

Charity Groups

Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve



Herts and Middlesex

It's been another very interesting and very unusual year in the nature reserve, primarily owing to our wonderful British climate. Residents of a certain age will remember well the drought of 1976, with its parched fields and water shortages.

Miraculously, there were no hosepipe bans in Ashwell in 2018, but we still had parched conditions.

By early July, the grass in the reserve had dried up to a crisp, but, owing to earlier rain, there was quite a lot of it and we wondered how we would cope with the hay making, especially when we heard that the Wildlife Trust's big mowers were out of action. However, help was at hand. For the first time ever, a smallish tractor, with a cutter/collector combination mounted on the rear, came to our aid. The crop on all the flat areas (without anthills) was cut, collected and tipped into our convenient big hole in less than a morning. What a miracle! No raking up and no carrying of piles of grass to composting heaps – from these areas anyway.

But we didn't get away without some effort. Our own volunteers and the Trust's Green Team cut steep banks on those meadows with anthills, using scythes or strimmers during work parties in September, October and November.

Although vegetation shrivelled up, the summer heat was appreciated by adult butterflies. In many surveyed wildlife areas numbers had increased substantially. We enjoyed Marbled Whites, Common Blues, Chalkhill Blues, Small Heaths and the more usual Meadow and Hedge Browns. Several moth-trapping nights yielded a wide range of species, along with first county records of two species of beetle.

During the recent winter months, we continued to coppice old bushes to bring new life to them. We also cut down several ash trees. These are gradually succumbing to ash dieback disease.

As always, we are very appreciative of the help given by our conservation volunteers.

Why not come along and join us? It's cheaper than joining a gym and much more fun! Our work parties take place on the third Sunday of the month from 10:00 am until about lunch time.

Don't forget, visitors are always welcome in the nature reserve. A free permit lasts a year and allows you to go for a walk around at any time.

For more information, please contact us.

Chris & Trevor James,
56 Back Street, Ashwell
☎ 742684

Ashwell Charity Christmas Card Shop

Christmas wouldn't be the same without Christmas cards. Though Christmas cards in their current form are only 150 years old, the issuing and giving of cards printed with religious themes goes back to the origins of printing in Europe in the 15th century.

They continue to brighten up our houses and allow us to keep in touch with people we otherwise wouldn't. Despite the impact of technology, there is no replacement for them. Social media is impersonal, emails don't always arrive, and many people won't accept e-cards in case they have been sent by scammers.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics for 2017 show that, despite total card sales being down by 0.5% on 2016, the value of cards sold increased by 14%. The numbers for Christmas card sales were much the same, except slightly better. It seems people are buying slightly fewer but more expensive cards.

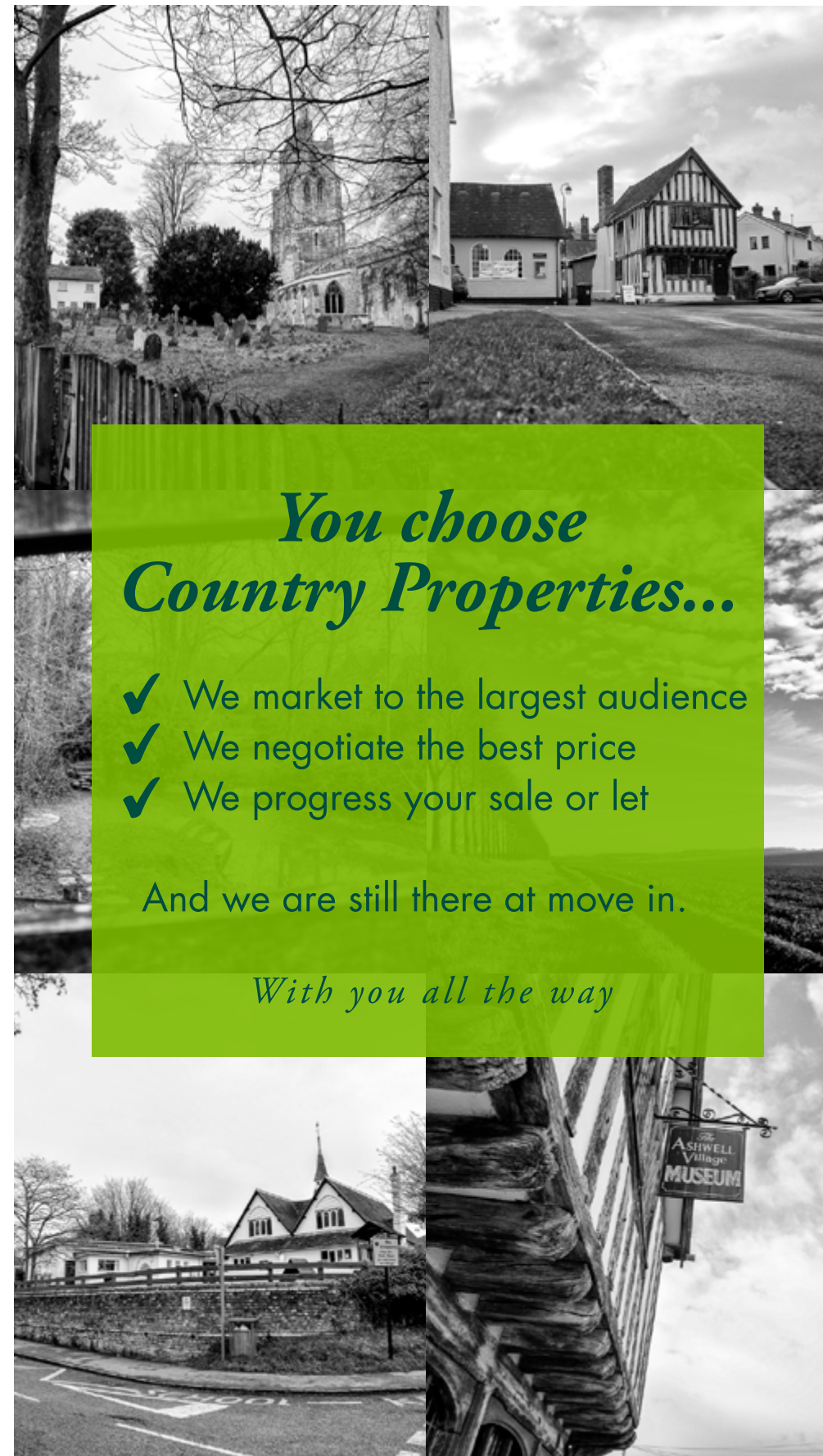
In 2018, sales of Christmas cards from the Ashwell Charity Card shop totalled £2,850, 30% more than last year. In very large part, this is owing to the re-opening of Bear Lane and the improvement in general visibility now that the work on Bear House has been completed. People now walk past on this side of the road again and people in passing cars can see that there is a shop there. This year, there was also an unprecedented variety of cards for sale (some of them unique to the shop) from the 15 different charities involved.

We are very grateful for all the support we receive from people in Ashwell and surrounding villages. As well as providing a relaxing, sociable and easy way to buy cards for Christmas, the card shop acts as one of the focuses for social life in the village. You also 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, supply the cards and give their time to staffing the shop during the weekends leading up to Christmas. 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, please 'phone Ian

We look forward to even more of your support in 2019.

Ian Chandler
☎ 743091



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Ashwell's Fight Against Cancer



2018 commenced with Chris Scholfield, David Roberts and I presenting a cheque for £5,000 to consultant neurosurgeon Mr Price at Addenbrooke's Hospital. This money has gone towards provisions for their new research laboratory. He was delighted to show us around the neurosciences department on the 6th floor and gave us an insight into the medical advances they are making in both research and clinical care. The highly skilled neurosurgeons treat all kinds of tumours and trauma. Once he had explained that they received only 1% of cancer research funding for their department, I felt compelled to continue fundraising for them in 2018.

I have many people to thank once again for their continuing support. Keith Gordon and John Boggust organised another wonderful Golf Day – and somehow were able to ensure sunshine all the way. I don't know how they do it!

We had hoped to hold a Black-Tie Ball but unfortunately it had to be postponed. Instead, Jill and Chris Powell offered their garden for an evening's candlelight supper and so marquees and lights were erected, a caterer acquired and interesting raffle prizes accrued. An honesty bar and small auction added the finishing touches. £1,200 was raised on the night. My

thanks go to all those who helped, but especially to Jill and Chris, and Wendy and Graham Scott, without whose enthusiasm and organisational skills nothing would have been possible.

A very successful Coffee Morning in November provided some Christmas gifts and stocking fillers for those who attended. Super cakes and a good raffle (with expertly made tea and coffee) ensured that a good time was had by us all.

Our end of year fund raisers – AFAC Christmas cards, Ashwell Stores raffle and donations from the Big Sing Concert – courtesy of Alex Holmes – had yet to be accounted for at the time of writing. However, £5,000 had already been raised and so we looked forward to presenting a large cheque to the neurosciences department yet again.

2019 is already shaping up well. We are holding a "Folk, Country and Little Bit More" night on 23rd March, a combined prestigious Charity Golf Day with the Danish-UK Association at Burrhill Golf Club, Surrey, on 9th May, and our annual Golf Day at Chesfield Downs in June. We are delighted that members of the Covent Garden Opera House Chorus are giving a concert for us in St Mary's Church in November. It promises to be an exciting year.

Finally, to all of those wonderful people who have given their time or donated to AFAC in 2018, my heartfelt thanks.

Christine Scholfield ☎ 742136
✉ christinescholfield@hotmail.com



Presentation to Mr Price

Diapalante

Diapalante is an Ashwell based charity that works with partners in West Africa to support them in their chosen projects, which are aimed at alleviating some of the worst effects of poverty within their communities.



Teenagers helping younger children with their French at the Diapalante Community Education Centre in Senegal. Photo by Liz Chandler

This year, we have received many and varied donations of time, money, fundraising opportunities, goods and the invaluable expertise of Ashwell residents, including administrative help, professional advice and fundraising skills. We are immensely grateful for all your support.

A highlight of 2018 for the younger children at the Diapalante Community Education Centre in Senegal was a written



Helping children in Senegal. Photo by Liz Chandler

exchange of questions and answers with a class at Ashwell School. Each group asked 10 questions about the others' culture, covering a range of topics such as school and home, snow and sandstorms. Ashwell School also donated to the Centre some stacking chairs they no longer needed. These will be used for lessons at the Centre and lent or hired out for community use at meetings, school events, weddings, naming ceremonies and funerals. The Community Education Centre, run by Mamadou Kane, helps young children with their French – the national language used at school. Older children and adults are supported to improve their English and computer skills – greatly improving their job opportunities.

In Mauritania, Ibrahima Diallo – who has been involved with Diapalante since our first project in 2004 – uses his spare time to organise basic health care to children who live in the town of Nouadhibou. These young boys have no family support. They live in poverty, in the care of a religious teacher, many begging from door to door for the food and money for their upkeep. Diapalante provides medicines to treat common illnesses, which tend to be coughs and chest infections, wounds and sprains, digestive problems, conjunctivitis, ear infections and various parasites. The health problems are often linked to the children's poverty, to eating old food and to living in poor conditions.

Thank you for your support during 2018 which we are hoping will continue in 2019.

Liz Chandler ☎ 743091

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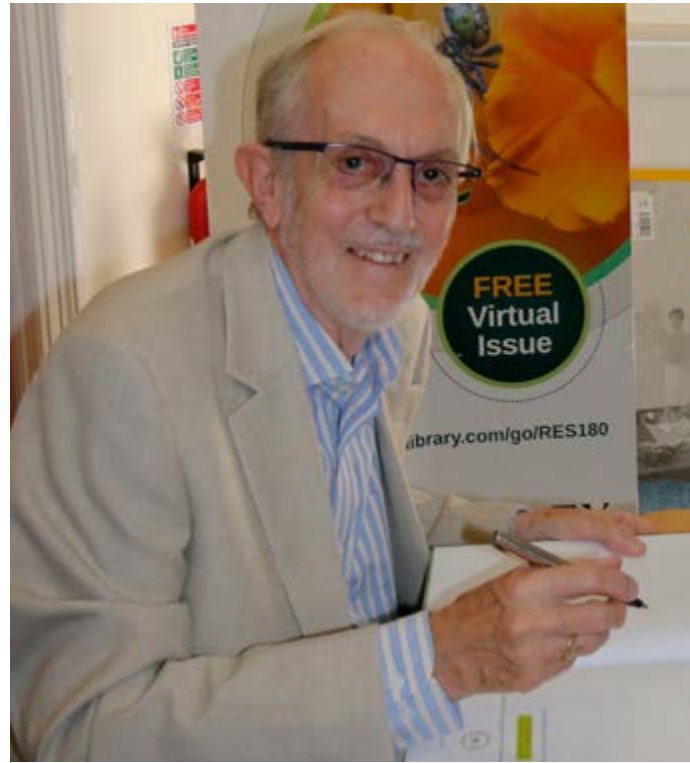
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Trevor James is a naturalist who lives in Ashwell. His book *Beetles of Hertfordshire*, published by the Hertfordshire Natural History Society in 2018, has been widely acclaimed. As a result of this success, Trevor has won the National Biodiversity Network Trust's 2018 Gilbert White Adult Award for Biological Recording and Information Sharing, which recognises and celebrates outstanding contributions towards improving our understanding of the wildlife of the United Kingdom.

Trevor has lived in Hertfordshire since he was five years old. As a boy he used to roam through the countryside near his home in Cuffley, where he became fascinated by observing wildlife. He began to keep records of what he had seen, finding it rewarding to contribute to the bigger picture of our knowledge, firstly with birds and then with other kinds of wildlife. This childhood enthusiasm led directly to his later career as the keeper of natural history for North Herts Museums from 1973. In this post, his work included encouraging amateurs to pursue their interests in natural history, especially recording.

Trevor moved to Ashwell in 1976, followed shortly after by his wife, Chris, and they have been running the Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve for the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust (see report on page 36) since 1978.

As a spin-off of his work as a museum naturalist, Trevor became the voluntary county plant recorder in 1978 and county beetle recorder in 1983. In 1990 he joined Hertfordshire County Council to help set up the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre, to record and monitor the wildlife and natural habitats of the county. From 2001 Trevor then worked as project officer for the National Biodiversity Network Trust, based in the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology at Monks Wood near Huntingdon, finally retiring in 2014.

The Hertfordshire Natural History Society published Trevor's *Flora of Hertfordshire* in 2009.

Asked what keeps him so enthusiastically motivated, Trevor had no hesitation in replying, "For me, the main driver is finding real facts to back up conservation effort. Part of it is also the camaraderie of working alongside others with similar interests."



This is a lavishly produced book of 496 pages, a ground-breaking account of all 2,483 species of beetle so far recorded in Hertfordshire (though Trevor says that further discoveries since publication have now taken this total to over 2,500). It is beautifully illustrated with more than 600 colour photographs and provides detailed information on the occurrence of every species, as well as on their habitat needs and conservation status. There are also 750 distribution maps for the more widely recorded species. The book includes a detailed overview of the different beetle habitats across the county, as well as assessments of which species are increasing, decreasing or have become extinct. It considers beetles in the context of nature conservation and their incidence as indicators of wider ecological health. It also describes key sites in Hertfordshire where different species of beetle can be found.

Beetles of Hertfordshire has been critically acclaimed: *This is the first book to cover all the beetles reliably recorded in a UK county in such a comprehensive way – it is a remarkable achievement and a landmark for future studies.* Paul T Harding, British Journal of Entomology and Natural History, 31, 2018.

...a heroic achievement...this is an impressive book. It sets a new standard for county beetle faunas and will be a hard act to follow. I can unreservedly recommend it for anyone with an interest in British beetles. AG Duff, The Coleopterist.

Unusually for a learned book of this type, it had already almost sold out its second print run by the end of 2018.

Beetles of Hertfordshire, by Trevor James, published by Hertfordshire Natural History Society (HNHS), (2018). £45. ISBN:978-0-9931217-2-2. [But available from the author direct at £35, saving £10 postage.]

Flora of Hertfordshire, by Trevor James, published by HNHS, (2009). ISBN:978-0-9521685-8-4 (out of print).

If people just want to take a look at both these books, copies are available in Ashwell Village Museum.

Cliff Jenkinson

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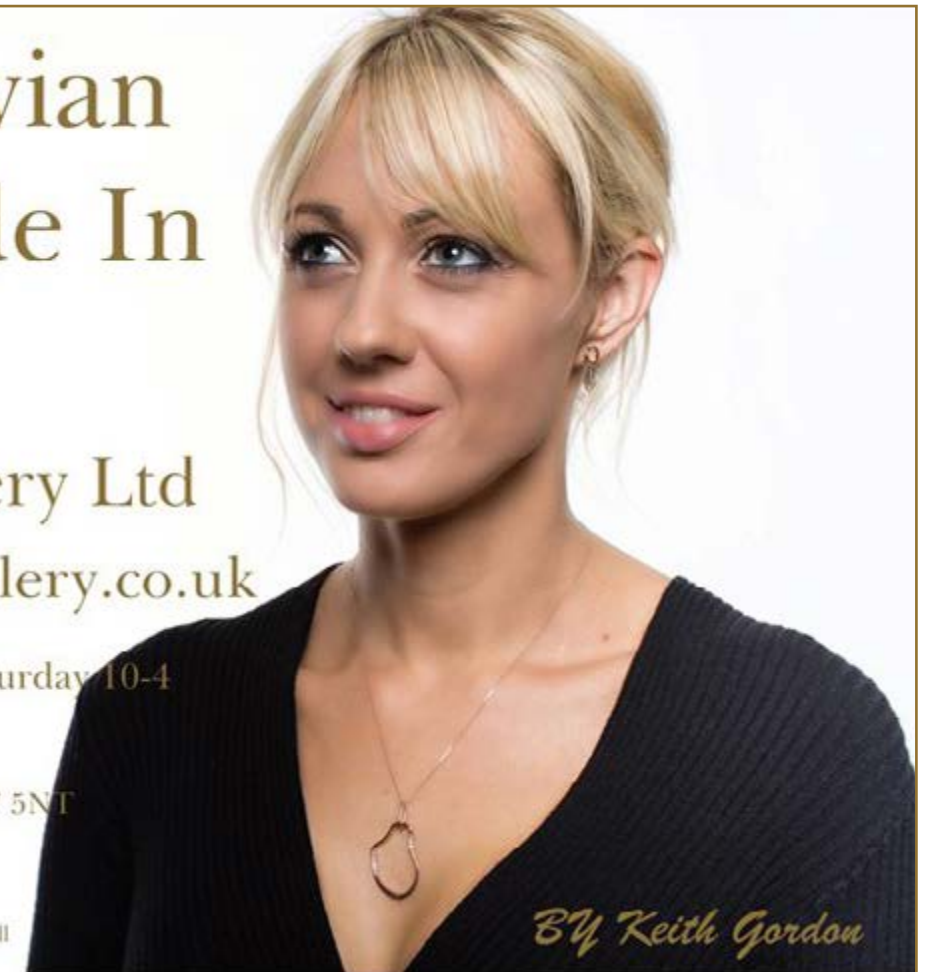
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or find details on the website at www.ashwell.gov.uk

Parish Council Elections 2019