

# Clubs and Societies

## Border Ramblers



We had another excellent year, starting with the New Year's Day stroll to Arbury Banks. Our regular 2:00 pm walks started in February when we set out from *The Three Tuns* towards the Mordens. The following months we headed west towards Hinxworth and Caldecote and beyond, with generally good weather but, being Ashwell, often

windy. The walk days were varied from Sundays to weekdays to give everyone the chance of an afternoon out in our lovely countryside.

We also had two longer walks starting at 10:00 am. The first was along Ashwell Street east towards Litlington (seeing the US memorial) and stopping at *The Jester* at Odsey for lunch. The second was to Edworth with its lovely medieval church. We stopped for lunch in Hinxworth. If incentives were needed for those inclined to flag we aimed for the occasional Sunday tea/cake in the Parish Room or the fuchsia festival in Caldecote church.

In September we had an evening visit to St Mary's to see the Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats that roost in the two porches. Both species gave a good performance for those unused to bats.

The numbers on our walks varied from around five to a dozen, regulars and newcomers. Rounding off the year we had an evening drinks/review of the year in a local hostelry.

Details of our walks are posted each month on the noticeboard by the Rose and Crown, so if you want to join us just turn up; or if you need any more information please contact Ken Coyne.

**Ken Coyne**

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Stay in touch with all the up coming events in our village.

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

## Ashwell Jazz

At the October meeting of Ashwell Jazz in 2018 the club celebrated its tenth anniversary. Besides the cake and fizz that one member brought to help us celebrate, he also produced a programme played on 78s, using a wind-up gramophone brought by a friend of one of our members. What amazed most of us was the quality of the sound.



Fortunately, other members had brought more 78s along so that we had a most entertaining and enlightening evening.

Marco Marconi, the Hitchin based jazz pianist, once again joined us for our December meeting. This makes a change from listening to recorded music and gives us a chance to talk about jazz with someone who plays it.

This does not mean that our regular meetings do not give great enjoyment. As ever, the selection of tunes played covers a wide range of musicians including music from many parts of the world. All tastes were catered for and most of us had our knowledge and appreciation of jazz expanded.

Although held in a home the meetings are open to all. The evening starts with a programme prepared and presented by one of our members. This lasts about an hour. The rest of the evening is taken up with the contributions of other members on the same theme.

The evening ends around 10:00 pm. There is no pressure to present a programme, but those who have done so find it is a good way to learn more about jazz. We also have an annual summer social/barbecue when other friends join us.

If you enjoy jazz, want to know more and want a relaxed evening out once a month then do come and join us.

There is no charge but you do need to bring your own refreshments. We meet on the second Thursday of the month at 59 High Street at 7:30 pm.

**David Short**

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## Ashwell Theatre Club



Ashwell Theatre Club (ATC) opened 2018 with the pantomime *Sleeping Beauty*, which was a huge success. Paula Merrell did a great job directing, supported by a big team of helpers. Panto is always popular, but it is a lot of work and therefore we only "do panto" every other year, although we know people look forward to it.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Ashwell Show in recognition of the contribution made by volunteers from ATC we were delighted to be able to purchase and install at the village hall a new, professional grade double curtain track for scenery.

We supported Ashwell at Home and marked the centenaries of women's suffrage and the end of the First World War by taking part in two different events on Sunday 13th May. Many female members donned the costumes of 1918 and chained themselves to the railings of the United Reformed Church before marching down the High Street to give a short performance of suffragette



*A Midsummer Night's Dream. Photo by Paula Merrell*

readings at St Mary's Church. This was followed by First World War letters, diaries and poems, poignantly read by other members of the Theatre Club and interspersed with harp music played by Julia Mitchell. We had a significant success in the summer of 2018. With the inspirational drive of Nicki Humberstone, the landlady of the Rose & Crown, and working for the first time with professional actors, we took part in an outdoor production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the Rose & Crown garden. It was very interesting to watch the process of a professional director at work, and our thanks go to both Nicki and to Harry Blumenau.

During the summer we also learnt of the plans of Sarah and Ben Bartram, and Annie and Keith Clifford to move away from Ashwell: Sarah and Ben to Oxfordshire, Annie and Keith to Leicestershire. All of them have made significant contributions to ATC and we miss them all...a lot.

At our AGM we were joined by Craig Maddox and Jo Auckland, who were voted on to the committee, so it is great to have new talents on board to ensure our future as a club. To mark 100 years since the 1918 Armistice, we performed *Tin Hats and Telegrams* in November, alongside a performance of poetry and readings that charted the story of the First World War. *Tin Hats* was originally written for schools,



*Tin Hats and Telegrams. Photo by Emma Pritchard*

but we had a truly multi-generational cast. We were delighted to have raised over £130 for the British Legion with a collection at the end of each performance — our thanks go to those who gave so generously. As the year ends, we are rehearsing our next performance, *Last Panto in Ashwell*, which is an adult farce and the second in a series of three plays. It will have been performed in early 2019 so by the time you read this we hope some of you will have enjoyed it.

As you can see, Ashwell Theatre Club continues to perform for the community on a regular basis and we continue to improve our facilities in the village hall. None of it happens without great enthusiasm from our committee, cast, audiences and members. If you are interested in joining us in any way, please check out our website for more information: <https://www.ashwelltheatre.co.uk>

**Connie Chambers, Chair**

✉ [connie@ashwelltheatre.co.uk](mailto:connie@ashwelltheatre.co.uk)



*Sleeping Beauty Panto. Photo by Chris Frazer Smith*

**Kate E Cumins**  
MAFHP MCFHP

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## Ashwell Women's Institute



In July 2018 our Women's Institute celebrated its centenary when Margie Wallace, our president, told members about its early days, using pictures, minutes and programmes stored in the Village Museum. We again

enjoyed an interesting and active year. We took part in a county-wide quiz, visited the Beefeater gin distillery and the Imperial War Museum in London and spent a delightful day at an alpaca farm.

Group 21 (a combination of several local WIs) got together in Baldock and heard about the exploits of a member of an old pop group. Our WI provided the entertainment - a derivative of the old Call my Bluff quiz, which was very well received. We served teas at the URC hall and ran a very successful refreshment tent at the Ashwell Show which raised £1,700 for the Show's funds. We are grateful to the non-WI members who became honorary members for the day in order to help us. Again, the Ashwell Bake-Off proved popular and seems likely to become a Show tradition.

Subjects of talks were varied and interesting and included: the pleasures and pains of rambling; medical imaging both past and present; understanding dementia; Dr Martin



The visit to the Alpaca farm. Photo by Sheila Hogan

Hoffman's journey in medicine; the history of Ashwell Stores; a woman's life in the army and a very amusing talk entitled 'When doctors and policemen start to look young'. We had a 'getting to know you' session when several members gave us a brief insight into their lives and how they came to live in Ashwell. We rounded the year off with an excellent Christmas lunch provided by Liz Chandler and her team, with all profits going to Diapalante.

We meet on the third Wednesday of each month in the United Reformed Church Hall at 2:00 pm, with the exception

of August when there is no meeting. We currently have 35 members but would be happy to welcome more. Why not come to one of our meetings as a visitor? Details of our meetings are on posters displayed on the notice board attached to the wall of The Adelong, High Street. We are a lively group of ladies, keen to learn more about a wide range of subjects and always happy to try out new experiences and make new friends.

**Sheila Hogan, Secretary**  
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## Ashwell Horticultural Society

It was another busy year in 2018, with our activities and events falling into four distinct groups.

### Gardens

It would be difficult to imagine a horticultural society calendar without including visits to gardens. This year we had an absolute feast, including a visit each Thursday in June, and a weekend in York.

Johanna Brown gave us a tour of her cutting garden in Baldock. Tony and Gill Francis' garden proved a popular venue, while David and Margaret McKee's beautifully presented garden was enjoyed by all.

Over thirty of our members ventured forth with Michael Gill, our trusted guide, on a tour of North Yorkshire. Highlights of the trip included Harlow Carr, Scampston Walled Garden and Jackson's Wold.

### Display

The Spring and Autumn shows were both very well attended, with an abundance of beautiful flowers, amazing plants and incredible fruit and vegetables, not to mention the wealth of handmade goodies, both edible and handcrafted, and many artistic entries. Tony and Annie Coe painstakingly filmed and produced a DVD of the Autumn Show, which we viewed after our AGM and Gardeners' Supper in November.

### Programme

Our annual programme has been varied. We were thrilled to welcome Simon Saggars in January. Peter Green from the National Trust enthused us with news of Wicken Fen in February; and in May Sandra Barker gave an excellent demonstration, "Making willow supports". Kathy Brown's talk on edible flowers was equally fascinating. In October, Twigs Way gave an inspiring talk. This time her subject was, "The social history of the allotment". We concluded the year with a superb talk on Islamic gardens and their influences, in which Susan Greenbank used photographs to illustrate her presentation, including some from her visit to the Alhambra in Spain.

### Rules

2018 proved to be another year of great challenge for the committee, when once again we tackled issues that involved rules and regulations. The committee works tirelessly to keep abreast of current issues and to provide us with an exceptional programme. Janet Townsend-Stojic has retired from the



Alan and Margaret Gilliam act as mine hosts at one of the Hortics summer garden parties. Photo by Margaret Budgen

committee as she is relocating to the Netherlands. We are pleased to welcome Martyn Hird as our new subscriptions secretary.

### General Data Protection Regulations

Like so many organisations we have been faced with implementing GDPR legislation. All members have been given the relevant information and forms and we hope we can continue to keep everyone in touch with news of the society.

**Margaret Gilliam, Chair** ☎ 742040

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www.ashwellhortics.btck.co.uk



The 1918 Ashwell WI Programme was a little more domestic than that of 2018! Photo by Margaret Budgen

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## Rose & Crown Folk

Ashwell's folk session is now in its 25th year, having begun in December 1994 with a charity "Sing-along-a-thon" at the Rose & Crown. Since then, we have met every month for an evening of music, singing and general merrymaking.

In 2018 we have grown somewhat, with quite a few new musicians and singers. With Billy and Niki in charge, we have had some really excellent evenings and now, with Howard, we are hoping to continue with more memorable nights.

Whatever transpires, everyone who comes along is assured of a huge welcome, whether or not you're singing or playing.



We almost always have visitors from outside the village, but nearly everyone is either from Ashwell or has links with the village. We also occasionally form a band, Rose & Crown Folk, to perform at various village and other events.

**Please Note: December 2019 will see our 25th anniversary and we are planning a special event to celebrate!**  
\* Look out for notices \*

We normally have a different theme every month. We don't really take too much notice of these themes, but they give the evening more of a focus than it would otherwise have. Look out for the posters on village noticeboards and inside the Rose & Crown. We also have a Facebook group at: [facebook.com/groups/RoseAndCrownFolk](https://www.facebook.com/groups/RoseAndCrownFolk)

We meet on the first Monday of every month from 8:30 to 11:00 pm 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 and Janice and Ian Murton.

**Ian Chandler** ☎ 743091

## The Mid-Life Crisis Car Club



The Ashwell based Mid-Life Crisis Car Club took full advantage of the long hot summer of 2018, with all but one of its runs taking place on dry, sunny days: ideal for top-down motoring. The club's year started in April with a scenic run to Ely, where we enjoyed lunch at

the Cutter Inn. This was followed in June by a visit to Studio 434 in Potters Bar, which is an astonishing private collection of over 350 classic cars, ranging from Clynos to Ferraris and Lagondas. A unique aspect of this collection is that visitors are allowed to sit in the vehicles rather than just admiring them from afar. Most are also available for hire if your pockets are sufficiently deep.

Stow Maries First World War airfield in Essex was our destination in June, followed the next month by our regular visit to the Kimbolton Country Fair and Car Show, where we joined dozens of other car clubs in displaying our vehicles. In August we had a very interesting private visit to Glemham Hall, a 17th century manor house in Suffolk, preceded by a picnic in the rose garden.



Members' cars at Buckler's Hard. Photo by John Wilkinson

This year's weekend away saw 26 of us in 13 cars touring the New Forest in September. This included a visit to Buckler's Hard where we were allowed privileged access to park our cars in front of the historic cottages for a photo shoot (see picture). Later that month we drove to Aldeburgh, via Lavenham and the Snape Maltings, where we had lunch. We stopped for tea and cakes at a delightful tea shop in Lavenham. The Lavenham Parish Council had reserved eleven parking spaces for our cars in front of the Guildhall in the historic market square.

Our final run was in October to Woburn, where a record 29 of us had lunch at the Black Horse. This was when our luck with the weather ended as there was torrential rain all day, causing several members to leave their sports cars at home in favour of their everyday vehicles.

Our Annual Dinner was held in the Rose & Crown at the end of November. The after-dinner talk was given by one of our members, who spoke about his recent participation in the Rally for Heroes, an event which involved driving through ten European countries in ten days, raising over £150,000 for a military charity. The objective of the club is to find scenic roads to drive along and interesting places to visit. Membership is open to anyone with a sports car, classic car or convertible. For further information see our website: [www.midlife-crisis.org.uk](http://www.midlife-crisis.org.uk)

**Robin Lipscombe** ☎ 742584

## Ashwell Mummers

January 2018 saw our 17th Christmas tour of Ashwell, starring *The Dragon*, who was, as usual, on great form, though somewhat shorter in stature this year.

The children's performance at the Bushel and Strike was well attended and we proved very popular, especially Father Christmas, who had brought a sackful of presents.

The performance at Wolverley House was better attended than in the last couple of years and, as usual, went down well; but the Three Tuns was unavailable at short notice. This led to our first Christmas performance outside the village as we did an alternative performance at the Waggon & Horses in Steeple Morden. This was well attended, even at a few days' notice, and we are planning to perform there again in 2019.

The final performance at the Rose & Crown was also well attended, with a very enthusiastic audience, as was the party afterwards.

In all, we collected a record £367.21, which we sent to the North Herts Sanctuary. This brings our grand total to over £4,300 over the 17 years.

For 2018 we had a full cast, including such famous characters as Beelzebub, Big Head and Humpty Jack. For 2019, we have lost our Beelzebub (Niki) but Sarah is planning on returning from Oxford for the night to perform in the role.

The tour was regarded by all as a tremendous success this year. For up to date information, follow us on our Facebook group page

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

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

**Ian Chandler**

☎ 743091

## Meditation Group

Would you like some space and quiet time in your busy life? Then come and join the Meditation Group that meets in the Parish Room on the third Wednesday in the month at 11:00 am and/or the fourth Friday in the month at 7:00 pm for thirty minutes or more of peace and quiet.

As well as meditation the meetings can include poetry and discussions if the group wishes. The Meditation Group is for all faiths or none. No experience is required and it is free.

Do come and try it out or give me a call to discuss what we are about.

**Ken Coyne** ☎ 743723

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