully Lulla Lullay** (Stopford) and **The Nativity Carol** (Rutter).

Perhaps the most momentous thing for the choir in 2025 was to be singing behind brand new choirstalls. These arrived in time for Easter. As alluded to in last year's Yearbook, these were the product of much focussed teamwork not only in fund raising, but in completing the diocese's application process. Treske (manufacturer based in Thirsk, North Yorkshire) built them for us, and if you're not a regular church goer, but are reading this, I urge you most sincerely to pop in and see them. I thanked Ruth ten Hove in last year's report for all her industry in leading the project, but I repeat that thanks here with utmost sincerity.

A word or two if I may about Pete Eaglesfield, our organist since September 2022: he and I work closely together throughout the year, and I thank him for that naturally. But what some of you may not know is that we both share a deep love of organ music. I wouldn't say his newfound love of Bach's organ music is all my doing, but I have encouraged him greatly to expand in that direction. In 2025, amongst other wonderful playing, he gave us Bach's **Fantasia in C minor BWV 562** and **Aus Tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir BWV 39**. I will remember those as well as any of the choral music we performed together. Add to those the versatility to write arrangements for weddings that in 2025 included John Legend's **All of Me**, he's quite the allrounder.

Lastly my thanks go to the Rector, Chris Campbell, and all the members of the choir who sing with us and who made 2025 a spectacular year.

### Bene't Coldstream

✉ bcoldstream@yahoo.co.uk

☎ 01462 742288

☎ 07971 404481

## Mothers Union

Mothers Union continues to meet on the second Thursday of the month in the Parish Church Room at 10.30am. We have had an interesting and rather experimental year without a planned programme. However, that doesn't mean to say

we've been idle! Lots of opportunities have occurred and we haven't had any trouble filling our year with activities.

We have had fewer speakers but embraced a more hands-on approach with members taking a more active role in meetings which has been most enjoyable. We do love to chat over a cup of coffee and some of our meetings have been based on discussions around our ethos of 'Christian Care for Families'. In February, we celebrated National Marriage Week by thinking about how marriage has changed since Mothers Union began 150 years ago and how we can best support very different types of families today.

As our movement is very much based upon our Christian faith, in November we were led in discussions about 'How Scripture has Influenced my Life'. Members were very happy to talk about their own experiences based around quotations from scripture we had been given, as well as those that we felt had helped us personally.

We have also enjoyed lots of practical activities. We cut out pictures to be made into a 'memory book' which will support dementia patients in a care home. Those of us who like sewing had a go at stitching a 'cross in my pocket' which comes with its own case and a poem which talks about why we are Christians. One of these went to someone recovering from a serious accident who much appreciated it and has since made an excellent recovery. More recently we have made and filled 40 Christmas stockings for the neonatal and children's wards in Lister Hospital and also provided them with emergency wash bags, thanks to people's kind donations in our box at the back of church.

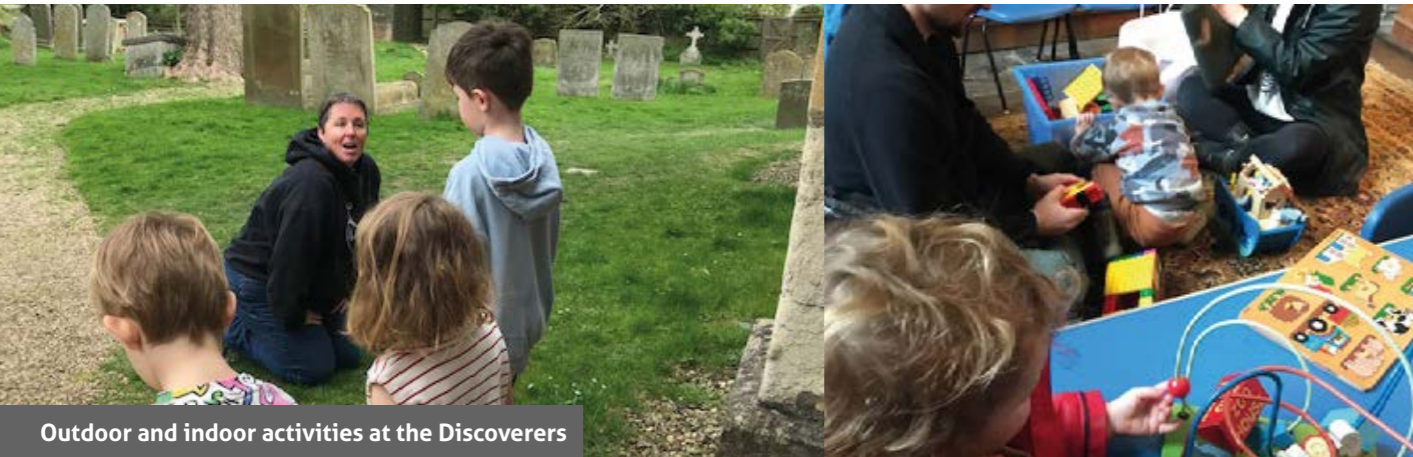
In July we held a cream tea in church as it was just too hot outside, and raised £80 for our Summer of Hope appeal and in August we went on a lovely walk around the village stopping to reflect on the life of our founder, Mary Sumner, ending in the Parish Church Room with prayers, coffee and cake.

In 2026 we will be celebrating 150 years of Mothers Union with lots of exciting activities planned. We always welcome new members so do join up and join in!

### Viv Hollow

Group Contact

✉ viv\_and\_ken@yahoo.co.uk



Outdoor and indoor activities at the Discoverers

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

*"Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from Him." psalm 127*

St Mary's Church warmly welcomes all visitors to our services and activities, or just to enjoy our beautiful, spiritual, historic building. Not least of these are the children and young people who bring joy and a sense of fun to the varied activities we have to offer.

As we compete with sporting fixtures, family commitments and other distractions, our numbers have fluctuated, but we continue to offer our Discoverers sessions for children aged 3 to 11 during the 10.45am service on three Sundays out of four.

We link our activities to seasonal themes and Bible readings to tie in with what the adults are contemplating. As we pause during the service to share the peace of God with each other, the children also share what they have been learning about with the congregation. Hearing thoughts and ideas from the perspective of children is a highlight and teaches us that we can learn much from each other.

Our 'Thank God It's Sunday' all age service on the first Sunday of every month provides another opportunity for children and young people to take part. With a more flexible, interactive style, there are lots of ways to get involved. We have been pleased to have children leading prayers, taking

part in dramatic readings, holding props and participating in Q&A sessions.

In addition to our Sunday services, there are regular seasonal activities such as our Easter egg hunt in the churchyard on Easter Saturday, and 'Holiday drop-in' sessions in August with crafts, toys and stories. As I write, we look forward to hosting a Christmas craft event in December, helping us to prepare for the crib service and our Advent window display as well as items to take home.

Ashwell Primary School children, teachers and parents filled the church at Harvest festival and Christingle services, and also joined their friends from the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers on Remembrance Sunday.

On 31st October we offered hot drinks and soul cakes to passers-by at the lych gate. On a damp dark evening, this was appreciated by approximately 100 people who stopped for a chat. For many this was a welcome break from trick or treating!

Looking ahead, we are planning to commence running 'Little Fishes' baby and toddler group at the URC Hall from January 2026, following the closure of the existing group in September.

If you would like to find out more about our children's activities, please go to our website or contact our Rector Chris or Jo Adams.

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

**Rev'd Chris Campbell**

✉ chris@revcc.uk  
☎ 01462 742277

**Jo Adams**

✉ adams561j@gmail.com  
☎ 07756 921199

## Parish and Museum Teas



Parish Teas is firmly established as a year-round event. Run at the Parish Church Room, it was originally set up by St Mary's Church to offer Sunday afternoon teas during the summer

months. Now the venture runs all year thanks to the inclusion of Ashwell Museum, who have taken on the organisation and running during the winter. It provides a year round Sunday afternoon tea shop serving hot and cold drinks together with homemade cakes, scones and biscuits.

We seek to provide all with a warm, welcoming tea stop. A place to meet with others, enjoy a chat if so inclined and indulge in a cuppa and cake. Many people have enjoyed this service over the past year, both locals and visitors to the village.

Such a venture does not run on its own. So far this year, around 40 volunteers have been involved in either baking or serving for St Mary's, and 30 volunteers have provided the service for the Museum. Very many thanks to all of you, we couldn't do it without your help. Over the past year, St Mary's has been able to raise £2,872 for the Fabric Fund, and between October 2024 and April 2025, £1,739.36 was raised for the Museum.

We are constantly on the lookout for willing volunteers for both Parish and Museum Teas. Should you be interested in assisting please feel free to contact us.

**Judy Banham**

Parish Teas  
✉ judy.banham@btinternet.com

**Karen Mills**

Museum Teas  
✉ karenmillsuk@yahoo.co.uk

## Food Pantry



Thank you so much to all the people who have donated regularly, or occasionally, to the food pantry this year. For those new to the village, it is located at the back of St Mary's church and is a way for the community to

support people within it who are going through difficult financial times by providing free food and toiletries. There's no registration and its use is totally anonymous. If you are in need please make use of it. There is a limit of six items a day to make sure we can help as many people as possible and the pantry team monitor and refill daily.

Over the few years that the pantry has been open we have occasionally been left notes by users thanking people who support the pantry and letting us know that it has really helped them when things were difficult. This makes it all worthwhile. If you would like to donate, please drop items off at the village store or in St Mary's Church. If you're in doubt of what to buy, the following things are always appreciated:

- tinned meals
- baked beans
- coffee
- desserts
- cereal
- biscuits
- tinned veg (not beans, lentils or chickpeas)
- pasta sauce.

Many thanks.

**The Pantry Team**

ashwellfoodpantry@gmail.com



Enjoy home-made cake and a cuppa at the Parish Room

## Bellringing Report

Over the course of 2025 all our ringers have continued to make good progress, especially our youngest who has reached the standard needed to ring for services. Our other ringers have improved their change ringing skills, helped in part by ringing regularly at Hinxworth as well.

During the year we rang for four weddings as well as a funeral and a memorial service, all with ringers from our band. In May we rang to celebrate the 90th birthday of our former Tower captain, Robert Sheldrick. We also rang regularly for Sunday services throughout the year, including ringing half muffled for Remembrance Sunday.

At time of writing we are planning to ring for the village carol concert and for services over Christmas.

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 where you will be made most welcome.

### Steve White

Tower Captain  
☎ 07981 393110

### Ian Chandler

Secretary  
☎ 01462 743091

## Ashwell Village News

2025 brought changes to the Ashwell Village News. Sarah and Alfie Talks stepped down as editors, with the January 2025 issue being their last. I took over as editor in January, producing my first issue for February. Ed Freed joined in to redesign the layout and continues to help with any of the trickier design elements which come up. On the advertising and finance side of things we have Julia Mitchell and Mark Eaton. And Tracy and Richard Young handle distribution.

Of course, the AVN would not exist if it weren't for our contributors. I was very pleased that most of our contributors stayed on and that we have recruited some new ones. We have had articles about medicinal herbs, poetry and essays on famous writers, puzzles and crosswords, words of

wisdom, and community updates.

A new Community Calendar was introduced, collating all the various village events onto one page for quick reference. Whether an article, poem, or artwork, we welcome contributions from all members of the Ashwell (and surrounding) community.

We are also grateful to the shops that continue to stock the Ashwell Village News. Ashwell Village Stores, the Ashwell Pharmacy, and Sarah's Farm Shop make it easy to pick up a copy of the news magazine. Copies can also be purchased at St Mary's Church and the Parish Church Room.

Looking forward to 2026, we hope to expand our group of contributors, including more young people, organizations, writers and artists in the mix. We would like to collaborate more with groups such as the Ashwell Show and Ashwell at Home. We are also hoping to recruit some new advertisers. If you would like to get involved, please drop us a line.

### Christa Bosch

✉ ashwellvillagenews@gmail.com

**JANE BUXTON**  
*Garden Maker*

GARDEN DESIGN · PLANTING PLANS  
PLANT HUSBANDRY

*Highly experienced practical advice  
with proper local knowledge of site and soil*



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## Ashwell United Reformed Church



During 2025, we have enjoyed getting to know our new Minister Rev'd Stan Chatikobo along with his family who usually accompany him when he comes to Ashwell on the fourth

Sunday of the month to lead worship. Rev'd Stan has also joined in some of our Come and Meet Each Other (CAMEO) sessions, Saturday lunches and teas. It has been very interesting hearing about his former life in Zimbabwe – and the differences between worshipping communities there and here in the UK. Rev'd Stan has pastoral responsibility for two other churches so we share him with churches at Walkern and Knebworth.

Our lovely chapel was open to visitors at Ashwell at Home (and occasionally at other times) and, in December, Ashwell's Big Sing came again to make marvellous music for a good cause. We held community lunches during Lent and at Harvest time and, during June and July, afternoon teas were available in the hall on Saturday afternoons. These raised just over £700 for church funds so we are very grateful to all those who came along to enjoy scones, cakes and lively conversation.

Our CAMEO gatherings still attract 10-15 people and we have enjoyed a wide range of topics for listening, discussion, crafting and singing. We are

also delighted that the Ashwell Hub on Thursday afternoons has been a successful venture.

In 2025, the church and hall were inspected by a surveyor undertaking the Quinquennial Survey. We are very relieved that no major problems were discovered. There are one or two patches of damp (not surprising in older buildings) and one or two areas of loose brickwork - all matters to be addressed within the next couple of years. The Hall is a much-appreciated community resource, offering a gathering place which can seat 60 people, a smaller meeting room and a modest but well-equipped kitchen. Several village organisations use it for their events and families hire it for parties and gatherings. We are very pleased that the Toddlers group started up again in the new year.

Sunday worship generally includes hymns, readings, prayers and a short 'message' (we try not to call them sermons). On the second Sunday we sometimes worship in a more relaxed style, with members of the congregation choosing hymns, perhaps offering topical prayers or joining in a discussion about a particular bible theme. Communion is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of the month. Regular worshippers are rather few now but we still maintain a warm and friendly presence on the High Street. Do look for information about our activities in each month's 'Ashwell Village News'.

**Finally, we have two special requests:** please do not to park outside the chapel on the mornings of second and fourth Sundays – and especially when the cones are out to indicate a funeral. Secondly, the churchyard should not be a place to 'empty' your dog. Surely it should have more respect than for this purpose? We wouldn't normally have mentioned this – but complaints have been received!

### Revd Stan Chatikobo

Our Minister  
☎ 07823 961895

### Chris James

Church Secretary  
☎ 01462 742684

### San Carswell

Hall Bookings  
☎ 01462 742757



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Tuesday 7.15pm

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*From our Registers*

*St Mary's Church*

**Baptisms**

27th April	Ezra Zwetsloot
7th June	Jake Mitchell
	Theodore Clode
31st June	Rory Parsons
20th July	Noah Hall-Putz
10th August	Artemisia Stockton
11th August	Rachel Stockton
	Kevin Stockton
1st November	Wilfred Wilcock

*St Mary's Church*

7th December	Aurora Lien-Talks
14th December	Austin Moore

**Weddings**

26th July	Jenny Dixon and Luke Hale
9th August	Amelia Humbert & John Holroyd
20th September	Beverly Guab and Matthew Perch
27th September	Helen Allen and Jamie Mash
8th November	Alexandra Feast and Archie Pearson

**Funerals**

27th January	Richard Herbert
18th February	Jim White
17th July	Chere Hunter
26th September	Ruth Rowntree
8th October	Winifred Sheldrick
20th November	Bernard Sanders

**Memorial Services**

31st May	Olive Holmes
4th June	Simon Hunter

*United Reformed Church*

**Funerals**

30th July	Molly Aldridge
19th November	Mabel Marjorie Skerman

*Ashwell Parish Council*

**Interments**

23rd January	Dennis Roberts
27th January	Richard Herbert
18th February	Edward James White
9th April	Stanley Albert Revill and Ruth Pearl Revill
31st May	Olive Holmes
30th June	Joyce Maud Sharp
15th July	Anthony Albert Oyston
17th July	Cheryl Lyn (Chere) Hunter
8th August	Pauline Ann Powell
26th September	Ruth Frances Rowntree
19th November	Mabel Marjorie Skerman

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### Introduction

Ashwell isn't just a collection of buildings, it's a thriving community of interesting people. It's the people that make Ashwell the special place it is. Here we find out more about a selection of Ashwell people, and how they have helped to make Ashwell the village it is, whether as a volunteer, a member of a society, or in a role serving the community, be that behind a bar, at the drivers seat of a bus, or helping to keep our cars running.

### Jill Powell

#### Ashwell's Unsung Hero



Ashwell is lucky to have a number of unsung heroes who give up their time and skills to support a cause or help individuals. One of these unsung heroes is Jill Powell.

Jill was born in Nottingham in 1943 and came to Stevenage in 1946, attending the Sacred Heart Convent in Hitchin followed by Mullarkey's Secretarial College. It was whilst Jill was at

secretarial college that she first became involved in charitable work with the Local Yokels group, raising much needed funds for the old Hitchin Hospital.

Jill has lived in Ashwell since 1969, her husband Chris having moved here with family in 1956. Ashwell has been at the heart of her interests since moving to the village. Shortly after moving in, Jill and her husband became involved with Ashwell Show. In 1971, she took over as Secretary of the show from Anna Day, wife of the baker Howard Day. She stayed involved in the show for the next 20 years, taking responsibility for trade stands along the way. During this time Jill's family grew, Anna and James both attending Ashwell School. James joined both cubs and scouts, Jill helping at both. Anna now lives in Ireland with her husband and 2 children. James lives near Brighton with his wife and 2 children.

Jill was the Parish Clerk from 1987-89 and was then elected as a Parish Councillor, a role she held for many years. As Parish Councillor, among other things, she met with police to discuss problems over under age drinking in the village, and campaigned against mothers having to clear litter from the recreation ground before youngsters could use the play area. It is a shame that problems which were faced in 2002 are still apparent today in the village. In March 1995 Jill joined in celebrations for 100 years of the Parish Council. As part of the celebrations the Parish Councillors dressed as the council would in 1895!

During her time as Parish Councillor she represented it as a governor on Ashwell School Governing Body and was Chair of Governors for several of those years. It was a time of change for Ashwell School with increasing numbers of children in the village, meaning that the school



Jill and other school governors at the County Council

*Al fresco gathering of the Women's Institute*

Ashwell people

needed funds to extend. In 1994 Jill took a group of governors and parents to the county council to ask for funding for the extension, which was successful.

Jill has been a member of Ashwell and District Royal British Legion (organising the Poppy Collection for 5 years) and is still on the committee. She headed up a small group of volunteers to organise a picnic on the Recreation Ground for Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. From 2004 Jill was a Village Hall trustee for many years and in 2007 helped produce the Ashwell Cook Book to raise money for improvements to the Village Hall. Since 2021 has been Chair of the Friends of Ashwell Museum. For several years Jill also did a watercolour painting of an Ashwell scene which was reproduced as a charity card for Ashwell's Fight Against Cancer.

As the saying goes, if you want a job done, ask a busy person. Jill has been the epitome of an unsung hero for Ashwell throughout her time here, and on behalf of the village, thank you Jill for all that you have done for Ashwell and continue to do so.

As told to **Tracy Young**



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## Margaret Gilliam

As Margaret steps down from being Chairperson of Ashwell Horticultural Society, let's learn a little more about the lady who has been a stalwart of the society for the last 20 years.

Margaret grew up in Holywood, Northern Ireland, and it was during these informative years that she began her love of gardening and the great outdoors, over 65 years ago. Her neighbour, Mr Stevens was an avid gardener and a member of the local horticultural society. Margaret and his daughter Ruth often attended the annual horticultural show, where he exhibited his prize dahlias.

Both Margaret and Ruth grew to loathe dahlias, largely because of the multitude of earwigs hiding in the blooms. She finally changed her mind about dahlias in 2025, when she bought some plants and is now very appreciative of their beauty. As a ten year-old, Margaret was responsible for looking after the garden when the Stevens family went on holiday. She would tend the garden, pick the fruit and make jam with the produce.

Alongside a passion for gardening, Margaret has always been involved in the life of the local church. After several years teaching, Margaret returned to college, this time to bible college, after which she worked for a Christian charity, teaching others about the Middle Eastern culture and customs, in an attempt to help others understand more of their Christian faith.

It was during this time she and Alan, her husband, met and discovered their mutual interest in the Middle East. Today they are volunteers for Embrace the Middle East, a charity working in several countries in the region, supporting them in their work, and fundraising on their behalf.

In the 1990s Ashwell became their "go to place", and they found themselves frequently coming to the village for walks and visits to the local pub, until one day they found themselves outside the museum, hoping to participate in one of Peter Greener's talks, when they spotted a house for sale opposite.

That was 28 years ago, and while they are no longer living in Swan Street, they are only round



the corner in West End and are now the proud owners of a beautiful garden, which sometimes opens for Ashwell at Home.

Their close neighbour in Swan Street, Geraldine Crump, invited them to go with her to one of the Horticultural Society meetings in 2005. At the time Liz Moynihan was chair, and Margaret was immediately taken by Liz, the Chair's, warm welcome. Margaret got to know Liz and Fergus more when she and Alan went to Jordan on a trip arranged through St. Mary's Church in October 2008. As a result, Margaret joined the committee, became part of the team preparing and serving refreshments at the monthly meetings, before becoming Membership Secretary, and eventually Chair in 2012, when Eileen ten Hove retired from the post after four years.

During Margaret's time as Chair, the Horticultural Society membership has grown, and now has over 130 members, with a high percentage actively involved in events. Among the changes made, there has been the updating of the constitution and moving the Annual Show from the school to St. Mary's Church. Although Margaret has led Ashwell Horticultural Society for several years, she is keen to point out that she is a facilitator rather than an expert, providing opportunities for others to learn more and develop their skills.

After bible college, Margaret returned to teaching, and her final post was at Offley Church of England Primary School, where she was Head of Infants, and religious education, before retiring in 2016. When Margaret retired, she and Alan went to pick olives in Palestine, living with the indigenous

people and learning about the injustices that they face. This trip was followed by another in 2019, this time meeting with food producers and learning about Middle Eastern cookery, whilst taking part in lessons given by residents of refugee camps. Margaret has since run several Middle Eastern cookery courses in Ashwell, which have not only been well attended, but have raised knowledge of food from the Middle East and raised much needed funds. During COVID they set up the 'Shop in the Shed' at the end of their garden selling produce and objects from the Middle East. Interest in the goods available through their shop has grown, and in 2025 they sold a record 60 litres of olive oil.

Throughout her time as chair, Margaret has continued to be involved with St Mary's, including leading all age worship services and holding House Group meetings at her home, and is a member of the Ministry Team.

Now she has retired as chair of the Horticultural Society, Margaret is intending to spend more time in the garden with Alan, developing their new found passion for growing dahlias, especially as they don't seem to be overrun with earwigs in Hertfordshire. She is also planning to develop and deliver further Middle Eastern Cookery courses in Ashwell. Watch this space! Many thanks to Margaret for leading Ashwell Horticultural Society for the last 13 years, we look forward to your seeing your dahlias at the Annual Horticultural Show.

As told to **Tracy Young**

## Mother and I and the WI

Margie Wallace's reflections on retiring as President of Ashwell WI

In the early 1920s, Mrs Fordham from the Bury



called at Farrows Farm and suggested to my grandparents that their daughter, Bessie Sale, then aged 16, might like to become a member of the newly formed WI. Bessie agreed to give it a try. Her parents impressed on her that if she joined, she should take it seriously and attend the meetings faithfully. This she did for the next 86 years or so.

The WI then was a sort of Google-cum-Ashwell hub of the day. Its first object was to give

country women a voice, encourage the production of food in the post war years and revive rural communities. Being apolitical and non-denominational, it was open to everyone. During the Second World War it was an invaluable meeting place for members to exchange ideas, getting help on learning new recipes, using up leftovers, making and mending clothes in those days of ration cards and clothing coupons.

But it was far from just 'Jam and Jerusalem' as other interests took root. Ashwell soon had a lively drama group, and a prize-winning choir, both much encouraged by the Whitby family. When my mother became President, my sisters and I became accustomed to being called upon to take part in various pageants, dramas and shows. Like my mother I became a member aged 16 when the choir needed an accompanist. Thus, when not at school I had the chance to visit other WIs where the choir was singing, and much enjoyed the annual competitions at Hatfield. Our home at Bluegates was constantly involved in rehearsals, garden parties, tennis parties, and full of tapestries, lampshades, and other WI inspired paraphernalia.

When I retired from my London job and returned to Ashwell, I knew where I should find friendship and company. It was not my intention to become president, but the post was made most enjoyable and trouble free by a lively and energetic committee, and the enterprise of members. This was especially true during the COVID period, in mastering Zoom, and devising wondrous poems and other cheering ways of keeping in touch. I leave it in good heart as numbers grow, and look forward to more of those good meetings to come.

**Margie Wallace**



Margie and Bessie Wallace together

## Ashwell Bus Service

... and Ye Olde Tin Can



Paul Day with grandson Marcus

This last year has seen a huge change to the bus service to and from Ashwell. However, it set me thinking: when did Ashwell get its first public transport bus service? I referred to Ashwell Museum and Albert Sheldrick's book **A Different World - Ashwell before 1939**. It was fascinating to learn the following:

"The village owes its first bus service to a London hat manufacturer. Cockney Henry Leverett, wearing a cloth cap and neckerchief, bought the strange White House on Ashwell Street at the top of Bear Lane in the early 1920s. There were the usual village rumours... something mysterious was going on... but after a time, Henry made himself known to the regulars at the Rose & Crown and, following a few rounds of drinks, he didn't seem a bad sort of chap. In fact he made it known that he was building a bus! In due course the strange vehicle emerged – a mixture of polished

aluminium and red paint. A sign above the windscreen stated, "Ye Olde Tin Can". The bus was fitted out with about fourteen red wickerwork seats, with red leather cushions. A board on the slaughterhouse of T.D. Dennis in the High Street stated the bus would, "leave at 5.30pm on Sundays bound for Bedford, Henlow and Hitchin, returning about 10.30pm." And so the first bus service had come to Ashwell in the early 1920s. How different the bus service is 100 years later!

Since the new housing development at the end of Station Road, Ashwell has an improved bus service with buses running hourly from 7am in the morning to 7pm in the evening during the week, less regularly on Saturday.

From there being just one bus stop in the village in the 1920s, Ashwell now has four stops, two in the High Street and two in Station Road. This year also saw the second bus shelter installed in the village. Previously, Ashwell had one bus shelter at the end of Station Road near the Memorial. With the building of the new development Senuna Park at the other end of Station Road, a new bus stop was erected. Originally the planning department wanted to install a glass shelter. However, the villagers opposed this and fought for a design more in keeping with Ashwell. The villagers won, and towards the end of 2025, a wooden bus shelter with electronic bus time display was installed.

Although automated buses will probably be a thing in the future, buses need drivers and Ashwell has been particularly lucky in having the welcoming face of Paul Day at the wheel of the Ashwell bus. Paul moved to the village from Stevenage just after 1992 when he married local

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girl Jeannie Fox. They went on to have three children, Annie, Stephen and Rebecca who all attended Ashwell School.

He qualified as a bus driver in 2003 with Arriva when the 90 and 91 route went hourly from Hitchin to the Mordens. In 2012 he joined Centrebus in Stevenage who then had the bus route which had changed to going to Royston. Sadly in 2017 his marriage ended so he moved out of the village, before returning a couple of years ago. In 2021 he was contacted by Andrew Richmond who offered him the job of doing the 91 route full time and so for the last four years it's mainly been Paul as the village bus driver.

I'm sure that for the last four years those regular folk who use the bus were comforted to see the safe hands of Paul in the driver seat. Since working as a bus driver, 2025 brought the biggest change which Paul has seen. With the increase in service there are now three bus drivers during the week and two on a Saturday.

As the saying goes, 'Use it or Lose it!' Ashwell residents are incredibly lucky to have an hourly bus service.

As told to **Tracy Young**

## Josh's Story



Hi I'm Josh, the pub manager at The Bushel & Strike, many of you will know me from coming to visit the pub, however for those that don't, I thought it would be nice to share with you a little about myself and how I ended up working in this fabulous village.

It all started back in 2016 when I joined the Team at The Bushel under Lucy and Martin. I started initially part time time, then as time went on, a full time position happened not long after. I loved being a part of the hustle and bustle of Ashwell and I loved serving and getting to know the locals.

In 2019 when Lucy and Martin (who left the Bushel in 2018) rang to say they were opening a

restaurant in Baldock and would I like to be their restaurant manager, there was only one answer. I really enjoyed my time in Baldock. I used to see so many familiar faces from Ashwell, but also a brand new set of customers, some of which are still friends today.

Timing was a real issue here as along came COVID in 2020. We worked throughout the pandemic delivering the 'Arbury at Home', a very special hand delivered service which felt really important. It allowed us to keep in touch with so many of you at a time when we could not socialise.

Unfortunately the restaurant closed not long after the pandemic and I found myself at D'arry's, a bar and restaurant in the heart of Cambridge. They had multiple bars and it was here that I honed my skill for mixing cocktails.

Nine years after joining The Bushel I got the call again... Martin, without Lucy this time, rang to say he was going back to take on the pub again and would I like to run the front of house operation for him? We reopened the Bushel on 22nd January 2025 and we haven't looked back since.

There are so many facets to my role here that are amazing. Again it is great seeing so many of you on a regular basis, I really enjoy our chats and how most of you tolerate my bad jokes, I'm also very proud of our staff, most of whom are local youngsters who have taken on their first jobs in life and it is an honour to help them navigate that first step into the world of employment and watch them grow as individuals.

Now of course it can't all be about work, I do have spare time and do like to spend it with friends and family. Being a twin - maybe that is something you didn't know about me - family is really important and we are all very close. My favourite way to spend my time off is with my Partner Ellie, a seasoned hospitality worker too, on dog walks in the countryside then off out for dinner and seeing what is new out there.

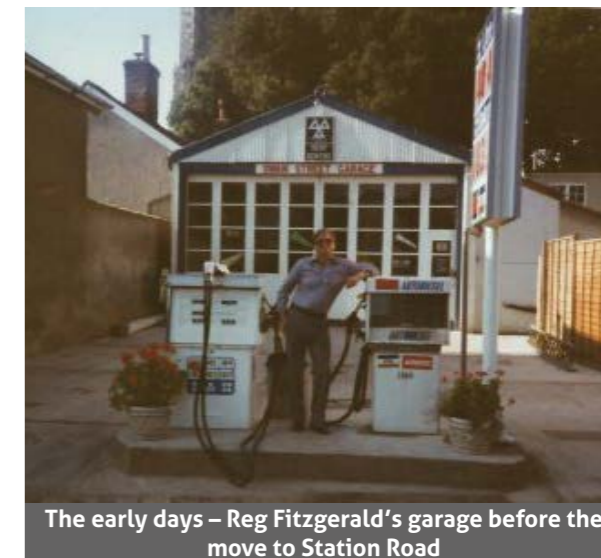
It has been a pleasure to share a little of my story with you, feel free to pop in to the bushel and share some of yours over a nice pint, or of course a cocktail if your in the mood.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as we can in 2026.

**Josh Hathway-Neville**

## Ashwell's Garage

*a story of Ashwell's heritage, craftsmanship and community*



The early days – Reg Fitzgerald's garage before the move to Station Road

### The early years - Reg Fitzgerald's legacy

Reg Fitzgerald's journey into Ashwell's motoring life began at his original premises on Swan Street, where he built a respected local garage known for reliability, hard work, and friendly service. When the time came for the village to evolve, the Swan Street garage was demolished and replaced by a house, marking the end of one chapter but opening the door to another.

Determined to grow his business, Reg then built the new premises on Station Road, creating what would become the long-term home of Ashwell Garage. He owned and operated the site until 1998, running the workshop with dedication, long hours and a reputation that made him a familiar face to villagers old and young.

### A new chapter - Brennar, Thompson and a growing reputation

In 1998, Reg sold the Station Road garage to Steven Brenner, who invested in expanding and modernising the premises. Steven added a third workshop bay and continued to build the business for the growing needs of the community.

It was during this period that Lee Thompson joined the team, employed to manage garage operations. Lee quickly became the face of Ashwell Garage, earning trust across Ashwell and surrounding villages. His fairness, approachable



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Ashwell Garage today – proudly serving the village with a family-run touch

manner and technical expertise helped cement the garage's reputation for quality and integrity. In 2008, after a decade of managing the site, Lee acquired the business from Steven Brenner, and a new era began.

**Lee's era - growth, modernisation and a family run future**

Over the last 17 years, Lee has transformed Ashwell Garage into a modern, fully equipped service centre while keeping its community-focused heart. Under his leadership, the business has:

- modernised its workshop facilities
- invested in advanced diagnostic technology
- expanded services for cars, vans and campervans
- strengthened ties with local families, farms, businesses and tradespeople

What began as Lee's personal commitment has grown into a true family business. His two eldest children, Kai and Ciana, joined the garage after completing their degrees, bringing new skills, energy and continuity for the next generation.

And at the heart of the team is Hazel Court, a long-standing and deeply respected member of staff. Hazel supported the garage back in the 1990s alongside Steve Brenner and continues to be a valued member of today's operation, a living link between the garage's past and present.

Behind the scenes, the workshop runs smoothly thanks to the dedicated team: Lee Cherry, Jack Crossland, Connor Livings and James Parkinson, each playing a vital part in delivering the high standards, honesty and care the garage is known for.

**Ashwell Garage today - built on trust, honesty and community**

Ashwell Garage remains proudly independent, proudly local and proudly family-run. From MOTs and servicing to diagnostics, repairs, tyres and forecourt support, the team's mission is simple: to provide dependable, honest and high-quality service for the community we love and belong to.

**A heartfelt message to our community**

To all our customers, neighbours, friends and supporters - thank you. Your trust in our work, your patience on busy days, your conversations at the forecourt and your loyalty over the years mean more to us than words can say. Whether you have been with us since the days of Reg, joined us under Steven, or first visited under Lee's ownership, you are part of our story.

We remain dedicated to serving Ashwell with honesty, care and the community spirit that makes this village truly special. Here's to many more years together.

**The Ashwell Garage Family**

*Sarah's Farm Shop*

Hi, I'm Dilshan and I run Sarah's Farm Shop. I also run the Litlington shop nearby. We are a family run business with the goal of serving our community with the finest fresh produce from local suppliers, everyday essentials, gifts and cards, and a level of personal service that makes you feel truly cared for.

We bake bread from frozen in store daily and have a wide variety of meats from nearby butchers. We also stock a whole range of cheeses to meet your cravings.

Our aim is to make shopping simple and enjoyable, whether you visit in person or rely on our weekly village deliveries. If there is ever an item which you need stocked, please feel free to ask us and we will do our best to cater for your needs.

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## Sporting Ambassadors

Ashwell is fortunate as a community. We are able to enjoy a range of sports, to both entertain us and to keep us fit, whether that be as an individual, as part of a team, or part of a group. Here we find out about the sporting interests of some Ashwellians, and how they became interested in their sport. Perhaps you might be tempted after reading about some of the sports to have a go!

### Cricket

#### Graham 'Scottie' Scott



Clearly cricket has been a big part of Graham's life throughout his life - and he has played at a high level.

It all started in earnest in school at age 11 when his cricket mad headmaster saw a promising leg spinner and then discovered that he could swing the ball as well. By the time he was 15 he was playing for Southgate CC first team in the Middlesex league.



U19 Young cricketer

The next year he was invited to join



Middlesex U19 League team

Middlesex CC's 'Young Cricketers' progressing at age 20 to the second team where he was paid for playing. In his first game (against Sussex at Hove) he opened the bowling... and was asked for his autograph! That evening he partied hard late into the night, which seems to have become a feature of his relationship with the game.

Cricket was a door-opener for him. Invited to join a Lloyds of London syndicate, he became a valued contributor to the team it ran. Meanwhile he continued to play charity matches and testimonials for Middlesex for some time but nevertheless managed around 35 games a year for Lloyds.

Graham played for Lloyds many years, and who wouldn't want to? During that time, he toured the East Coast of America, Spain, France, Holland, the Middle East, and more. The American tour was televised on Sky TV and Tim Rice was one of the players.

Graham played against the MCC and Virgin Atlantic. Yes, he partied with Richard Branson. There's only so long that lifestyle is sustainable - though keeping at it until age 35 must be considered a good innings.

In the 1980s he moved from Southgate, and with five others started a club in Newton near Harston. The pavilion was a two-bedroom chalet bought in kit form from Sweden, and it's still there to this day. But the lure of tougher competition drew him to Royston CC. Next came Datchworth where he had six happy years and became Club Captain during three successful promotion seasons. Then came a break while Graham started his own Lloyds syndicate.

But could he really stay away from cricket? No. Not that long after starting the syndicate he went on to play for Essex league winners Woodford Wells and spent five years with them. Another break followed. But of course, that didn't last long either.

Then, around 2008 Graham was asked not just to play for Ashwell but coach as well. Ashwell CC flourished and got promoted to the Senior level of the Cambridge League. Unfortunately, the club got relegated later because the Recreation Ground was too small to accommodate that level of the game. Presumably some visiting players didn't fancy the idea of retrieving the ball from Lucas Lane or from over the hedge in the paddock.

Graham still can't give up. He has recently played with the Hertfordshire over 60s and is now with the over 70s. Luckily, he has an understanding and supportive partner, even after all these years. He has loved every minute of it and continues to do so, even though it's getting harder all the time.

Looking after yourself is a priority. Here's a tip from 'Scottie', if you want to go on with sport keep your blood pressure under control and check oxygen levels.

Finally, just what is it that makes cricket so different, so appealing? For Graham it's a lot of things: the competition, camaraderie, something you can share with people from all over the world. It's about learning and growing, and then passing on skills... and, of course, partying.

As told to **Norton Mahy**



Graham guests at an Australian touring side practice match

#### Rachel Godshalk



Cricket has been a key part of Rachel's life since she was 12 years old. She started playing for Hitchin CC Women in 1992 under the captaincy of Megan Lear. Megan went on to coach the England women for the 1997 World Cup.

During her time with Hitchin Rachel also played for East Anglia including in the age group captained by Charlotte Edwards who now coaches the England women.

At Newcastle University she captained the women's team during her second and third years, while still managing to play for local teams. Her involvement with a variety of teams in Northumberland and Yorkshire extended well beyond university and she learned many local rules, including penalties for hitting sheep, practical considerations regarding cow pats and that sixes were scored only by hitting **over** stone walls (in Rachel's case, never).

She re-joined Hitchin CC in 2021 after moving back to this area from Ripon and has just given up captaincy of its successful first team that hopes to get promoted to the Premier division of Home Counties Women's Cricket League in 2026. Rachel's focus now is on trying to get selected, and promoting cricket as a great game for women - or indeed, anyone.

And work? Rather than curtailing her cricket, Rachel's early career as a farmer, qualification as a barrister (she now works in publishing) led to yet more opportunities in the sport, and she currently serves as vice-captain and secretary of Refreshers CC, a diverse team of barristers, ranging from young pupils to Septuagenarian judges.

What's the appeal of cricket to her? What makes it a great game? For a start, put aside the notion that it's an impenetrably complicated affair. Basically, the bowler bowls the ball and the batter tries to (1) not get out and (2) get as many runs as possible. There are lots of different formats to enjoy, from 120 balls bowled each side, all-day games and longer at higher levels. Short games are an exciting thrash, the longer ones have ebb and flow, and a story with some drama.

Cricket is something that can be a constant though life, with no age restriction and which also inevitably provides friends for life. And, depending on the level and team vibe, it can be either tough and competitive, or relaxed. It's your choice.

Rachel encourages anyone to take up the game but is most interested in promoting it among women. She loves helping young players to develop skills and self-confidence, including engaging with the parents who support them. As a team sport it also helps to grow social skills and a sense of community. She underlines the importance of community in cricket, particularly when it comes to diversity and its power to bond all people regardless of age, background, culture or sexual orientation.

Women thinking of joining in can be reassured that, though you can enjoy the benefits at any level, the quality of the women's game has increased exponentially in recent years. It's possible to increase skills and progress - if that's what you want.

Give it a go! Hitchin CC has plenty of ways to play: two women's 'soft ball' teams, two adult women's teams, two under 15s, two under 13s and no less than three under 11s. 'Soft ball' is a great way to start cricket as it's not as daunting to beginners as facing that hard red one!

If you want to learn more, Rachel's keen to hear from you.

✉ rachel@morthamlamb.co.uk  
☎ 07962 152242

or try Hitchin CC instagram:  
hitchinccwomen\_girls

As told to **Norton Mahy**

## Rowing

Josie May Milligan



Josie May Milligan, 16, is another young Ashwellian who has love for a sport outside of the village. As a young teenager, Josie May was losing passion for the extra curricular activities which her school and the local area offered. One of her Dad's friends suggested rowing, she took a week course, and fell for the sport. She says it's a hard sport in general, having to wake up every Saturday and Sunday at 6am to row for four hours in all weathers, and mentally hard having to train at the gym most days of the week. It's quite a trek to Cambridge to train at the gym with her rowing pals, so Josie May supplements her training with runs around Ashwell, and using the rowing machine that she has at home.

Rowing has taught her resilience, having to try her hardest for what she wants to achieve, and overcoming the challenge of finding a new crew to row with when age groupings demanded a change to a different boat. There have been many fun, memorable (sometimes disastrous) moments, including dressing up as Mario characters for a race, almost passing out on an erg test and doing Titanic poses in the boat.

Josie May hopes her sport will help with college and university applications in the future, with possible scholarships and maybe a future career



in either competition, coaching or just continuing it as a hobby for as long as she can.

Rowing is a very unknown sport in this area as we aren't local to many clubs. Josie May would love to see more promotion for awareness of the sport. Cambridge and Bedford are fairly nearby, and offer amazing facilities for rowing with so many possibilities for younger generations.

To anyone who is keen to take up rowing, or at least have a go, she advises to just go for it, it's a community as well as a sport and you get so much out of it, it's so worth it. And it's a time and space every week to get outside, row and think!

As told to **Tracy Young**

## River and Rugby The 'Campbell Women'

Alongside the familiar rhythms of village life, Ashwell quietly plays host to many lively sporting routines. Rev'd Chris Campbell, of course known locally for her ministry, as well as her two daughters balance rowing, rugby and river sports alongside school, work and parish life.

Charlotte, Chris' 17 year-old daughter, discovered rowing through school five years ago, and what began as curiosity has grown into a serious commitment. These days, Charlotte trains up to six times a week, which includes a demanding mix of early mornings on the water, sessions on a rowing machine, and weights training.

What rowing has given Charlotte, above all, is perseverance and a strong sense of teamwork. Now in Year 13 and applying to universities, she hopes to carry rowing with her into the next chapter of her life.

Racing takes her well beyond the village, from regular competitions on the River Cam to iconic venues such as Eton Dorney and the Thames at Henley. Last winter even included a training camp in Portugal. While the rowing was the main focus, Charlotte admits the "mystery meat" at mealtimes was almost as memorable.

Where Charlotte's sport is about rhythm and endurance, her 15-year-old sister Emily's is centred around strength and the odd impact. Emily's introduction to rugby came after watching the Red Roses play at Twickenham during the Women's Six Nations. That was 18 months ago, and after some searching she found her place at Hitchin Rugby Club, which she has experienced as very friendly and has teams for teenage girls of all ages. Emily trains twice a week, with Sundays often reserved for matches against local teams.

One of the things Emily values most about rugby is how inclusive it is for girls of all sizes. As American rugby player Ilona Maher once voiced, "Rugby loves that you're big, rugby loves that you're strong". This is a message that Emily admires, especially in a world where girls can often feel pressured to fit to certain body standards.





For Chris kayaking is about being in the moment

Teamwork is what Emily loves most about the sport, whereas the bumps and bruises are the unavoidable downside, especially on match days. Still, she wouldn't swap it for anything else and if there's one ambition on the horizon, it's to keep improving and, one day, score that elusive try (no small task when you're playing prop!)

For Rev'd Chris Campbell, sport is less about speed and competition and more about water, movement and reflection. A keen kayaker and paddleboarder, Chris can usually be found at nearby spots like Langford and Great Barford, since Ashwell's springs aren't quite deep enough for a proper paddle. A previous home just half a mile from the Cam made getting out onto the river even easier.

What draws her back time and again is the calm of being on the water. Exercising gently while surrounded by nature, including ducklings, fish, and the occasional kingfisher are all part of the appeal.

Chris' most ambitious challenge came a few years ago when she paddle-boarded from Cambridge to Ely in a single day to raise money for the church. More recently, she's also braved white-water kayaking in Scotland.

Together, Chris and her daughters show that in Ashwell, sporting passion, whether for teamwork, endurance, or simply the joy of being on the water, can thrive happily alongside everyday village life.

As told to **Wendy Hagues**

## Basketball

### Hector Sparkes

Another sporting enthusiast in our midst is Hector, the 11 year-old son of Alice and Edward Sparkes, whose introduction to basketball began with a simple trip to Pendleton Sports Centre with his father when Hector was in Year 2. A poster on the wall for the North Herts basketball team caught their eye and shortly afterwards, Hector found himself on the waiting list.

He joined the under-8s community session on Friday evenings and loved it from the start. Now in his fourth year with the club, basketball has become a central part of his life.

What hooked Hector so quickly was the pace. He loves the speed of the game, the rush of racing from one end of the court to the other, and, best of all, the deeply satisfying sound of a perfect "swoosh" as the ball drops cleanly through the net. Being part of a team and making new friends has been just as important as scoring baskets.

Stepping up to the under-12s brought Hector his biggest challenge so far. At this level, North Herts Knights run a competitive National League team, with places decided through try-outs. Playing alongside older and much bigger children was nerve-wracking at first, and Hector admits he initially felt shy and anxious. However, as the session went on, his confidence grew, and he began to show what he could do on the court. By the end, he felt sure he had earned his place on the team.

Looking ahead, Hector hopes to stay with the squad next year, continue improving, gain more experience in competitive matches and, if all goes to plan, work towards becoming the team's top scorer!

When asked about funny moments, Hector points to the remarkable height differences across teams. Some clubs, such as Milton Keynes and Cambridge, field players over six feet tall, while others are barely four feet. Battling under the basket against much taller opponents has brought plenty of challenges. But as Hector says, it's made him a better player.

Basketball has also taught him lessons that reach beyond the court: resilience when the team is

behind, the importance of working together, and helping others improve by giving them opportunities to shine.

Most of Hector's training takes place outside Ashwell, with twice-weekly sessions at North Herts Knights in Stotfold, split between Pendleton Sports Centre and Pixbrook Academy, amounting to around three and a half hours of training each week. One ongoing frustration, however, is how difficult it can be to secure extra court time, as sports centres are so often fully booked.

And if there were just one change he could make in Ashwell? Without hesitation, Hector would like to see some basketball hoops. A couple at the rec or even at the old Merchants' Taylors' yard, he suggests, would give local children the chance to practise without needing a lift further afield. Who knows, a few well-placed hoops might be all it takes to inspire the next generation of Ashwell basketball players, whatever their height!

As told to **Wendy Hagues**

## Pickleball

### Al Jacoutot

Pickleball is a fun and fast-growing sport which combines elements of badminton, tennis and table tennis. It can be played indoors or outdoors, on a badminton-sized court with a slightly lowered tennis net. It's played in singles or doubles, with what looks like an over-sized table

tennis paddle, and a perforated plastic ball about the size of a cricket ball.

The only equipment you need to get started is a decent pair of court shoes. Ashwell Tennis Club has paddles and balls that you can borrow, and once you get rolling, you'll be out looking for your own personal equipment to help you take your game to the next level.

Pickleball is much easier to learn and get good at when compared to tennis. With just a couple minutes to learn a few key rules, you could be up and playing in no time.

A number of people have been playing at various locations in and around Ashwell, and now the Tennis Club is looking to encourage and expand play at our village tennis courts. We held an Open Day in November which was well-attended. With the winter weather closing in and only the die-hard players carrying on through the winter, the plan is to hold another Open Day in March/April to get the year kicked off and then get open and organised play rolling over the Spring and Summer.

If you would like to give it a try even sooner, get in touch and I'll take you through the basics to get you started. Warning... once you get started, you just might get hooked... and then it can become an obsession!

**Al Jacoutot**

✉ [Ashwell.Pickleball@pobox.com](mailto:Ashwell.Pickleball@pobox.com)



Give Pickleball a go

## The First Ashwell at Home



The cover of this Yearbook celebrates the 40th Ashwell at Home. Here's how it all began.

With a committee of three and a lot of goodwill the first At Home took off on two days: 7th and 8th May 1983, from 2.30-5pm. Programmes cost £1 and children under 14 were free.

The origin of the idea came from Bidy Barlow who with her husband Erasmus lived at Elbrook House. With the Museum needing the first extension, money was needed to pay for it, hence the suggestion which was then taken up by the Trustees and Friends of the Museum. Albert Sheldrick and John Bray, the Founders of the Museum, were still pretty active in the village and the official opening of the extension was performed by The Merchant Taylors Company, patrons of the Museum, on Sunday 8th May at 2 pm.

Looking back now after 40 years it all seems like yesterday but the atmosphere was good, weather fair and over the weekend we raised £1,563.10.

The Four Pubs were all open, The Engine, Three Tuns, The Bushel & Strike and The Rose & Crown - plus various businesses. Crumps let people come in and watch sausage making, while able to buy hamburgers and hot dogs. Days had visitors putting jam into doughnuts and the Seven Springs Gallery hosted an Art Exhibition and welcomed you into the shop which was still run by Marie and Pauline Whitby.

Many names are no longer visible in our village businesses such as Brays, Geeves, Turner's Garage, Cerdan and Cooke Engineering, but that weekend suggested a lively village.

Looking at the Gardens we had open, many of those residents are no longer here, but I do recall the fun people had at Elbrook where Bidy told fortunes in a Gypsy Caravan as well as running scrumptious teas in their garden.

At Farrows Farm we could see a working pig unit (now over towards Newnham) and the Field Studies Centre (Merchant Taylor's and now houses) had a display of various archives.

At the School we did lunches and teas, with everything being donated by parents and villagers with a lot from volunteers lending a hand on the day. Some of the older children were very helpful riding round the village on bicycles to deliver extra programmes or cakes. We still had David Chapman as our local policeman.

We actually publicized the event in all the local newspapers and feedback suggested that was how people knew about the At Home. After 1983 we decided to just run it on one day as it was hard work and later both St Mary's Church and the school shared in the takings.

**Karen Mills**

## My House, Your House

Many of Ashwell's houses shelter interesting stories within their walls. Stories of times past and families that have come and gone. Here are two examples that might interest you.

### Anton Cottage - then

My parents married in the early 1930s. My mother came from Everton just over the border in Bedfordshire, and my father was born in Ashwell. His name was Horace Henry Francis. He became a carpenter and joiner and worked for Bray's Builders in Ashwell, just like his brother Gordon.

In the mid-late 1930s, my father and mother rented the house at 29 High St (though it was not numbered then). Later, they had the chance to buy it; quite unusual for a carpenter to buy his own house at this time. My parents even had a car, an Austin 7 Ruby.



Anton Cottage today

Our house was, I believe, previously owned by the people next door, who I think were named Cook. They ran a cycle shop. In the 50s, their house became a wool shop, then in the late 1970s it became Ashwell Antiques and then Ashwell Delicatessen in the 1980s. In the 90s, it was Tony's tea shop and then a flower shop. Of course, it's now Rhubarb & Mustard.

I, Tony, was born in 1941, my sister, Anita, four years later. As we grew up, my parents had the grand idea to name the house 'Anton Cottage'.

As my father made coffins during the war, he was not called up to fight and so he became a special constable in Ashwell. I decided I wanted to follow my father and work as a carpenter/joiner at Bray's. I was at Bray's for 40 years and then I was self-employed for nearly 20 years.

A year or so after I started work, my father died of lung cancer, leaving my mother to manage on a tiny widow's pension. As I gained a bit more experience, I found you could get a Council improvement grant. With that money, the house was rewired. We put in some heating and cured most of the damp. A large part of the back wall was replaced as it was clay batt. We put in a new back door and large window frame and also replaced the bathroom and toilet. The old one was a 'bucket and chuck it' behind next door..

My mother died aged 98. The house was split between my sister and me and sold to a young couple renting in the village.

**Tony Francis**

### *Anton Cottage - now*

Sam and Lucy moved into Anton Cottage in June 2021, from Hitchin. They were married later that year and were ready to take on the project of turning Anton into their family home. They have undertaken careful restoration projects, as custodian of this wonderful cottage. Some activities include restoring the original windows and front door, often with much guidance from Lucy's father.

During those projects, Lucy and Sam got to meet lots of you living here in Ashwell, discussing progress and taking votes on the new colour of the front door which was a lovely introduction to the village they are happy to call home.

### *How an Australian visitor linked the histories of The Old Forge and The Beacon*

For a number of years I have been creating the Ashwell Family Tree on Ancestry, which started when I was researching the history of Ashwell Stores. Early in 2025, Peter Greener, curator of Ashwell Museum, contacted me with a request for help from Kim Pack who lives in Western Australia regarding his family connection to Ashwell.

I used the Ashwell Family Tree to research Kim's family and, for a number of months, emails went backwards and forwards to Australia. Kim's family were all blacksmiths, the first recorded being John Pack born in Ashwell 1736-1796 who was apprentice to William Seabrook. Many generations of Kim's family had lived originally at The Forge Cottages, the pink cottages at the top of Kingsland Way, and worked as blacksmiths, farmers, lime burners and bicycle repairers. Kim's grandfather Thomas Pack, his wife Jessie Annie who was a school mistress at Steeple Morden and his son John were, by then, living at Beacon Legge (Beacon Light) in Station Road. When Thomas died in 1926, Kim's father, John aged 14, was sent to Australia to Jessie's sister. Jessie joined them in 1927 and remained there until 1951 when she returned to England. Kim's family have remained in Australia.



Kim Pack and friend Pam with Margaret Budgen

After receiving the information about his ancestry, Kim decided to come to the UK and visit Ashwell with his friend Pam to see where generations of his family had lived. I was fortunate to be able to take them around Ashwell on August Bank Holiday Monday, pointing out the places where his family lived, worked, went to school and worshipped.

Margaret Budgen, the current owner of The Old Forge as it's now known, showed Kim and Pam around the property, explaining about the tunnel which goes under Ashwell Street connecting her property to the quarry from where lime was extracted. The lime was used as a fertiliser for the fields and the limewash as a protective finish for the outside of cottages. Hence the original name of the road was Lime Kiln Lane, but it is now known as Kingsland Way. Margaret showed them fourteen historical documents dating from 1806 to 1923 relating to the land, premises, mortgage, conveyance indentures and more. See also her article about The Old Forge.

After lunch at The Three Tuns, we explored the Springs, Ashwell United Reformed Church and its grounds and the property next to it, Greith House, which is where another branch of the Pack family lived. They too worked as blacksmiths and farmers. Afternoon tea followed, provided by Di Shuttlewood at Wolverley House using her Bone China tea set which they found very 'English'! Di was a neighbour of the late Lol Pack at Sunnymead Orchard, so she was able to tell Kim about him. Lol was a farmer who lived in Grieth house where he was an elder/treasurer of the

URC for many years. He was Kim's third cousin twice removed and was the last direct relation of Kim's in Ashwell. I then took Kim and Pam to the station for their journey back to London, very exhausted but thrilled!

On returning to Australia, Kim sent the following: "A thank you to Ashwell Village. What a wonderful, delightfully presented Village: the historic buildings, chimneys, outlooks, gardens, colourful floral borders of the narrow roads are some of the features which are all so different from any of the towns in our young state of Western Australia. The history of the village surrounds you. Everything is picturesque, richly complete with historical character.

It was truly amazing to experience the knowledge of the past; where my family lived and worked and to have heard about their personal history, these memories will remain with me always.

Even though we had a short one-day visit, it was remarkable the amount of my family's history we learned. It was uplifting, and at the same time, very emotional.

This wonderful experience would not have happened without the dedication and diligence of our marvellous friend Jackie and with the generosity of Dr Margaret Ashwell. Margaret welcomed both Pam and me into the cottage where my great-grandfather lived. Our memorable visit was enhanced with the lovely Di Shuttlewood's hospitality and her insights into members of the Pack family."

**Jackie Embury**

### *The Old Forge*

We discovered Ashwell in 1978, when Allan and I and my parents came for a day trip, out of curiosity, to visit the place which bore my name. We loved the village and vowed we would return. Two years later, I was given the chance to work in Cambridge with the Medical Research Council. Since Allan was working in North London at that time, we made the momentous decision to move to, "that lovely village of Ashwell", as vaguely halfway.

So, in 1980 we came to Ashwell to look at a few houses, including 'The Old Forge' in Kingsland Way, but we were not intending to rush into a



The Old Forge as it is now and back in 1929

decision. As it happened, fate played the upper hand. I was travelling to Rome and standing in a queue at Heathrow Airport waiting to board a plane. Two fellows were standing behind me, and I was vaguely listening to their conversation - as all inadvertent eavesdroppers do! "How's the house hunting going?", said A to B. "Fine", said B to A. "My wife is very keen on a house in Ashwell, called The Old Forge so we'll be making an offer for it." As you can imagine, I made a frenzied phone call to Allan as soon as I got to Rome and, within a few days, we had committed ourselves. We arrived here in March 1981.

We bought the house from Trevor Waltham who had the franchise for 'Snap-on-Tools' and, for this reason, he had built a large garage to house his van and his caravan. Trevor told us that the house was originally numbers 36 and 38 Kingsland Way (formerly Lime Kiln Lane) and that he had converted the two cottages into one.

All we knew about the house was that it was built in 1825 by Bailey's builders and it had been lived in at some time by one of the many Blacksmith families in Ashwell. We were then told the more recent history of our house by Roy and Pam Jarman, who lived over the road in the bungalow called Broadchalke, previously lived in by Roy's father, Stan. Since the late 1920s, number 36 (nearest to the road) had been occupied by Mrs Duffy and number 38 had been occupied by Charlie Miller, his wife, Madge and son, Ken. Ken took over his father's engineering business running it in sheds on both sides of Ashwell Street. Unfortunately, Ken got into financial trouble, and he sold the Broadchalke land to Stan Jarman in the early 1950s.

This all changed last August Bank Holiday, when Jackie Embury brought Kim Pack to see me - as she has explained in her own article. I now know that Kim Pack's great-grandfather, William Pack, and his grandfather, Thomas Pack, lived here during the 19th Century and that they were carrying on the family blacksmiths trade which had started in 1754. In 1886, William Pack died and, in 1901, his widow, Ann, sold their part of The Old Forge for £150. This allowed the Packs to live at The Beacon. See Tracy Young's article for that part of the story.

When their son Thomas Pack, who was Kim's grandfather, died in 1926, his wife Jessie sent her son John, Kim's father, then aged 14 years, to Australia to live with her sister in Perth. Jessie followed later that year but returned to the UK about three years before she died in 1956.



The Old Forge tunnel

The most interesting feature of my house is the tunnel at the top of the garden which goes under Ashwell Street and into what used to be the Jarman's Garden, which are now the new houses in Broadchalke Close. Ashwell historian

David Short explained to me that the Smithy had a sideline in transporting the lime from the cliffs over the road on little wheeled trucks through the tunnel. The blacksmith would heat the lime on his furnace and turn the calcium carbonate (lime) to calcium oxide (quicklime). Adding water to the quicklime produced calcium hydroxide (slaked lime) and this could be sold as whitewash. Seeing the Packs described in my deeds as 'Blacksmiths and Lime Burners' has made me realise that, rather than a sideline, this was a legit part of the Smithy's business.

The Walthams, who sold the house to us, had built a swimming pool at the back of the house. I loathed this from the start, worried about the safety of our daughters and also the maintenance required. We eventually got rid of it in 2006, turning it into an enclosed lawn. One day someone will come along and think, "Hey that's an ideal place for a pool".

Soon after we moved in, we realised that, although we had been given the address of 'The Old Forge' as 36 Kingsland Way, the house numbers did not correspond with those in Kingsland Way, but they did correspond with those in Ashwell Street. However, by then, we'd given out our new address and so we let it ride.

It was only in 1995, when I became self-employed and we built an office/studio over the garage that I realised I could use this mistake to our advantage. From then on, the Budgens lived at 36 Kingsland Way and Dr Ashwell worked at 36 Ashwell Street and they, very amicably, shared the same postcode. From 2017, I've rented out the studio as a flat.

We have not made many changes to the original house that William and Thomas Pack and their families would have lived in. Each of the original two cottages had a scullery with a door leading into their backyard with an outhouse, each with a toilet.

When our girls were young, they would use these outhouses as their secret meeting places with their friends. In 2000, we joined these outhouses to the house with a new garden room and smartened them up to use as our utility room. We added a conservatory in 1986, and, in 2017, we transformed this into my new office so I can look out into the garden as I write this.



Meeting Kim Pack and his friend Pam from Australia in August this year was fantastic. Thank you so much to Ashwell Museum and Jackie Embury. Seeing the tears in their eyes when Kim realised they were standing in the house that had been lived in once by his grandparents and great-grandparents about 150 yrs ago was quite amazing.

#### Margaret Budgen

#### *The Beacon, Station Road*

We first came across Ashwell in 2000 when we bought the walking book Hertfordshire Rambles by Liz Moynihan. Our family especially enjoyed the Ashwell walk featured in the book, stopping at The Three Tuns at the end.

Three years later when we wanted to move from Old Stevenage, a house became available on Station Road. Not knowing the exact location of the house and seeing the photo with the white picket fence outside, we initially decided against the house as we didn't want to live near the station! Six months later when we ventured to Ashwell for another walk, we found the house was still up for sale and nowhere near the station. We fell in love with it at first sight.

In July 2003 we moved in, having bought the house from Debbie and Jason Boorman. The moving in day was memorable for more than one reason. As the removal vans arrived, Richard stayed to help as I took our boys Rob and Andy to school, and then continued to the University of Hertfordshire where I had my final examination interview to qualify as a teacher. Our next chapter had truly begun.



Snowy day in 1903

The old photo of the house in 1903 sees it standing proud on its own as The Beacon on Station Road welcoming people to Ashwell. How different the area looks now. The house has also changed in several ways. Previous occupants The Brown family, Debbie and Jason, and ourselves in 2013 all extended the house in some way.

During the building of the side double garage and utility room at the back in 2013, I came home from teaching at Ashwell School to find emergency red tape around the building area at the back of the house. The digger had nearly disappeared down the 30 foot well which we didn't know we had. It was duly filled in.

Whilst we were having the house repainted during COVID we decided to change the colour. The bright sunflower yellow colour chosen really did make the house stand out as a beacon, although not everyone approved. It still makes us smile as we come home. We have been immensely happy living at The Beacon and continue to be so.

Tracy Young

## Ashwell's Bin Confusion

In Ashwell's lanes, confusion reigns,  
As bins in hues ignite new pains.

Purple, blue, and grey - bizarre!  
Three weeks pass before they star.

Brown goes fortnightly to those who pay,  
Food bins weekly, come what may.

Now matters muddle even more,  
Brown bins Mondays as before.

But every other beastly bin,  
Must wait for Friday's weekly spin.

Village pals can't help each other,  
West folk one plan, East folk another.

Which bin is which? Take a wild guess,  
Or consult Ashwell News to relieve your stress.

And when Christmas came, the chaos grew,  
Schedules shifted? - not a clue!

Bins left waiting in the frost,  
Missed collections, tempers lost.

Ashwell's streets a rubbish maze,  
Will order come in brighter days?

NHC, do lend an ear,  
For Ashwell's bin fate's far from clear!

Margaret Budgen




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**The Golden Generation**

*The lives and times of Ashwell people who have reached a significant milestone*



*Susan Hayes  
Celebrated 100 years*

Susan was born in Greenock on 12th April 1925. She had one older brother, a younger sister and two younger brothers. She moved down to England (Rugby) in her twenties where she met Jim. They were married three months later and had two children: William and Wendy. Following a spell in hospital when she was 85, Susan moved to Wolverley House in 2012 to be nearer Wendy and her husband Graham 'Scottie' Scott.

There were two 100th birthday celebrations. The first was a couple of weeks before the big day when nieces and nephews from Scotland visited and there was much reminiscing and laughter. The second was at Wolverley House with children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, friends and neighbours. She was delighted to receive her card from King Charles and Queen Camilla and a present of a musical biscuit tin from Fortnum & Mason.

Susan's recipe for a long life is three square meals a day, Cadburys chocolate every evening and lots of laughter. It seems to be working so far!



Margaret Kerr

Margaret was born on 21st October 1935, in Wallasey Cheshire, within sight and sound of the sea and enjoyed regular outings along the nearby seafront.

Her family moved to live in Birmingham in 1940, so no more sea breezes! Margaret is grateful to the City of Birmingham for providing her with an excellent free education at school and University there, where she obtained a degree in Dental Surgery in 1958. After working in general dental practice and school clinics for a few years, she decided to specialise in orthodontics. This meant a move to London for further study and exams, following which she worked in five hospital orthodontic clinics in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

Margaret moved to Ashwell with Anne in 1977 and soon came to appreciate its friendly and welcoming community. Winters seemed to be more severe then. Overnight snow falls could make for hazardous driving conditions and we sometimes struggled to drive cars up Angell's Meadow, but helpful and friendly neighbours would come out early to shovel snow and we would together push the cars up the hill. We knew that we had found a good place to live.

Joining St. Mary's Church introduced Margaret to new friendships and opportunities to be involved in Church activities. Her interests in theology and church history led her to study for the Certificate in Christian Studies at St John's College, Nottingham. It was an interesting and challenging experience, a 'distance learning' course in the pre-internet era, which involved posting written work to tutors.

Retirement in 1995 brought many enjoyable opportunities for travel around Europe and further afield to Canada and Australia. There was more time to join local groups here in Ashwell... keep fit, The Literature Group and local history classes at the then Merchant Taylors' Centre. Further afield, courses in Bedford and Letchworth helped Margaret to explore family history and philosophy and to learn how to use a computer.

Invited to be Church Warden in 1997, Margaret was privileged to be involved in the appointment of the Rev'd Jacquie Birdseye as the first woman to be Rector here, a historic moment in Ashwell's history. She enjoyed the challenge of learning about church management and building maintenance (even climbing onto the Church roof on one occasion) and, as Church Warden, supporting Jacquie in her ministry here.

Margaret says, "My Christian faith has been an important part of my life since early days and has continued to be so throughout the many challenges that 90 years have brought."



Mary Rutter

Mary Doreen Rutter, the only child of Ivy and Harry Tompkins, was born on 8th January 1935 in Ilford, Essex, into a very caring community based around Gants Hill Methodist Church, which had many activities for young and old. It even had an operatic society and orchestra. Her singing teacher put her in for The Kathleen Ferrier Competition in London which was a wonderful, though nerve-racking experience. She attended three other village schools to escape the bombing with her mother, while her father, who worked in a reserved occupation, was in the Home Guard, fire-fighting in London during the Blitz. Their house was bombed, but luckily, they were away!

Amazingly, after all this disruption, she passed the scholarship and went to Romford County High School for Girls, then took a secretarial course at the South West Essex Technical College, ending up as a shorthand typist in the Standard Life Assurance Company, London, and later at the Essex Education Committee in Chelmsford.

While singing the role of Elsie Maynard in *Yeoman of the Guard*, she met John Taunt, an engineer from Bayford. They married in 1957 and had 3 children: Caroline, Christopher and Louise. They eventually moved to Knebworth where sadly, John, a wonderful man, died aged 39, a great shock to Mary, their family and friends. Then a miracle happened. John had a great friend, Peter Rutter, from Sea Scouting days who had lost his wife, leaving him with a young son Paul. They decided to put the two families together. The rest is history, and amongst the ups and downs of family life they worked it out. Mary now has 12 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

When all the children had flown the nest, Mary and Peter moved to Ashwell, which they loved; new friends, a lovely village and countryside. Their family continued to meet with friends and families from Sea Scouting days until the early 2020's – more than 70 years. Mary enjoyed many activities, especially flower arranging in the Church, Womens Institute, Mothers Union, choir, poetry group etc. and Peter enjoyed making and flying model aircraft and boats, and sailing in the dinghy he made. He sadly passed away after a long fight with cancer in 2005 and is lovingly remembered by the whole family and friends.

Mary is so glad that she has ended up here in wonderful Ashwell with so many lovely friends and some of the family. She really can't believe she is now 90 and tries to live each day as it comes. She especially thanks her daughter Louise for all her help and kindness and son Chris, who cooks her a lovely dinner every day. And not forgetting little furry pal, Spanner, a cockapoo who often keeps her company.

Thank you, Ashwell.



Robert with his cherished card from the St Mary's Bell Ringers

## Robert John Sheldrick

Robert was born on 13th May 1935, in the house where he still lives in Mill Street. His mother, Agnes, came from Eyeworth and his father, Sidney, was from Ashwell and worked as a drayman for Fordham's Brewery. Robert was the eldest, then Diana and Nicholas. Robert had a large extended family in the village, including two who were very important Ashwell residents. Uncle Percy Sheldrick trained as a highly skilled embroiderer and some of his beautiful work is in St Mary's Church. Cousin Albert Sheldrick co-founded Ashwell Museum, which we are so proud of today.

Robert went to Ashwell school until he was 11. Classmates included Peter Hankin and Eleanor Bryant. He knew everyone in the village. As a young boy, he joined St Mary's Junior Choir until it was disbanded. Robert moved to The Merchant Taylors School for just one year until it was closed. He was in a class of six. He then moved to The Knights Templar School until he was 15. He was particularly good at technical drawing and fairly good at maths.

Robert was an outstanding member of Ashwell Theatre Club, as both a junior and senior member. He remembers performing in **Toad of Toad Hall**, starring as Toad himself (alternating with Olive Anderson). Sister Di was the washerwoman and brother Nick was a rat. He was also a Scout. Once, he and other scouts wanted to clean the floor of the scout hut, so helped themselves to all the hot water in the Village Hall. Mrs Eley had stoked up the boiler so there would be plenty of hot water for the 'public baths' at one end of the hall. No hot water for Ashwell baths on that day!

Robert started work in the cow shed at the dairy in Bacon's Yard, which hated. Then he was asked to do a milk delivery round, helping Mr Neville Howes in his electric float. Robert enjoyed this and was a very popular milkman until he retired after 40 years, always cheerful whatever the weather.

In 1954, Robert was called up for National Service. After training, he was ready to go to Korea but the war ended, so Robert was sent on a troop ship to join The Essex Regiment in Hong Kong. They were in the New Territories, manning observation posts along the long fence and, "keeping an eye on the Chinese". He became a radio and telephone signaller and learned Morse Code. He had never been on holiday before or slept anywhere but at home, so felt very homesick at Christmas. However, Robert thoroughly enjoyed his time doing National Service and made good friends in the army. In 1956, Robert was flown home when his father died and he returned to dairy work. He subsequently became Secretary of The Royal British Legion for 20 years.

Robert was a bell ringer in St Mary's for 70 years, and Tower Captain for many of those. He has rung bells in 494 bell towers, including Exeter Cathedral. Before the tower clock became electric in 1971, Robert voluntarily wound the clock manually, every other day, for 10 years, climbing 100 steps. There are many other ways that Robert served the church. He locked the church at night, was Verger for many years and operated the sound system for services.

In 1984 and 1992, Robert, Di and her husband, Peter, travelled to the USA, Fiji, Hawaii and New Zealand to visit members of their extended family and enjoy wonderful holidays.

When Robert retired in 1993, he was a very popular 'surprise guest' at The Ashwell Christmas Carol Concert, a tradition started by organizer Norman Gurney. Robert received a bell-shaped cake made by Days and a framed certificate, thanking him sincerely.

"We record today, with gratitude, Robert's wonderful record of friendly, selfless and consistent service. He is a fine example of an Ashwell gentleman."



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*'At Home' with the Hicca Hoodlums  
living up to their name*

Events



Eager shoppers queueing for a bargain

### *Ashwell's Famous Flea Market*

*15 March 2025*

Harrods sale comes to Ashwell! On a bright but chilly day 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 handbags along with sun loungers, two bicycles, garden tools, three cat carriers, a three-foot wooden giraffe and even a tabletop snooker table. Without counting we must have had at least 3,000 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 £2,383.73 - over £450 more than last year. This will go to the St Mary's restoration fund. Not bad for three and a half 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, 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.



Friends celebrate the life of Simon Marlowe

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 and ensuring we raised a magnificent amount.

See you all next year.

**Karen Rogers**

☎ 01462 743338

### *Ashwell Music Festival*

This year was a big year for the Ashwell Music Festival, as it was our 70th. The first took place in 1953, but we missed a couple due to COVID. From its beginnings (which were originally a largely choral affair) the Music Festival has continued to celebrate music.

The Festival opened on Sunday 4th May with Festal Evensong. We were delighted to welcome as guest preacher the Reverend Matthew Catterick, who is the Vicar of St Saviour's, Pimlico. Father Matthew is the grandson of Rev'd Jack Catterick, erstwhile Rector of St Mary's and the original instigator of the festival, and so it was really fitting to invite him to be with us.

The choir prepared a feast of music for us, and during the service we also blessed the wonderful new choir stalls.

This was followed on Tuesday with the Young Persons Concert, where the sheer quality and



musical ability of the young people never fails to amaze the audience. The Dave Rance Rockin' Chair Band returned on the Wednesday afternoon, although sadly without Dave Rance, who had passed away at the beginning of the year. As I am sure he would have wished there was the usual fun and laughter for all, including the performers, despite his absence.

Another death, this time of our dear friend Simon Marlow, meant changes to the programme on the Thursday night, when he was due to play. In his place five hugely talented friends of his (Shulah

Oliver-Smith, Kelly McCusker, Clare Gardiner, Toby Turton and Clare Hawkes) put together an emotional and evocative evening, which included a dazzling performance of Vaughan William's The Lark Ascending. On Friday, the Hitchin Band gave us a light-hearted evening, full of energy and swing, that had all our feet tapping and we started Saturday with two family workshops with steelpans and the music of Trinidad and Tobago.

The festival was closed by Temple, an amazingly talented band who played us hits from the last 70 years of pop music – everything from the Beatles



and Abba, through to Walk the Moon and Britney Spears, with possibly the best singing along of the night being to Wheatus' Teenage Dirtbag!

Many thanks to all who helped to put the festival together this year, not only during the festival week, but also over the whole year.

This year our attendance figures were down, which meant that we only just broke even, and didn't manage to make much for the St Mary's Restoration Fund. Because of this, in 2026 we're having a slightly pared back festival as follows:

- Sunday 3 May - Festal Evensong
- Thursday 7 May - Young Persons Concert
- Friday 8 May – Megson
- Saturday 9 May – Abba's Angels

If you'd like to get involved, please do get in touch, and please do support this year's festival, to ensure it continues in the future.

**Chris Campbell**  
on behalf of the Music Festival Committee 2025



## Ashwell at Home 2025

1<sup>st</sup> May

This year we celebrated 40 years of Ashwell at Home, a major milestone and on the day we definitely celebrated in style and put on a show the village could be proud of. The weather gods had been kind to us again, and we had a bumper turnout. 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, a record sum of £12,500 was distributed to Ashwell Museum, Ashwell Primary School, St. Mary's Church, the Village Playgroup, and United Reform Church. I also especially want to point out that this year our residents could no doubt observe the scaffolding and works in place at the Museum. A direct example of where our funds are used, with the refresh of the lime-wash and woodwork on the Ashwell Museum, one of the oldest buildings and culturally significant sites we have. A core pillar of our fundraising is to protect our history, including buildings, and make sure the ongoing tireless work that goes on behind the scenes, with ongoing digital archiving and restorations, can be financially supported.

This was the year we doubled down on events and performances that have been the backbone of the day over the years and have been popular with our visitors; these continue to be music, street performers, bringing our history to life, and demonstrations of our rich and varied cultural arts and crafters. In a contrast of styles, we had both Letchworth Morris and, for their first appearance at our village open day, Hicca Hoodlums from



Letchworth ukelele group at the Village Hall



Hitchin, who both provided a wonderful, colourful, and flamboyant demonstration of different dance styles. I didn't see it, but I'm told there was even a Morris 'battle' with both teams sharing the stage.

The ceramics market in the Bushel & Strike, with craft stalls and live demonstrations of throwing and pot making from our local potters, was a big hit. Many firm favourites made their return, the Welwyn Harmony singers toured our residents' open gardens and the Springs. Another local group making their first appearance this year, definitely was a year of firsts, was Letchworth Yukulele group who performed their repertoire in the Village Hall, and the day was rounded off by local musicians, DJ sets, and bands who played on the outdoor stage in the Bushel garden to a packed crowd. A big thanks to the team of volunteers who helped with stage logistics. This year, we also celebrated the important links between various village charity and fundraising groups and our local businesses, who continue to support Ashwell events generously. A big special thanks from the committee to you all, you know who you are!

To mark the 40th year of Ashwell at Home, a commemorative well dressing design was on show outside the Museum, which was a beautiful piece of work by our local expert, thank you, Maureen Hersey. I finally want to say a big thanks to all the village for turning out and supporting the day. We tried a lot of new things, we didn't always get it right, but overall the feedback from visitors was very positive, and it would take too long to print many of the kind words people from far and wide said about the day, and the village in general, in this piece.

So, what's in store for 2026? Again, we are planning to try something new, and attempt to appeal to a wide spectrum of visitors. Never easy, but rest assured, many of the firm favourite events will be there, plus a return of a few items, and in May 2026 we will also be holding a 'Farm to Fork' mini-festival. I mentioned previously about the important links that hold our community together, another crucial one is the partnership with Farming. We have a busy dairy, and many local farms within the village and surrounding area, plus many tenant and small-holding farmers. Not to mention their supply of locally reared food to our shops, pop-up, and specialist retailers. Watch out for more news on this, and plans for the rest of the day on our social channels (always shared to Ashwell Hub). There is something for everyone. We hope to see you there.

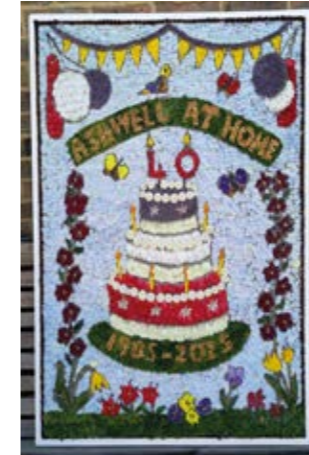
**David Hoar**

✉ dave.hoar@gmail.com  
☎ 07584 100612



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## Well Dressing 2025



Whilst the Well Dressing team at their first meeting decided to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Ashwell at Home, the challenge was how to depict it. After much discussion it was decided that a celebration cake was the answer. It was agreed that it would have three tiers and the design would also

incorporate hollyhocks which are so emblematic of Ashwell. With flowers, balloons and bunting it was all agreed.

We were more adventurous with the petals that we used this year and even used a complete, very small, white chrysanthemum to illustrate the icing on the cake. Amongst the other petals used there were more chrysanthemums, gerberas, carnations, delphiniums and hydrangeas to name a few.

Once again we turned to Lynda Spencer to put our ideas on paper and incorporate them into a design. As always she came up trumps, thank you so much Lynda. Sue and Gordon Hill allowed us to use their garage for the week and kindly kept us going with cups of tea, coffee and biscuits, we are most grateful for their continued hospitality.

The Well Dressing wouldn't happen without the dedicated team of helpers so my sincere thanks go to all involved.

Once again many of the visitors to Ashwell at Home showed their appreciation of what we had done. As well as the enjoyment that the team get when creating the picture it's the interest that visitors take and the complimentary comments that 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, even if they can only help for a few hours.

**Maureen Hersee**

✉ maureenhersee@btinternet.com

## Ashwell Springs Festival

On 6th July our village once again celebrated the traditional Ashwell Springs Festival, bringing people together to honour our beloved Springs and the River Rhee they sustain.

After last year's festival was unfortunately cancelled due to bad weather, this year we had a great turnout and were joined by community members from all walks of life. Ashwell schoolchildren began the festival with a beautiful dance and, after we held a ceremonial toast to the Springs, local historian Peter Greener gave a wonderful oversight on the history of the place.

As with the last festival, Rev'd Chris Campbell held a blessing ceremony in honour of the Springs and we were further enthralled by some great music by local musicians Julia Mitchell, Mike Holmes and Ian Chandler.

Today our Springs (and rivers across the country) are suffering from agricultural and sewage pollution with greedy water companies taking far too much. So, it was fitting that the Theatre Club put on an amusing and highly relevant performance about Ashwell's fight for clean water

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Opening the Springs Festival with dancing. Photo: Bianca Valentine



in 1910, which was written and directed by Cliff Jenkinson, starring Nicki Holmes and Wendy Scott.

The award-winning nature writer Dr Amy-Jane Beer spoke beautiful words of wisdom about the importance of valuing such water and Sherran Chalkley from Greening Ashwell encouraged others to get involved with local environmental efforts.

We know that the Ashwell Springs Festival was held every Summer until the mid-19th century and in reviving it we celebrate not only our Springs but a thriving folk culture which recognises the importance of nature for the health of our whole community.

Amid the climate and environmental crises, this festival offers a means for us to reconnect with the natural world which sustains us all, and to be truly proud of our Springs which offer new life and hope to the ecosystem.

In honouring and looking after these precious green and blue spaces, we rekindle our love and care for nature and our community as part of it. We're looking forward to the next Ashwell Springs Festival already!

If you would like to get involved with the festival, please get in touch.

**Harry Jenkinson**

Festival Organiser

✉ ashwellspringsfestival@gmail.com

## Ashwell Show 2025



This year's Ashwell Show delivered one of its most memorable editions yet, drawing large crowds, showcasing exceptional talent, and celebrating the very best of community spirit.

Blessed with perfect weather from the moment the gates opened, visitors enjoyed a full day of entertainment, competition, and countryside tradition. The atmosphere was vibrant, the turnout impressive, and the event once again reinforced why the Ashwell Show remains a much-loved highlight of the local calendar.

One of the standout attractions this year was OG Performances, whose breathtaking equestrian displays stunned audiences throughout the day. Their riders and horses demonstrated extraordinary skill, combining acrobatics, stunt work, and precise horsemanship. Each performance drew large crowds to the main ring, where spectators were treated to daring manoeuvres executed with grace and confidence on beautifully presented horses.

Also popular was Hawkeye Falconry, back again with their engaging and educational interactive displays and shows. Visitors of all ages were able to get up close to an impressive collection



Horses are a popular feature of the show

of owls, eagles, hawks, and falcons. Handler, Alistair provided fascinating insights into the birds' natural behaviours, flight techniques, and conservation, making the exhibit both entertaining and informative.

Competitions were another major feature of the day. The Womens Institute Bake Off attracted a strong field of talented bakers which showcased the culinary talents within the community. Judging was extremely close, and the winning entries were celebrated not only for their flavour but also their creativity and presentation.

The Horse Show proved once again to be a huge success, with over a hundred participants across a wide range of classes. Riders of all ages and abilities took part, from young riders to seasoned competitors, making it one of the biggest and most diverse line-ups the show has seen.

The ever-popular Dog Show also drew large crowds, offering both serious pedigree classes and fun categories that celebrated personality and charm above all else.

A now-traditional favourite, the 'Man, Woman and Child vs Tractor' Tug of War, returned to great enthusiasm. Cheers echoed across the field as teams dug in their heels against a slowly retreating tractor, providing a mixture of competition, comedy and spirited determination. Another highlight was the Horse and Hound display, which delighted audiences with its blend of coordination, tradition, and rural heritage.



Around the showground, dozens of stalls, trade stands, and food outlets offered plenty to explore and enjoy. Local artisans, charities, and businesses showcased their work, while families relaxed with refreshments and soaked up the sunshine. Thanks to the generosity of visitors and sponsors, the show raised an impressive amount of money, which will be distributed to local charities and organisations.

The police cadets, who efficiently manned the car parks, were praised for their professionalism and hard work. As always, the show could not take place without the army of volunteers whose commitment ensures the event runs smoothly year after year.

A special thanks must be extended to the whole organising committee, with particular recognition for Steve and Melinda Fleming, who are stepping down after a decade of dedicated service. Their contribution has been invaluable.

Equal thanks must go to Graham 'Scotty' Scott who is gracefully bowing out after innumerable years of immeasurable contribution (and highly questionable double entendres!) Gratitude also goes to landowner Sam Shepherd, who once again prepared the grounds impeccably and made the event possible.

Overall, the 2025 Ashwell Show was a resounding success - joyful, well-attended, and deeply rooted in community spirit. Here's to another wonderful year and many more shows to come.



Dramatic hawk flying display



Fun on a vintage tractor



Bake-off winner Lisa Harding



Looking for a good read. Photo: Bill Rodgers

*Our commitment*

All the money we raise goes back into supporting local clubs, societies and organisations. This includes £31,688 in 2025 to the organisations below.

Name	Amount Distributed	What for
Ashwell Horticultural Society	£100	Display boards
Newnham PCC	£200	Repairs and maintenance
Ashwell Well Dressing	£250	Clay and flowers
Ashwell Makers at the Museum	£310	Room hire and craft supplies
Garden House Hospice	£700	Donation and donation from tractor rides
Blood Bikes	£350	Hi-viz jackets
Greening Ashwell	£450	Bench, flag, speakers, seeds
Cambridgeshire Police Cadets	£500	Donation
Ashwell Bellringers	£500	Donation
Ashwell Pantry	£500	Reserves
Ashwell Playgroup	£1,703	Website, domain, outside board, signage
Ashwell Cricket Club	£2,000	Pitch repairs
Ashwell Academicals	£2,000	Changing shed, track repair, signage
Ashwell School	£2,281	STEM workshop and additional educational resources
Ashwell WI	£881	Laptop, software, card reader

Name	Amount Distributed	What for
Ashwell Scouts	£3,502	Hardship fund, expedition, hazel staves, wood stoves, maps and compasses, first aid kit
Ashwell Museum	£1,736	Archaeology specialist, card reader, anti-slip step, takeaway boxes, computer and monitor
Ashwell Theatre Club	£3,335	Back curtain (continued donation from last year), blackout blinds
Ashwell PCC	£3,500	Toilet refurbishments in Parish Room
Moss Cottage Homes	£3,890	Window sills, survey, paths and paving
Ashwell Tennis Club	£2,000	Pickleball equipment
Ashwell URC	£1,000	Broadband, card reader

The Ashwell Show Committee is always on the look out for new members either as a full committee member, or simply to help wherever you have expertise or time. If you would like to know more, please contact me.

**Gemma Allan**

✉ info@ashwellshow.co.uk.

*The Great Ashwell Show Bake-Off  
25 August 2025 in the WI tea tent*

Another successful year for the Ashwell Show. Whilst we had fewer entries this year those that we received were excellent. It was lovely to see the efforts of all the wonderful bakers with their different styles and flavours and there were some

imaginative takes on the themes from a cake with a pile of chocolate soil, carrots and a spade for the 'Dig for Victory' to patriotic cupcakes depicting British Transport, Flag and Crowns, English Rose Garden and Thrones. Our thanks to the judges Connie Chambers and Clive Day of Days for their efforts in choosing the winners.

11 years and under – Patriotic Theme:

- Star baker, **Lacey Arnold**
- 2nd place, **Martha Gearing**
- Joint 3rd place, **Arthur Arnold**
- Joint 3rd place, **Ella Mai Earl**

11-18 Years – Dig for Victory:

- Star Baker, **Emma Targett** and **Alex Hadron**

Adults – Marking 80 years since the end of World War Two:

- Star Baker, **Lisa Harding**
- 2nd place, **Yvonne Wright**

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**  
**Karen Rogers**

*25th Ashwell Book Weekend*

*4th and 5th October 2025*

Ashwell Book Weekend celebrated its quarter of a century this year with the 2025 Book Weekend.

People started queuing early and the Church was packed on the Saturday morning. A steady flow of people continued through the rest of the day and on Sunday browsing and buying as well as enjoying tea, coffee and delicious home-made cakes. An amazing collection of fiction, non-fiction, and children's books were available – something for everyone.

It takes a lot of hard work to organise the event, from the advertising to setting up, sorting, and pricing all the books. This is made easier by the numerous volunteers who give of their time and energy throughout the week and the weekend baking cakes, taking money, serving refreshments, and clearing up, 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 event was a great success, raising an amazing **£5,569** for The Friends of St Mary's. The success is down to those many volunteers and our thanks to you all for your efforts. As well as to all those people that come to buy.

Despite the magnificent sales we had plenty

of books left over and we were again able to donate books to Wimpole Hall, the Garden House Hospice and the Ashwell Book Swap in the Parish Church Room.

We then used an online marketplace to sell some of the leftover stock and David's Books bought most of the left-over fiction books.

The company Book Rescuers collected the rest, raising funds for their charity partners: The Rainbow Centre and the Doorstep Library. This means that the books that were donated for the sale will go to help many other charities as well as 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 26th Ashwell Book Weekend will be held on Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th October 2026. Please make a note in your diary and start saving those books!

**Karen Rogers**

✉ karenr@wsrllp.com

☎ 01462 743338

**Teresa King**

gathering together to support and enjoy local craft. Visitors left with unique treasures, festive cheer, and memories of a truly special day.

For more info contact me.

**Kate Heiss**

✉ kate.heiss@gmail.com

*Christmas Fair 2025*

On a very blustery day in late November, St Mary's church was pleased to welcome lots of visitors to the Christmas Fair. The stalls were a mix of charities, local businesses and crafters, and some run by the church. You could buy a bacon sandwich to help Diapalante, a beautiful wreath to help Ashwell Pre-school, cakes, gifts, cheese, crochet, beauty products and homewares, as well as support charities in the Middle East and have mulled wine and mince pies listening to the church choir sing familiar carols.

Games and tombolas meant you could win a toy, a bottle or a mystery gift. The marbles in the flowerpot game was as hotly contested as ever, and the tie game made good use of the peculiar donation of ties made to the book fair earlier in the year.

Thank you very much to everyone who helped in so many ways to make the Fair a success. Financially the Fair provides much needed funds for the church in order to keep the heating on, run services, maintain the building and much more. However, it also offers an important opportunity for locally sourced Christmas shopping, socialising with friends and for the community to come together. We hope to see you again for the Christmas Fair in 2026.

**Julia Mitchell**

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*Makers Market*

*23rd November 2025*

A Festive Showcase of Creativity at the Ashwell Makers Market

This year's Ashwell Makers Market at The Bushel & Strike on Sunday 23rd November was a wonderful celebration of creativity, community, and festive spirit. Visitors were welcomed with

the warm scent of mulled wine and the sweet aroma of mince pies, setting the perfect tone for an afternoon of shopping, discovery, and seasonal cheer. The market offered a vibrant showcase of local talent, where creativity and craftsmanship took centre stage.

Inside, visitors were treated to a diverse mix of talented makers. Juliette Shackleton offered delicate, botanically inspired ceramics, while The House of Alyssa Smith added sparkle with their beautifully crafted jewellery.

Orchard Hill Flowers brought natural elegance with their dried blooms, and Fernwood Remedies shared wildcrafted balms, teas, and tinctures rooted in herbal tradition. Little Shop of Pots charmed with quirky Christmas ceramics, and Fable Jewellery displayed silver pieces inspired by nature and travel.

The Walled Garden filled the room with the comforting scent of hand-poured candles, while Kate Heiss showcased her handmade linocuts and stationery. Jolly Brown Studio presented a curated collection of sustainable vintage finds, Rhubarb & Mustard contributed festive gifts from their much-loved local shop and café, and Helena Jenkinson's calm, hand-thrown pottery rounded off the indoor displays beautifully.

Outside, despite the crisp winter air, Rabbit Stew Crafts, Liliane Textiles, and Bespoke Seasonal Styling impressed visitors with live woodturning, contemporary woven designs, and charming reusable wreaths. The combination of indoor warmth and outdoor activity created an immersive experience that delighted visitors of all ages.

The market was lovingly organised by Kate Heiss, Alice Sparkes, and Juliette Shackleton, whose teamwork ensured a thoughtfully curated and welcoming event. Special recognition goes to Michelle Bannister for her striking branding that tied the market together so beautifully, and to Martin at The Bushel & Strike for hosting with such generosity.

This year's Ashwell Makers Market was a vibrant reminder of the creativity, talent, and festive spirit that make Ashwell such a special place. It celebrated not only the skill and imagination of local makers but also the sense of community, warmth, and connection that comes from

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SG8 0PB

Weather statistics 2025

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Rainfall (mm)	43.6	32.7	2.3	20.3	5.8	13.1	37.6	14.3	30.2	35.5	77.2	35.7	348.2
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	17	15	5	4	4	8	13	7	12	17	20	14	136
Max. temp. °C	12.2	15.9	20.1	25.6	27.6	32.3	32.3	31.2	25.7	19.6	16.4	14.1	
Min. temp.	-3.9	-2.5	-1.8	2.4	5.0	8.0	11.7	11.0	4.9	3.6	-1.8	-1.2	
Month avg. max °C	6.2	7.6	13.2	17.9	19.3	24.5	24.1	23.6	19.0	14.5	11.0	9.4	
Month avg. min °C	1.6	2.6	4.1	6.6	9.6	14.2	15.5	14.7	11.0	9.4	6.1	4.8	
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	
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	
Days with min 0°C or below	7	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	21
Sunshine hours (Heathrow)	51.9	67.4	187.9	252.3	225.5	230.8	190.3	192.0	170.9	70.5	71.7	67.1	1778.3
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



Download weather data on:

[www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/yearbook/2026/weatherstatistics2025.xlsx](http://www.ashwell.gov.uk/downloads/yearbook/2026/weatherstatistics2025.xlsx)

### Ashwell Weather 2025

#### Rain, rain: gone away

The most notable feature of 2025 was that it was the driest year since the Ashwell records began in 1976. The annual rainfall was 348.2mm. The previous lowest yearly total was 351.8mm in 1996. All months of the year, apart from November, had less than average rainfall. We had by far the driest spring and summer with 93.9mm (the previous driest was in 2022, with 119.2mm). However, 2025 wasn't the sunniest year. There were 1,778 sunshine hours in total, which is somewhat more than the recent average of about 1,600 hours. But the year 2003 was the brightest with 2,004 sunshine hours.

January and February were colder, greyer and marginally drier than usual, but otherwise unexceptional. Their lack of significant snow has become normal for recent years.

March was very different. There was very little rain, daytime temperatures above normal, nighttime temperatures a bit lower, and lots of sunshine. The 2.8mm of rainfall was the lowest recorded. Also with 187.9 sunshine hours it was the brightest March since 1995, when there were 194.5 sun hours.

In April the sunny trend continued with the sun shining for 61% of the daylight time (252.3 hrs), the most since national records began in 1957. Rainfall was low, but not as low as one might expect from the many sunny days. Only four days had any rain and much of it fell on just two days – 7.8mm on 15th and 6.9mm on 23rd.

May was also dry and sunny, though – unusually – not as sunny as April. June, July and August were generally warm with highs in each month above

30°C. There was a short heatwave from 19-21st June with peak temperatures on consecutive days of 28.3, 29.4 and 31.6°C. It just made the Met Office heatwave criterion which, for London and most surrounding inland counties, is defined as having three days or more with temperatures above 28°C. Lower thresholds apply for the rest of the country, going down to 25°C for the other UK nations and parts of England. For more details and a map see <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/blog/2025/will-we-have-a-heatwave-and-how-do-we-define-one>.

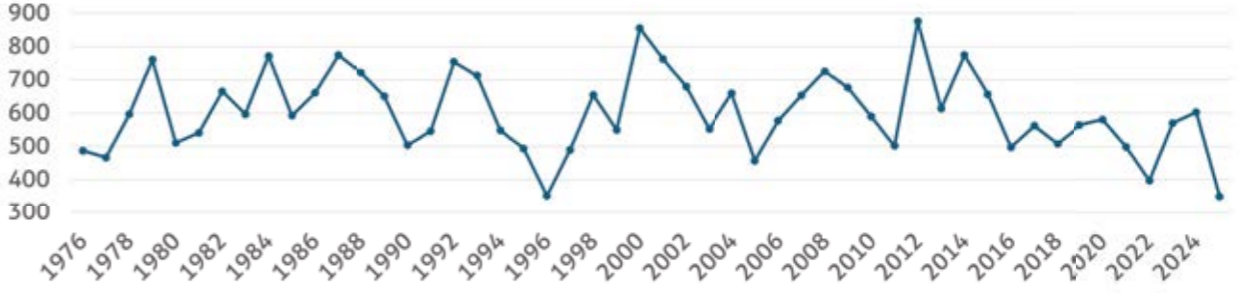
We had another hot spell from 27th June to 1st July with maximum temperatures 27.4, 29.6, 27.9, 32.3 and 32.2°C. So, while we had three days above threshold they were not consecutive so it was not formally a heatwave. It just felt like it!

There were two other short heatwaves in the summer: July 10-12th with a maximum temperature of 32.3°C, and August 11-13th peaking at 31.2°C. July was a bit wetter than we've become accustomed to, but in August again the rainfall was relatively low.

In September there was some relief for those who don't like the heat. After a warmish start up to the 9th there were only three days when the temperature exceeded 20°C. October continued the dry trend with 55% of the usual rainfall, though more than half the month had days in which some rain fell. It was unusually cloudy though, with only 65% of the average sunshine hours.

November was wetter than usual, with 77.2mm of rain, much of which came in a single day – 29.1mm on 14th. Without that contribution it would have been about average. Sunshine hours were also about average.

Annual total rainfall 1976-2025





December was drier than usual, but not exceptionally so and, as for all months but January and February, the average monthly temperatures were above normal. Rainfall was about two thirds of normal.

The lack of rain during the year, if it is a trend, will lead to concern over water supplies. The UK generally was in the grip of one of its most severe droughts in living memory. Spring 2025 was officially the driest since 1956, and the consequences have impacts through many facets of the British agro-ecosystem, from parched farmlands to shrinking rivers. The spring was the driest since Peter Bryant started recording the rainfall in 1976. The water supplier for Ashwell, Affinity Water (central), relies on groundwater for much of the supply and while the reserves have dropped they are still above a worrying level, see <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/water-resources/central>. So far we have been lucky.

**Overall summary**

2025 was considerably drier and somewhat warmer than usual. The graphs show the total annual rainfall over the last 50 years and the day-by-day rainfall for 2025.

**Heatwaves**

Clearly the heatwave definition for UK is inappropriate for use everywhere, and the World Meteorological Organization has a general definition which is when the daily maximum temperature of more than five consecutive days exceeds the average maximum temperature (1961-1990) by 5°C - see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heat\\_wave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heat_wave).

It does not look as this is followed everywhere: e.g. in Adelaide, South Australia a heatwave is five or more consecutive days at or above 35°C, or three consecutive days at or over 40°C.

**Bob Carswell**

*Farming*

*Harvest 2025 - a year to forget*

I appreciate that farmers are renowned for complaining, and perhaps we should learn the lesson of the boy who cried wolf - but this year has truly been a particularly difficult one for farming, especially arable production.

A prolonged wet spell from September 2024 to March 2025 made crop establishment a major challenge. The few crops that did establish were then hit by a long drought from April to July, which had a dramatic effect on both yield

and quality. Nationally wheat yields have been recorded as down 8% compared with the five-year average. Our spring barley failed to meet the required malting specification, and our peas yielded only half of their usual five-year average.

As we all know, inflation has had a dramatic impact on costs over the last several years, and agriculture has not been insulated from this. However, the prices achieved for our produce have fallen. The price of wheat - our main crop - was £170 per ton in October 2025, compared with a five-year rolling average of £190.

Support for farmers, from both past and present Governments, has reduced subsidies to a minimum and increased taxes. Despite promises of assistance through environmental and sustainable farming initiatives, many of these schemes seem to be withdrawn almost as quickly as they are announced.

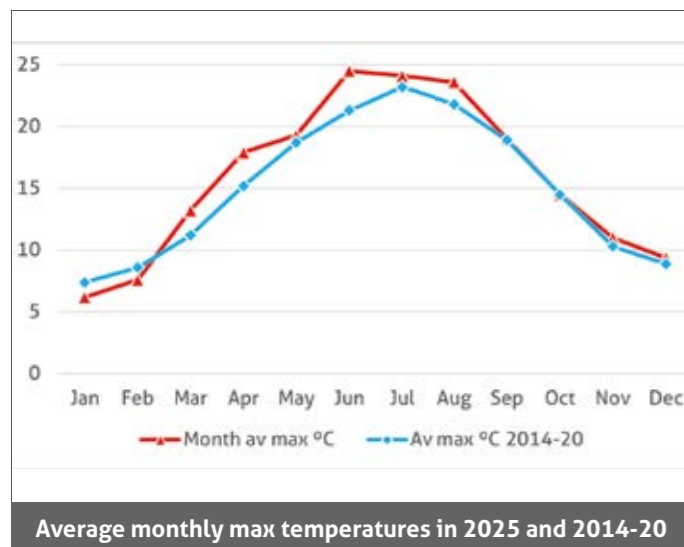
With poor arable returns, limited government support, and the continued urbanisation of North Hertfordshire, farmers are being continually pushed away from food production. This has

severe consequences for the nation's food security, the environment, and the rural landscape we all know and love.

To meet our environmental obligations on Farrows Farm we have continued with establishing 170 acres of green cover crops (a mixture of mustard, radish and phacelia). These protect the soil over winter, absorb any nutrients in the soil, and are ploughed back into the soil as green manure. We invested in a small seed applicator to establish these crops in a single pass with the tractor in September.

This year the areas we planted with winter bird food mixes established well and are providing excellent food and habitat for all birds. However, due to the prolonged drought the wildflower areas and strips we tried to sow in the late spring were very patchy - we will try to establish them again this year. This was a reminder that as farmers, even when trying to do good for the environment, you are still bound to the forces of mother nature.

**George Tait**




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*Mollie Aldridge*  
1931-2025

Mollie Bryant was born on 16th July, 1931, in Back Street, to Violet and Stanley Bryant, a farm worker, the eldest of six children. She died in Ashwell in June 2025.

Her family moved into Chain Cottage, when it was two homes and then to the pretty thatched cottage 'Down the Green', next to the Lockup. Mollie married Stanley Aldridge, in St Mary's Church, in 1956. They had their reception at the Bushel & Strike, with Days making the wedding cake and the flowers came from the garden. She walked to her wedding down Hodwell from The Green. She and Stanley lived in Baldock, before moving to the Grange Estate in Letchworth. She and Stanley moved back to Ashwell to a bungalow in Ashwell Street. Stanley died in 2014.

Mollie came from a large family, related to other long established local families including the Warboys, McBeal's and Bonnetts. She loved Ashwell, she and Stanley came back every weekend and attended all main events in the village. Stanley played in the village cricket team. They did not have children but there were plenty of nieces and nephews.

Mollie was a familiar character around the village; always very smartly turned out and, because of her deafness, had no difficulty in being heard!

Those we have lost



*Prof Patrick Holmes*  
1939-2025

*Olive Holmes*  
1941-2025

Pat was born in Hawarden, North Wales and Olive in Northampton. They both attended Swansea University; Pat studied civil engineering, with a passion for oceanography and Olive, sociology. Their shared love of music and choral singing brought them together for a blessed life full of shared passions, family and community.

On completing his PhD, Olive and Pat moved to the USA. Pat began working for the American Navy developing maritime engineering solutions that he couldn't talk about for decades; secret challenges that took him across the Pacific and deep beneath the ocean's surface. Katie, their daughter, was born whilst in America. Returning to the UK, Pat and Olive created a wonderful life on Merseyside. Olive built on her training, becoming a marriage guidance counsellor, and Patrick found new challenges and satisfaction at Liverpool University, where he later became Professor of Civil Engineering.

I arrived, along with a Schnauzer named Skipper; the first of three. Later, dinghy sailing, a passion Olive's father Ernest passed on, canasta evenings and hillwalking became features of life. Many a drenched day was spent in Snowdonia or on the Dee estuary. Pat's love of the sea deepened and he trained as a yacht master with the RYA; the basis for many family holidays in the Med.

A change of job for Pat prompted the move south. Pat became Professor, and later Dean, of Engineering at Imperial College. Olive started her own counselling practice, Vigil. They set up home on The Green in Steeple Morden and, over time, wove themselves into village life. Olive's parents, Ray and Ernest, came to live with them a few years later.

Their love of singing rekindled in the church choir at St Mary's, with the North Herts Guild, Ashwell Music Festival, and, of course, the St David's day celebrations. Olive became heavily involved locally in Save the Children, the United Reformed Church, and the parochial church council; she was instrumental in establishing the lunch club, a quilting group, and the literature group in Ashwell; all of which continue to this day.

Four granddaughters arrived: Francesca, Juliette, Megan, and Anwen. Time with them, whether on The Green or in the South Hams, where Pat now had a share in a yacht, was one of their greatest joys. 'Taxi' rides in the ship's tender always seemed to be necessary, even if it was to simply go round in circles. It is not entirely clear who enjoyed that most, Pat or the granddaughters.

With Ray and Ernest's passing, Pat and Olive moved into the heart of the community they'd become such a part of, Ashwell, and closer to the many dear friends they'd come to know over the years, alongside their cherished neighbours from The Green. Mum, and Dad, found a profound sense of belonging on The Green and in Ashwell, and with it so much happiness and fulfilment. As is always the way, the more we give of ourselves, through kindness, presence, and the quiet generosity of everyday life, the more we receive in return. So, Katie and I offer our heartfelt thanks to you all.



*Cheryl 'Chere' Hunter*

Chere moved to Ashwell in 2013 and lived in Hodwell Barn, a carefully chosen and much-loved home, for its beautiful courtyard garden which she took much pride in, as well as for the stunning views it offered overlooking St Mary's Church, a place very close to Chere's heart throughout her time in the village.

Chere was born and raised in Cardiff in Wales. Her favourite place in the world to be was Wales, as she said it always felt like home. She would regularly visit and enjoy going back 'home' as often as she could, again for the beautiful views. Ashwell quickly became her next favourite place to be, and she very much settled into the village life enjoying the pubs, the church and the community feel.

Prior to moving to Ashwell, Chere lived in Potters Bar with her husband Malcolm who she was married to for 40 years, as well as her three children who she adored. Much of her career was spent as a well-respected and loved head teacher in St John's Wood in London. Chere continued a strong bond with many of her pupils right up until she died.

Alongside her career, Chere also studied a theological degree and became a licensed reader in the Diocese of St Albans, where she became very popular in assisting with weddings and leading funeral services. After retirement, she looked after Northaw Church during a long clergy vacancy which she very much enjoyed, and also dedicated ample time to a young offenders prison, offering pastoral support and setting up a music group to help bring joy and cheer to the inmates.

After moving to Ashwell, her reputation for delivering touching funeral services continued and she remained very busy spending much of her time with bereaved families planning and delivering funerals. As a trained bereavement councillor, she offered pastoral support to many and ran well attended bereavement groups in the village too.

Chere also spent several of her later years as Anglican Chaplain at St John's Hospice in Moggerhanger, where she made a huge impact. She insisted on being on call for the hospice anytime day or night, to be with the dying patients and their families and is very much remembered for the care and compassion she showed to so many. Chere sadly eventually passed away herself in this hospice, with her family beside her on 23rd June 2025, after a cancer diagnosis eight weeks prior.

Chere will always be remembered for her kind, giving, compassionate and caring nature. Her children remain immensely proud of the woman she was and how many lives she helped to enrich and support throughout her life.



*Simon Marlow  
1945-2025*

Simon was born in Purley, Surrey in 1945. He was educated at Whitgift school before going to Cambridge to read music. He learnt the piano and French horn from an early age and played the French horn in the National Youth Orchestra. On leaving Cambridge he moved to Ashwell as he had a job teaching music at a Catholic school in Stevenage and a girlfriend still in Cambridge. He put a pin on the map and Ashwell was on the middle so he moved there. Both the job and the girlfriend fizzled out but he has lived in the area ever since. First lodging in Ashwell with various families before moving to Hinxworth.

He was best known as the local piano teacher but this gave him the chance to perform as well. He played a large part in the Ashwell Music Festival in the early days. He made his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall in 1973 and had a busy musical career ever since, which included regular concerts in Britain and in many other European countries as well as the United States, Sri Lanka and Iceland. He broadcast with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and made several recordings.

Later his life took a number of unexpected directions which included working for years with the Lucis Trust in London, an educational charity, plus several forays into local politics. He was a member of the Hinxworth Parish Council for many years and served one term as a district councillor for the Arbury ward. He delivered the newspapers for many years and more recently played the organ for the Sunday services as well as weddings, christenings and funerals in Hinxworth Parish Church.

He married Frances Gairdner in 1974, a local district nurse who he met in Ashwell. They had four children Oliver, Ruth, Alice and Tom who all went to Ashwell School and then Knights Templar.

He died suddenly in March just after giving a concert and a reading of his poetry in The Hague.



*Ruth Rowntree*  
1941-2025

Ruth moved to Ashwell from Buntingford in the late 1970s with her children, Abigail and Matthew and her corgi, Daffy. Abigail and Matthew went to the Ashwell School while Ruth continued working as a community occupational therapist in North Hertfordshire alongside overseeing the conversion of her run-down cottage in Gardiners Lane into a family home.

In her early 20s, Ruth had spent time travelling in Europe, with six months in Italy as an au-pair. She enjoyed herself so much that there was some concern in her family that she would stay in Rome forever. Having been summoned back to London by her parents, she trained to become an occupational therapist which combined her love of arts and crafts and helping people. Her love of arts continued through her life and she enjoyed visiting art galleries and exhibitions on her travels. She visited St Petersburg to see Russian art, ballet and operas and enjoyed hosting the artists when they came to Ashwell.

She also enjoyed travelling through Africa with Matthew and later travelled around the world on her own, visiting friends and catching up with Matthew in Asia. She was, however, most at home in Ashwell and was determined not to leave.

Ruth was very keen on her garden and took great pleasure in seeing the hollyhocks and sweet peas bloom each year. She was an active member of the Horticultural Society and enjoyed visiting local gardens and going on trips with the society. She never won the potato in a pot growing competition but entered regularly in the hope of beating those who used their secret magic formulas for bumper yields.

In 1982, she suffered severe injuries and the death of Abigail in a road traffic collision on the A505. She was grateful for the love and support that she received from friends and family but never fully recovered from the physical injuries and emotional trauma.

Following early retirement, Ruth enjoyed spending more time with societies and clubs in Ashwell and was also an active member of an exercise class, the Mother's Union, 4th Thursday Club, United Reformed Church and the Womens Institute. She was a regular at Ashwell Pharmacy, Crumps, Kirby Manor events, the Parish Room and St Mary's Church; she loved chatting with people and could often be seen zooming around the village with her stroller and pink outfits.

Following a short illness, Ruth died in early September. She is buried with Abigail in Ashwell Garden of Remembrance.



*Winifred Catherine Sheldrick*  
1930-2025

Winifred was born on the 22nd July 1930 in Glasgow, the fifth child of six. The family moved to Abington, where, as a youngster, she grew up happily. During a visit to Midsummer Common Fair in Cambridge, she met the handsome Peter. He courted her and they married in 1951. They were married for almost 70 years, until Peter passed away five years ago. They started married life in Fowlmere, where Peter worked on the family farm. And their three children, Michael, Dianne and Paul were born there. During the harsh winter of 1962-63 they moved to Hillcrest, Ashwell and ran a poultry farm, keeping chickens, rabbits, geese, ducks and pigs, which she was actively involved in, selling produce and eggs at the gate.

They immersed themselves in village life; fiercely competitive members of the Badminton Club, always followed by a drink at the Bushel and Strike. Winnie was a founder member of Ashwell Thrift Shop, which was run from one of the outbuildings. Eventually they retired and moved to Lucas Lane, where they loved their garden, Winnie could be found pottering in it most days, even at 95 years old.

The children grew up, married and produced seven grandchildren: Anna and Edward, Nicolas and Jenna, and Georgia, Jessica and LouLou and then 10 great grandchildren for Winnie to love and cherish. They enjoyed many visits to Dianne and Christian, and family in the South of France, loving the weather and trying their luck in the Monte Carlo casino. They spent many Christmases and New Year Eves there where they would dance the night away.

For their 60th wedding anniversary they took a trip on the Orient Express to Venice and also enjoyed many other holidays, including visiting relatives in America and several amazing cruises. Winnie was very fashionable and glamorous, loved to dress up, and was never without her lippy.

In recent years, following Peter's death, and the slow onset of dementia, Winnie relied more heavily on family. Especially Paul and Sarah, who live in the village, and were always there for her. Winnie was getting unsteady on her feet, her eyesight and hearing were failing. However, she still loved trips out to garden centres and her favourite restaurants, when Michael and Lynda visited regularly.

In July, on her 95th birthday, Paul and Sarah, and Michael and Lynda took her to a grand fish restaurant, where she celebrated with champagne and candles on a cake, whilst they and the waiters sang a rousing Happy Birthday. She loved it! She loved her family, and believed family was everything in life. She loved to reminisce about her childhood and of children and grandchildren growing up. To quote Winnie, "you will miss me when I'm gone" and we really do XXX.

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Village Events

For information about the events in Ashwell, visit the recently re-launched **Village Calendar**

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/calendar/>

Local services



## Local Authorities - 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: Local Government is being re-organised. Responsibilities will change in the near future.

The infographic is divided into two main sections: North Herts Council (purple) and Hertfordshire County Council (green). North Herts Council services include: 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, and Parking. Hertfordshire County Council services include: Highways & transport, Adult social services, Children's social care, Schools & education, Fire & rescue, Libraries & archives, Recycling, Re-use Centres & waste management, Trading standards, Public Health, and Registration Services.

### Hertfordshire County Council



You can access details of all services offered by the County Council on its website:  
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/home.aspx>

Alternatively you can send an email or telephone:  
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 ☎ 03001 234040

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### North Herts Council



#### General enquiries

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 ☎ 01462 474000 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday). Textphone/Minicom 474800

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#### Electoral and Legal Services:

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 ☎ 03004 560535 (24-hour service)

#### Follow NHC on social media

Twitter: @NorthHertsDC, Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr

### Citizens Advice North Herts



A local charity, available to all, offering free, confidential help and support.

#### Letchworth Office

49 Station Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3BQ

Opening times:

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 9.30am – 4.00pm
- Wednesday: 9.30am – 12.00 noon

#### Royston Office

Royston Town Hall, Melbourn Street, Royston, SG8 7DA

Opening times:

- Monday and Wednesday: 9.30am – 12.00 noon

Call us on ☎ 01462 689801 and leave a message, or visit [northhertscab.org.uk](http://northhertscab.org.uk) for more information on our services and drop-in locations.

### 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 27 January 2026

#### 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

Book the HertsLynx demand responsive bus service via the HertsLynx app from Playstore or the Apple Store, on the website or by telephone.

Bookings:

Telephone  
 ☎ 01992 555513

Online login (sign-up required)  
<https://bookings.hertslynx.co.uk/login>

#### Trains

Ashwell and Morden Station is at Odsey, just over two 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)

### Post Office

Over a year ago the Post Office changed the opening times for its service in the Parish Room, Alms Lane. The current 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)

**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 from 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.

Prices are liable to change. For the latest information on any of the services, you can telephone or visit the HILS website.

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 is responsible for Wolverley House which provides retirement accommodation. It comprises 30 flats, a communal kitchen and lounge/dining area, guest facilities, laundry and garden. There are regular social activities.

Settle also has cottages in Back Street, and some of the houses and flats in Dixies Close, Ashwell Street and Station Road. Contact:

**Settle**

Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 1HA  
[customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk](mailto: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 <p > and <p >.**

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