

Ashwell Yearbook 2024



PUBLISHED MARCH 2024 BY ASHWELL PARISH COUNCIL
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Welcome to the 2024 edition of the Ashwell Yearbook

This year's Yearbook has again been prepared by a working group led by parish councillor Norton Mahy, supported by Tracy Young and many others. We thank them all for working so hard on preparing this valuable record of Ashwell village life. Norton has continued to edit and design the layout of this year's 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 yet again provided interesting, and informative reports.

The parish council has, like all of us, faced significant increases in costs during 2023, and it is only with the support of advertisers and the parish council that we are able to bring every household and business in Ashwell a free copy of this Yearbook. So, many thanks to all those Ashwell based businesses, and other businesses that provide a service to Ashwell, for advertising in this issue. Without your support for the Yearbook it would simply not be possible to maintain such a high quality and comprehensive magazine. So to all Ashwell residents – please continue to use their services as much as possible. And, after the initial reading, please keep the Yearbook as a handy reference book for service providers and activity groups available in the village, all of which contribute to making Ashwell such a special community.

Graham Lee

Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council



If you would like to see your organisation's report and photographs in the 2025 edition of the Ashwell Yearbook, please contact the parish office before the end of November 2024

clerk@ashwell.gov.uk

☎ 743706

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The yearbook working group

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

Tracy Young, editor in chief

Wendy Browne, editor

Margaret Budgen, photography

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

Kay Hoskins, church and chapel, and charities reports

Dave Wallace, proof checking

Front page: the Festival at the Springs, 23 July 2023

Photo: Bianca Valentine.

✉ biancavalentinephotography@gmail.com

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

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



Parish, district and county councils

How 'green' is the Yearbook?

All printing methods have an impact on the environment, however, compared to conventional printing, digital printing is a far more sustainable option. The process uses less energy, produces less waste, and has a smaller carbon footprint overall. The paper industry prides itself on being one of the top recycling industries. Currently in Europe 74% of paper is recycled.

This year's Ashwell Yearbook is printed digitally on paper that is from a sustainable certified source.

For 2024 we have carefully calculated the number of copies to print to avoid a surplus. This does not save significant cost but does minimize the environmental impact. If you would prefer to read the Yearbook online, please contact the parish office but do note that Yearbooks are printed in multiples of one hundred so, unless others do likewise, your request may not affect the number of copies.

Chairman's report

Writing this report at the very beginning of 2024 and wishing to be upbeat and optimistic about the forthcoming year, it is hard not to reflect on the negative global events of 2023 and their indirect impact on all our lives.

Although inflation has dropped significantly, the cost of living, driven largely by higher energy prices, means that almost everything costs significantly more than it did in 2022. Not only will that be affecting us all, but it also reflects on the costs of maintaining Ashwell's facilities that are managed by the parish council, as explained in the financial statement contained in the Yearbook.

Global warming is also impacting our lives and the natural environment in one way or another. With no reduction yet in the total global generation of greenhouse gases, the negative effects of global warming are set to get much worse.

Having lived in Ashwell for nearly 40 years, and caring greatly about the village, I feel that, as Chair of the Parish Council, I should be taking the initiative to drive positive changes that could benefit us all. But the parish council will need your support (moral, financial and / or your special expertise) to help us deliver the improvements. There are two major projects in mind:

Climate change – making Ashwell zero carbon

A climate emergency was declared for Ashwell in 2022 but, at that stage, it proved difficult to find a way forward to achieve a significant reduction in our collective carbon footprint and reliance on fossil fuels. However, at the end of 2023, the parish council became a member of Community Energy England to gain access to their expertise and support in gaining a grant from a £10 million Government fund for carrying out two feasibility studies for Ashwell.

These will identify our community's energy needs and how that might be provided by locally generated green, sustainable, energy sources. A Stage 1 application is to be made in Spring 2024 for up to £40,000 of grant funding which could lead to a further Stage 2 application for up to £100,000 of funding to help specify the infrastructure needs to achieve a community energy plan.

To help us succeed in getting these grants we need to form an Ashwell Community Energy Project team / working group with village volunteers. ***So if you have any engineering, science, energy based skills and /or a keen interest in climate, carbon reduction or the environment, please contact me or the Clerk to express your interest in volunteering.***

We continue to encourage Herts County Council and North Herts Council to provide public charging points for electric vehicles. We appreciate that there are a large number of Ashwell households who have no off-street parking to allow personal EV charging. So, it is essential that public on-street charging facilities are provided in the areas of need.

The Pavilion – renovation or replacement

Consultation with an architect in 2022 identified that the Pavilion at the Rec', which was built in the 1960s, is no longer fit for purpose and requires either a major refurbishment or replacement. With a forecast build cost in excess of £400,000, there is a funding gap of £250,000+. We have already invited donations from the Ashwell community but, to date, no donations have been forthcoming. If you are in a position to be able to make a donation please do so by contacting the Clerk at the parish office.

The alternative to gift finance is to fund the project through an increase in parish specific annual Council Tax. This is estimated at an average Band D household tax supplement of £30 per year for 10 years. ***Please contact the Clerk with your views (for or against this tax supplement) or attend the Annual Parish Meeting when it will be an agenda item.***

Doctors' surgery

The parish council has continued to liaise with the Ashwell and Bassingbourn Patients Group (ABPG), and the surgery. We provide relevant updates via the parish council website and Facebook page, with additional communication via the Ashwell Hub social media pages. I continue to represent not only Ashwell, but also the other villages served by the surgery as a member of the ABPG. Please contact Peter Chapman of ABPG or myself about any matters you would like raised with the surgery, see page "Peter Chapman" on page 33 for the email contact.

Retirement of our Clerk – Jane Porter

After working for the parish council as Clerk for well over 20 years Jane Porter will finally retire this year. Jane has been an amazing fount of knowledge on all aspects of Ashwell, particularly the role of the parish council in the community and also where the village services are provided by North Herts Council or Herts County Council or the water or energy providers. In many ways she has provided the grease that keeps the wheels turning for the village! Words alone cannot thank her enough for her advice and dedication to the role – Jane will be greatly missed.

We have recently recruited a new Deputy Clerk and at the time of writing are trying to recruit a new Clerk or Trainee Clerk.

Finally...

A reminder to anyone who is interested in the activities of the parish council but has not yet signed up on the parish council website to receive email notifications. You can do so at www.ashwell.gov.uk. You can opt to receive all updates or you can select only those specific items that interest you. And if you have any questions or comments about anything that interests you or concerns you about Ashwell please phone or email any one of the councillors or our Clerk or Deputy Clerk.

Thank you.

Graham Lee

Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

Parish information

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

www.ashwell.gov.uk/contact/

Scroll down to the bottom, enter your email address in the box indicated and click on the arrow (>). If you don't want to sign up or cannot, you can contact the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Chairman or individual councillors.

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

Parish council meetings

Everyone is welcome to come to meetings of the parish council and there is an opportunity to speak in the 'open forum'. Meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month in the Parish Room and start at 7pm. If you want to attend online using Zoom, sign up via the website, or send in a request to be emailed a link with login details. Our district councillor, Tom Tyson, and county councillor, Steve Jarvis, are invited and routinely attend. Council meetings are minuted as soon as possible after they have taken place and draft minutes are put on to the website. An archive of approved past minutes can also be found there.

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

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

Parish council representatives

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

Local Government responsibilities

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

For details of services provided by Ashwell Parish Council please see pp6-12, for Hertfordshire County Council and North Hertfordshire District Council please see pp135 and 136.

Contact details for other local services can be found on pp137-138.

The Annual Parish Meeting

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

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

Further details and draft minutes of the 2023 meeting are on the parish website: <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/>



Annual Parish Meeting, 20 March 2024, 7pm at the school (big hall), all welcome

Agenda

- 1 To approve the minutes of the 2023 Parish Meeting
 - 2 Matters of report from the 2023 Parish Meeting
 - 3 Chairman's Report
 - 4 Financial Statement
 - 5 Reports from parish council including working groups
 - 6 Reports from others
 - 7 Parish affairs
- Signed

Graham Lee

Chairman, Ashwell Parish Council

Please remember to bring your copy of the yearbook.



Council members



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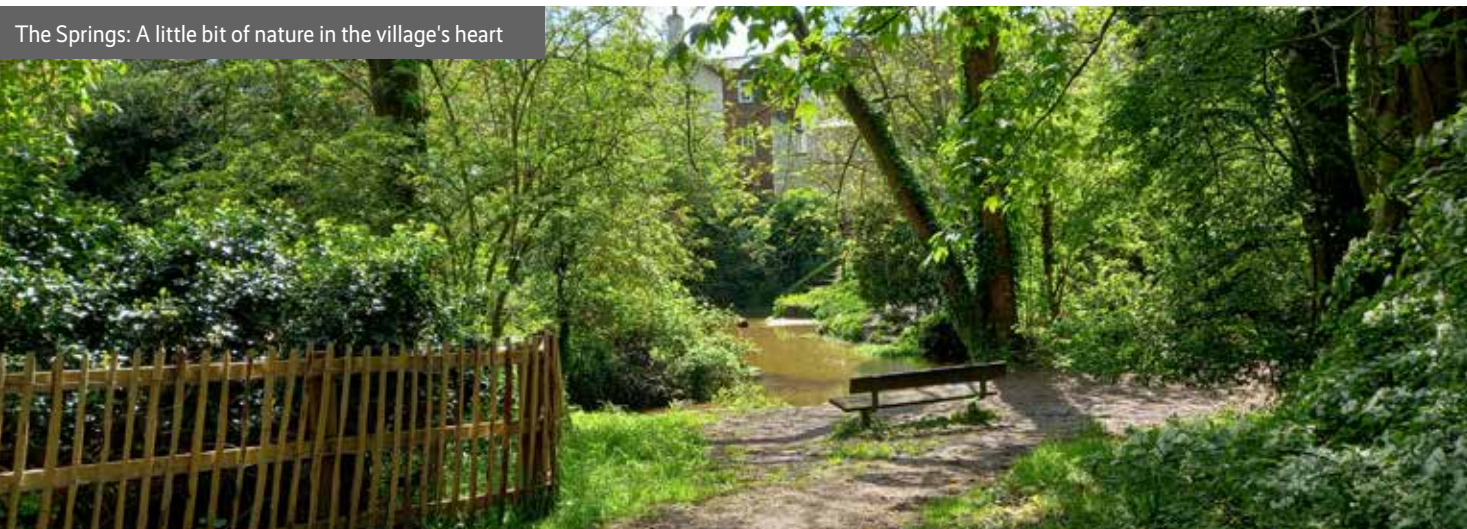
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Clerk: **Jane Porter**, ✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk
Deputy clerk: **Nicola Forrester**, ✉ deputyclerk@ashwell.gov.uk

The Parish Council office is at 6a Back Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5PE, ☎ 743706, 🖱 www.ashwell.gov.uk

Sign up for regular information
about the village at: 🖱 www.ashwell.gov.uk

The Springs: A little bit of nature in the village's heart



The Springs

Site of Special Scientific Interest

Last year the Springs continued to be well-used and enjoyed by many. If anything, the place has become even more popular than in the past. It's not known exactly why. Perhaps visitors who discovered it in lockdown still find it an attractive destination.

It has been a busy time. The Parish Council has installed new fencing with the aim of keeping people off sensitive areas to prevent erosion and improve ground cover. There needs to be a balance between the site's ecological significance and using it as an amenity. We have managed to find a new fencing contractor who has done a good job, though this has taken some time.

"There needs to be a balance between the site's ecological significance and using it as an amenity."

We have carried out tree work along the footpath to Hodwell to remove overhanging branches. In line with the management plan we will continue to manage the sycamores to increase light penetration and that should help the ground cover as the fencing has done. Ash die-back is becoming an issue in the area. The trees are checked regularly for tell-tale signs and we continue to follow guidance from relevant authorities. So far there is no evidence of it: fortunate because currently there is little that anyone can do when it appears.

We must thank the Greening Ashwell team for helping to keep the Springs in good order. You can read more about its good works in the article in the community groups section of this Yearbook.

In July the Springs Festival took place. A parishioner, Harry Jenkinson, revived it as a custom that was last

celebrated in the mid-19th century. It was a chance to enjoy history talks, music and general goodwill in a lovely setting. The Yearbook cover depicts the event.

The Environment Agency monitors flow rates at the Springs and provides data monthly. The rates did not give us any concerns in 2023. They increased last spring after a dry spell had ended several months before - it takes some time before rainfall changes filter through to affect outflow.

Martin G Hoffman

Public rights of way - footpaths

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

There are two specific projects to highlight this year:

Ashwell St / Ruddery between Woodforde Close and Station Road. This BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) forms part of the ancient Icknield Way. It is a rural, unmetalled, tree-lined track for the primary benefit of pedestrians. In response to the increased usage of this track by delivery vehicles and some local residents as a shortcut between Kingsland Way and Station Road we had requested that the BOAT should be restricted to use by pedestrians, horses and two wheeled vehicles.

Unfortunately this has been turned down, due largely to the lack of detailed traffic volume data for the track. We have requested that the data is now collected so that we will have the opportunity to apply again in future. We have also requested that the speed limit along the track is reduced to 20mph.

Partridge Hill. The increasingly frequent storms and heavy rain caused significant damage to the un surfaced track. The local farmer felt that part of the issue



Partridge Hill, resurfaced



Main avenue at the cemetery

was the route being taken by a stream whose source was higher up the hill. He suggested raising the side of the easterly stream bank so that the water stayed on that side where hedges and trees could absorb much of the water.

The Rights of Way team at Hertfordshire County Council have also resurfaced the lower stretch of Partridge Hill, and the 2023-24 winter rains will show whether this combined work has achieved the desired result.

Other footpaths. There is no further update on the much needed extension of the Ashwell Station footpath and cycle path beyond the Hertfordshire / Cambridgeshire boundary. However, it is

now recognised as a priority for Stage 2 of the Hertfordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan's sustainable transport programme.

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 to access Ashwell footpaths or those in the rest of Hertfordshire.

Any Ashwell resident with concerns re Public Rights of Way in Ashwell can contact the parish council or HCC directly using their 'Report a Fault' page.

Graham Lee
Chairman

CRUMPS
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5 MILL STREET ASHWELL
01462 742255

Ashwell Cemetery

The cemetery in Station Road is a significant village asset which is owned and managed on behalf of the community by the parish council. Ashwell residents, and those who have a close association with the village, may be buried here. Plots for graves and ashes are available at competitive rates and burial rights may be reserved for future interments.

The original cemetery area, laid out to a design by Edwin Lutyens, now has no space for new graves, only interments into existing family plots; but new interments of ashes continue here at the far end. The 'New Area' towards the garage has sufficient space for the foreseeable future and at some point the 'Fourth Quarter', currently in agricultural use, will be reclaimed for burials. Ashwell is favoured to have its own burial space under its own control, as many communities no longer have this advantage. Comments and suggestions on its management are welcomed so please do get in touch if you have any.

The chapel is available for small services of any denomination or none through the tenant, Neville Funerals (see their advert on p11). It can seat up to 40 people and, since its refurbishment to a very high standard a few years ago, is a lovely space for a memorable event.

See the website or contact the parish council office for information on burials, memorials, etc.

www.ashwell.gov.uk/places/ashwell-cemetery/

Jane Porter

Parish Clerk

✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk

☎ 743706

St Mary's Churchyard

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

Like other sites, such as the Springs, we check the trees regularly. Because they are large and old it is a costly responsibility and varies considerably from year to year. For this reason, there is an earmarked fund to accommodate occasional large bills that is kept topped up by an annual contribution. Keeping the trees in a good state is an important contribution to the setting of our lovely Grade I listed church. We work hand in hand with the parochial church council to agree specifications for annual maintenance.

Parishioners have re-wilded part of the grounds and a contractor keeps the grass trimmed and paths clear in the rest of the Churchyard.

Martin G Hoffman

Small Gains and hedgerows

Small Gains allotments and sports field. The growing season started well with conditions suitable for growing crops. I think most people had a good year, but the latter part was spoilt due to the persistent rain making the ground too wet to work on.

The rabbit problem has improved but they are still causing damage. The track still causes problems but unless thousands are spent, we will have to keep patching it.

There are still some plots vacant should anyone wish to grow some nourishing vegetables, and they are cheaper than other plots in the area.

The trees and hedgerow are well established and have improved the appearance of the car park.



Hedgerows. The hedgerows on the recreation ground have had mixed fortunes. The Lucas Lane side started well but has been damaged by people climbing over the fence and not using the three entrances available; a fence may have to be erected in front of the hedge to protect it as we had to do on the Station Road hedge, which is a shame when we remember these hedges were planted as part of the late Queen Elizabeth's 'Plant a Tree in Celebration of the Queen's Jubilee', which the whole country took part in.

The Queen's Green Canopy. The Station Road hedge suffered badly from the drought and nearly fifty per cent died even though we were watering it nearly every day. Now, thanks to Greening Ashwell, who have replanted some of the hedges and cared for them on the Rec', the hedges are starting to recover.

We would like to remind some people who use the Rec' that it is an offence to damage the hedgerow which could lead to prosecution. So can we all enjoy the Rec' and, at the same time, look after it?

David Sims





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Recreation Ground, pavilions, childrens' playground and public toilets

During 2023 a low fence was added along the Station Road boundary to protect the young hedge from accidental damage caused by stray footballs and pedestrians. A similar hedge was also planted along the Lucas Lane boundary. That too may need some additional low fencing to protect it from accidental damage. The aim of these hedges is not to restrict sight of the green space and activities taking place on the Rec', but to increase the environmental benefit brought by such planting. The hedges will be maintained appropriately.

Playground facilities are regularly inspected for safety and condition. Discussions are still taking place with North Herts Council over the total funds available for spending on Ashwell recreational facilities. A sum of money donated by the Henry Colbron Trust in 2022 remains ring-fenced for playground upgrades.

As explained in the Chairman's Report there is a funding gap of £250,000+ for renovation or replacement of the current pavilion and public toilets. Realistically, with limited availability of grants from larger public bodies or sports associations, the main options for finance remain community donations or from a commercial loan financed through a temporary increase in parish specific annual Council Tax. That supplement is estimated at an average Band D household tax supplement of £30 per year for 10 years. *Please contact the Clerk with your views (for or against this tax supplement) or attend the Annual Parish Meeting when it will be an agenda item.*

Graham Lee
Chairman

Arbury Banks



Information board at Arbury Banks

In 2023 Arbury Banks celebrated its centenary as a scheduled monument, having been first listed in 1923. The status means that it belongs to the most important category of architectural sites in the United

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Parish, district and county councils

Kingdom. It is the most easterly of a line of six hillforts along the Chiltern Hills, the next one going westwards being Wilbury Hill Camp near Letchworth. Historic England has authoritative information about it, and hillforts in general:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1008981?section=official-list-entry>

The site is on a popular route for dog walkers and ramblers offering, as you might expect, a panoramic view of the landscape. The parish council has placed a noticeboard by the path providing much of the information appearing on Historic England's website.

Martin G Hoffman

War memorial



The memorial viewed from Station Road

We continue to be grateful to the local volunteer, Craig Langford, who keeps the planting looking magnificent.

The previous Yearbook mentioned the county council's change to the Lucas Lane and Station Road junction and how it enhanced the war memorial's setting. Now access from the road has been improved as well, with a new crossing point. This was completed just in time for Remembrance Day.

The memorial step's stonework needs minor work and cleaning and we are looking for a specialist to do the work in the coming summer. This is necessary to maintain such an important, Lutyens designed, feature in our village.

Norton Mahy

Ashwell Lock Up

This grade II listed building is part of a larger network of old lock ups, cages and prisons across Hertfordshire. Have a read of the plaque next to it to get a snippet of its history.

Norton Mahy

Keeping Ashwell tidy

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

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

As for benches in the parish, our contractor mows the grass growing around the few outside the village, otherwise they are left alone as long as they are safe and have acquired a rustic look. In the village, seats are checked from time to time and replacement considered as necessary.

"... please don't put soiled nappies or dog waste into the litter bins."

This year the litter pick will be Saturday, 20 April. It's a sociable, family-oriented afternoon and a chance to enjoy the spring weather. Mark the date in your diary. If at some other time you fancy doing an extra activity during a walk, the parish office can lend you some litter picking gear and show where to put what you have collected. The office is at 6a Bear Lane; open Monday to Thursday, 9.30am to 1.30pm.

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

Norton Mahy

Litter pick: 20 April 2024

2pm, the pavilion on the Recreation Ground

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Parish council finances

Actual spend 2023-24

In 2023-24 we expect to get more income and spend less than the £111,912 originally budgeted. The under-spend will be around £4,700. The main contributors to this are:

- Increased income from the cemetery
- The actual timing of the build of rabbit-proof fencing at Small Gains meant that the cost came out of the previous year's budget (2022-23)
- A slightly higher level of staff vacancy than anticipated
- Lower Yearbook print costs

Budget 2024-25

As in past years, the approach to the Budget has been to preserve the level of services and make prudent contributions for large one-off costs likely to crop up in the next few years.

Once again, there have been inflationary pressures in the economy and it is getting harder to find local contractors to take on work at competitive rates.

In the last three years it has not been possible to fully fill the parish council officer positions due to sickness and because of difficulty recruiting. Last year we expected to be able to address this to some degree,

but not completely. In 2024-25 we plan to have a full establishment and make a small additional provision for professional accounting support.

There have been increases in the fees and charges we make but, apart from burial costs, they have been modest. The parish council's view remains the same: fees are a small proportion of its income and we want to make it as easy as possible for villagers to play sport and maintain allotments, for example.

Overall, this approach meant that the parish precept increased by 16.6% (this is the amount that goes to the parish out of your Council Tax). The effect on each household is an additional £17.22 (16.5%) annually for a Band D property.

Where the money will go

The parish spends money on a range of services, classified according to the categories below:

- Recreation Ground, pavilions and playground
- Support for our streets
- Cemetery and burials
- The Springs
- St Mary's Churchyard and the Parish Clock
- Small Gains - sports field and allotments
- War Memorial



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This charming building can seat up to forty people and is available for funeral services or related events.



Chapel enquiries can be made via our Hitchin branch or by email - ashwell@nevillefuneralservice.com

Parish, district and county councils

- Other parish assets
- Community communication
- Community projects and grants
- Local representation
- Yearbook (mostly covered by advertising income)

Aside from items like 'Cemetery and burials' whose purpose is obvious, the descriptions of three of our services would benefit from a short explanation.

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

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

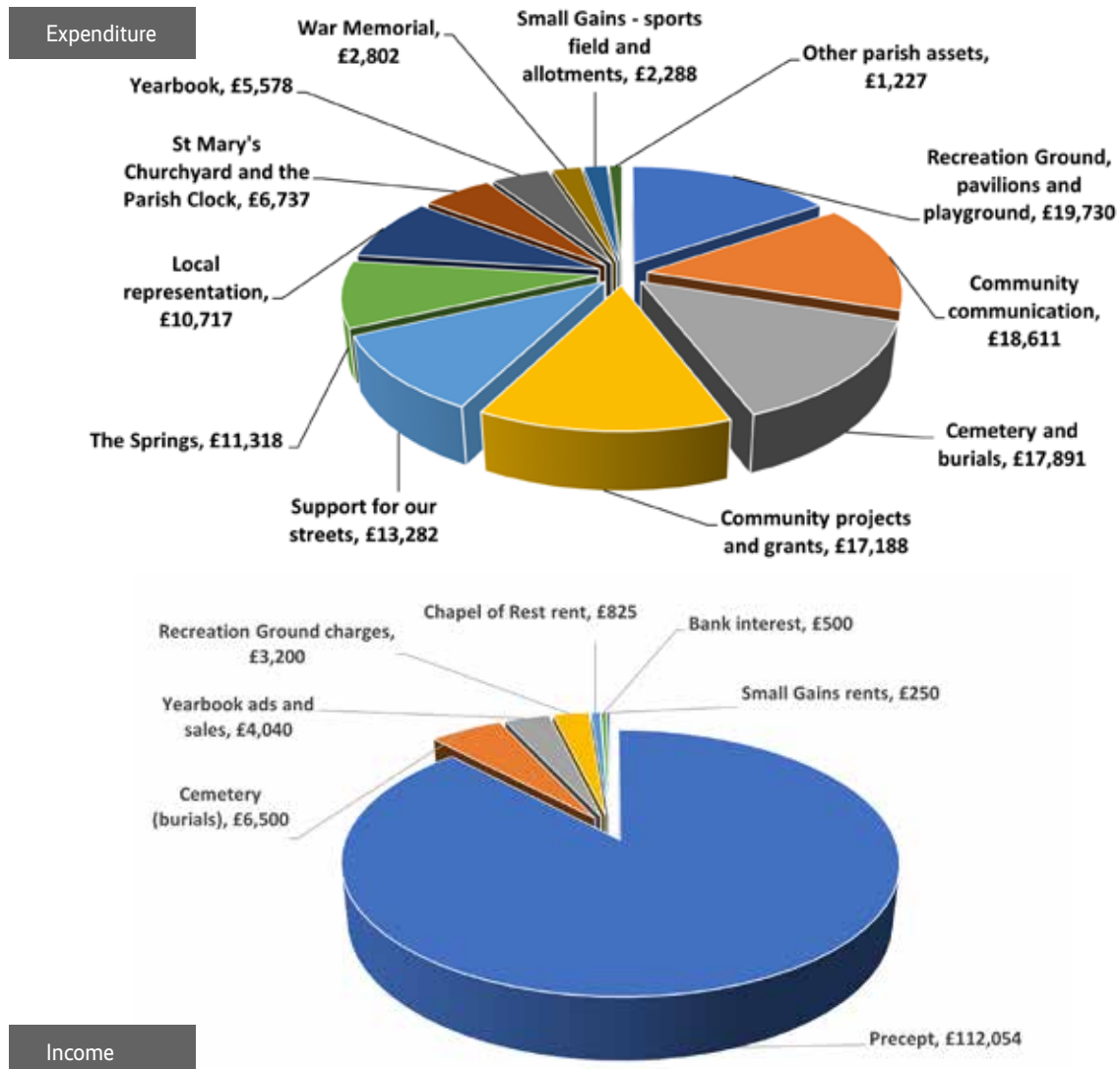
Local representation. The council is made up of individuals appointed by a democratic process to represent the local community. It promotes the interests of parishioners by, for example, responding to North Herts Council planning applications on their behalf. In doing so, it has to run meetings and keep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

The cost of staff time spent on administrative tasks, and of general expenses (keeping accounts, insurance, bank charges, etc) are spread across services *pro rata*. 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
 ☎ 743706

Norton Mahy

Parish budget 2024-25: £127,369





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North Herts Council

Councillor's report

During a period when local government has come under more intense financial pressure than ever, North Herts Council has continued to operate within its budget to provide services at the high level we have come to expect, including those which go beyond statutory requirements. Soaring inflation over the past year has of course had consequences for the council, as it has for all of us, and the administration has worked hard to ensure the best outcomes for residents.

In Ashwell we saw a significant planning application come to the planning committee this year: the proposed development on Dixies Meadow was refused permission in September. One of the last open fields within the village boundary has been preserved as a green space. The decision was based on policies in our Local Plan and the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan, demonstrating the importance of these official documents as a barrier to inappropriate predatory development in the village.

In July, North Herts Council passed a motion declaring an ecological emergency. The aim is to ensure that consideration of ecological issues is prioritised in planning policies and design guides for new development, including the master planning of major sites allocated in the Local Plan (eg Baldock). Appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain must be identified and impact on existing habitats limited. This will amplify and reinforce the policies already in place both nationally and locally, and play a part in rectifying the terrible decline in biodiversity witnessed over recent decades. Linked to this, the council has published its sustainability planning document, currently in draft form and open for public consultation at the time of writing. It dovetails with the council's climate strategy and supplements the Local Plan, describing in detail a range of requirements for new developments in the district. It will contribute to the pressure on builders to meet the highest standards of design

to combat climate change and preserve the natural environment.

Another council motion I was very content to support came in September with our commitment to becoming an awarded 'Council of Sanctuary'. This involves affirming our support for migrant communities, embedding our principles of equality and inclusion, and challenging anti-migrant sentiment wherever we find it. As the son of an immigrant this is something I can easily relate to.

Closer to home, I have been pleased to continue working with and alongside Ashwell Parish Council and would like to commend their proactive and conscientious approach to getting things done for the village. We have worked together on issues including planning applications, the Baldock expansion, parking problems, liaison with the police and of course concerns from individuals about a wide range of other matters. I am available at parish council meetings to field questions and contribute to discussions on matters of local concern, and I can also be found at our North Herts councillors' surgery in Baldock every month if you'd like to stop by for a chat. Details are published on the council website and social media channels.

Tom Tyson

District Councillor

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Hertfordshire County Council

Councillor's report

Over the last year, the high rate of inflation and much increased energy costs have had an impact on the county council as they have on many residents. Costs have gone up whilst the funds available to pay for what are, in many cases essentials, have remained the same at best.

Herts County Council spends three quarters of its £1 billion annual budget on services for vulnerable adults and children. Caring for elderly and disabled adults continues to be a challenge, not least because of the difficulty in recruiting staff to do this. In the case of children, the cost of looking after children in the council's care has increased massively, although their numbers have remained approximately constant.

The county council has been found to be wanting in its delivery of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities – something that will come as no surprise to parents of these children or to headteachers. Along with my colleagues, I have been pressing the council to move faster to address these problems, but it seems unlikely that much will have changed by the time that you read this. To some extent, the problem is caused by the government only giving Herts about two thirds of the funding per child that they provide in some other counties. Of course, as vital as these services are, it is highways and transport services which most people see.

The planned speed surveys in Back Street, Lucas Lane and West End were conducted to assess the results of the 20mph speed limits. These revealed that speeds had been reduced in both Back Street and West End, but not to any significant extent in Lucas Lane. I arranged for some additional 20mph roundels to be painted on the road but realistically these are unlikely to be sufficient to solve the problem. I am in discussions with Ashwell Parish Council about what further steps could be taken.

There is also a continuing problem with speeds in Newnham Way where a speed survey has shown a significant proportion of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by an amount that would result in prosecution. It appears that only physical measures such as humps or more chicanes would resolve the problem. This will need further investigation.

I am pleased that, working with the parish council and local residents, we managed to get the persistent flooding problems in Hodwell tackled. At the time of writing, some further work is still required to ensure that this is a permanent solution, but the cause of the problem is understood and acknowledged by highways.

There is starting to be a widespread problem with highway drains (known as gullies to the highway engineers) which, in an increasing number of cases, are not getting their scheduled clean because it is claimed that 'traffic management' is required before this can be done. At the time of writing I am attempting to get this resolved, so I have some hope that by the time you read this there will be a sensible solution.

Finally, I am pleased to say a walking and cycling route from the village to the station, or at least as far as the Cambridgeshire border, is included in the North Herts Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan. This plan was only supposed to include 'urban' routes but the massive response from Ashwell people got this distinctly non-urban route included, which is excellent news.

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

Steve Jarvis

County Councillor

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☎ 07815 887375

🌐 www.stevejarvis.org.uk

Coronation party on the Rec'.



Ashwell life

Café Culture in Ashwell

The first café is said to have opened in the mid to late 1500s (but not in Ashwell!). Constantinople had that honour. It wasn't until later that the tradition really flourished in Europe, particularly London. It was so much easier to socialise in cafés and, of course, considerably cheaper than restaurants. At that time, they attracted both politically and artistically minded men and served as a venue to make connections outside work.

The coffee house became a hub of intellectual exchange but also revolution and dissent. Both the French and American revolutions were said to have been planned in coffee houses!



In London in the mid 1600s, cafés became places for 'middling' class men to meet and discuss their dissatisfaction with people in power. King Charles II sent spies into coffee houses and ordered that they all close, although this decree proved divisive and was unsuccessful. Coffee houses were known as 'Penny Universities' as just about anyone could participate in intellectual discussions for the price of a cup of coffee. Johnathan's Coffee House in the City of London was a significant meeting place in the 17th and 18th Century and is famous for being the original site of the London Stock Exchange.

The current village coffee shop, Rhubarb and Mustard, has been many things over the years. Once a cycle



shop, in 1950 it was a wool shop and remained so for twenty years then a furniture shop (Ashwell Antiques), solicitors, estate agents, a tea shop, Ashwell Delicatessen, and, in the 1990s, a flower shop and eventually a café!



So what is the Ashwell café experience as brought to us by Sarah and Charlotte in Rhubarb and Mustard? There is a whole range of customers in our village café. There are the two friends who have been coming weekly for five years after their three mile walk around the village. They see their weekly coffee and natter a just reward for the morning trek! Friends who met at both church and Women's Institute, along with the dog walkers are also all regular customers.

Then you have the well known village character who describes the café as his office from home where he meets with clients and staff involved in his adult care business. He describes it as an excellent place to meet people.



Many groups enjoy gathering when their exercise class is done, the pilates, tennis, Ashwell Fit Club, and yoga groups all meet to socialise and enjoy a chat and a coffee.

Everyone enjoys their weekly coffee. They love the atmosphere, the attractive surroundings, and the very pleasant staff. But they especially love the fact they can walk to the café where they can spend an hour or so putting the world to rights!

Another taste of Palestine



Last year we were asked to write about our experiences in Israel and Palestine for the 2023 Yearbook. A year on and life is very different for the people living there, following the Hamas attack on Israel on Saturday 7 October, killing 1,200 people, and taking 240 hostages. It quickly became apparent that life would never be the same again for so many people. Pain, death and displacement became a reality, with thousands on the move within the Gaza Strip. As we write there are over 22,000 people dead in Gaza, mostly women and children, not to mention the harassment and difficulties the Palestinians are experiencing because of settler violence in the West Bank.

In response to this situation, we set up a soup lunch in the Parish Room in mid November, and we raised over £1,000, which was donated to Embrace the Middle East, who have partners working in both Israel and Palestine.



Collage below made from 100 year old Palestinian dress

Recognising the need for much more humanitarian and medical aid, we decided to donate the proceeds of our pop up 'Shop in a Shed' (in the garden) to various charities working in the region, and to use it as an outlet for Palestinian goods supplied by a number of charities in the UK. Throughout December we welcomed friends, neighbours and villagers to the shop, all eager to support our attempts to provide vital assistance to the agencies working there. The response was overwhelming, and we sold £2,000 worth of goods from Palestine. This included olive wood items from Beit Sahour, keffiyehs from Hebron, embroidered bookmarks and purses from the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza City, felted objects from Bethlehem and other items from Ramallah

and Hebron. We also sold 15 litres of Palestinian olive oil, 25 boxes of dates from the Jordan valley, a quantity of tahini from Nablus and za'atar from the countryside, all marketed by Zaytoun, a member of the Canaan Fairtrade Co-operative, a not for profit organisation working in the Jenin area.

The generosity of so many of our customers enabled us to send a further donation of £400 to help the victims of the tragic situation which is unfolding before us. We plan to hold other events during 2024 and continue to support this worthy cause. Thank you to everyone who has helped us in our efforts. Do look out for news of our 'Shop in a Shed' in December 2024.

Alan and Margaret Gilliam

Clunch wall rebuild, Summer 2023

As you walk along High Street between Bear House and Dixies Barns, you may have noticed the newly rebuilt clunch wall there. "Why did it take 11 weeks?" I hear you ask. Well...



Work in progress, summer 2023

Clunch is a naturally occurring fine-grained local limestone. It is like a very hard chalk, but as stone goes, it is softer than something like Portland Stone, and much more porous. Clunch will absorb up to 15%



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Blessing the new clunch wall

of its own weight of water! For those reasons, since the early 1800s, "It is not recommended for outdoor use, but makes a fine decorative stone indoors."

So why are so many buildings in Ashwell built with it? Up until Victorian times there were 130 small clunch quarries in a diagonal line between Luton and Newmarket. We had two - one now the nature reserve on the way to Hinxworth - one east of the village on high ground towards the Mordens. When you only had a horse and cart to transport the heavy stone to site, it was an attractive building material inside and out. Woburn Abbey is the largest house built of it in the area. Now only one quarry is left, at Totternhoe (near Luton), so the material is very expensive.

If like us, the church, the Lock Up, and 3-4 houses in the village, you are the proud owner of a listed clunch structure, you have a major headache when the structure becomes life expired. By spring 2023 our wall was unsafe and near to collapse. Partly old age, partly frost damage in the lower courses (remember its porosity), and partly having been pushed over by a mature tree that was way too close to it.

So back to why the eleven week timescale. The old wall was dismantled a stone at a time, and 80% of them recycled back into the new wall, after cleaning and in some cases re-cutting (only 1,200 stones!) All of the old tree stump and roots had to be excavated, leaving a hole nearly 2m wide, 1m deep and 1.2m long. New foundations had to be poured, then the double thickness wall rebuilt using lime mortar, which is fickle (and therefore time consuming) to use. Finally a new wooden roof had to be cut, mitred, stained and fitted. Wood of the correct size could only be found in Norwich, so that had to be collected.

To give the wall an eighty year life expectancy, several damp mitigation techniques were used in its design, including a French Drain, a damp proof membrane and weep holes in the brick base. Counter intuitively, now finished we try to keep water out of the wall. But while building it, each stone had to be sunk in a bucket of water before inserting into the wall. Then each part of the wall had to be covered with hessian

and sprayed with a fine mist of water 3 times a day for 3 weeks.

So now you appreciate the enormity of the undertaking. The rebuilding had a happy ending with an opening ceremony in mid-August attended by 40 friends and (long suffering) neighbours. The Rev'd. Chris Campbell blessed the wall, and we all toasted it with a wee glass of champagne. We included a date stone in the wall so that future generations will know 'wot year it woz built in'. We are glad to have been the custodians of protecting part of Ashwell's rich character and heritage. Do enjoy it when you next walk past.

Guy & Hilary Mackenzie

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Peregrines at St Mary's Church 2023

Peregrines at St Mary's Church

Background, 2021-22

For the past two winters, a pair of peregrine falcons have been roosting high on St Mary's Church tower. In February 2021, Sarah Talks, our church warden, sought advice on the best way to encourage the falcons to breed. Hertfordshire ornithologist and licensed bird ringer, Barry Trevis, fitted a nesting tray on the top of the tower in March 2021. Peregrines only recently began breeding in Hertfordshire in 2017, while their presence on high buildings has been increasing in the UK for over three decades. Originally a species found in wild mountain crags and sea cliffs, the peregrine's preference for nesting on high buildings in cities, towns, and villages has grown. This choice is driven by the security it offers and ample supply of local prey, particularly feral pigeons. Peregrines, however, have seen steep declines in their population throughout much of the 20th century. Persecution, pesticides and egg theft have all led to a concern about their future.

Although the Ashwell resident peregrines showed signs of breeding behaviour in early 2021, they disappeared from the church for much of the remaining year, only to reappear in the winter. The nesting tray remained in place and there were high hopes they might breed in 2022, but they again left the church in the run-up to the breeding period. Falcon pairs on four other buildings in the county's towns, including on St Albans Cathedral, have successfully raised young this year. It has thus been questioned why the Ashwell pair had not stayed to breed, particularly given that no visitors are allowed to the tower, thereby minimising potential disturbances to this legally protected species. Other factors like clock chimes, bellringing, tray placement or the presence of a spotlight on the spire may have acted as deterrents. However, peregrines are typically tolerant of sounds emanating from churches. To address the concern

about the lights, with the assistance of Martin Talks from Ashwell, Barry added a second tray on the east side of the tower in October 2022. Since then, villagers and regular local peregrine watchers, particularly Janice Willis and her son Sean, have been seeing the peregrine pair on the church tower on most days, seemingly showing some preference for the east side. It remains to be seen as to whether the birds will take to nesting on the church in the coming year.

Ultimately, having continued to do much to encourage this emblematic bird to breed at St Mary's Church, it will be 'fingers crossed' for them to raise chicks. Keep your eyes on the church and the Ashwell Village News for updates.

Barry Trevis

What the peregrines have been up to in 2023:

Since early January, both the male and female peregrines have frequented the church, engaging in noticeable vocal communication. In April, the peregrines were seen going behind the clock face on the east side of the church. Whilst the peregrines may be unlikely to use this spot as a nesting site due to lack of visibility of potential predators, they may use it for catching food. I was fortunate enough to capture some photographs of one of the peregrines emerging from behind the clock; most likely the female. This intriguing sight occurred for a few more days, but then, regrettably, the female disappeared once more.

I continued to monitor the church throughout the summer and only the male peregrine was seen regularly using the church for hunting and roosting at night. During late September, the male was once again joined by a female; you might have heard their spirited conversations. The pair has continued to make regular appearances from September through to early November 2023. I'll maintain my monitoring efforts and remain optimistic that the peregrines might choose Ashwell as their breeding site in 2024.

Janice Willis

Ashwell from the air

Having won a sightseeing trip from Fowlmere Airfield in Cambridgeshire to the Norfolk coastline, we took a detour over Ashwell. Fowlmere, with its rich history as a Royal Air Force station dating back before World War II, has transitioned into an active airfield supporting general aviation and private flying in Cambridgeshire. It provides facilities for flying clubs, flight training and recreational flying, allowing aviation enthusiasts and private pilots convenient access to explore various parts of the country and abroad. The airfield is not too far from Ashwell and offers affordable flying in Cessna planes.

Fowlmere airfield ✉ info@fowlmereairfield.com

Jamie & Jordan





The coronation was a riot of colour and pageantry

Coronation 2023

It was a sunny day for Queen Victoria's coronation in June 1838; 185 years later Victoria's great-great-great-grandson Charles III was not so lucky. Indeed at each coronation since Victoria's it has rained, to a greater or lesser extent. So a rainy coronation day has become a tradition and a sign of good luck.

On 6 May 2023 we eagerly anticipated a bright day and set off early. We were Connie Chambers, Christine Schwick, Sara Mathews and myself. We decided against an all nighter so opted for an early train and before we knew it we were walking past St James' Palace on the way to The Mall. The early morning atmosphere already quite exciting.



We chose to stand on the left of The Mall looking towards the Palace, that way St James' Park is directly behind. The park contained various food and drink outlets (for a much needed cuppa) and the loos! All essential for a more enjoyable day.

The Mall was lined with Union Flags as well as the flags of each Commonwealth nation, we were just next to Grenada.

Everyone faced the Mall with a great feeling of good spirit and anything that happened or passed by got a cheer. Various members of the armed forces, the police, the Scouts, St John's and of course the road sweepers, the road kept spotless and any horse poo swiftly removed. Only in Britain would the removal of horse poo get a cheer!

The parade to the abbey was soon underway with various bands, soldiers and horses passing by and of course the King and Queen, both looking visibly nervous. Lots of cheering and flag waving from the crowd. We were lucky to be able to see a large screen in the park so were able to watch events as they happened en-route and in the abbey. It was also at this time the heavens opened, everyone getting wet. Those that put up umbrellas and blocked sight of the screen got a quick shouting down. Whilst all this was happening the main parade made its way down the Mall to be in place at the abbey for the return, this is not shown on TV.

The return parade was spectacular and the rain stopped. Countless armed forces from across the Commonwealth, brass bands playing their best and horses galore. Then the Gold State Coach made its way past. It is very tall and easily spotted and it is gold... very gold! It moved slowly as it is very heavy and was pulled by eight Windsor Greys. The King and Queen now wearing their sparkling diamond crowns looked more relaxed and were smiling and waving. It all looked amazing.

The crowd was too big for us to make it to the palace for the balcony appearance so we enjoyed the helicopter fly past from the park. Heading back we were all a bit soggy round the edges, and tired. But all agreed it had been fantastic and well worth it.

Simon South

When I met the King

Margaret Budgen



Prince Charles (as he then was) in Scilly

I have been to the Isles of Scilly many times as I'm lucky to have friends who have retired to the main island of St Mary's. In 2018, a friend and I came back from a trip to an off-island, St Agnes, into the harbour on St Mary's.

We were surprised to see a strong police presence, including divers. Apparently, Prince Charles was expected the next day to open a new restaurant in St Mary's.

Not being too bothered about seeing our future monarch, we decided to continue with our plans to take a boat to St Martin's and do our chosen walk. On arriving at St Martin's, lo and behold, we saw more police divers and a couple of policemen on the quayside. "Prince Charles is coming here later," they said. "Where might we see him?" we asked, with a small amount of enthusiasm. At this point, the police officer showed us the complete schedule of Charles and Camilla's comings and goings on St Martin's. Good job we were not assassins!

We decided that we would alter our plans just slightly to see him at the village hall where he was meeting a group of islanders discussing climate change. We arrived at the allotted time and, instead of finding a huge mass of crowds, there was just another couple of ladies who turned out to be from St Albans.

Of course, Charles was late. Very late. One of the islanders in the meeting came out to look for him and, on not finding the Prince, offered to make us ladies a welcome cuppa. Eventually Charles arrived with his small entourage, but no Camilla. She had elected to stop at the previous stop, the bakery, clever her!

Charles was very polite to us and smiled for our photos. Then remembering how late he was, he scurried inside the hall, leaving his small Hertfordshire welcoming party to carry on with their day.

Carys Roberts

Well yes, I did meet the King (when he was still Prince Charles) at Highgrove House on 3 July, 1996. I was invited by my brother, Bryn, as his 'plus one', during a period when he was involved with the Prince's Trust and had met the Prince on several occasions.

I was fairly blasé about it all, but a day off school and a new outfit was a 'no brainer.' I hot footed it up to London to collect my outfit, when as the saying goes 'pride goes before a fall,' I tripped, fell, and cracked a rib! However, not one to be put off that easily, on 3 July, I went with Bryn to Westonbirt, the National Arboretum, where we were to park the car and meet our transport to Highgrove.

Along with many others, we travelled to nearby Highgrove by coach (not horse drawn). I was pretty well rattling with pain killers but being very brave. Once in Highgrove we were assembled in groups of 6-8 on the terrace at the rear of the house, awaiting Prince Charles, who appeared and moved from group to group.

He arrived at our group, asking me if I was wearing 'sensible shoes' for a walk round the garden which was to follow. Not perceiving it was an invitation to join him on the walk, I assured him I was wearing such shoes.

Prince Charles is not tall, but an unforgettable feature were his enormous red hands; a fact confirmed by close-up TV shots during his coronation. However, he was without doubt an absolutely charming man and I admit that I was star-struck. At the end of this part of our visit, Prince Charles took his leave and sadly, we did not see him again.

Our guided walk round the stunning gardens at Highgrove was a delightful experience. We also saw William and Harry's red and green tree house, along with something I had never seen previously: a magnificent stumpery.

Following the garden tour, we were taken to a marquee enjoying the most sumptuous afternoon tea, during which Sir Angus Ogilvy talked about the work of the Prince's Trust. After tea, we visited the Highgrove House gift shop, and, whilst I can't remember the tea exactly, the fudge I bought in the gift shop was fabulous.

Photography was not permitted at any stage during the visit, but I can tell you that in the official photograph in which my brother appeared with Prince Charles, you can see a corner of my face!

Memories of the 1953 Coronation

Peter John Gates



On Coronation Day, 2 June 1953, I was a schoolboy aged 14, at boarding school. It was Summer Term, and the school was closed for a week so that we, along with the rest of the nation, could celebrate this wonderful occasion.

I was lucky because at that time my father's office was in the building of 1 Victoria Street, which had a direct view of the entrance to Westminster Abbey. In those days I only had a Kodak Brownie box camera, fixed focus and no zoom, as we have nowadays. I had to process and print the photographs myself!

However, I was lucky, because, as you can see from the picture, the Gold State Coach came down Great Smith Street and Victoria Street very close to my viewpoint. So for about two to three hours I sat on the outside of the windowsill, despite being wet and took photographs. What was also amazing was the massive grandstands installed overlooking the abbey and the number of military who marched past.

Memories of such an occasion never fade.



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Ashwell and the coronation

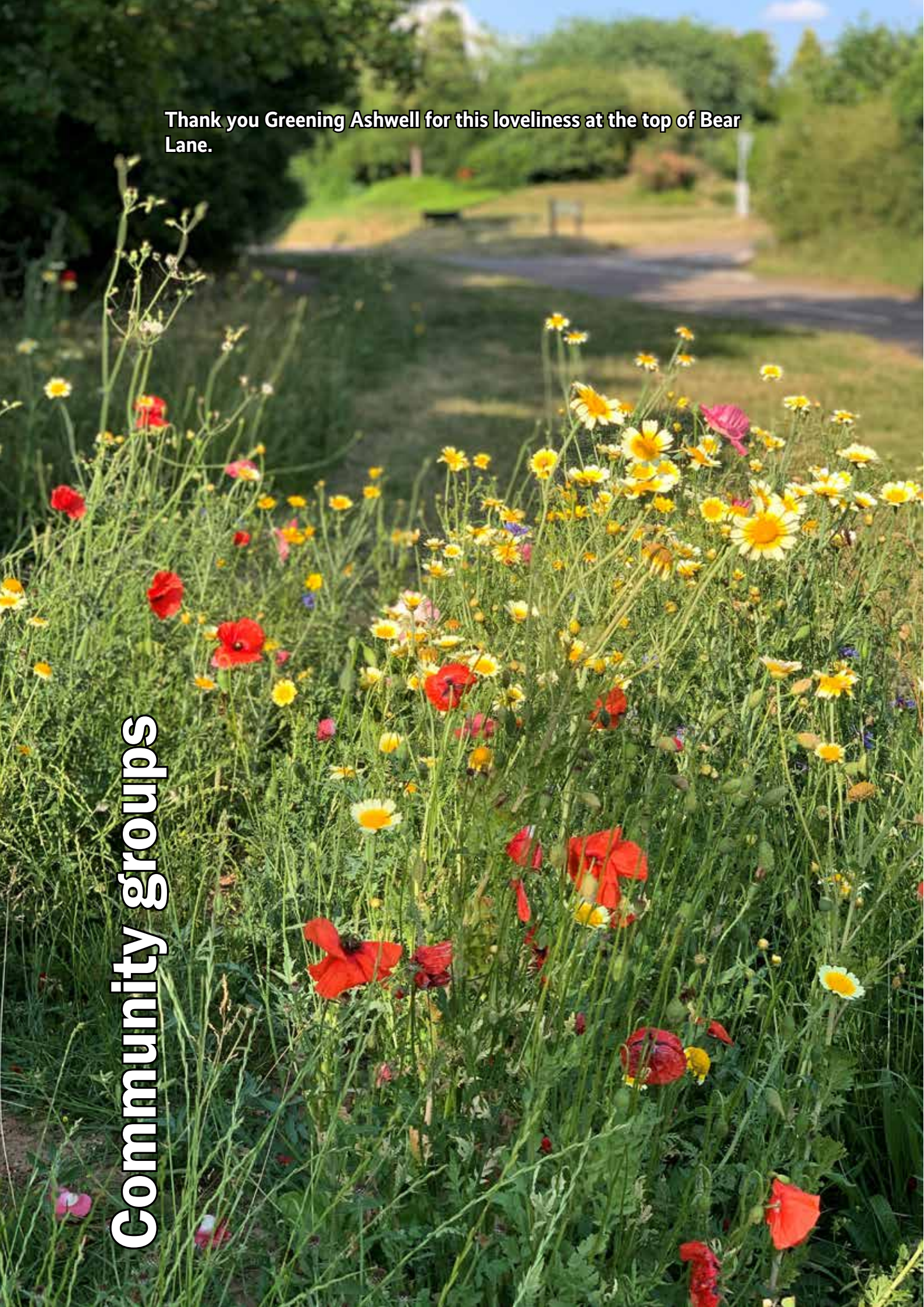
The village took the chance to mark the new monarch's reign in its own style, with a party - of course! And other jolly touches helped to foster a mood of celebration.



Coronation crown competition: everyone's a winner!

Thank you Greening Ashwell for this loveliness at the top of Bear Lane.

Community groups





Ashwell Housing Association: Bear Farm, Back Street

Introduction

One of the many factors which make Ashwell such a vibrant and happy place is the high level of voluntary contributions made by Ashwellians towards organising community groups and projects. You can read about the achievements of these groups and projects in the following pages. The Parish Council is very conscious of the value of this work and would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved.

If you would be interested in volunteering to help the community yourself, please see p37 at the end of this section of the Ashwell Yearbook for a list of some of the possible ways in which you might become involved.

Ashwell Housing Association Limited



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

We have had a service agreement with First Garden City Homes for several years and have relied on them to carry out routine maintenance, provide a management service and give us advice when necessary. However, although reactive repairs have been dealt with efficiently, we have become increasingly concerned that some of the routine maintenance is not being done. The properties are over 40 years old and are in need of some updating. It has been a mutual decision that the agreement terminates at the end of 2023. We have decided to use a small local firm to carry out the management service for us and although they tend to deal mainly with private

lettings, we are confident that they will provide an efficient service for us and our tenants.

During the past year we have carried out some improvements to bathrooms in two of the properties using a local Ashwell based firm and will be looking to see what other work needs doing.

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

We are always on the lookout for new committee members, so if you would like to join us, please contact Liz Fitzsimmons.

Liz Fitzsimmons

Chair

✉ liz_fitzsimmons@yahoo.co.uk

Moss Cottage Homes

Reg charity 238596

Moss Cottage Homes in Hodwell were built and endowed in 1904 by 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. We are members of the Almshouse Association.

All six cottages have been occupied during 2023. In December 2022 the Trustees were able to change the water heating system in four cottages to improve efficiency and cut costs for residents. Further improvements this year have included the insulation of outside bedroom walls in three cottages, with the aim of making them warmer and less susceptible to damp. Some bedroom floors and roofs will receive attention in 2024.

Safety of the residents is paramount. The EICR five-yearly electrical checks were carried out and new security lighting was installed in all the porches during the summer. The cost of the security lights was covered by a grant from the Ashwell Show Committee and we thank them for their generosity. All six

Community groups

residents have now received 'Safe and Well' visits from the Fire Service.

Cath Connolly stood down as a trustee earlier this year and we welcomed Jonathan Ruch to the board as a Parish Council nominee.

Natalie Terry left her role as Clerk to the Trustees in July. We thank her for her hard work in this demanding role. Trustees have subsequently agreed to share the clerk's duties between them. In addition, we have engaged Yvonne Wright as Accounts Clerk to manage the banking and day to day finance on our behalf. With Yvonne's help the charity has now fully transferred to online banking.

The current trustees are Rev'd Christine Campbell, Rachel Godschalk, Julia Mitchell, Jane Munns, Ann Robertshaw, Phillida Shaw (Chair), John Rhodes and John Ruch.

More information about Moss Cottages is available from:

Phillida Shaw
Chair of Trustees
☎ 742577.

Ashwell Village Museum



The past year has been one of consolidation rather than brave new ventures. A generous donation allowed us to complete the update of our heating system. We should now be able to maintain the uniform temperature and

humidity that we need to keep the collection in tip top condition – and it should also reduce our electricity bills. Changes in regulations have obliged us to improve several safety and emergency measures for which we are grateful to the Ashwell Show committee for assistance.



Hoopoe at the Museum

The website <https://www.ashwellmuseum.org.uk/> continues to invite enquiries from old Ashwellians and their descendants all over the world. We get about one enquiry a week which we try to answer to the best of our ability. However, there is also a lot in it for residents and newcomers to discover about the past. Keep an eye on the website for upcoming events including the regular 'Makers at the Museum' meetings on the second Tuesday of the month.

New additions to the collection this year have included an oil lamp from Ashwell Station stamped LNER and an embroidery mostly by Percy Sheldrick but finished by a pupil who had the audacity to sign their name to it. The local historian David Short's move from Ashwell has meant a large quantity of his papers have come into our possession. Most of these are not 'original' documents but constitute a life's work recording the history of Ashwell. As such we are sorting it into a history file that can augment our archives and collection. Contained therein is a font of knowledge on family histories and local buildings and there are many copies of documents about Ashwell sourced from archives all over the country that would be otherwise hard to find.

Throughout the year we are open on Sundays and bank holidays. The curatorial team are usually there on Tuesday afternoons if you want to drop in. With the help of the trustees, the Friends, the cleaning team and curatorial volunteers, we will continue to care for the collection you have placed in our hands for posterity, answer any burning historical questions and welcome you all.

Peter Greener, and Sarah Talks

Curators

✉ enquiries@ashwellmuseum.org.uk

☎ 742956

Friends of Ashwell Village Museum

The Friends exist to support the Museum Curator and trustees in the day to day running of the museum. We provide volunteers for Sundays and bank holiday Mondays and at any other time for groups or special events in the village like Ashwell at Home. We also have a devoted team of people who regularly clean to ensure we present the museum as best we can.

New volunteers to help in all above are always welcome so please contact any of the names below or pop into the museum when open to inquire. We also hold an open coffee morning during the year for anyone to drop in, meet us and see what is going on.

We also arrange events during the year to raise funds to support the purchase of anything that may be needed in the museum.



Makers on a field trip to the Quarry Nature Reserve

Our coach trip in 2023 to Stratford upon Avon to the theatre was a very successful day with us enjoying a wonderful production of Hamnet at the Swan Theatre. We also enjoyed two talks, one by local Bridget Long on her life in patchwork and quilting and one by David Short on the history of houses and what they reveal about a place, in this case of course Ashwell. This was David's last talk to us as he and Madeleine have moved away. We acknowledged the time he has given over the years in supporting the museum.

Events for 2024 include a 'Memories of life in Ashwell' with four residents who can certainly reminisce! Our AGM is on Monday 11 March, 7.30pm in the URC with Chris James talking about the quarry and wildlife there. We are planning a coach Trip to Knole, Kent on 22 May. Knole is National Trust with very interesting conservation studios as well as having a house to visit. Please contact Hilary Masham 742416, Karen Mills 742155 or Monica Boggust 742463 to express interest. A further talk and a theatre trip will hopefully be planned for later in the year.

During the winter months we are running the Sunday Teas in the Parish Room following on from St Mary's who do them during the summer. Again, we have been lucky with our band of helpers and cake makers who ensure that Sunday afternoon visitors to the village can enjoy a nice cup of tea or coffee and homemade cakes. We are grateful to everyone and money raised goes to the museum.

With our committee we carry on with arranging all above but are also grateful for support from our Friends so if you want to become a Friend please contact us.

Jill Powell

Chair
☎ 742318

David Hall

Treasurer
☎ 743799

Karen Mills

Secretary
☎ 742155

Makers in the Museum

The Makers meet on the second Tuesday of every month in the museum to learn more about a craft, hobby or activity. The format of the afternoons varies but often begins with an illustrated talk and an opportunity to look at items in the museum collection linked to the theme. The items are often stored away in boxes, so it gives us a chance to check on their condition and to show the range of items we have.

In 2023 we have had sessions on calligraphy, patchwork, clunch and the quarry and woodturning led by people skilled in those areas, and others on candles, herbs, love tokens, buttons and badges, wall and floor stencils, the Ashwell picnic, Roman gods and goddesses and cross stitch, led by the museum team. Our sessions end with refreshments and an opportunity to make something, again linked to the theme, to take home.



Patchwork pincushion

Our meetings are free to attend, thanks to funding from Ashwell Show, and everyone is welcome. In 2024, we will be offering a few sessions in the evening and one at the weekend to encourage others to come. If you have a skill to share, or you would like to suggest a theme, please contact Sarah Talks or Peter Greener.

Sarah Talks

✉ sarah@sarahtalks.me, or
✉ enquiries@ashwellmuseum.org.uk



The Cottage Garden in full bloom

Ashwell Village Museum Lottery

Reg charity 271473
 Lottery reg no LC/LOT 9280

Lottery Results

At the end of the fourth year of operation, the Museum Lottery has continued to be a great success, during that time it has contributed £10,700 towards ongoing running costs of the museum. The same amount has been distributed as prizes and none of the money from ticket sales has been used for administration or expenses. The lottery is ongoing with quarterly draws at the end of March, June, September and December, with 50% of ticket money donated to the Museum.

The winners for past the year were:

| | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|----------|------------|---------------|------------|
| Dec 2022 | D Boardman | G McLearnon | D Richards |
| Mar 2023 | V Moore | E Fitzsimmons | F Moynihan |
| Jun 2023 | J Banham | A Church | J Rhodes |
| Sep 2023 | W Skelding | H Eden | C James |

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

Join the lottery now to help ensure the future of the museum and your chance to win one of the quarterly prizes. It costs £25 per quarter – the same as a weekly National Lottery ticket - but Ashwell Village Museum Lottery odds are just 60:1. For an entry form and terms and conditions, please contact me:

Shirley Wardrop
 ✉ ashwellvillagemuseum@gmail.com
 ☎ 742861

Ashwell Cottage Garden

In the centre of Ashwell village is a quiet, beautiful haven - the Cottage Garden. Created in 1968 by villager Albert Skerman, it has been a welcome refuge for villagers ever since. I've spent many a time admiring the flowers, scents and foliage, on my own and with a class of children when I taught at the school.

It's easy to admire the garden's beauty, but before this year I hadn't put much thought into who looked after it. So now with time on my hands after retirement I approached Martyn Hird and offered to help.

The garden is maintained by a small band of volunteers who meet once a month for just one hour, and Martyn is a stickler with the time! I joined the group with some trepidation, I love gardening but I'm no Gertrude Jekyll. I admire plants but don't always know their names or know the difference between some weeds and flowers. However, I need not have worried, Martyn leads the group, directing on what needs to be done and several of the volunteers are highly knowledgeable.

Over the year we have weeded, pruned and generally tidied. The established plants have fared well over the harsh Winter we had. After giving them a chance

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ttt tiler of the year

Established 2004

over the Spring and Summer to re-establish, only a couple sadly did not survive and these will be replaced in the coming season. Thought is always given to introducing new plants, bearing in mind those plants which grow well in our local conditions.

In 'Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood', the gardening designer says, "The purpose of a garden is to give happiness and repose of mind first above all other considerations." Ashwell Cottage Garden certainly does that. If you've only walked or driven past it before now, stop and admire. Spend some time just being. And if you can spare just one hour a month to keep the garden looking it's best, contact: **Martyn Hird** ✉ iona1996@aol.com.

Tracy Young
Volunteer gardener

Ashwell Village Trust

Reg charity 294673

Ashwell Cottage garden was described by the late John Betjeman as, "the best cottage garden I have ever seen." It was originally created in 1968 by Ashwell residents, Albert Skerman, and his wife Alice, on derelict land located in Swan Street next to Swan Cottage where the Skermans were tenants. When the land was threatened with development the local community raised funds to save it, original donors included Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother. At this time Swan Cottage and the garden were vested in the Hertfordshire Preservation Trust and a restrictive covenant placed on any future development of the garden. Ashwell Village Trust was created in 1986 to administer the cottage garden on the death of Alice Skerman, when Swan Cottage was sold. The cottage garden was renovated between 2001 and 2003 when additional seating and disabled access were added. The garden now provides a quiet and beautiful place which can be enjoyed by local residents, their families and visitors to the village. It is maintained throughout the year by a group of volunteers who meet on a monthly basis under the guidance of Martyn Hird. Over recent years Martyn has done an amazing job to maintain the essence of the cottage garden whilst at the same time refreshing it with new planting - no doubt John Betjeman would approve! The Ashwell Cottage Garden report can be found on p30 of the Year Book. 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), David Sims and Vinny Hall (parish councillors), Simon Bettany (Treasurer), Gordon Hill, Claire Moynihan, Liz Moynihan, Jane Porter.

Simon Bettany
Treasurer

Community Land Trust

We're delighted to advise that the Ashwell CLT Ltd is now ready to launch. An inaugural AGM for members and directors will be held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 7pm in the Parish Room. We would urge parishioners interested in becoming members to deposit their £1 to secure their official share at the Parish Office and receive a share certificate in advance of the AGM.

Ashwell CLT Ltd is a 'not for profit' mutual society with up to seven directors and an unlimited number of shareholder members. The purpose of creating Ashwell CLT Ltd was to further the social, economic and environmental interests of people who live or work in Ashwell. In essence that means investing in assets or services in or around Ashwell for the benefit of Ashwell residents.

Whatever form of investment is considered over the coming years there will be consultation with Ashwell residents to ensure that it reflects the majority view of those with an opinion on the investment. Funding for the investment would come from any combination of sources including shareholder investment, grants, donations, mortgage, or third party investment. Ashwell CLT Ltd is your opportunity to help shape and secure the future resources that you want from Ashwell. Please join us.

Graham Lee
✉ graham@grahamlee.co.uk



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The Book Swap

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

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

The Book Swap Café was started to bring the facility to the attention of more people but the team running this decided that it had served its purpose and was no longer needed. However, in March, the team hosted a soup and pudding lunch and raised a magnificent £790 for Jimmy's homeless shelter in Cambridge. We are so grateful to all of our soup and pudding makers, servers, washer-uppers and to all of you who came to support us. We hope to continue to host events to raise funds for such a worthwhile cause.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fund-raising events and, of course, the Book Swap is available whenever the Parish Room is open. Contact on behalf of the Book Swap team:

Eileen ten Hove

✉ eileen@pyghtle.com

Ashwell and Bassingbourn Patients' Group

The ABPG was founded in 2006 - one of the earliest in Hertfordshire. Its principal function is to maintain a two-way channel of communication between patients and the surgery so that the patients' experience is as good as it can be. The group is made up of representatives from the various villages covered by the practice together with members of the surgery staff. We are fortunate that Dr Jarvis, the Senior Partner, and Katie Prince, the Practice Manager, always attend meetings and are therefore able to listen directly to patients' concerns and ideas and to offer responses. The Group meets every two months but there are often informal exchanges in between.

Our main preoccupation this year has been the survey which we carried out in the spring. This produced a huge amount of data which we carefully analysed leading to the publication of our report which can be found on the surgery website. We hope that patients will find this helpful in their dealings with the surgery.

It was apparent from the responses to the survey that the telephone system was the cause of much frustration among patients – a situation widespread in surgeries around the country. It has long been recognised that the present set-up is inadequate, and we have been disappointed not to have benefited from previous NHS funding rounds aimed at improving surgery telephone installations. However, at the time of writing our Practice Manager Katie is confident we won't have to wait much longer. The system proposed should improve access to the various services offered by our practice, making life easier for patients and staff alike. It can't come soon enough so fingers crossed.

Since the survey we have acquired a new and



Leaf characters by Ashwell Primary School pupils



Dhaval and Arpita at the Pharmacy

improved website, introduced a new electronic communication system called Accurx (accessed via the website), have added some chairs with arms to our waiting rooms to aid patients with mobility issues and are having the heating at Ashwell overhauled so waiting should be cosier this winter!

Our Patient Services Manager and Surgery Care Champion, Joanne Coleman (also an ABPG member), has recently established a connection with Ashwell Primary School. The new welcome board in the entrance of the surgery has been made by Year 1 students and will be updated by the art department seasonally. We are proud of the effort Jo has made in fostering this relationship and look forward next year to seeing new links develop with other schools in our local community.

Recruitment and retention of staff at all levels - but especially for clinical professionals - is a huge problem in the NHS. But here at Ashwell and Bassingbourn I am pleased to tell you that we are lucky to be fully staffed. And the collective aim of the professionals and the Patients Group is to ensure a good service to all our patients. We will continue to strive to ensure that it comes about.

Peter Chapman

Chairman

✉ peterchapman70@yahoo.co.uk

First anniversary of Dhaval at Ashwell Pharmacy

I am grateful to have this opportunity to share my experience of being here in Ashwell. I started my new career as a pharmacy owner in Ashwell Pharmacy over a year ago. I still remember the warm welcome from customers which touched my heart.

A huge thank you to previous owner Brian Deal for

providing me with this wonderful opportunity to serve the community of Ashwell and surrounding villages. Being an experienced pharmacist, I expected a few challenges, the main challenge maintaining Brian's excellent customer service along with his level of expertise. However, I am confident about maintaining the continuity as I am greatly supported by our patient, respectful and understanding customers.

The first few months of running the business and settling the previous accounts was very stressful as I also had to maintain the continuity of the pharmacy. After finishing those initial hurdles, I started focusing on working with local patient groups and the local surgery. I am grateful to both for working together with me and Ashwell Pharmacy to fulfil the requirements and needs of our patients.

Since I took over Ashwell Pharmacy, I have started a number of new services. These required specific training and working closely with Hertfordshire local ICB (Integrated Care Board) and local NHS England Team. The most challenging service to acquire the permission for was offering a Covid Vaccination service. I want to apologise to all my customers for not being able to offer this service when it was first introduced by the government in early September 2023. I would like to thank local patient group lead Peter and Graham for supporting me along with our local NHS England team to finally make it happen.

I would like to reassure our customers that we are trying our level best to participate in all new NHS services so that the local community does not have to rely on overburdened surgeries for certain minor ailments. The government announced last year that they will allow pharmacies to prescribe antibiotics for certain conditions. This will require specific training and certification. Although this will be time consuming and stressful, I would like to assure our local community that I will be participating in all services in a timely manner.

Community groups

We currently offer:

- **New Medicine Service** (we provide support to patients who are put on certain new medications)
- **CPCS and GPCPCS** (local surgeries and NHS111 can refer patients to pharmacies for certain minor conditions and if it is not treatable in pharmacy, they can be referred to surgery without a long wait)
- **DMS** (the pharmacy ensures that recently hospital discharged patients get their medications without delay)
- **Sexual Health Service** (any female patient from 16-25 can get their emergency contraception free of charge along with free sexual health kits)
- **Flu and Covid vaccinations, travel vaccinations, private PGDs** (Patient Group Directions) for certain conditions.

We will shortly be offering:

- **Stop Smoking Service**
- **Contraception service** (we will be able to offer pills on NHS without needing to go to the surgery)
- **NHS PGDs for Antibiotics** (Uncomplicated Urinary tract infection, Sinusitis, Sore Throat, Earache, Infected Insect Bites, Impetigo, Shingles).

Since taking over the pharmacy, I have started delivering medications myself to housebound and needy patients along with offering vaccinations to them at their homes. I really enjoy supporting, helping, and serving such a wonderful community. Please feel free to approach me if you need any support from me. Thank you to all of you for being so supportive and appreciative.

Dhaval Patel

☎ 742550

🖱 <https://ashwellpharmacy.co.uk/>

Ashwell Village Hall

This year has been another good year for the Ashwell Village Hall. We have seen the hall being used by many groups including the playgroup and the theatre club to name a few.

We have also seen a change in our committee officers with Rosemary and Mike Pearch stepping down from their roles. The Ashwell Village Hall is for ever in their debt for all the years and hard work they have put into the running of the village hall.

Ashwell Village Hall would like to welcome our new committee officer members:

Alan Munns has taken on the role as Secretary as well as other jobs

Hannah Doran is our new Treasurer

Paula Doran is our new Bookings Secretary.

Alan has been involved for many years doing a lot of

small jobs that have needed doing and the village hall could not thank him enough for this.

I personally would like to welcome Hannah and Paula to the committee and would like to thank all three of them for stepping up to the roles.

This year we hope to continue to grow as we try to bring in new clubs to use our halls. To do this, Sigma Office has started work on designing our new website. We are hoping that this will go live in the early part of next year. On top of this we are looking at trying to have an online booking and billing system. This is something that Hannah and Paula are looking into and would make life a lot easier for both us and the users, so watch this space.

The village hall is also looking for a volunteer that would be able to help with the maintenance of the hall and to project manage some of the jobs that are required. If you are interested then please email Andrew Dolby.

All that is left for me to say is, I hope you all have a good year and we look forward to seeing some of you at the village hall throughout the year.

Andrew Dolby

Chairman

Ashwell Village Hall

✉ Andyd@sigma-office.net

Foresters Friendly Society allotments

A bit of background



Way back in 1834 (our year of inception) we were known as The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society. Although now we are simply known as Foresters Friendly Society,

our ethos hasn't changed. Our first members came to recognise they had a duty to assist their fellow men and women who sometimes needed help, "as they walked through the forests of life." This need arose principally when a breadwinner fell ill, could not work and received no wages. Back then, members recognised that by paying a few pence a week into a common fund, they would be able to offer sick pay and funeral grants when needed. Providing financial and social support to our members has been the main purpose of Foresters Friendly Society throughout our long history.

Whilst we're over 185 years old, our values remain as relevant in today's world as they were when the Society was formed. We currently have 188 branches operating in the UK whose purpose is to manage our social and benevolent activities, and they also give local members a powerful voice in the life of our Society.

Immaculate raised beds at the Foresters allotments



Another term used to describe our branches is 'Courts'. Over the years Courts have closed and amalgamated with other Courts nearby. This was also the case with the Ashwell Court, which merged with the Royston Court in the early 1970s. The Ashwell Court owned not only the allotment field, but also two rows of cottages in the village, which still bear the Foresters name. Although ownership of the cottages has long passed from the Society, we are proud to retain our allotment field in the centre of the village, which has been in the ownership of Foresters for over 100 years.

The allotments

Originally the allotments would have been solely for the benefit of Foresters members in the village. This is no longer the case, although a good number of allotments are still held by our members. Provision of the allotments is seen by our Court members as a great means of engaging the Society with the local community and provides a space of tranquillity and community where all are welcome.

The site is situated between Ashwell Street and Back Street and is divided into 41 plots. It has also recently benefited from the provision of a water supply. The cost of making the water connection was funded wholly by the Foresters Royston Court. As the site is so popular, we currently have no vacant plots to offer, however, from time-to-time this changes. For any enquiries about the availability of plots, please contact:


Kevin Ayres
 Court Secretary
 ✉ court9737@forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk

To find out more about Foresters Friendly Society, visit www.forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk or scan the QR code with your smart camera.

Foresters Friendly Society is the trading name of The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society Limited



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Greening Ashwell

Established in 2020 and with a new committee in 2021, Greening Ashwell aims to ensure that the green areas in the village are maintained and enhanced, both for the enjoyment of the people of Ashwell but also to help preserve local flora and fauna. We aim to help combat the effects of climate change.

Working in consultation with local authority maintenance requirements, The Woodland Trust, Ashwell Parish Council, local experts and residents, we make sure that any planting has the full consent of the community.

2023 was a busy year with work on several projects around the village. We now help to maintain the area around Ashwell's remarkable natural chalk spring, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We have cleared rubbish, cut back vegetation where necessary to ensure safe access and planted more native spring bulbs here. We helped organise the first Ashwell Springs Festival to take place in well over a hundred years – once an annual village event. This was a truly magical evening, so do look out for a repeat of this in Summer 2024!

Work began in earnest on our wildlife allotment at the Foresters site on Ashwell Street. This is now developing rapidly, with wildflower borders, a pond, bird and bat boxes, and in spring 2024 a bee hive managed by a local resident beekeeper.

We have already hosted a visit to this area from a village youth group and would like to invite other groups to come along and see what we do! We feel it is important to engage with younger members of our community as they will be the future custodians of nature and our green spaces and also will inherit the legacy of climate change.

We promote and participate in the planting of wildflower borders, native hedging and trees in the village to create corridors for insects, birds, and small mammals to thrive. Once again, we received trees from North Herts Council in the autumn and distributed or planted native trees such as field maple, crab apple, rowan and wild cherry which we hope will be enjoyed by residents for years to come. We organised a tree trail around the village during Ashwell at Home to highlight some of the beautiful trees in the village and opened our wildlife allotment on the day, which proved popular with visitors.

We are very pleased that, thanks to another generous donation from the Ashwell Show we can continue to grow and develop as a group, with funding for more equipment and resources for our work.

If you would like to get involved, we welcome volunteers of all ages and abilities. Whether you can spare an hour here or there or are looking to make a regular commitment, please contact our secretary, Sherran Chalkley. Look out for our regular updates in the Ashwell Village News or on Ashwell Hub. We are a friendly group who meet monthly to work on projects in the village.

Fionnuala George
Chair
✉ f.george847@btinternet.com

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✉ kateblake123@yahoo.co.uk

Sherran Chalkley
Secretary
✉ sherranmandrell@hotmail.com

Getting involved in your community

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

Greening Ashwell working parties, eg at the Springs (see p36)

Youth organisations (p54)

Charities (p82)

Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve (p86)

Church fundraising, eg the Flea Market, Book Swap or Christmas Fair (pp59, 32, 70)

Sunday Parish Teas (p117)

Ashwell Music Festival (p62)

Ashwell at Home, the village open day (p63)

Ashwell Show (p66)

Ashwell Village Sports Day (p41)

Ashwell Village News, helping with the production of the village news in 2024 (p117)

Volunteer driver for Royston and District Community Transport (p138)

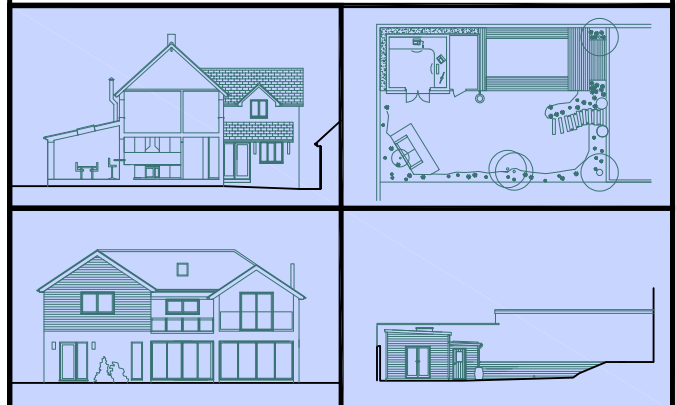
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Coronation race. Ashwell Village Sports Day, 21 May.



Sport

Ashwell Academicals Football Club



2023 was a good year for the Accies. Numbers continue to flourish. We welcomed a new Under 7 team led by Bridget Gaynor and Rob Burke and our Under 14 team has reformed for this season with Nick

Denham and Andy Kingsley. We sadly saw our Under 15s end due to other commitments, but our thanks go to Mark Hurst and his team for many years of hard work for the Accies. It is great to see Mark continue to be involved as a referee.

Our trophy night was another roaring success; the players loved receiving their trophies, especially the new younger players who wouldn't be more excited if they were winning the Ballon d'Or! We got to award our 'Accie of the Year' award to Sam Murphy from our Under 16 team; he has taken it on himself to qualify as a referee and has been helping out with younger years games. This is fantastic and we loved the extra dedication this takes.



Trophy night

One of the season highlights was our Under 12 girls team making the cup final, losing narrowly to a team from the league above. This was a great achievement and we are really proud of them.

Off the pitch, a lot of hard work goes on in the background. We have a group of sponsors who we really appreciate. They contribute money that pays for the children's home kits and allows us to keep our fees down. This special group of companies are: DP Designs, the Rose & Crown, PetFace, Taylor Dolman, Days Bakers, Brilliant Lawns, Crumps, Ensum Brown, Mynott Bowers Group and Claret IT. Our grateful thanks to them all.

We have also had fantastic contributions from the Ashwell Show that has allowed us to get new goalposts, floodlights and this season will be sponsoring our away kits. A big thank you to anyone who works at the show and nominates the Accies, you can see it really makes a big difference to the club. On a

final funding note, this year we have acquired two defibrillators for the village at both our sites and have installed a toilet at Small Gains - we're getting all the mod cons!



Under 12 girls final

Our hunt for space for extra pitches continues; with over 160 children at the club in 11 teams our pitch space is stretched to the limit. We have started using Litlington to ease the strain but we continue to search for more local space. If anyone has any suggestions to help us expand or know any kind landowners who could help, please get in touch.

The club is run entirely by volunteers, the committee carry out their roles in their spare time. If you would like to get involved and learn more about the committee please get in touch; extra help is always welcome and it only takes a few hours per month. A special shout out to all parents who help out, whether it's helping set up, running the line or running the tuck shop, without this we wouldn't be such a great club so thank you to all who contribute.

Finally, thank you to all our coaches who give up their own time every week to ensure our children have a great time in a safe environment.

We look forward to seeing you in 2024. Up the Accies!

Andy Hayes, Chairman

✉ chairman@ashwellacademicals.com

🖱 www.ashwellacademicals.com

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Ashwell Cricket Club



I could see he was out from here

From the ashes and dust (and relegation) of the 2022 season so the phoenix rose in 2023. Ashwell Cricket Club had a resurgent year. Played 16, 9 wins, 3 losses, 2 cancelled, 1 conceded. As a result, we won the CCA Junior League (South) Div 2. Yes, we won... top of the pile!

Our club is still not overburdened with playing members, but with only one game conceded for lack of players, it was a 'not bad, could do better' season on that front.

Reg Redfern (skipper) had another stellar year. 511 league runs at an average of 46 and a high score of 112 topped the list in all batting categories. Andy Young made 209 at an average of 30. George Griffin, 189 at 27 average, Tim Moynihan, 188 at 31. Ian Plumley averaged 32 (playing 5 games) and Paddy Robinson averaged 36 (playing just thrice).

Bowling wise it was again Reg who topped the chart. 20 wickets at average of 11 (that's runs conceded per wicket). Dom Crossley (another waving the flag for the over 40s) took 15 at a 16 average.

The season started with bad weather but eventually we played in late May and a win over Aspenden where we defended a low total of 142 by bowling out the opposition for 74 (Sean Wellock 3-19). Reg made 112 against Thriplow in an easy 63 run victory. A nail biter against Birchanger where we won by 2 wickets was highlighted by Ben Turner taking 3-28, then in chasing 198 for victory, we were 5 down for less than 100. Del Trezise (30) and Jake England (44) took us to the cusp of victory, with Tom Foot and Pete Garbutt taking us over the line.

July saw three more wins including the game of the season home to Barley. We made 190 (Young 46, Redfern 45, Reeve 35) and then bowled out the opposition for 189 with Harry Daniell taking 4-49 including the last man out. Harry is 14 years old.

George Griffin made 79 and Paddy Robinson 61 against Ashdon but we lost on the last ball when Ashdon needed a 6 to win and got it! August otherwise saw some good knocks from Alfie Perry, Tim Moynihan, Ian Plumley, and Reg of course.

"...with Harry Daniell taking 4-49 including the last man out. Harry is 14 years old."

On other fronts we ran another excellent junior cricket programme for the early summer and thanks are due to Jack Busby for all his hard work there. Likewise the club is also grateful to Hugh Carling for his tireless work leading our ever popular Big Bashwell fund-raising evening in July which is becoming a village must attend event.

Our quiz night in February was equally successful and is another for your calendars in 2024.

My thanks go to everyone who made cricket possible, and if this is Reg Redfern's last year as captain, a personal thanks to Reg for his endless patience, dedication and good humour.

Bene't Coldstream

✉ bcoldstream@yahoo.co.uk
☎ 742288
☎ 07971 404481

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Ashwell Junior Cricket Camp



Remember: 'line and length'

For the 3rd consecutive year, Ashwell CC ran its Junior Cricket Camp on Friday afternoons during June and July on the Rec'. The camp is attended by children in school years 3-6 and is aimed at younger children who might be trying cricket for the first time. If your child is already a budding Ben Stokes or Heather Knight then they may be getting their fix elsewhere!

Original funding from the Henry Colbron Trust enabled the club to hire professional coaches, buy new playing equipment and provide each child with an Ashwell Cricket Camp t-shirt. Each year that offering continues but with the majority of the funding now coming directly from Ashwell CC. Most importantly, the camp continues to be provided to the children free of charge.

The coaching team is led by local ECB qualified coach David Isherwood and is assisted by his daughter Caroline and Justin Leavers who plays cricket for Royston 1st XI. All three coaches do a sterling job and have the uncanny knack of organising over 30 children on hot summer afternoons into organised games of cricket in a fun and educational way.

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

The Friday afternoons are sociable for all, including parents who make the most of the sun and the weekend starting with a glass of something watching the children have fun. Parental help is always appreciated and new blood will be needed soon to take the reins from your correspondent as his children outgrow the camp. We look forward to more junior cricket in 2024.

Jack Busby

✉ jackbusby1977@gmail.com

Ashwell Village Sports Day



We celebrated our favourite local sporting event with a bumper crowd and very enthusiastic participation in 2023. The weather was kind, the grass championship length and carefully marked with a record 15 lanes, the DJs in

entertaining form, the cake stall was stacked with goodies, and the BBQ and beverages sold out yet again!

In the spirit of Celebration, this year we added a Coronation Year special with two regal dressing up races! And in the spirit of inclusiveness there was a new category for the Round The Village race - for anyone happy to admit to being over 50!

We really hope everyone came away feeling proud and happy after a great afternoon of fun. Prizes used to be coins in envelopes, but this year to emphasise 'Celebration' as a key part of the event, winners were awarded newly minted medals, and were able to stand on the finish line podium and take a photo in the selfie frame. All of these changes emphasised the joy

Start of the Round the Village Race (RTV)



Sport

of participation for all. The village Beavers made us all smile – running in uniform and helping to sell raffle tickets. And a mention in dispatches to the dad who made light of our first real event-related injury - by whacking himself with the post-hole basher during the morning set-up. Ouch!



Rider (7) and May (5) with their medals from the day!

And a loud cheer for the 2023 trophy awardees:

- Junior trophy - Asier Diomande
- Youth trophy - Alissa Slater
- Family race - Team Busby
- Slow bicycle race - Alfie Moss
- RTV girls - Ellie McCutcheon
- RTV boys - Eddie Kendrick
- RTV ladies - Sue Kemp & Silke Endecott (sharing the glory!)
- RTV men - Vincent Wright
- RTV senior ladies - no takers, most participants claimed to be about 21!
- RTV senior men - Guy Reed

Big thanks to our very generous raffle prize donors: the Rose & Crown, Rhubarb & Mustard, Campervan Coffee and Key Essentials Nursery.

The Village Sports Day is run as a 'not-for-profit' event. However, we are very keen to donate where possible to encourage sports participation in the

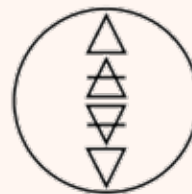
village. In 2022 we funded a trip for the Beavers to an outdoor pursuits centre as a thank you for their help. In 2023 our expenditure was £1,766 and income £2,039 – so £273 in hand for re-investment or donation.

Please come and join us at the Rec' again on Sunday 19 May 2024. In the meantime:

- Follow us on Facebook for news updates, and to share any feedback to improve the event or if you'd like to get more involved: www.facebook.com/Ashwellvillagesportsday
- Review the photos from the 2023 event, taken by community photographer Alan Jackson: www.flickr.com/photos/198468060aN02/
- Practice the Round The Village Race (with trophies galore) on foot or on your bike, and officially on Strava: www.strava.com/segments/23986808

Thank you again to everyone who came along and took part, supported, or volunteered. And see you in 2024!

Guy Reed
Gregor Mitchell
Wendy Howard
Laurence Simon
Dawn Sanders
Mike Banister
✉ guy.reed01@gmail.com



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Anyone for tennis, 1920s style



Ashwell Tennis Club

Did you know that there has been a tennis club in Ashwell since at least the early 1900s? See the picture *circa* 1920 courtesy of the village museum. In the early days, the club played on grass courts by the war memorial. There is a real history of people in the village getting together to hit a fuzzy yellow ball about and spending plenty of time off court in the local hostleries for well earned refreshment.

2023 was a year of getting people out on court whether that was in our Friday morning coaching sessions, along to our Thursday evening or Friday lunch club sessions or turning out for the Datchworth league teams. We even had some success in the latter with our 1st team getting promoted and our 2nd and 3rd teams managing survival to maintain their respective divisions. We ended the season with a new take on our tournament in a more casual and social setting whereby everybody played with different people emphasising getting to know one another, with Charley being our champion!

"We would love to continue to increase the usage of the courts and the number of people involved."

This year, we really started to utilise the clubhouse at our current venue on Ashwell Street and have some exciting plans to put in home furnishings ahead of the 2023-24 season and hopefully some form of solar power. We must say a thank you to the Ashwell Show for its support to the club.

During the year we ran two very successful social events. The first 'Dancing in the Aisles' an evening under the roof of our very own Ashwell church and a second a summer drinks party for the Wimbledon

final hosted by our chair Jeremy. We now have a social secretary focused on events for 2024 so watch this space!

The club is continuing to grow and we maintain a low level of membership fees compared to other tennis clubs. We would love to continue to increase the usage of the courts and the number of people involved. On this basis we plan to continue to diversify in what the club can offer, and pickleball (look it up!) is something we are trying to establish and have some nets and equipment on the way soon. If tennis or pickleball interests you then email us at the address below.

Anyone for tennis, 2020s style



I want to close this update with a thanks to our outgoing chair Jeremy for all his hard work for the tennis club, I know everyone is very grateful.

Mark Hurst

Chair

✉ ashwellsport@gmail.com

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

Cycle Club Ashwell

Grass roots cycling



Racers negotiate turn 4 in the Devil take the hindmost race. Photo: Guy Wills

Ashwell is known to many cyclists as the home of Days of Ashwell as many a two wheeled visitor will attest as they enjoy a cuppa and a cake. Ashwell is also becoming known as a destination for cycle sport.

For about a dozen years now we have been using the

Small Gains field for cycle training and racing grass track and cyclocross. This all started in 2008 with a few youth riders practicing track riding around the cricket pitch. The idea to run grass track racing as a way to develop cycling was in no small part due to the encouragement and expert direction of the legendary Max Pendleton. It was then Ashwell resident Geoff Godschalk who made this happen. In time Ashwell's Chris Schwick noticed what we were doing and by 2010 Geoff had agreed with Chris that the club could use his field, Small Gains.

Geoff organised preparing the land and even researched the right grass to seed. He laid the hedges and organised the corner piles; now well used features for cyclocross. Geoff now lives in County Durham, but we made sure he came back for our first Grass Track race of the year in May so we could name the track to recognise his vision and work to get the track established. Now we know the track as The Geoff Godschalk Grass Velodrome.

Whilst Grass Track Racing is quite a niche part of cyclesport it is an important part and important to what Cycle Club Ashwell does. Cycle Club Ashwell caters for all aspects of cycling for youth and adult riders.

Daniel Doncaster

Cycle Club Ashwell

www.ccashwell.co.uk

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Opening Hours

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Tuesday 9am – 1.30pm

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Thursday 9.30am – 4.30pm

Friday 9am – 5.30pm

Saturday 9am – 4pm

**Tuesday pm appointments
available by prior arrangement**

Dixies Barns

High Street, Ashwell

01462 742043

Jane Nicholson
Proprietor

Ashwell Fit Club

Fit Club has been happening for the last five years every Saturday morning from 10-11am on the Rec' run by Phil Ward. The purpose is not weight loss or competing with each other but to have some fun and improve fitness with a variety of activities that work different parts of the body.

Phil asked a group of participants if they could put into words what fit club is like from a participant's perspective.

"Inviting newbies for a coffee and chat post workout is the norm, in fact friendly and welcoming is probably the best way to describe the vibe of the group..."

"The obvious thing to say would be that we turn up for the fitness, but it is more than that... we have made good friendships which have led to support networks beyond the club. Fit club members are particularly supportive of each other's personal sporting challenges and the group chat is full of messages of support and positivity.

Inviting newbies for a coffee and chat post workout is the norm, in fact friendly and welcoming is probably the best way to describe the vibe of the group and if the weather really is that bad, some of us fair-weather fit clubbers (not mentioning any names!) just pop along for coffee afterwards.

Phil is not the only one who takes the class, other members also take a turn, anyone can step up and have a go! Needless to say, this approach encourages ownership, personal growth and a team spirit which you simply don't find in a gym environment.

The 'netball rugby' game which most enjoy (but isn't compulsory), also creates healthy competitiveness and team spirit. Circuit training and bear crawls keep everyone on their toes and fit-ish! Being able to bring your children along to show them how fit you are is also a bonus.

In a nutshell, we keep coming back because we get fit whilst spending time with friends and having fun. The Saturday get together really sets the weekend off well. It's one of the many joys of village life and epitomises the community spirit we're lucky to have in Ashwell."

Sureyya, Heather, Zoe, Sarah, and Linda

Philip Ward

✉ philipward100@gmail.com.

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Ashwell Primary School Year 6 at the Obstacle Training Ground, Bassingbourn.



Education



Ashwell Primary School in 2023



Ashwell Primary School continues to be extremely popular with only a few spaces available in some of our year groups. The school currently has 224 children on roll from Nursery through to Year 6. Our extended nursery provision caters for 30 hours per week.

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.

Since August 2022, the school has been working with Hertfordshire County Council to complete a huge heating replacement project as part of the local authorities plan to make schools sustainable and more environmentally friendly. The project, once completed, will see a huge reduction in the use of gas as the new air source heat pumps take over. In addition to this, the school now has a number of solar panels which enables us to produce our own electricity. In October 2023, the school kitchen was completely upgraded to remove the use of gas appliances. We hope that the entire project will be completed early in 2024.

In January 2023, we welcomed a new Deputy Headteacher and SENCO into post. Mrs Katie Andrews has brought with her, a wealth of experience

and expertise and knows the Hertfordshire education system well. Mrs Andrews settled into the school exceptionally well and has already built fantastic relationships with a range of people across the school community.

Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, the school continued to offer a vast array of curriculum enrichment opportunities including an extensive residential offer. In May, our Year 4 children spent a night at the Celtic Harmony Camp sleeping in round houses. In July, our Year 6 children took part in a week long residential visit to the Isle of Wight. In October we took Year 5 to Burwell House, a Victorian house in North Cambridgeshire. It continues to be our mission to provide as many enriching experiences for our children as we possibly can. We pride ourselves on the curriculum enrichment offer we facilitate at Ashwell School. These events are a real success and a lot of fun is had creating lifelong memories for both children and staff.

In September 2023, the school launched a new, modern and updated website. The new site has a huge range of information available to parents and the local community: www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk

2023 highlights

January – Fencing enrichment day, Maths Day, Year 6 visit to Houses of Parliament

February – Children's mental health week, safer internet day, Year 3 class assembly, PTA disco

March – World Book Day, Science Week, Year 3/4 production, archery enrichment day, PTA bingo

April – choir sang at the Herts Schools Gala at the Royal Albert Hall

May – Year 2 class assembly, Year 1 class assembly, Year 6 SATs, Ashwell Music Festival, Year 4 Celtic Harmony Camp, Ashwell at Home



June – Reception class assembly, International Day, Year 5/6 production, district sports.

July – Year 6 Isle of Wight residential, Sports Day, PTA summer fête.

September – Harvest Festival, French Dance Enrichment Day

October – Year 5 visit to Burwell House, football team competed in the Rural Schools' Football Tournament, PTA Disco, Indian drumming workshop

November – Anti-bullying week, Children In Need, PTA fireworks event. Year 3 class assembly, Year 3 trip to Fitzwilliam Museum, Year 5 CCI workshops, Reception visit to Audley End

December – Christmas Bazaar, EYFS Nativity, Key Stage 1 Production, Widdershins Theatre production; 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.

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

☎ 742297

PTA: ✉ ashwellpta@gmail.com

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

☎ 742297

Ashwell Primary School Parent Teacher Association

The PTA aims to bring together parents and teachers to provide experiences for and to raise funds to enhance the education of the students of Ashwell Primary School. Being part of the PTA gives the opportunity for parents and grandparents to be actively involved.

This year marked a big change within the PTA with a number of long-serving members stepping down. We cannot thank them enough for the impact they have had on the lives of the children passing through the school - we certainly have big shoes to fill!

Despite the change within the group, a lot of the long-standing activities organised by the PTA continue. This year, we held Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day shops, allowing pupils to choose a present for their relative. The Easter Bingo happened at the end of the Spring Term with suitable amounts of chocolate being won!

The Summer Fête took on a different form, as the weather forced us inside, but lots of stalls and a bouncy castle kept the children entertained and together, we raised money for the school.

Pupils enjoyed a Monster Ball disco just before October half term. There were lots of amazing



Year 6 trip to the Isle of Wight

costumes and some incredible designs entered in the pumpkin competition. Thank you to all the parents and staff who got involved with this event.

The annual fireworks display held in November was a great success, with 900 people attending! This year marked the 25th Anniversary of the fireworks team - and what an amazing show they put on for us all! There was a big team of volunteers running the event on the day, made up of parents, grandparents, school staff and staff from the Three Tuns. Thank you so much for all your contributions which went towards making the event great fun and a very successful fundraiser.

The final event of the year was an enjoyable Christmas afternoon, run in conjunction with the Year 6 pupils at the school. A lovely time was had by all.

The PTA has raised an amazing amount for the school this year and we have had lots of fun doing it! Being a part of the PTA is a great way to get to know other people and we're always pleased to have new team members!

Ali Everington
Treasurer



Hard at work in Year 4

Ashwell Pre-school



Ashwell Pre-school (formerly known as 'Playgroup') had a happy and productive 2023 in no small part thanks to our experienced Level 3 Early Years Educator

Natascha Waller, the manager of the pre-school, assisted by deputy Sarah Rodway, who both do a wonderful job! We welcomed new staff members Kat Richardson, Jenny Keeling and Chelsie Ball, and also said goodbye to Lisa Sheridan and Sophie Stiquel.

Transition work with Ashwell School included a play morning and a music morning within the early years area of the school. The children were very excited to spend time at the big school and there is no doubt these visits increase their confidence when they start full time at school.

In June, for the first time since Covid, the children went on a pre-school trip to Church Farm, Ardeley. They loved their walk about to look at the different animals together and enjoyed playing in the adventure playground.

The 2023 leavers were given an excellent end of term party in July, and we wish them all the very best of luck now they have started the next stage of their education at the village school.

Autumn term saw a higher than usual intake of 11 children on the register, increasing to 13 leading up to Christmas. For this reason, we were able to open consistently from 9am-2.45pm, providing a more comprehensive child care option for busy parents.

Father Christmas visited during the last session of the year's Christmas party, and the children had great fun



playing on the bouncy castle amongst other treats.

We are looking forward to a busy 2024, with a very healthy intake of 17 children on the register from January. The majority of these children will move up to Ashwell Primary School as a cohort in September 2024, which helps to make this important transition time very smooth for them, given that friendships are already blossoming.

A BIG thank you to everyone whom has volunteered time or donated funds to the pre-school in 2023!



We would like to say a special thank you to the Ashwell at Home and the Ashwell Show Committees, for their generous financial support of the pre-school in return for help at these village events. We are also very grateful to the Henry Colbron Trust for their continued support.

Early Years settings such as our pre-school provide invaluable first experience of independent socialisation away from home for 2-4 year olds, and yet are always short of funding, and always looking for more voluntary support! If you feel able to help in any shape or form, please do contact us. We are now recruiting volunteers to help with car parking duties on Sunday 12th May at Ashwell at Home, which will help us earn a donation to the pre-school, and would love to hear from you if you can spare any time!

Merry Pertwee

Treasurer & Trustee
Ashwell Pre-school

✉ merryasmith@yahoo.co.uk

🖱 www.ashwellplaygroup.co.uk

Ashwell Baby and Toddler Group

Ashwell Baby and Toddler Group runs on Tuesdays (term time only) 9.30-11.15am in the URC Hall, £2.00 per child. Card payments accepted: new-born to pre-schoolers.

What a fab year we have had at the ABTG. A very successful Messy Tent at the Ashwell Show, with many children's faces painted by our talented face painting volunteers. Thanks to the success of the Ashwell Show, the committee kindly funded some brand new soft play equipment. With the soft play equipment our sessions will be more enriching for the children and will help in the development of their gross motor skills.

We have seen many new attendees this past year, thanks to broadening the advertising to surrounding villages' social media pages. This has helped boost numbers, some weeks having up to 15 children, which is fantastic.

We still offer a healthy snack time, where the children gain essential socialising and sharing skills and enjoy eating with their peers around a table. The adults can also enjoy (most weeks) a treat with their teas and coffees.

Thanks to some of the parents who attend the group, I have been able to keep the sessions running by their kind volunteering. I'd like to say a massive, "Thank you" to them. If it wasn't for them the ABTG may not have been able to continue running this past year. The community and I, are forever grateful for this.

We have had many clean up sessions, sorted through our toys and tidied up the craft room supplies to make way for new and exciting equipment. However, we are always on the lookout for any new and exciting toys to offer the children. So if you're having a 'spring



Preschool, and Baby and Toddler Group fun



clean' this March/April time please think of us, we'd be happy to take any pre loved toys. Contact Abby on the email below.

We look forward to another exciting year for the ABTG. For any information about the sessions please don't hesitate to contact me on the email below. A weekly post the day before each session can be found on the ABTG Facebook group, the Ashwell Hub and other local community groups, so head there for updates on sessions.

Abby Valley

Treasurer
Ashwell Baby and Toddler Group
✉ mrsavalley@gmail.com

For further details, please also see our Facebook site: facebook.com/ashwellbabytoddlergroup

Enhancing creativity

A year of art curriculum transformation at Ashwell Primary School

It is with great pleasure that we share the remarkable strides our school has taken in reviewing and improving the art curriculum and scheme of work that we offer children. This year has been a journey of creativity, exploration, and innovation, as our dedicated staff have worked tirelessly to cultivate a rich and inspiring environment for our children.

The school's commitment to fostering artistic expression and nurturing young talent has driven the comprehensive review of the art curriculum. The goal was not only to teach traditional art techniques but also to incorporate modern mediums, digital art, and interdisciplinary approaches to prepare students for the diverse creative fields of the 21st century.

Our scheme of work has been revamped to enhance the sequential progression of skills and concepts. The well-structured framework builds upon students' knowledge and abilities as they advance through different year groups. This ensures a coherent and enriching learning experience, fostering a deeper understanding of art history, theory, and practical applications.

To encourage a hands-on and immersive approach to learning, the school has also invested in upgrading the art resources.

As we celebrate the achievements of our children in this year's Yearbook, let us also applaud the hard work and vision of the staff. Here are some artwork pieces from each class.

Jennifer Harber





Handprints from the nursery class

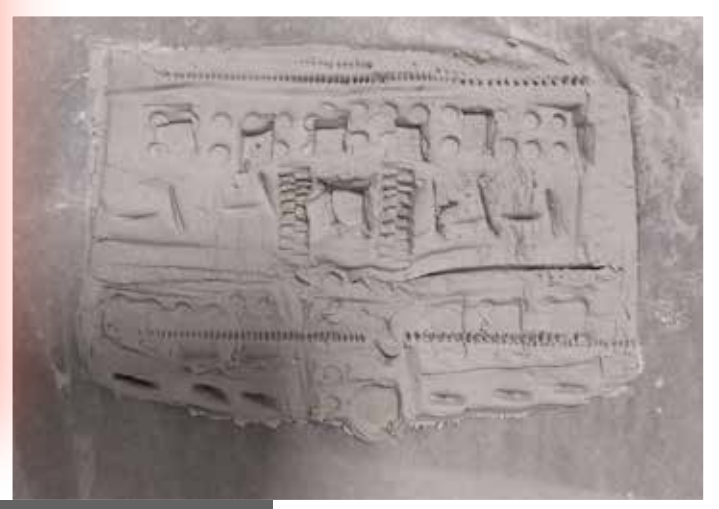
Reception faces



Ashwell Primary Art



Year 1 'Leaf Man' portraits



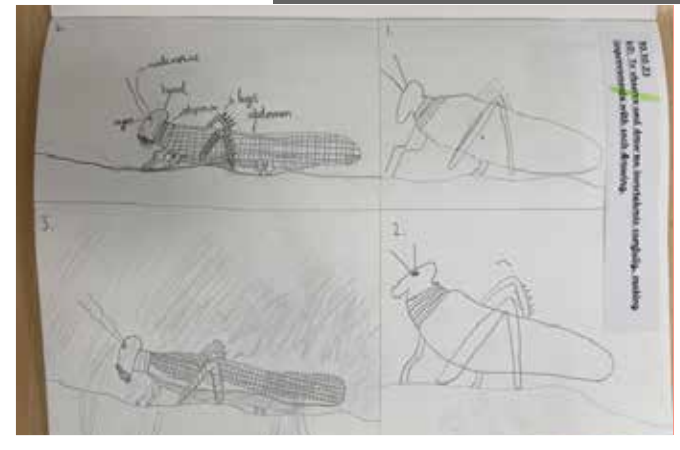
Year 2: textures in clay

A Study of Ancient Egypt from Year 3



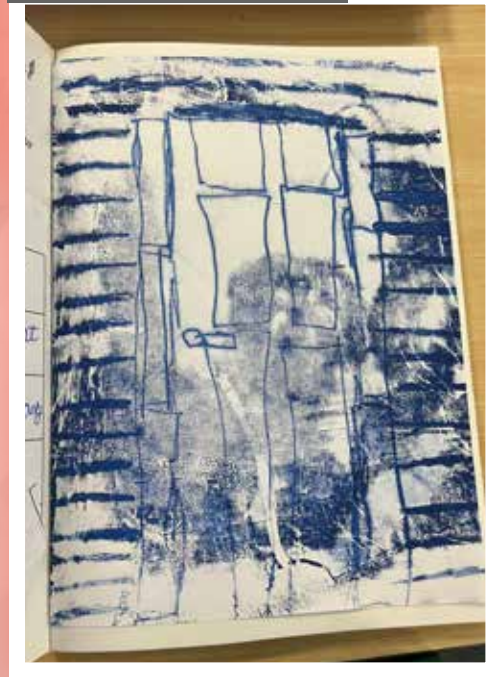
Creativity

Year 4's exercise in careful observation

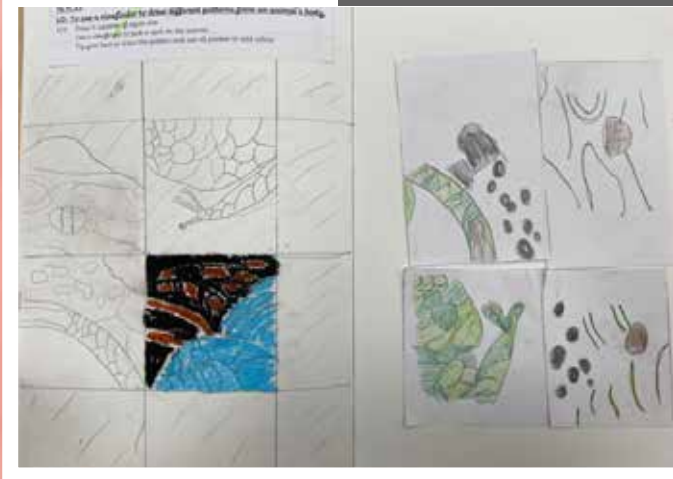


Exploration

Year 5 trying a new technique



Close observation from Year 4



Innovation

Gassed, an oil study, 1918-19 (oil on canvas), by John Singer Sargent



Painting, and performance art with Year 6

The scouts' Christmas dinner.

Youth organisations



Guides under the shelter bought with show money



1st Ashwell Guides



We've had a varied year this year with outings, camp and a strong environmental theme for our badges.

Our first outing of the year was an evening in Baldock for a Penny Hike. That's a hike where a coin is flipped at every junction to decide which way to go, so you don't know where you'll end up, (hopefully not going round in circles)! We plotted our route on a map, so we didn't get lost.

Many of our badges this year explored ways we can protect our planet, from finding alternatives to fossil fuels and protecting the oceans, to discovering how to run a successful campaign and influence those who can make the changes we would like to see. Each patrol built a 'themed' obstacle course, representing challenges to be overcome, for the other patrols to solve and complete.

The Guides ran two activities this year for Ashwell at Home: 'Build A Junk Robot', which was very popular, and 'Welly Wanging'. Later in the year we helped alongside the WI in the busy tea tent at the Ashwell Show.

A special event of our summer was when Ashwell and Baldock Guides joined forces for a long weekend camp at Wymondley Wood. We had a great time playing wild games in the woods, and cooking on open fires amongst other things, but it seemed we had only just settled in when it was time to strike camp and go home.

Unfortunately, we couldn't offer camp places to everyone who wanted to come this year due to leader numbers but with more leaders available now we will be able to offer places to everyone who wants to come to camp in 2024.

In June we had a fabulous trip to Grafham Water. The Guides had great fun crate stacking, kayaking and raft-building in glorious weather!

We had quite a few visitors this year too.

Danica, who has a background in the fashion industry and degrees in pattern cutting and sustainable fashion, ran a fun and practical session highlighting issues with 'fast fashion' and looking at ways to limit its damage such as reusing and upcycling. The Guides have asked her to come back to do another 'fun fashion' session!

Greening Ashwell came and spent an evening making willow wreaths with us and we found out many ways we can look after wildlife and our environment closer to home. We're looking forward to helping and doing more activities with them in the spring.

We also had a whittling evening where we learned how to use a knife to whittle a fork or spoon. It took a lot of practice but we managed to produce some useable items!

Badges involving cooking are always popular and Guides chose ingredients to cook stir-fry on gas stoves outdoors early in the year and finished the year with an evening of Christmas themed party games, baking and decorating gingerbread and making toasted marshmallow snowmen!

Guides is for girls aged 10–14. If you are interested in joining or would like more information, please contact:

Sue Long

✉ ashwellguides@gmail.com

☎ 01223 208337

Guides go for it





Senuna Explorers on a night march

1st Ashwell Scout Group and Senuna Explorer Scout Unit



Senuna Explorer Scout Unit

2023 was an exciting year of growth for Scouting in Ashwell with the foundation of an Explorer Scout Unit for young people aged 14-18.

The 'famous fourteen' met together for the first time on Friday 18 September to choose a name for their unit and design their own neckerchief. Remembering their local history lessons from Sarah Talks the new Explorers chose to name their unit 'Senuna' after the Celtic goddess whose shrine was discovered near Ashwell End. They designed their own badge and a necker of royal blue with a thin pink border. Since that first meeting the Explorer numbers have grown to 18 with a mix of former Scouts, former Guides and people who are new to Scouting. We have hiked through the fields to Steeple Morden in the dark to camp, cooked on campfires, mixed mocktails, and cooked a full Christmas dinner without adult intervention. The young people are planning more activities for 2024 and any 14-18 year olds would be welcome to join us on Friday evenings 7.30-9.30pm in the Village Hall.

Scouts

Scouts (10½-14) started the year with a tour of St Mary's Church where we learned about the medieval graffiti and rang the bells before gathering round the altar for Rev'd Chris Campbell to dedicate our new

Union Flag which has been carried at St George's Day and Remembrance Sunday parades this year. Other activities included developing orienteering and map skills over several weeks and having a first taste of yoga. Scouts have also been raising money for local good causes with barbecue catering for Ashwell at Home, activities for the Ashwell Show and accompanying Santa on his annual charity ride through the village. Our summer camp at Tolmers was a chance to try out our brand new tents, bought with a generous donation from Ashwell Village Show.

Cubs

Cubs (age 8-10½) also camped this year and have also been busy gaining their circus skills, naturalist and gardening badges. A muddy highlight was racing round the obstacle course in Bassingbourn.

Beavers

Meanwhile, Beavers (age 6-8) have taken on the challenge of the Letchworth Greenway Walk to raise money for charity, helped out at the Ashwell Village Sports Day and had a great summer camp under canvas.

"We only achieve all this through the leadership of our adult volunteers... if anyone would like to lend a hand... please do get in touch."

We only achieve all this through the leadership of our adult volunteers and the numbers of these are running low, so if anyone in the area would like to lend a hand and help our young people develop skills for life, please do get in touch!

Stuart Kendrick

✉ gsl@1stashwellscouts.org.uk



Team building with the Scouts



Friday @ 5 goes outdoors

Ashwell Brownies

Ashwell Brownies have had a very busy 2023! We have been incredibly lucky to have so many wonderful members of the community visit us throughout the latter part of 2022 and into 2023. We had a talk from the local hedgehog lady and completed hedgehog homes. Ashwell Theatre Club also came to visit and hosted two sessions focussing on topics the Brownies were learning.

During Spring and Summer 2023, we had visits from parents to talk about their jobs for the 'Girls can do anything' session the leaders hosted in line with International Women's Day on 8 March. The Brownies have been on bike rides to visit and groom horses. Our cookery skills were put to the test when we made brownies to sell at Ashwell at Home.

In September 2023, we moved our sessions to a new day and a new venue – we meet on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm at Ashwell Primary School. Seeing 2023 out with a bang, we enjoyed fireworks with the Beavers for bonfire night, taking part in the Remembrance Sunday parade, learning about Morse Code at Therfield Heath, and finishing the term taking part in the carol concert.

Natalie Terry

Unit Leader

✉ ashwellbrownies@gmail.com

🖱 <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk>

Friday @ 5

St Mary's Youth Group

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

Our lively sessions include lots of self-chosen play, alongside some organised activities such as games, crafts, model making, competitions, cooking and much more. Drinks and snacks are also provided. Now that junior choir rehearsals no longer take place on Friday evenings, we also offer the chance for our young people to do some singing at the youth group. This is quite informal and an opportunity to practise some seasonal songs in preparation for festivals such as the music festival, harvest and Christmas.

The group provides an opportunity for children to socialise together in a safe space, to appreciate the impressive church building, to ask questions about any issues that are bothering them without fear of judgement or ridicule and to have fun.

Activities this year have included:

Making fruit kebabs

Bug hotel

Making sweets for Mothering Sunday

Poppies for Remembrance Day

Outdoor parachute games

A visit to the Greening Ashwell allotment

Lego models

Science experiments

Fun with paint

Toasting marshmallows around a fire pit

Sparklers

And much more!

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

Jo Adams

✉ adams561j@gmail.com

☎ 01763 241587

Classic tractors at the Ashwell Show.



Events

Ashwell's Famous Flea Market

4 March

A bright but chilly day saw people queuing outside St Mary's long before the start of Ashwell's Famous Flea Market – in fact the queue stretched all the way to the main gate!

It never ceases to amaze me the variety of donations we receive – everything from a Victorian aspidistra stand, three sets of nesting tables, a tailors dummy, three dartboards, a brand new cat's scratching post, to a wall safe along with the usual plethora of children's toys, paintings, china, mugs, glassware, jewellery and over 30 jigsaws. Thank you to all those who raided their cupboards to donate the hundreds of items for sale.



Something for everyone at the Flea Market

Business was brisk over the 3½ hours and we raised a record amount of £1,823.73 which goes to St Mary's Restoration Fund. This is an amazing total – over £500.00 more than last year!

None of this would have been possible without the numerous volunteers. They worked tirelessly promoting the event beforehand, sorting and laying out all the items beforehand and helping on the day with selling, and serving tea and coffee. Also, a wonderful team helped with the momentous task of putting the church back to normal at the end and getting rid of any leftover items – with donations going to various charities.

The event would not have been successful without all their hard work so a huge thank you to all those volunteers for their help.

Thank you also to those that joined us on the day making purchases and enjoying tea and coffee.

See you all in 2024.

Karen Rogers
☎ 743338

Banger Challenge

Ashwell Banger Challenge 2023 raised £32,586 for the British Heart Foundation and Happy Days Children's Charity.

In April the third edition of the Ashwell Banger Challenge finally happened following a three year postponement due to Covid.

Ten teams of 42 participants competed in the event which saw them purchase a second-hand car as cheaply as possible before giving it a themed-makeover.

Entrants drew inspiration from Austin Powers, Scooby Doo, Ski Sunday, James Hunt, Barbie, and the Wacky Races' Ant Hill Mob when decorating their old motors. The fleet also included two pirate-themed vehicles and an old taxi that had been converted into a Mario-karts car.

The event began with a procession of the eccentrically liveried vehicles along Ashwell high street, cheered on by a fantastic turnout of hundreds of spectators.

The teams then spent two days driving across Essex and Suffolk completing a series of tasks including paintballing, dashing around Saffron Walden to complete various photo and video challenges and the teams hurling themselves over an ultimate ninja assault course in Colchester. Following an entertaining night out in Ipswich, fuzzy heads were soon cleared with a series of races in various water craft. Money was raised through entrance fees, sponsorship, donations and a black tie awards ceremony. Further funds were then raised by participants selling their vehicles used for the event.

The Ashwell Banger Challenge was a tremendous success and it was fantastic to witness the imagination behind the transformation of these old bangers. And it was great to see people carry their car theme through into the costumes they wore throughout the weekend.

What makes the event so special is the enthusiasm and support for the event from the local community and businesses. So thank you to everyone for helping to raise so much money for two very worthy charities!

Stu Endacott

Duck Race

23 April

Fun for all the family! Yes, the Duck Race returned this year; a rather grey day enlivened by a splash of yellow at the Springs. And nobody got (too) wet.

for **Merry Pertwee**

Duck Race



Banger Challenge





Mainline Big Band at the Music Festival

Ashwell Music Festival

7-13 May

The 2023 Ashwell Music Festival was well supported and enjoyable. Nearly 500 tickets were sold and the festival raised an amazing £2,900 for St Mary's Restoration Fund to assist with current work on our beautiful church, and a donation of £250 to United Reformed Church.

This year in a change from tradition, we opened the festival with Festal Evensong. The choir, led by Benet Coldstream, performed beautifully and the Rev'd Chris Campbell was able to bless the performers, committee members and helpers for the week ahead. The following day, Ashwell Music Festival had its first livestream internet event. Ashwell's very own Oliver Gearing entertained the listeners with live Rock and Pop covers from the likes of Queen, Ed Sheeran and Pap Roach. Listeners were able to tune in via the platform Twitch, interacting with Ollie and placing requests.

Mainline Big Band gave us music from great artists

such as Glenn Miller's band and Louis Armstrong. The chance to learn a new instrument was available to all ages at the ukulele family workshop. Much fun was had, but I don't think anyone will be reaching the standard of George Formby any time soon! Eboracum Baroque brought us 'Purcell and a Pint' – we were transported back to the alehouses of 17th century England, with the price of a ticket including a pint of beer from Buntingford Brewery.

The United Reformed Church was host to two events – An Evening of Flanders and Swann' with Peter Chapman and Mike O'Neill, and the Dave Rance Rockin' Chair Band. Foot tapping fun was guaranteed in both concerts. The latter concert took place in the afternoon, and the audience enjoyed refreshments of tea and delicious cake. Many thanks to Judy Banham and her band of lovely helpers.

The participation of youth is a central tradition of the festival. Accordingly, the Young Musicians' Concert opened the festival. Students from The Knights Templar School, Ashwell School Choir and St Mary's Junior Choir provided a lively mix of vocal, string, brass and percussive music.



Dave Rance's Rockin' Chair Jazz Band



Music festival organisers in detention



**Sunday May 5th –
Saturday May 11th 2024**

Festal Evensong
Young Musician's Concert
Hertfordshire Constabulary Choir
Dave Rance's Rockin' Chair Band
Oliver Gearing
James Pearson
Handbell workshop
Soul Kinda Wonderful

www.ashwellmusicfestival.org.uk

Tickets available online and from Rhubarb and Mustard



The standard of musicianship was as high as ever! We were also treated to a special performance by Bene't, Kit and Theo Coldstream of Nella Fantasia with music by Ennio Morricone and lyrics by Chiara Ferrau. There was not a dry eye in the audience by the end of their performance. Thanks to all the teachers involved, especially Hannah Back, Will Byers and Tim Welch. Many thanks also to the gentlemen of the Church Choir who provided a peaceful and moving end to the evening with the ancient plainsong service of *Compline*.

The festival closed with a live 6 piece party band, Lost in Music, performing songs which took us back to school discos of the 70s and 80s. The audience, some dressed in school uniform, sang and danced the night away.

The festival could not take place without the army of volunteers who help with the staging, bar and front of house – many unseen tasks that enable us to enjoy a series of smoothly run events. Many thanks to them all. We are also most grateful for the continuing support from you who buy tickets and come to be entertained during each festival. The 2024 Festival takes place from Sunday 4 May to Saturday 11 May. We hope to see as many of you as possible at our events. For further details please see elsewhere in this edition of the Ashwell Yearbook, or look online.

Tracy Young

Chair

✉ tracy.youngthebeacon@gmail.com

🖱 www.ashwellmusicfestival.org.uk

Ashwell at Home 2023

14 May

'A Day in the Country' was the theme of the village open day in 2023 and a very happy and sunny day it proved to be. Visitors came from far and near. The car park in Dixies Meadow filled rapidly and everyone seemed to enjoy the occasion.

The attractions and events were too numerous to mention here, but popular among the innovations this year were the 'Down on the Farm' display and talk in Gardiners Lane, the stables in Springhead and the mini dog show in Church Mead. There were traditional and modern crafts to see and try out: spinning and weaving in the church, pottery at Ash Farm and butter making in the museum.



Support the Brownies: eat cake.



A display on 'Picnic and Provisions' in the museum was brought to life on a guided walk, showing where Ashwellians in the past would have found what they needed for their own day in the country.

Fifteen gardens, of all shapes and sizes, were open and greatly enjoyed by visitors, including the Cottage Garden, where gardeners' questions were welcomed and answered.

A wide range of music was performed in streets and gardens, in the church, the school, and even at the Springs. There was Tudor music and dancing in Swan Street and the local Morris dancers popped up all over the village during the day. Children's activities included story time, art sessions, welly-throwing, folk dance, a stage school workshop, building robots, harp lessons, a tree trail and a scarecrow trail. The Theatre Club staged three scenes from classic English comedy in the United Reformed Church.

And the food! The PTA at the school, the Pre-school in the village hall, the Scouts in the pavilion, and whole teams of volunteers in the URC hall and the parish room all provided stimulating coffees, superb lunches and tasty teas.

A record total of £12,000 was raised and distributed to our beneficiaries: the museum, St Mary's Church, Ashwell Primary School and the Pre-School, with a small grant to the United Reformed Church.

Very large numbers of villagers gave up their time, talents and energies to ensuring the event was a success. The organisers would like to thank everyone involved. We hope we shall be able to count on your support and enthusiasm again for the 2024 Ashwell at Home on Sunday 12 May when the theme will be 'Hidden Ashwell'.

Cliff Jenkinson

✉ cliffjenkinson47@live.co.uk

☎ 742592

The 'At Home': Madeleine Legg carding wool



The local police brought their cars and set up a stand on the Rec', where the fun fair was also in full swing. The amazing creations from the Ashwell Banger Challenge charity event were displayed in the Village Hall car park.



Our Village Open Day
Sunday 12th May 2024

Entry to all activities by wristband

£10 per adult (£9 in advance)

children free

www.ashwellathome.org.uk

This year's theme: the King's coronation



Well Dressing 2023

This year the subject of our design was fairly easy to decide being the King's coronation. The difficulty started when we discussed which crown to depict bearing in mind the problem of petaling small areas.

Ingenuity was called for and Gordon Hill came up with the ideal solution when he suggested coloured stones for the jewels which he kindly painted for us. We do try to keep to the old tradition of only using live natural material but felt that our jewels would be acceptable.

We are most grateful to our resident artist Lynda Spencer. After discussion, Lynda did the initial design and then kindly took on board the changes that we suggested in order to finalise the design.

As always there was some artistic license as we are so limited with the flowers that are available at that time of year. Not only the colour but the petal size also has to be taken into account, especially for those tricky little areas of the design. Chrysanthemums and carnations are our most used flowers.

Once again we were delighted to welcome a new member to the team. It may not have been easy to start with but they soon got to grips with the petaling and their contribution was much appreciated.

We are most grateful to the Ashwell Show committee who kindly gave us a grant to help with the cost of creating our Well Dressing.

If you think you might be interested in helping to keep this ancient craft alive or would just like to find out more about the custom of Well Dressing then please do get in touch.

Maureen Hersee

✉ maureenhersee@btinternet.com

The Springs festival drew a good audience



Ashwell Springs Festival

23 July

On 23 July, Ashwellians revived an ancient festival at our village springs, in celebration of this wonderful place and what it means to the village. Local historian Albert Sheldrick records that up until the mid-19th century, an annual festival was held at the Springs to celebrate the site, a tradition he thinks dates right back to a pre-Christian past, when springs were considered sacred.

Sarah Talks spoke about the history of the Springs, from the first humans to arrive, up to more recent times: reiterating that throughout Ashwell's history, the Springs have always been central to our community. Rev'd Chris Campbell held a blessing ceremony over the Springs, and onlookers were impressed that she did so whilst standing in the water!

In keeping with tradition, we held a ceremonial toast to the Springs and were then welcomed by a brilliant display of Ashwell's musical talent, with pieces dedicated to Ashwell Springs by Julia Mitchell, Rachel Houghton, Mike Spencer and Simon Blake. We were also given some fantastic folk music performances by Ian Chandler and Mike Holmes.

The festival had strong environmental themes. As the source of chalk stream tributaries and ultimately the River Cam, Ashwell Springs is a key site for biodiversity and we talked about the importance of safeguarding the Springs for future generations. Clare Spencer talked about what Greening Ashwell does in protecting and enhancing local biodiversity. Special thanks to all the team at Greening Ashwell for their hard work in helping this festival to take place.

For those of us who live in Ashwell, it's sometimes easy to forget just how special the Springs are, but



Young rider

they're the fundamental reason our village exists in the first place. The clue is in the name Ashwell: it's a well (or spring) surrounded by ash trees!

So let's not see our Springs as merely a set of concrete stepping stones across shallow water, but the very heart of a thriving community, valued by people, animals and plants for thousands of years. Through encouraging access and care over our village springs and by honouring them with events such as this, we can ensure community guardianship over this special place for many years to come.

We very much hope that the Ashwell Springs Festival will become an annual event once more and are looking forward to next year's! If anyone is interested in finding out more, or has ideas, please email:

Harry Jenkinson

✉ ashwellspringsfestival@gmail.com

(Photos taken by local photographer Bianca Valentine: <https://www.bphotography.co.uk/>)

Ashwell Show 2023

28 August

Wow what a day!

After the incredible success of the 2022 show, the committee knew it would be a challenge to top that achievement. We did! Even more people than ever flooded through the gates to experience the myriad of entertainment, shopping, cuisines and so much more on offer.

Once again, we owe a special thanks to land owner Sam Sheppard who, as always, generously hands over Elbrook Meadow to the show committee and even helped prepare the ground to create ideal conditions to put on the show.

Vintage tractors and cars greeted guests as they walked into the show, with many pausing to admire these incredible feats of engineering and maintenance.



"I would help, but don't want to get the suit grubby."

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The Pony Derby is highly competitive

One of the many highlights of the 2023 show had to be the Shetland Pony Grand National. Miniature ponies and their child-jockeys contended for the lead over jumps and the flats in highly competitive races. With the now traditional falconry display and family favourite 'human vs tractor tug of war', the main ring entertainment drew crowds 3-4 deep to watch the performances take place.

The WI tea and cake tent was busy all day as the ladies (and gentlemen), ably supported by the Girl Guides, served refreshment to a steady queue of hungry guests. There were trade stands a-plenty selling a vast variety of food who all appreciated the huge number of visitors passing by.

Thank you.

We would like to say a big thank you to all those clubs, societies and individuals who helped to set-up and clear up, man the gate and car parks, and provide activities on the day. The committee works hard throughout the year but we simply couldn't have put on the show without your help. And thank you to everyone who came to the show on the day - we appreciate your support and hope you had a great time.

"If you have any time or expertise to lend to the Ashwell Show we would love to hear from you."

Want to Join the Ashwell Show Committee?

If you have any time or expertise to lend to the Ashwell Show we would love to hear from you. We currently have vacancies in a number of committee

posts, especially in marketing, and there are plenty of things you can do to help no matter how much or little time you have to spare. Come and join in the fun!

To volunteer to help the show or join the committee, please contact Show Secretary Gemma Allan on: [✉ info@ashwellshow.co.uk](mailto:info@ashwellshow.co.uk).

Ashwell Show hands out more money to local charities and organisations

The Ashwell Show is organised by volunteers and operates a not-for-profit policy with the proceeds raised given to local clubs, societies and organisations. In 2023 the show handed out £24,072 to local worthy causes and those organisations who sent volunteers to help with the running of the show. In the past 15 years the Ashwell Show has given more than £175,000 to local organisations.



Just one of the many classic tractors

2023 was yet another exceptional year and we are delighted to announce that thanks once again to the hard work of the committee volunteers and everyone's support on the day, we are able to contribute

Events

the following funds to local clubs, societies, and organisations:

| Beneficiary | Amount | Details |
|--|------------------|---|
| Ashwell Accies | 3,154.88 | Away kit, benches, shelters and referee training |
| Ashwell Baby and Toddler and Messy Play | 1,115.00 | Soft play equipment |
| Ashwell Bellringers | 500.00 | Professional consultancy |
| Ashwell Cricket Club | 1,459.00 | Cricket net and mesh screens |
| Ashwell Fit Club | 370.97 | New exercise equipment |
| Ashwell Food Pantry | 600.00 | Contribution to ongoing supplies |
| Ashwell Guides | 500.00 | New equipment |
| Greening Ashwell | 648.72 | Equipment, bird boxes and bulbs |
| Makers in the Museum | 450.00 | Makers at the Museum sessions |
| Ashwell Museum | 750.00 | Ongoing electrical work |
| Ashwell Pre-school | 2,000.00 | Sheds, polo shirts and on-going costs |
| Ashwell Primary School | 3,198.53 | Teaching resources, SEN resources, sensory room project, design and technology, EYFS resources |
| Ashwell Scouts, including Beavers, Cubs and Scout groups | 1,145.00 | Hiking stoves, gas burners, camp tables, tag belts, dodgeballs |
| Ashwell Scouts - new Explorers section 14+ | 500.00 | Set-up and ongoing costs |
| Ashwell Tennis Club | 2,207.00 | Electrical fitout, table & chairs, soft furnishings, pickleball nets, storage locker, leaf blower |
| Ashwell Village Hall | 673.00 | Lighting materials |
| Ashwell Well Dressing | 200.00 | Flowers and clay |
| Ashwell Womens Institute | 1,000.00 | Bench and transport costs |
| Bloodbikes | 400.00 | Support for volunteer service |
| Moss Cottage Homes Trust | 1,000.00 | Security lights |
| St Mary's Church | 2,000.00 | Free Ashwell Village News for every household in December, ongoing repairs |
| St Vincent's Church, Newnham | 200.00 | Support for repairs |
| TOTAL | 24,072.10 | |

Show proceeds are awarded on a discretionary basis to local good causes, societies, and organisations

nominated by those who help to put on the Ashwell Show in some way. If you would like to nominate a local society or organisation you think could benefit from funds from the 2024 Ashwell Show, or you think your organisation could offer help on show day by providing an activity, manning the car park, setting up/clearing up, or contributing in any other way, please let us know.

Gemma Allan

Show Secretary

✉ info@ashwellshow.co.uk

The Great Ashwell Show Bake-off

Another successful year for the Ashwell Show saw lots of keen entries to the Great Ashwell Show Bake-Off in the WI tea tent.



The Great Ashwell Show Bake-off winner

Whilst we had plenty of entries in the Adult category it would have been nice to see more from the two under 18s categories (we only had four in total) – maybe next year! It was lovely to see the efforts of all the wonderful bakers with their different styles and flavours - from tiered cakes to cupcakes from chocolate to carrot cake.

Our thanks to the judges Geraldine Watling and Clive Day of Days for their efforts in choosing the winners.

11 years and under:

Star baker – Freya Kristensen

2nd place – Charlotte Wright

3rd place – Clemmie Redfern

12-18 Years:

Star Baker – Emma Targett

Adults, 19 years plus:

Star Baker – Dawn Dean

2nd place – Sharon Dawson

3rd place – Suzanne Elliott

Congratulations to the winners and all those that took part. Thanks as well to Days Bakery who sponsored the prizes.

Our thanks also go to everyone else that kindly donated cakes for sale in the WI tea tent and to the numerous people that gave of their time setting up the tent, serving cakes and drinks, clearing tables, taking the money, and clearing up at the end of the day. None of it would be possible without you.

Sheila Hogan

Teresa King, and

Karen Rogers

23rd Ashwell Book Weekend

7-8 October



Searching for a riveting read

2023 saw another bumper year for books with an amazing collection of fiction, non-fiction, and children's books – something for everyone. With over 500 visitors the church was buzzing and there was plenty of browsing and buying over the two days as well as enjoying tea, coffee, and delicious homemade cakes.

A lot of hard work goes into the event, from advertising, and putting posters up, to posting on Facebook, and then with setting up, sorting, and pricing all the books. All of which is time consuming but made easier by the volunteers who give of their time and energy throughout the week as well as at the weekend baking cakes, taking money, serving refreshments, and clearing up at the end. It goes without saying that we are very grateful to all the wonderful volunteers without whom the whole event would not have been possible.

The success of the Book Weekend is down to those many volunteers and our thanks to you all for your efforts. The event was a great success and we raised over £4,848.00 for the Church Restoration Fund.

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 charity Comfort Cases, which helps children

going into emergency or foster care, as well as to the Ashwell Book Swap in the Parish Room. We then used an online marketplace to sell some of the leftover stock which helped increase the money raised – hence the magnificent total.

The company Book Rescuers have now collected the rest and will sell these on so that they can enjoy a new lease of life as well as raise funds for their charity partners, The Rainbow Centre, which supports children in southwestern Sri Lanka, and the Doorstep Library, which is dedicated to bringing the gift of books and the joy of reading into the homes of children across London who need support.

This all means that the books that were donated for the sale will go to help many other charities as well as St Mary's.

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 24th Ashwell Book Weekend will be held on Saturday and Sunday 5-6 October 2024. Please make a note in your diary and start saving those books!

Karen Rogers

☎ 743338, and

Teresa King

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Makers Market

16 November

On the evening of Thursday 16 November the Bushel and Strike hosted the third Ashwell Makers Market. A fantastic variety of local artisan businesses from Ashwell and surrounding areas participated. Organised by Ashwell residents, printmaker Kate Heiss and ceramicist Alice Sparkes (Little Shop of Pots), the evening saw lots of visitors kick-starting their Christmas shopping. There was a lovely atmosphere with festive music and people meeting friends to sip and shop their way around the room.

There were many fabulous products to purchase. These included homemade plant medicines created from locally foraged plants, handmade ceramics, wood turned pens, dried floral decorations, delicious personalised biscuits, stunning silver jewellery, adorable handmade kids clothing, amazing textiles and original limited edition prints and stationery. There really was something for everyone.

A raffle was held during the evening to raise money for the JustGiving page of Vicki Breen, the landlady, whose granddaughter is undergoing treatment at Addenbrooke's for leukaemia. Nearly £100 was donated. One visitor said, "It is such a lovely event that always provides the opportunity for the village to see the wealth of local creative talent on our doorstep."

Thank you to everyone who attended. The Ashwell Makers Market is a great way to show support to all of these wonderful local businesses. Thank you also to Ashwell based graphic designer Michelle Bannister for the poster artwork. If you would like to be considered for future events please get in touch with:

✉ ashwellmakersmarket@gmail.com

St Mary's Christmas Fair

2 December

Saturday 2 December dawned crisp and very cold, but spirits were lifted with Christmas cheer at the Christmas Fair. Stalls, activities, refreshments, and carols filled the church with hopefully something for everyone. The raffle and tombola stalls were popular, as was a new venture, the Skills Stall, where you could try lots of different challenges like a buzzy wire, or how many marbles you could scoop into a flowerpot. There were lots of things for younger people to have a go at too, including a bumper toy tombola.

The choir sang, you could have a hot mulled wine or a bacon roll and complete all of your Christmas shopping from the wonderful trade and craft stalls. We were pleased to offer an opportunity for village charity groups like Diapalante and Ashwell Pre-School to run a stall.

Thank you to everyone who took part, helped, or donated items for the Fair. We raised at least £2,500 at the time of writing. These funds will help St Mary's in lots of different ways.

Sarah Talks

CHRIS MORTON





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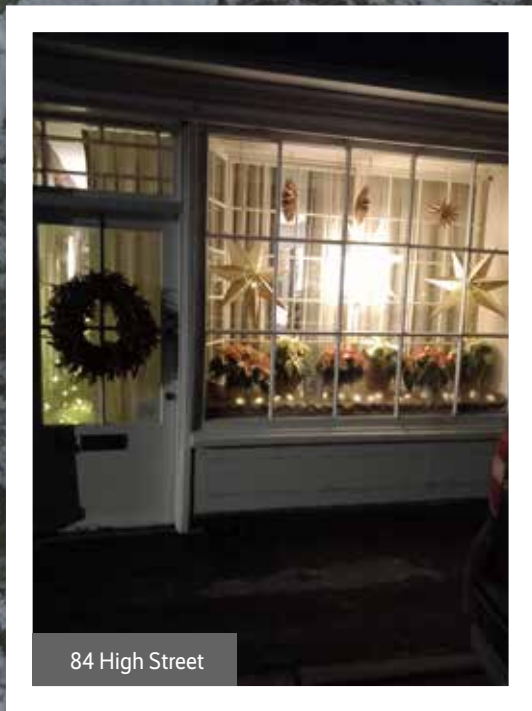
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The Rectory

Jonathan Crump retired in 2023: just one of Ashwell's community to have made a change in their lives.

Ashwell people



Madeleine Legg and David Short



In October 2023, longstanding residents Madeleine Legg and David Short upped sticks and moved to Dorchester in Dorset. Many know them well through their active involvement in village affairs over several decades.

Those that do not know them so well – and maybe those that do – may be interested to hear something of their backgrounds and contribution to the life of Ashwell.

Madeleine

Madeleine, then a consultant in the charity sector, came to Ashwell in 1988 initially moving into one of the terraced houses in Back Street and later moving to Silver Street and then 59 High Street. She took an immediate liking to our friendly, self-contained community with its many clubs and societies and soon got involved in Ashwell life by joining the local history research group. It was also near her mother who lived in Guilden Morden.

In 1994 Madeleine started the long process of training as a psychotherapist: a process that was to take seven years as studying had to be done whilst still working. After graduation, she moved into the mental health sector where she managed a counselling centre in Stevenage, training and supervising the work of counsellors. Her career then moved to the NHS and private practice and she retired in 2018. Since retirement Madeleine had more time to devote to her hobbies of weaving, spinning and dyeing that had started as a result of keeping rare breed sheep with

David. She became an active member of the Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers in Letchworth and has now joined a Guild in Dorset.

Madeleine has two sons; one who lives in Duluth, Minnesota and one who lives in Poundbury, Dorset.

David

For much of his time in Ashwell, David's story was closely connected with the Field Study Centre on the old Merchant Taylors' School site. The building is still there but the centre has closed.

David had been teaching at Hadam Hall School when, in 1975, he was appointed Advisory Teacher for Environmental Education based at the Ashwell Field Studies Centre, one of eight in Hertfordshire. The intention was for David to strengthen the historical aspect of environmental studies teaching in the county. When David moved to Ashwell he was in charge of the Centre, which included being the village librarian.

A year after arriving in Ashwell David organised the centenary celebration of the Victorian classroom opening in the village, which was held at the centre. This included a full dress re-enactment of the day the Merchant Taylors came to Ashwell to open the classroom. It needed the co-operation of many Ashwell organisations.

In 1981 there was another notable anniversary: the tercentenary of the building of the school. This time a *son et lumiere*, written by David, was held in the garden of the School House. The day was not kind. It rained all day and evening. Those watching sat in the pouring rain. Amazingly no one left before the end!

In 1991 Hertfordshire County Council wanted to close down the Field Studies Centre. David's response was to take it over and run it as his own business, which he did for the next ten years until the Merchant Taylors' Company decided to sell the site for private housing and put the proceeds into the Henry Colbron Trust.

Following that, David taught at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford, the British Library, the Workers Education Association, the University of the Third Age and Cambridge, Brunel and Hertfordshire Universities.

David has three daughters, Claire, Alix (the juggler who performed at their farewell concert) and Hanna. Hanna is a born Ashwellian but now lives in London. Claire and Alix both live in France.

Sheep

Sheep brought Madeleine and David together. She met him via her involvement in the History Research Group. One evening she asked David if he wanted help with the sheep he was taking to a show the following weekend. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ashwell people

When David moved to Ashwell in 1975 the family brought with them a cat, two rabbits and two donkeys. Two years later he bought his first two sheep. The focus was on rare breeds, initially the black, multi-horned Hebrideans. When in 1994 Madeleine got involved she added Manx Loaghtons to the flock and, a couple of years later, Portlands. The Portlands had two attractions: being white, their wool could be dyed, and Madeleine had lived on the Isle of Portland.

At one stage they owned 200 animals. They were never trouble free. One day a ram, called Zeus, escaped and was found by the police in Biggleswade. They called David and Madeleine who went and caught him outside Biggleswade station. He was returned to another field in Ashwell. Unfortunately the following night he managed to escape again but this time went into a neighbouring field full of ewes. This upset the resident ram who promptly killed him.

For Madeleine, sheep were an introduction to a world she had never expected to see. She became a member of the Weavers, Spinners and Dyers Guild and regularly gave demonstrations at the Museum and shows.

From 2019 Madeleine and David wound down their flock because the owner of the field they used – Townsend Meadow – had decided to sell for housing development.

... and Other Pursuits

Both Madeleine and David were members of the Ashwell Horticultural Society, with Madeleine being a committee member. This reflected their interests, as did tending a half plot at the Foresters allotments and a full one at Small Gains. The chickens in their back garden were good for three eggs a day.

Their collie dogs were a popular fixture in the village. They were not pets as they had to earn their living by helping to move sheep.

The open lambing days which David and Madeleine held each year gave people in Ashwell the opportunity to see the new lambs and, if lucky, to see one being born.

The Parish Council

As many know, Madeleine and David were long term members of the parish council. David did a stint from 1995 to 2011 and Madeleine from 2007 to 2011. Both joined again in 2014 and stayed until 2019.

Whether in the role of councillor or parishioner, Madeleine and David have made significant contributions to village projects. Examples include the 'think tank' running from 1995 to 2000 which asked the question, "What do you want to see in Ashwell in the next 20 years?" and covered topics such as planning, business, environment and sport.

Out of that came the *2000 Village Design Statement*, aspects of which are in the current Neighbourhood Plan and therefore have weight in planning decisions now. Regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, both David and Madeleine made significant contributions to shaping and delivering it through its various, and complicated stages. This involvement reflected their interest in the village and a desire to retain its unique character. David also served as Chair of the Parish Council and a parish council nominee governor of Ashwell School for ten years.

Being a parish councillor brought extra responsibilities for both. Madeleine had a long association with Moss Cottages starting in 2007, when she was the parish council nominee on the management board. She stayed on beyond her term on the council, succeeding Andrew Gillborn as chair of the trust.

Outside the village David was a committee member of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History for over 40 years and served as Chair and President of the association. He was also on the Council of the British Association for Local History for 20 years during which time he ran various projects for it.

Ashwell Yearbook

A bit of history: Gurney Shepherd started the Yearbook in 1988 as a way of making the annual parish meeting shorter. He originally intended it to be a compendium of reports from clubs and societies so that they did not have to be presented at the meeting. The following year Norman Gurney took on the task of editing the Yearbook. When he died suddenly in 2004 David took over as chair of the editorial committee from then to 2011, and after that from 2015 to 2019.

Moving to Dorset

Madeleine and David have family connections with Dorset. They have been frequent visitors to her son's beach hut on Portland.

These connections - and looking to the future when they might need support - prompted the move to Poundbury in Dorchester. Both have been impressed with the friendliness of people in Dorset.

However, Ashwell will always be special to them.

As told to: **Norton Mahy**

Rosemary and Mike Pearch

As Rosemary Pearch steps down from her role on the Village Hall Committee, we look back on her and her husband Mike's involvement in the Village Hall over the last 45 years.

Rosemary said, "At the end of 1978, my husband,

Mike, and I moved to Ashwell, and my first involvement with the Hall was as a playgroup mum when our son, Ben, started there. He was followed by Eleanor then Douglas. I did a stint on the Playgroup Committee and Mike was Village Hall Chairman for a while. We both took part in fundraising activities, helping to organise parties and making cakes, quiches and salads. During this period I also gained some accountancy qualifications, which proved to be very useful later.

Having moved away for work, we came back to Ashwell in 2002, by which time I had returned to work as an IT contractor. This usually required me to work away from home. When the Hall Committee was searching for someone to look after bookings, I was able to take this on, as I could handle the work remotely, and eventually worked with the treasurer to set up a logical system of charges.



A few years later there were vacancies for a treasurer and a secretary, so Mike and I took over the treasurer's tasks, and I acted as secretary. I was able to set up a system to keep track of bookings, and ultimately adapt it to automate part of the invoicing process. Users started booking the Village Hall on a more regular basis, at one time there were up to 17 regular users! The hall was also booked, mainly by Ashwell residents, for parties and celebrations.



When Sam Wallace retired as chairman after 30 years, Mike took over as chairman for 2 years. We organised maintenance and upgrade work during that period.

With the cooperation of users we were able to open the hall throughout the Covid pandemic, and keep the hall on a sound financial footing. Andy Dolby then took over as chairman. We were very happy to hand over the chairman's role and the maintenance work to Andy Dolby and Alan Munns.

We have enjoyed our work at the hall, giving us contact with the village community, and we are now very pleased to pass the treasurer role to Hannah Doran, booking secretary role to Paula Doran and the secretary role to Alan Munns, who we are sure, will all do excellent jobs."

Many thanks to Rosemary and Mike Pearch for all of their involvement in the Village Hall over the last 45 years.

As told to: **Tracy Young**

Patrick and Annette Forbes



We had spent some six months looking at wrecks and ruins across North Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. One Saturday we were driving through Ashwell from Lilley when we saw 18 Francis Road, Hinxworth advertised in Country Properties. We could just afford it and within ten minutes of seeing it, we had bought it. Maybe it was one of our better decisions!

In no time at all, I was involved in St Nicholas' Church where there was a vacancy. I helped out as best I could in the villages during vacancies and found that, having taken early retirement due to ill health, genuine retirement receded further and further into the future.

Annette and I became fully involved in village activities, the Arts Society, a house group called Mustard Seed and the beginning of Village Voice for Hinxworth, Newnham and Edworth. Iain Bain, married to my cousin Sue, helped design the

masthead and advised on layout. Both Mustard Seed and Village Voice started in October 2001.

I remained involved with radio work, making some 700 half hour programmes for Premier Radio and some Pauses for Thought for insomniacs and shift workers on Radio Two. Whilst at Premier, I wrote and recorded five thoughts for the day each week for some ten years. I also volunteered at Lister Hospital for almost 14 years working with a group of early onset dementia patients, and for ten years, at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford working in the radio room there.

While the Hinxworth Village Hall was being improved, we offered to store the hall chairs in the church, shifting the rotting pews to Edworth for storage. We discovered the joy of flexible seating in St Nicholas' and had a hand in replacing the pews with American oak pews which didn't have to be bolted to the floor and made configuring the space for concerts quite simple.

With Simon Marlow, I worked on the plan to have allotments off Francis Road and fondly remember my last year lying under our blackcurrant bushes picking a bumper harvest.

The Forbes family motto is 'Grace me guide' to which I might add, "we did what we could." Now we have moved to 42 Paddock Close, Clapham, Bedford MK41 6BD, we are having another go at retirement. We look back on our 25 years in Hinxworth and the benefice with thanks for the love, kindness and friendship shown to us by so many. Do come and see us if you can. Our phone number is 01234 417220.

Patrick Forbes

Crumps

Farewell to Jonathan Crump

In the heart of our village, a cherished institution has experienced a notable transformation after more than a century of tradition. Jonathan Crump, the latest in a line of esteemed butchers, has decided to hang up his apron and retire, signifying the end of an era for Crumps Butchers. However, the legacy of Crumps will continue under new ownership, ensuring that the familiar name and various traditions remain a part of our community's culinary landscape.

The legacy of Crumps traces back to 1920 when Mark Crump, Jonathan's grandfather, assumed proprietorship of the shop which had served as the village butcher since 1870. In 1954, Jonathan's father, Phil, assumed control of the business and in partnership with his wife, Geraldine - who also hails from a family of butchers - managed the shop. The adjacent property to the shop has been the home where generations of Crumps lived and for some, were born (Jonathan and his father were born in the bedroom

above the shop nearly 34 years apart to the day).

Jonathan's journey into the family business took a unique route. Initially an engineering graduate, Jonathan subsequently worked in various related roles, including at a car radio company and an MG restoration company. However, the allure of the family trade eventually beckoned him back, and in 1988, he joined his brother, David, in running Crumps. The family have always ensured community access to the finest local products. Exploring beyond the typical local avenues, Jonathan and his wife, Paula, cultivated an olive grove in Lunigiana, Italy, with olives processed into oil locally and sold in the shop. Jonathan holds the aspiration that the commitment to local and personalised sourcing will persist under the new ownership of Lewis Watson.

As Jonathan stepped into a well-deserved retirement, his colleagues threw a surprise retirement party. Jonathan was delighted to be reunited with his steak knife and sharpening steel; family heirlooms which he had worryingly noted to have gone missing. The butcher's tools, now presented in a fine frame crossed over one another like two swords, is a most fitting gift to honour Jonathan's skills in leadership and his tremendous merit to the industry.

Jonathan has expressed his mixed feelings about stepping away from the shop. He already misses the camaraderie with colleagues and customers but looks forward to indulging in his passion for motorcars and plans to spend more time in Italy with Paula. As we welcome Lewis Watson as the new owner of Crumps, the village acknowledges the tremendous contribution the Crump family have made to our community. As he steers toward retirement's open road, we bid farewell to Jonathan, a truly extraordinary butcher. May the road ahead be filled with rest and laughter, with hopes for pit stops at our charming village butcher along the way!

Talking with Lewis Watson, the new owner of Crumps

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background in the butchery business?

"I am Lewis Watson, 33 years old, I've been in this business since I was 16 years old. I've always wanted to do something creative and when I came to Crumps in 2019, I was given the creative freedom I obviously needed. I was very fortunate that Jonathan trusted me to make new products and flavours and it was probably the first time that I actually felt like I really enjoyed what I did."

Transitioning from the previous manager, how do you plan to maintain the traditions of the shop that our community values?

"Transitioning from Jonathan has been hard. I speak for everyone at Crumps when I say he is the best boss



anyone could ever wish for. I mean, who can say their boss took them away to Italy for the weekend and spoiled them rotten! He's a very tough act to follow.

Luckily for me, he only lives next door, so if I ever need any advice, he is never far away. As for traditions, I know every butcher says it, but provenance is absolutely key. We know where our meat comes from and we are known for great quality. I also think our little shop is quite a nice place to visit!"

In a time where the cost of living is gripping many people, how do you see Crumps being able to cater to those on budgets?

"In my head, when people think of Crumps, they think it's going to be expensive and sure, some of it is. However, there are lots of really cheap, old-fashioned cuts that are overlooked these days, and that people aren't familiar with. Breast of lamb, for example, is very cheap and it makes a fantastic slow roast. Chicken thighs are overlooked because they are dark meat and people seem to always go for the white meat of breast. Shin of beef packs so much flavour, you'll ask why you never tried it before. Folks have almost been conditioned to overlook these cuts because they don't see the value in them until they try it."

Can you share your vision for the future of Crumps in our village?

"Crumps is an Ashwell institution and I am absolutely thrilled to be a part of its history. I hope that I can continue to serve this wonderful little village until I can retire and pass it onto someone with as much passion as I do. I am genuinely humbled by everyone's trust in me. I will do my very best to keep the good ship Crumps sailing for years to come."

As told to: **Wendy Browne**



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John Mills' sculptures in Ashwell and London

With the sad passing of John Mills and his wife, Jo, in 2023, it seems the right time to say how lucky we are to have two of John Mills' wonderful sculptures in our churches.

The Risen Christ has been in St Mary's in Ashwell since 1993. This sculpture was commissioned from John by George Steeds who lived, with his wife, Marjorie, in Foresters' cottages from 1981. George was a server in the church, amongst other roles. He missed the presence of a cross on the altar table and so asked John to produce something which could be suspended above it. Although George watched John make the sculpture, he sadly died six weeks before it was finished. Marjorie presented the sculpture to the church in George's memory.

John made the cross from 'faux ivoire' to pay homage to the medieval ecclesiastical tradition of using ivory and alabaster. The figure sits within the open outline of a St Chad's style cross of polished brass and the artwork is suspended from the roof beams by wires.

At the time, John said, "I saw making this image as a challenge. Not only should it communicate to the congregation the image of Christ, but it should fit poignantly in an environment that, despite its medieval origins, seems to transcend time. The decision to suspend the sculpture above the altar was the result of considerable consultation with Patrick Bright, the Rector at the time, and with the subsequent serendipity of the sunlight from the west window highlighting the cross, this came to be seen as the correct choice."

If you go to St Nicholas' church in Hinxworth, you

will see their smaller version of *The Risen Christ*. This was the maquette of the Ashwell sculpture, ie John's preliminary model, which John himself presented to his local church in the early 1990s.

If you are in London, it's well worth going to see two of John's most famous sculptures. The Monument to the Women of World War II is a national war memorial situated on Whitehall next to the Cenotaph at the end of Downing Street. The sculpture represents the wartime contributions of over seven million women, including 650,000 who joined military services. It is a 7m tall hollow bronze resembling a coat rack. It represents Winston Churchill's call, "Let the women come forward", the idea being that women left their normal lives to fight for survival in any role necessary. John was himself a wartime evacuee when his mother joined the Fire Service.

The memorial was unveiled on 9 July 2005, two days after the 7/7 London bombings, by our late Queen as part of the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Baroness Betty Boothroyd, a personal friend of John, dedicated the memorial saying, "This monument is dedicated to all the women who served our country and to the cause of freedom, in uniform and on the home front. I hope that future generations who pass this way will ask themselves: 'what sort of women were they?' and look at our history for the answer."

Another of John's famous works is the National Firefighters Memorial which is located on the Jubilee Walkway to the south of St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. The statue, aptly named *Blitz*, depicts a fire officer and two firefighters on wartime active duty; one of them pointing their hose towards the dome of St Paul's Cathedral. The monument was originally the concept of Cyril Demarne OBE who was Jo's father and lived latterly in Hinxworth. Cyril had



been a firefighter in London during the Second World War and throughout the Blitz. The memorial was commissioned by the Firefighters Memorial Charitable Trust set up in 1990.

It was decided in 1998 to make the memorial a national monument that would commemorate not just the firefighters who died in World War II, but the lives of all firefighters throughout the UK who were killed in the line of duty. It was moved from its original site in Old Change Court, the plinth was elevated by a little over 1m, so that all the names of those killed in peacetime could be added. The Princess Royal, patron of the Firefighters Memorial Charitable Trust, attended a service and ceremony of

re-dedication on 16 September 2003. A total of 1,192 names were inscribed in bronze onto the memorial.

John Mills' work speaks volumes to a global audience. He loved his home in Hinxworth where he continued to work from his studio and his 'open' sculpture garden. Forever welcoming of young artists, fans and curious passers-by, John generously shared his work and utterly brilliant knowledge of not only sculpture, but painting and photography as well. A humble man, John was a huge inspiration to many past and present as well as being one of Britain's greatest living artists. We were so lucky to have John and Jo in our midst.

Margaret Budgen

Version of the Monument to the Women of World War II in Hinxworth



Volunteers scything at the Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve.

Charity groups





'Cheque' representing AFAC's achievements

Ashwell's Fight Against Cancer

(AFAC)

2023 saw Ashwell's Fight Against Cancer coming to the end of its fundraising life. The climax came in March when we were entertained by past and present members of The Royal Opera House Chorus, Covent Garden with an evening of opera and oratorio. What a fantastic musical event this was and what a depth of experience the performers brought to St Mary's. It was a truly uplifting performance and a fantastic finale with which to commence the winding down of our AFAC years.

The proceeds from this, £2,550, meant that we had donated to Addenbrooke's Hospital a total of £50,100 for the research and clinical care of cancers suffered by family and friends of Ashwell residents. I felt that a reasonable target had been achieved and that it was an appropriate time to finish AFAC.

AFAC raised amounts for the following:

- Oncology £7,950
- Neurosciences (brain tumours/trauma) £10,500
- Upper GI Tract (oesophagus) £5,900
- Haematology (lymphoma) £4,000
- HPB (bowel, liver, colorectal, pancreatic cancers) £14,900
- Lung £2,500, and

ACT on Cancer Campaign £4,350

Chris and I were invited to attend the 75th Anniversary of the NHS Addenbrooke's Fundraisers Thank You event on 4 July when a 'cheque' was made out for £50,100.00 so that I could show what has been achieved.

We were also invited in June to attend a lecture on the new cancer research hospital that will be situated on the campus alongside Papworth and the new Astra Zeneca research building. This will be cutting edge and from the artist's impression of how the wards and treatment centres will be designed, it will make such a difference to the patients' and families experiences at such a difficult time.

The end of the year saw £297.50 still in the account with sales of our Christmas Cards yet to be added. If these cards have raised a sufficient amount then £500 will be donated to the Garden House Hospice and the account closed.

I thank all those people who have assisted and supported AFAC over the years and for everything you have done to help AFAC raise the wonderful amount of £50,100, especially in these challenging and difficult times. I can assure you that the annual amounts raised have always gone to the research and clinical care of the chosen cancer of that year and it is good to know that your help has, indeed, made a difference.

Christine Scholfield

✉ christinescholfield@hotmail.com



Master P meeting Ashwell residents

Diapalante

Farewell to 2023



2023 has been a year of headlines – politics, wars and climate change – so many things that seem beyond our control.

In Ashwell things have been a little calmer and for Diapalante it has been a good year. Master P (Mamadou Kane), who runs the Diapalante Community Education Centre, was lucky enough to get a visa to visit England for our daughter Caroline's wedding. He visited Ashwell while he was here and was delighted to have the opportunity to meet some of the many people who have supported the centre's work over the years.

He also met a 'lovely lady' in the church, who showed him around the church and explained its role in village life. Master P is a Muslim and had never visited a church before. While there he picked up some prayer cards which he took back to Senegal. He was most interested in these as he felt the prayers were as appropriate to him and people in Senegal as they were to us here in Ashwell. He has since used them as the basis of several English lessons showing that what joins humanity is far greater than the obvious and much discussed differences that divide us.

Our fundraising appeals and events both online and in the village have been well supported. The garden party was a lovely day again despite an appalling weather forecast and after early rain the sun shone on our Pimm's and pavlova. Thank you to everyone for your support which has enabled Diapalante to help at least another 500 people striving to gain the education needed to help them, and their families, secure a better future.

Attending an annual conference of the British and Foreign Schools Society recently, I was surprised to

hear Diapalante singled out and praised for the Centre's literacy work with the Talibes (street connected children) in Kaolack, Senegal. It was encouraging to hear the results of our work being acknowledged. But it is not just our work - it wouldn't be possible without the funding and support we receive, much of which comes from Ashwell.



Making re-useable period pads

Last Christmas, 2022, we were appealing for your old socks (still being collected) to convert the legs into pouches for sanitary pads. This Christmas, as I write, the first overlocking sewing machine is due to arrive at the Centre and will improve the quality and speed of production of re-usable period products for some of the many girls who have to manage with improvised protection. The mere existence of this project has created open discussions of an otherwise taboo subject, around the managing of periods and the inconveniences and problems that can come with them.

After those few glimpses of 2023 it's time say a last thank you and to turn to 2024. Who knows what that holds in store for us all but we hope for your continued support in the coming year. Thank You,

Liz Chandler
Diapalante
☎ 743091



Long service presentation to Fred Bryant and Robert Sheldrick

Royal British Legion

Ashwell & District Branch

Chairman's Report 2022/2023



Following our busy but enjoyable centenary year, we began our new year of activities with the Poppy Appeal at collection points at various places on Saturday mornings before Remembrance Sunday.

The Remembrance Sunday service at the URC was led by Rev'd Jim Dagleish and was followed by the Act of Remembrance at the village war memorial led by Rev'd Chris Campbell. It was really good to see so many people gathered for both the chapel service and the Act of Remembrance, especially our uniformed organisations and St Mary's Church Choir. It was the first time we were able to use the newly created entrance to the Rec' and it seemed to work well. The lack of police presence did not cause a problem and it all seemed to run smoothly. The lack of a PA system meant that some could not hear but we hope that a system will be in place this year. The village was very well represented and wreaths were laid to honour the sacrifice made by many, often young, men from the village.

Since Hertfordshire Highways restructured the junction we have a wider paved area in front of the memorial. However, this is not large enough to hold the numbers attending so it looks as though we will continue to gather at the back of the memorial which appears to work well.

The work of the committee continued throughout the year – meetings were held on four occasions, ending with the AGM. Various fundraising events were also arranged throughout the year. They were all well attended and raised money to go towards the Poppy Appeal. They included the Remembrance Lunch at the Bushel and Strike, two coffee mornings in the

Parish Room and a pub game evening at the Bushel and Strike.

It was a particular pleasure to welcome the County Chairman to the committee meeting on 17 July and it was a greater pleasure to ask him to present Branch Certificates to Fred Bryant and Robert Sheldrick for their long service to the branch.

My thanks to all members of the Branch Committee 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. My special thanks to our officers: our Treasurer Rita Lewis, our Poppy Appeal Organiser Jo Huggins and our Vice Chairman and Membership Officer Andrew Gillborn for their unstinting commitment in supporting the work of our branch. Also thanks to Katie Cripps who took on the role of Branch Secretary and to Chris Pack who raises the Union Flag when needed. Thank you too to Craig Langford who looks after the war memorial and always makes sure that the grass is cut and plants are kept fresh and beautiful – a fitting tribute to all we remember. Finally, a huge thank you to those who volunteer each year to collect for the Poppy Appeal at various points in the village. We welcome new volunteers and if you would like to help please get in touch.

As this report was being written we heard the very sad news that our president, Mrs Edna Howes died following a short stay in hospital. As a branch we pay tribute to her involvement and commitment, and for the loyalty and dedication she showed as our Branch President for several years.

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

Rev'd Canon Lindsay Dew
Chairman

Membership enquiries:
secretary.trblashwell@gmail.com



Hedge laying class for beginners

Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve



Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust

Hopefully, many people noticed the large numbers of red admiral butterflies that arrived during the summer of 2023, most of them flying in from the continent. They were joined by other late summer butterflies such as small

tortoises and painted ladies, but not in such large numbers. This was a welcome change from 2022 when most butterflies did not appear following the drought.

Higher rainfall made the grass grow so most of the reserve 'meadow' areas were very long during the summer before they received their cut on 30 August. But before this, there were hundreds of pyramidal orchids, lots of yellow rattle, chalk knapweed, agrimony, tufted vetch, field scabious and other chalk plants to provide colour for human eyes and nectar and pollen for insects, including the butterflies.

Work parties were held monthly between January and April, then again from September to December. About seven volunteers help each month and are all now becoming very proficient with scythes, heavy duty grass rakes, bowsaws and loppers. Our job is to

cut and rake off the steeper banks or meadow areas that the tractor cannot reach. We also gave the Quarry Springs reserve a bit of a blitz in March, clearing another bucket load of ancient broken glass and old rusty metal from the stream and cutting back the path-side vegetation. The April work party almost always involves repairs and maintenance of steps, filling in holes and/or replacing wooden edges.

It is likely that the occasional work party will be held during the summer in 2024 in order to cut the paths.

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

Don't forget that, although the nature reserve is private land, visitors are welcome there. A free visitor's permit lasts a year and allows you to go for a walk around at any time.

Chris James

56 Back Street, Ashwell

☎ 742684

✉ chrisjames56@btinternet.com



Marbled white butterfly nectaring on scabious



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Ashwell Mummers

After 2 years of being unable to perform due to Covid, Ashwell Mummers finally restarted our famous Christmas play (starring *THE DRAGON*) in January 2023. We toured all three Ashwell pubs plus Wolverley House and the Waggon & Horses in Steeple Morden, accompanied by the Stevenage Sword Dancers. Our first ever Mummers tour was accompanied by the sword dancers and, sadly, this year was their last ever dance as they were unable to recruit during Covid and no longer have enough dancers to perform as a team. A number of older dancers came out to watch in some of the pubs, and this meant that we had good audiences all round.

We collected £326 during the tour, and a special donation of £82 meant that we were able to contribute £408 to Helping Herts Homeless, the charity we have supported over the last 20 years. Over the years, our contribution to them has amounted to over £5,000 thanks to the generosity of people in Ashwell.

As I write, preparations are in place for our next Christmas play, with a full cast and all in fine fettle. Sadly, the Bushel and Strike won't be available in January 2024 but we are hoping that by the time you read this it will be open again.

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

Ashwell Charity Christmas Card Shop

The Charity Christmas Card Shop opened once again for Christmas 2023. Again, it was a difficult year financially for people and card sales weren't helped by the increase in postal charges. However, a total of 13 charities were represented. Unfortunately, Oxfam cards were not available this year, due to an administrative error, but we expect to have them again in 2024. The local Save The Children group has also disbanded so both of our large development charities were not represented.

The shop was well supported in Ashwell and also with customers from surrounding villages along with a small 'passing trade'. This year our sales totalled over £2,500 again, holding up well and increasing slightly

from last year (by £25). The range of cards on offer remains very wide, with almost 200 designs from the 13 charities.

During the lifetime of the shop, now well over 20 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 has begun to bounce back to pre-Covid times, and it is beginning to be a social hub in the village again. We feel that we are doing our bit to help you support good causes and, by sending the cards to your friends and family, continuing 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 an increasing 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, please phone Ian before September!

We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2024.

Ian Chandler
☎ 743091



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Ashwell Horticultural Society's plot at the Foresters Allotments.

Clubs and societies



Horticultural Society Annual Show in St Mary's Church



Ashwell Horticultural Society

2023 proved to be another busy and fruitful year for the society.

Throughout 2023, at our monthly meetings, we enjoyed a selection of talks from local speakers, and others from further afield. We covered a range of topics from thatching and game keeping to bird photography, concluding the year with our December meeting when Sam Bilton, author and historian, gave a fascinating report about the history of the introduction and development of growing and cooking with English saffron. We were treated to saffron gingerbread and buns.

We had a field visit to the source of the River Ivel in Baldock, and plan to continue the journey next May, when we will visit the next stretch of the river.

Our open gardens series continued with three of our members welcoming us into their gardens, Louise Faure Walker in April, and Bridget Long and Jen Clarke in June. Three very different but interesting and beautiful gardens.

We had a great trip to Hyde Hall RHS Gardens, on a glorious day in June. The journey home proved to be very difficult with major traffic jams, but our driver from Richmonds was amazing, keeping us informed and shifting bollards along the way to make space for the emergency vehicles.

We held our Spring and annual shows on the first Saturdays of April and September respectively, and at both we 'showed' bountiful displays of produce from our gardens.

The allotment continues to be productive, and the team, led admirably by Tony Francis, continues to supply events and the food pantry with a range of fruit and vegetables. Our fund-raising teas in the

summer enabled us to twin the allotment with a garden in Africa – our presentation at the AGM focused on the project, and our meal beforehand reflected tastes of Africa, featuring goat casserole, twinned with produce from our allotment. When the church held a soup lunch in aid of the victims of the Gaza/Israel situation, we were able to supply lots of the vegetables for the soups from the allotment.

We currently have a record membership, with at least 15 new members this year – we hope they have felt welcomed and enjoy the range of activities we provide throughout the year.

Our committee members work hard to 'keep the show on the road' and I want to thank each of them for their commitment and dedication to the society, attending planning meetings, working behind the scenes. Likewise, the members who support and encourage us with positive comments and friendship. We look forward to 2024 and all that we can achieve together.

Margaret Gilliam

Chair

☎ 742040



The Autumn Horticultural Show sets a high standard

Jazz Club at the URC



Ashwell Jazz Appreciation Club

For the Ashwell jazz group, 2022-23 was another interesting and successful year. It was also a year of change. The group, established by David Short in 2007, had met every second Thursday in the month at his home. David and Madeleine sadly moved to Dorset at the beginning of October and the group was forced to locate to a new home. We now meet on the second Thursday of each month at the URC Hall. Meanwhile we wish David and Madeleine success and happiness in their new home.

The past year has been a good one with individual members producing hour long CDs of their favourite music on a theme, subject or musician. After a break other members contribute songs or tunes which often follow the same theme or sometimes music they just think others would enjoy. In 2023 members presented programmes on such subjects as: 'Trad Jazz', 'Laughter and Tears', 'Eastern Delights', 'European Jazz' and 'Artistry in Rhythm'. We were also joined for our December meeting by the well-known jazz musician Marco Marconi who entertained the group on piano with jazz of different styles and from various periods. In June we met for an enjoyable summer barbecue on an evening of beautiful weather.

If you enjoy jazz or would like to know more about the music or understand the very wide styles of music the term covers then we would be very pleased to welcome you on the second Thursday of the month. We meet in the URC hall at 7.30pm. Please bring your own refreshments

If you would like more information contact:

Clive Godfrey
☎ 742383

Tony Coe
✉ tonycoe@talktalk.net

Melanie Dawson-Dew
✉ melaniedawson@btinternet

Mid Life Crisis Car Club (MLCCC)



www.midlife-crisis.org.uk

The MLCCC entered its 31st year of operation with its AGM, held at the Bushel and Strike, where we were able to introduce two new committee members, David Ward and Paul Miller. Pub runs with lunch attached always go

down well and the first of the year was held on 'Drive it Day' at the Old Ferry Boat Inn at Holywell near St Ives.

This was followed up by a private visit to Deene Park, the home of the Brudenell family who appear to have been a very lively lot. Amongst their activities were the theft of the contents of their library by Cromwell's troops, purchase of half of Yorkshire, involvement in the Gunpowder Plot and last but not least, the Charge of the Light Brigade. After the failure of the charge, the leader, family member Lord Cardigan, apparently retired to the comfort of his launch which was moored in the nearby bay. As a bizarre memento the tail of his horse hangs in one of the galleries.

MLCCC at Deene Park



As we are a car club, we attended several car club gatherings among which were events at Kimbolton, Pirton and Barrington. The Kimbolton show has grown from a country show with a few cars to a car show with a country fair attached but a good day out nevertheless. The nice thing about these shows is that it brings out some really interesting cars and motorbikes which are not seen in day to day

motoring.

A further lunch run was organised by Colin Eades which took in some very pleasant Bedfordshire countryside. Amongst the surprises en route was a short diversion to the 'Sharpenhoe Clappers' viewpoint which is well worth a look. Lunch was taken at the Flying Horse at Clophill.

The annual dinner was held once again at the Bushel and Strike and we were entertained by the second half of Hugh Chamberlain's tales of competing in, and winning, the world championship for group C2 sports-racing cars. As an aside Hugh mentioned that he had read in a recent book that his team had been involved in a scam that he never knew about. Looking at a synopsis of the book on line it appears he wasn't alone!

The year came to an end with the traditional Decoke Ramble organised by David McKee and John Wilkinson. The route traversed the perimeter of Wimpole Hall Park and the slightly weary ramblers were then able to relax with a very pleasant lunch at the Pig and Abbott in Abington Piggotts.

As we move in to our 32nd year we are always looking for new members so if you have an 'interesting' car then please do get in touch and join us for some socialising.

Chris Scholfield

✉ chrisscholfield@aol.com

Ashwell's Big Sing



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

repertoire, from musicals to pop and rock classics. We also do exercises to help develop your singing voice.

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

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

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

Liz Townsend

Choir Leader

✉ ashwellsbigsing@gmail.com

☎ 07753 754 452



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The Childrens' Workshop: Much Ado About Murder

Ashwell Theatre Club



The theme for this year was diversity in creativity. We attempted to produce a variety of performances that encouraged both old and new, young and old members of the community to get involved.

Jack and the Beanstalk pantomime, January 2023



Directed by Paula Merrell and starring a large cast of Ashwellians, the January pantomime was a huge success. Despite early challenges casting the back end of the cow (we got there in the end), the resulting panto was one of the most successful ever, selling out almost every night. The costumes, sets, props, makeup, singing and acting were outstanding and, as usual, the panto enabled multiple generations and families to participate together.

Scenes from classic English comedy, May 2023

Exhausted and yet exhilarated from the mammoth panto effort, when 'Ashwell at Home' asked us to provide entertainment in the URC, we answered with a set of classic comedy scenes that were lightly rehearsed and lightly propped, taking the drama out

of drama. The resulting production was well received by all, with attendees enjoying the lovely setting and the cast enjoying the lack of memorisation required.

We loved the fact that by allowing scripts on set, we could be more inclusive to all thespians regardless of their ability to memorise. It was a revelation that led to more 'read-plays' such as *the Spirit of Christmas* in December, again at the URC, and the one act play, *Murder at Ashwell*, performed at our summer social.



Classic English comedy at the URC

Murder at Ashwell / Summer Social, August 2023

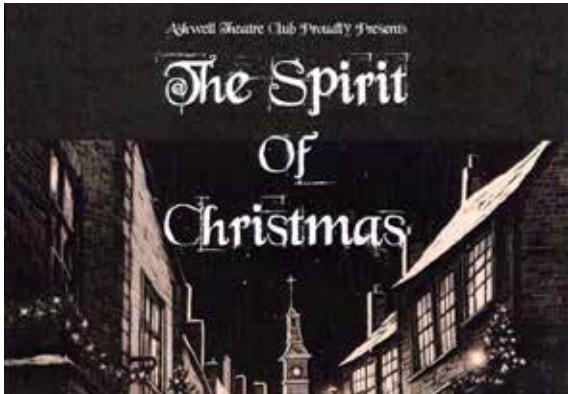
The summer social, once again held in the Robertshaw's lovely garden was a day of great weather, burgers, salads and a one act 'read-play' that was hugely entertaining. The *Murder at Ashwell* starred some lesser seen members of the ATC, and the sun shone as brightly as the actors.

Children's production: Much Ado About Murder, November 2023

Jo and David Rance reprised their very popular children's workshops in the Autumn, culminating in a fabulous play *Much Ado about Murder*. Over a dozen children acted in a very funny 'whodunnit', a performance enjoyed immensely by their families and friends. At the end many of the children were asking, "What's next?" energising the next generation of Ashwell thespians faster than a Mars bar.

Spirit of Christmas – December 2023

Directed by Sally Fletcher, this series of Christmas vignettes followed a historical path, and was performed, after mince pies and mulled wine, at the URC. This sold-out, low cost production (tickets were kept at only £5) enabled a variety of actors and musicians to get us into a festive mood in a lovely and unique location.



Dedication

The ATC was saddened by the sudden loss of one of our long-time and very active members, David Collinson, in late 2023. David, a fiercely intelligent man who learnt his lines at an astonishing speed, starred in many of our productions and was always happy to lend a voice, a hand, or an ear whenever needed. He will be sorely missed by us all.



David Collinson

An AGM to remember

Ashwell Theatre Club paid a very special tribute to Robin Lipscombe at their recent AGM on Thursday 14 September 2023.

Robin was instrumental in reforming the ATC back in April 1976 after the former club had disbanded in the

1950s. Since the late 1970s right up until 2021, Robin was directing, producing, and appearing in productions for the club.

Fellow Club member, Christine Scholfield, gave a wonderfully witty, poignant and heartfelt speech about Robin. She talked about the many roles he had played over the years from murder victim through to many a pantomime dame. He has also been a regular Director of both comedy, drama and pathos. His various productions have included *Blythe Spirit*, *Lest We Forget*, and a pantomime written by David Baddiel!

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

Thank you to Robin for everything he has done for ATC.



Robin Lipscombe

Get involved

The ATC serves as a platform to enable our members to express their unique creative talents. We are always looking for new members to get involved. Would you be happy to arrange a trip to the theatre? Do you have an idea for a play you would like to direct? Are you interested in acting, making props or helping behind the scenes?

We need and want many helping hands to make it all happen. Please email us and let us know how you would like to be involved.

Diane Jacoutot

Chairman

✉ ashwelltheatre@gmail.com

🌐 www.ashwelltheatre.co.uk



Womens Institute



It has been another interesting year for Ashwell WI and, despite losing some members who have moved from the village, new members have joined and our group now sits at 29.

Margie Wallace continues to be our much appreciated President. Sheila Hogan has decided to stand down as Secretary, after holding this position for several years. Sharon Dawson volunteered to take Sheila's place. Sheila will remain on the committee.

During the past year we have held eleven monthly members meetings, eleven committee meetings, Christmas lunch and a summer outing.

Our annual Christmas meal was cooked and served by Liz Chandler and her team of volunteers, with any profits going to the Diapalante charity. We all enjoyed a lovely meal followed by a delicious selection of desserts.

For our Summer outing in August, we travelled by coach to Hemel Hempstead where we boarded a canal boat and enjoyed a very leisurely cruise along the river. Some members helped steer the boat and helped open some of the many locks. Tea and cake were served and those attending all agreed that it was a lovely way to spend a sunny afternoon.



Canal boat trip near Hemel Hempstead

Thanks to Margaret Budgen, who arranges the programme, we have enjoyed some very interesting speakers at our monthly meetings, including talks by two Ashwell residents. Sarah Talks told us about the archaeology of Ashwell and Sandra Barker spoke about her life as a Yeoman Basketmaker. We also took part in chair yoga, wine tasting and heard from Linda Scholes who told us about her journey to citizenship following her move to the UK from America.

We helped with the afternoon teas in the URC hall, raising much needed funds for the church and in August many of us baked cakes and helped serve teas and cakes in the WI tent at the Ashwell Show. Once again, it was a busy time and we sold out of cakes by mid-afternoon.

We meet at the URC hall on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm and we have another interesting programme of events booked for 2024. New members are always welcome, so if you are new to the village, have recently retired or want to meet new people, then please come along and see what we are all about.

Sharon Dawson

Secretary

✉ sharondawson1@hotmail.com

Rose & Crown Folk



Ashwell's folk session is now 29 years old, starting in December 1994 with a charity 'Sing-along-a-thon' to raise money for the church tower.

During 2023 we managed a full year of music and song at the Rose & Crown. Sian and Sam continue to welcome us and we have had some particularly splendid musical evenings. As usual, every month is different and what happens is unpredictable. The atmosphere in the Rose & Crown is getting back to its pre-Covid high, and it's always nice when there's a proper pub atmosphere to go along with the music. In the main, we have had a good turnout of musicians

and singers, and the variety on offer has been exceptional. 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 singing voices.

2023 ended, as always, with a beautiful and varied session of carols and Christmas songs.

We have produced a programme for 2024, with a different theme for each month. We also publish a monthly article in *Ashwell Village News*, so you can keep in touch with what's going on by reading that. You should look out for the posters on the noticeboards and inside the Rose & Crown. We also have a facebook group at: facebook.com/groups/RoseAndCrownFolk

We continue to meet on the first Monday of every month from 8.30-11pm 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.

December 2024 will mark our 30th birthday and, as we have done before, we'll almost certainly be celebrating with a five hour 'singalongathon' in honour of this anniversary.

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 and The Murtons. Please look out for notices, facebook posts and please come and join us. For details of our folk session contact:

Ian Chandler
☎ 743091

Border Ramblers

Maps, compasses and GPS - and we're still lost?



The Border Ramblers is an informal group that meets monthly on Sundays, and occasionally on Thursdays, for what is usually a gentle stroll. In the early days we explored the paths around Ashwell but, now they

have become familiar, we venture further afield on most occasions.

This year started on a high note in February with a walk around Wimpole in blazing sunshine and lunch at the Chequers in Orwell. As the year went on we had mixed weather but most often managed to dodge the rain. Local walks included trips out to the familiar Bygrave plantation and the Morden Grange chalkpit. Further afield we enjoyed a variety of scenery around Therfield, Kelshall, Rushden, Wallington and Great Chishill.

At Great Chishill the group stood at the highest point in Cambridgeshire: the Gog Magog hills - a dizzying 479 feet (146 metres) above sea level. From there, we intrepid explorers could gaze at the highest point in Essex. On top of all this excitement there was a generous and well cooked Sunday lunch at the Pheasant that drew a lot of favourable comment.

On the final trip fifteen of us went by the three churches of St Mary Magdalene in Caldecote, St Vincent's in Newnham and finally our own St Mary's in Ashwell. Being December, rain and mud proved a bit of a challenge and the route had to be adapted to suit. But nobody got soaked and, after a change of boots, we were all sitting warm and comfortable in the Rose & Crown looking forward to food and lively conversation, both of which duly appeared.

If you would like to enjoy the fresh air with a friendly bunch, you are more than welcome to join the group. Just contact one of us (see below) and we will add you to the mailing list. Then turn up and say, "Hello." On the other hand, if you would rather enjoy some quiet time on your own outdoors, you could always try one of the local walks on the parish council website: <https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/ashwell/walks-from-ashwell/>

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✉ gillianduckworth@yahoo.co.uk

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Weddings and other life milestones





Hollie Wilson and Harry Blumenau

6 May 2023

Whilst various Coronation celebrations were happening all over the country, Hollie and Harry (both residents of the village), were married at St Mary's Church, Ashwell by Rev'd. Chris Campbell on 6 May 2023.

Though the weather may have poured with rain, the love and warmth we felt from our close family and friends brightened the day beyond measure. Following the heartwarming ceremony, we danced the night away at the enchanting South Farm, Royston.

Our heartfelt thank you goes to Rev'd. Chris Campbell for the beautiful and joyful service, and to Bene't Coldstream, Pete Eaglesfield, and the choir for their stunning musical contribution, it truly swept us off our feet.

Finally, a massive thank you to everyone in the village who played a significant role in making this day extra special. Thank you all for your love and blessings as we step into this new chapter of life hand in hand. Thanks so much,

Hollie and Harry

Jessica Sheldrick and Aaron Watkins

17 May 2023



Jessica and Aaron were married on 17 May 2023 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Jessica, daughter of Sarah and Paul Sheldrick, grew up in Ashwell. Aaron grew up in Welwyn Garden City but they both attended the Knights Templar School in Baldock. Aaron, a couple of years older than Jessica, was in the same year as her sister, Georgia. They met on a night out and have been together since early 2016.

Around thirty family and friends flew out to Las Vegas to celebrate their marriage with them. Jess was attended by her bridesmaids, including her sisters Georgia and Louise and close friends, Lauren and Natalie. Aaron was attended by his two best men, Jack and Luke, and his cousins Joe and Luke.

After the ceremony, conducted in a beautiful open air chapel, the wedding party headed off for the reception where dinner and dancing continued into the night. The happy couple left Vegas for a honeymoon on the west coast of America, driving up through Death Valley to San Francisco and then down the Pacific Coast Highway to LA.

A home celebration was held at Chesfield Downs in July for all family and friends unable to travel to Vegas. The couple live in Hitchin where Aaron runs his plumbing business and Jess works as a Retail Designer.



Caroline Chandler and Michael Pinna

27 May 2023

On 27 May 2023, Caroline and Mike were married at 'Howgills' Friends' Meeting House, Letchworth. It was a beautiful sunny day and family and friends packed the Meeting House for the service. In the Quaker tradition, the meeting was based on silence, but it was a very emotional event and there was a good deal of ministry from those present before and after the couple stood to exchange their promises.

Afterwards, the Quaker certificate was signed by all present and the couple joined their guests in buffet refreshments provided by the bride's mother and friends.

The marriage ceremony was the central part of a weekend of festivities, with bands, entertainers and food from round the world. Caroline's friend Mamadou (Master P) Kane flew from Senegal to be at the marriage. The weather was fine all weekend (though a little cold at night for those who were camping) and it was a very joyful occasion.

Heartfelt thanks go to all who attended to support Mike and Caroline.

Anne Donohue and Duncan Robert Mills

22 August 2023



Duncan and Anne were married on 22 August 2023 at Manchester Registry Office. They were accompanied by their son Oscar born on October 20th 2022 and immediate family and close friends.

Duncan was born in Royston and grew up in Ashwell with his brother and sister, attending Ashwell School, Knights Templar and St George's Harpenden. After a course at Plymouth University and work at Sigma Ashwell, he pursued a career in IT including working at NHS Hinchbrook Hospital. He currently works for a health based international company which does require some overseas travel.

Anne, his wife, is a Teacher having studied graphic design and is currently working part time at a further education college in Oldham. She grew up with her sister and parents in the Manchester area.

The family live in Knutsford where they are modernizing a property Duncan bought a few years ago. A rather challenging project requiring some drastic building works but slowly it is all taking shape.

Celebrations in Manchester were fun with a simple walk after the ceremony in the registry office across the centre of Manchester to Kings Place. We all enjoyed that short walk as it was through a fairly quiet pedestrianized area on a lovely sunny day. The 20 or so present spent nearly all day chatting and eating brunch, cake etc sharing stories and fully appreciating the relaxed atmosphere that private room gave us. Even little Oscar seemed happy with his day.

Sophie Tyler and Tom Smith

5 August 2023



Thomas Philip Augustus Smith and Sophie-Jane Tyler were married on 5 August 2023 at St Mary's Church, Ashwell.

Tom and Sophie met in 2015 and moved to the village from Letchworth in 2021 with their golden retriever, Claude. Tom proposed at Luttrell's Tower, Hampshire, in April 2023 before, in what he initially believed to be a joke, the wedding was planned and executed by Sophie and her family in less than four months!

It was such a privilege for Tom and Sophie to be married in a church as fine as St. Mary's (besides enabling Tom to make a glorious annotation to his Simon Jenkins!) and they would like to extend their thanks to Rev'd Chris Campbell for a touching and personal service, in addition to the valued guidance and support she offered them throughout. They would also like to thank Pete Eaglesfield who supplied joyous pomp on the organ, and, lastly, Bene't Coldstream and the choir whose performance of Psalm 121 was a true highlight of the day that was commented upon by numerous guests.

Fully embracing Ashwell life, their reception was held a mere stone's throw away at the Bushel and Strike (...for why would they have even considered leaving the village?) with no fewer than three golden retrievers in attendance. The weather was, of course, ghastly (on what was possibly the only rainy day this past August) but nobody minded a jot! The food was outstanding, the speeches mixed, and the dancing emphatic. The night ended with the newlyweds (quite literally) raised aloft by family and friends to a medley of Tina Turner, Journey and Oasis. They are further thankful to Vicky and the Bushel and Strike team for making the whole evening really special.

Tom and Sophie honeymooned on the North Norfolk Coast (with Claude in tow), staying in Burnham Market, before spending some time with friends in Northern France. They are now looking forward to starting and raising a family in Ashwell.

Platinum wedding anniversary Audrey and Eric Gurney



Audrey and Eric met at Ashwell School, although Audrey admits that she did not like him at first! This was not to last and on the 28 March 1953 they were married at Ashwell parish church. In 1956 Eric had left the RAF and worked with his father in the corn merchants business and in 1963 the Ashwell Stores came up for sale. They bought it and moved in and, with the help of Audrey's mother to help look after the four children, they successfully ran the shop until 1967.

The opportunity arose to become a farmer and by 1968 the whole family moved into Ashridge Farmhouse. Initially both Audrey and Eric worked the farm to make it a viable business. Although many other jobs were taken on to enable the farm to continue. Once Stuart was old enough he and Eric worked the farm together.

In 1999 Eric stepped back from the farm and with Audrey they toured Britain, France and Spain towing their caravan. This also included many holidays with the now growing number of grandchildren. Cruising was also high on their list of things to do and included round the world trips as well as visits to the Caribbean, Mediterranean and South America.

Audrey and Eric have lived nearly all their lives in Ashwell other than a brief move to Cromer and Wells Next the Sea.

At the beginning of 2023 Eric's health deteriorated and he had to move into the Baycroft Care Home. He was determined to make their 70th Wedding Anniversary where a party was held with all the family. Audrey and Eric have seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Sadly Eric passed away in June of this year.

Diamond wedding anniversaries Liz and Fergus Moynihan



Elizabeth Fletcher and Fergus Moynihan were married on 18 May 1963, in All Saints church Willian. Liz, who was brought up in Letchworth, met Fergus who was born and brought up in Ashwell, at Letchworth Grammar School in the sixth form.

The bridesmaids wore pink striped dresses, and the church was filled with pink tulips. The reception was held at the newly opened Broadway Hotel in Letchworth, where everyone enjoyed a tea, with a slightly surprising roast pigs head complete with apple as a centre piece.

Liz and Fergus worked in London for a few years before coming back to Ashwell where Fergus joined his father in medical practice. Liz worked as a journalist in London before Sarah and Tim were born.

In May of 2023 their Diamond Anniversary was celebrated in some style with a concert in St Mary's Church and cake and fizz. Family and friends came together to perform songs, musical acts, poems and stories were shared. It was a very special day.

Jennifer and Derek Skingsley



Celebrating 60 years of marriage, diamond wedding anniversary, on 8 June 2023, Derek and Jennifer Skingsley of Wolverley House, Ashwell... quite a fantastic achievement!

They met in 1958 when Jennifer joined the choir of St Mary's Church, Baldock where Derek was already a member since a schoolboy and a head chorister. Jennifer was 14 and attended St Francis' College, Letchworth and Derek, 17, was at the Grammar School, Letchworth. On leaving school Jennifer attended secretarial college in Hitchin and Derek joined the Ordnance Survey in Southampton. They married on a very hot day, 8 June 1963, and by this time Jennifer was personal secretary to the managing director of St Christopher Press, Letchworth and Derek was with the Services Electronics Research Labs in Baldock, after a change in career.

They had two boys, David born December 1964 and Ian, November 1966. They then moved from Baldock to Cricklade in Wiltshire for Derek to join Plessey Electronics just before Ian was born and bought their first house. Four years later they moved to Bedford for Derek to join Texas Instruments. The boys started school at Putnoe Infants before they all moved near Ely for Derek to join Pye Telecoms. Then it was on to Gamlingay because Derek joined British Aerospace in Stevenage and then Trafalgar Watch Company in London. Now you know why everyone had an address book just for them!

They then took on their first pub, the Six Ringers, a 13th century pub in Felmersham, Bedford. Derek freelancing whilst this was going on. Five years later they moved on to the Falcon at Bletsoe with a 60 seater restaurant. During this period Jennifer unfortunately, became ill requiring surgery so they decided to give it all up and move to their holiday home in Norfolk. Derek, however was head hunted by Plessey Instruments in Havant and they moved again to Hayling Island. When he was made redundant 3 years later, they moved back to Norfolk. They both joined local government in Cromer and stayed there till retired: Derek heading up Benefits and Jennifer a Trainer/Administrator in HR. She also qualified as a counsellor with a 10 year private practice. Derek however became very ill and had open heart surgery at Papworth in 2013. Big decision made and they moved to Ashwell in 2015 to be near close family. He is now also suffering from bladder and prostate cancer.

The boys both married and gave them five grandchildren and two great-grandsons. They live all over the country and one granddaughter with her partner have just received residency in Canada.

Derek and Jennifer celebrated in Jersey and then had a family get-together in July.

Corrie and Bob Swain



Corrie and Bob first met as teenagers at the international club in Hitchin. Corrie who is originally from the Netherlands was working as an au pair in Letchworth, while Bob was working as an apprentice estimator with a local construction firm. Needless to say, their relationship blossomed from the beginning. They subsequently married in Corrie's place of birth, the small Dutch village of Lage Vuursche, on the 10 September 1963.

In 1964 they moved to their first house in Back Street Ashwell, then on to West End and finally Hodwell. They have now both been resident in the village for almost 60 years. Their two sons Richard and David were both fortunate enough to grow up in the village, attending Ashwell school and then Knights Templar.

Bob took the bold step of setting up as a self-employed quantity surveyor/building designer and has celebrated more than 50 years in business. It's hard to walk around the village and not see some of Bob's handywork, perhaps most notably Ashwell Surgery! Corrie worked as a teacher for most of her career, specialising in children with special educational needs and ultimately retired from her last teaching post at the St. Christopher school in 2007.

Whilst living in the village they have participated in a multitude of activities, including Ashwell Youth Club, Meals on Wheels, the choir and of course Cycle Club Ashwell, with Bob being one of the co-founders of this very successful Hertfordshire cycling club. If you look carefully, you may still see him pottering around lanes of Hertfordshire with his son David in tow (much to Corrie's relief he has stopped hiding any new secret bike purchases in the Wardrobe!)

Bob and Corrie felt blessed to be able to celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary, with their family and friends in their home in Hodwell in September.

Mabel and Jack Hamilton



Both Jack and Mabel were born in Northern Ireland and met at a dance in Comber, Co Down. Two years later they were married in Dundonald Presbyterian Church on 28 June 1963. Their Honeymoon was spent touring Ireland.

Their son Ian was born in May 1964 and within a year Jack who was in the life assurance business was offered promotion, but it meant moving to Shrewsbury, Shropshire. After visiting the city, they decided to make the move and subsequently transferred to Manchester. After many happy years in the Manchester area, Jack was promoted to the company's London office.

However, their tenure down south was short lived when Jack (and Mabel) accepted an attractive job offer from a Kenyan life assurance company and migrated to Nairobi in 1983. With little or no house work to do Mabel landed a job at the British Development Division. Ian was attending Reading University.

They returned to the UK in 1988 and two years later moved to Sarasota in Florida where they bought a security guard company. The business prospered and after seven years they sold up and returned to live in Letchworth near to Ian and Allison and their two grandchildren in Hitchin.

After a four-year stint in Herts, they returned to Florida and secured part time jobs prior to retirement. Then followed countless "Road Trips" around the United States including numerous visits to New York where Ian and family were living.

With the onslaught of Covid, the emergence of Donald Trump and Ian and family ensconced in Hitchin it was time to uproot their Florida home and return to Herts in 2021. Finding a new abode was challenging, but eventually they discovered their dream village of Ashwell and are now happily enjoying village life.

Golden wedding anniversary Pam and Sam Wallace



“Two farming families unite.” This was the front page of the Royston Crow in October 1973 when on a freezing cold day in Royston, Sam Wallace of Ashwell, married Pamela Hoy of Royston in St John the Baptist Church.

Born and bred in Ashwell, Sam joined his grandfather, John Sale, in the running of Farrows Farm, in which the family have been involved for nearly 300 years. Pam was also from a farming family and the two frequently met at various local events which is where they caught each other’s eye. Over the years, the two have been very much part of the Ashwell community and have a joint interest in growing things whether it be wheat, dahlias or a family!

They have three children Tom, Susie and Victoria and now have seven grandchildren, two of whom attend Ashwell School. They had a lovely weekend away celebrating their golden wedding anniversary with all the children and grandchildren.

Notable Nineties

Recognising Ashwell residents who have reached, or passed a significant milestone in their lives and learning a bit about their experiences.

Geraldine Crump



Geraldine was born in Cambridge 26 September 1928, and moved with her parents to Sandon as a small girl and had to cycle to Letchworth every day to school because of the war and rationing.

She worked with her father, uncle and brother in their family business in Sandon, they were grocers, bakers and butchers.

She moved to Ashwell in April 1956 when she married Phil, living next to the butchers, then they moved into Swan Street in August 1988. Phil passed away October 2003 at the age of 77.

Ann and John Vidler



Ann and John Vidler are now nonagenarians for Ann is 90 and John is 94. They live in Springhead, where they have lived for just over 40 years.

Ann and John married 67 years ago and were blessed with three children. They have eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild, a little girl of two years old.

This year began with the good news that their son had been awarded an OBE in the King's New Years Honours List. Ann and John look forward to the marriage of another grandson this Spring and the birth of another grandchild, so 2024 began well and they have much to look forward to this year.

Winifred Sheldrick



Win, and her late husband Peter, moved to Station Road in Ashwell in the harsh winter of 1962-63 where they ran a poultry farm for a few years, and brought up their three children. She now enjoys seeing her seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren whenever she can. Win was one of the founder members of Ashwell Thrift Club which she ran from one of their outbuildings, until it later moved to the village hall. She was also an active member of the badminton club and enjoyed a drink or two at the Bushel and Strike afterwards!

Win loves her garden and still manages, with a little help these days, to keep it looking immaculate. She turned 93 in July and celebrated with a small family party.

Mollie Aldridge



Mollie Bryant was born on 16 July, 1931, in Back Street, to Violet and Stanley Bryant, a farm worker, the eldest of six children. The family later moved into Chain Cottage, when it was two homes and finally to the pretty thatched cottage 'Down the Green', next to the Lock Up.

Mollie attended Ashwell School and then moved to the Merchant Taylors' School until she was 14. Her first job, as a very young girl living in Chain Cottage, was to hold open the gate to the Bury Meadow, while the cows walked down Gardiners Lane to the dairy and back after milking. The dairy was then on the site of Bacon's Yard. She was paid 6d a week. Her next job at 14 was in Westrope's General Stores, where the Pharmacy and Country Properties now are. This was on three floors and you could buy almost anything there. Later, Molly worked in Booths, a ladies outfitters and then at Kayser Bondor's in Baldock.

There were always plenty of buses as very few people had a car. In 1956, Mollie married Stanley Aldridge, in St Mary's Church, had her reception at the Bushel and Strike, with Days making the wedding cake and flowers from the garden. She walked to her wedding down Hodwell from the Green. She and Stanley first lived in Baldock, and then moved to the Grange Estate in Letchworth. She and Stanley moved back to Ashwell to a bungalow in Ashwell Street. Stanley died in 2014.

Mollie comes from a large family and is related to other long established local families: Warboys, McBeals, Bonnetts and others. The village was full of 'family'. She loves Ashwell and 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.

As a child, Mollie remembers Ashwell being a quiet place, with virtually no traffic, people walking or on bicycles. It was very much a farming community with most people involved with farming somehow. Many lived in cottages owned by the farmer they worked for. Shire horses did the work of tractors. She remembers there being three butchers Crumps, Dennis and Brown. Christys (Ashwell Stores), Westropes and the Co-Op (opposite Days) supplied the village groceries and much more. A post office was run from where the Charity Christmas Card Shop is today. Miss Stanford had a ladies' and children's clothes shop by the twitchell, opposite the dentist surgery. There were more shops but Mollie particularly remembers these. There were frequent dances held in the village hall and 'everybody went'. The village was much smaller then, with no new development and plenty of gaps inbetween the old houses. 'We knew everyone,' said Mollie.

Mary Hagger

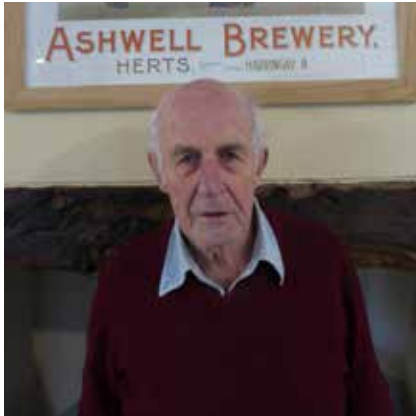


Mary was born in Litlington in 1931, the eldest of four children. She left school at 14 and went to work at Fordham's Brewery, cycling there with her three friends and co-workers Bett, Jessie and Mary. Meeting her beloved late husband Len as a teenager, they later married in 1953 when she was 22 years old. Len and Mary started their married life together in Fowlmere. They then moved to Ashwell the following year and bought their first home together in Mill Street, the same house she resides in to this day. Mary left the brewery in 1959 whilst pregnant with her first child, Jill, later going on to have a son, Keith. She now has 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren, of which she is very proud.

Whilst the children were young Mary would spend her summers working in the fields pea and potato picking for Frank Kirby at Cold Harbour Farm. She then went on to work in local houses domestic cleaning with her lifelong best friend and neighbour Bett Skerman. Following this, Mary became a post lady, for over 10 years, alongside Bett and Flo Worboys. Retired at 65 but as busy as ever, Mary's great sense of fun and quick wit have kept her young. She enjoyed many years of Bingo and coffee mornings at Wolverley House. Mary feels very lucky to have lived in Ashwell for 70 years and to have met so many wonderful villagers, who became friends along the way. She celebrated her 90th Birthday in the spring of 2021 with a socially distanced garden party with close family.

Friends and family are grateful for all the love, care and wisdom she has imparted to those around her over the years. She was an especially loyal and selfless friend to Bett, visiting her every week throughout a long illness. Mary is much loved by all who know her and a very special lady.

Jeremy Fordham



Jeremy was born in Collingham in Nottinghamshire on 24 August 1932. His parents were Christopher and Aline who moved to Odsey in 1954. Jeremy was educated at Marlborough College and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied land management, providing a foundation for his career in farming and land development. He married Perina Courtauld in 1956 and they moved to Odsey in 1958, having three children: Louisa, Christopher and Arabella. Jeremy married June in 1977.

The Fordham family had been prominent in and around Ashwell for many generations with interests in banking, brewing and farming. Jeremy was churchwarden in St Mary's for about twelve years, during which he served with Eric Gurney. His involvement with the village included becoming the founding chairman of the Friends of St Mary's and being a member of the parish council.

The Odsey estate specialised in growing malting barley and over many years samples from crops of malting barley were entered into the annual Institute of Brewing competition. A highlight of Jeremy's farming career was the year when one of his samples was judged to be the best in England and Wales.

Jeremy remembers the time when the village had lots of shops, its own policeman and streets empty of traffic.

The great-grandson of the Manchester architect Thomas Worthington, designer of the original Albert Memorial in Manchester, Jeremy has had a keen interest in architectural design. This interest was put into practice when, together with Sam Wallace, they developed the former working farmsteads of Westbury and Farrows Farms into the housing developments of Westbury Farm and Colbron Close. Jeremy recalls, "Old Mr Westrope used to cycle to Odsey once a week to collect Mother's order. Fortified by a gin and tonic, he later returned to his shop. Mother bought everything in the village."

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Christine Pickett



Christine (nee West) was born in Letchworth on 10 July 1933, the youngest of four children. Very sadly, her father died when she was seven and her mother when she was 18. She won a scholarship to Letchworth Grammar School and had hoped to train as a nurse, until her mother's death. Christine then moved to Bygrave to live with her older sister.

She met Leo Pickett when she was 17 and married him in 1954, aged 21, at St Mary's Church, Ashwell: apparently Rev'd Jack Catterick's first wedding in Ashwell. Leo, from an old Ashwell family, lived on Newnham Way, where his parents had a poultry smallholding. Leo's mother belonged to the Day family, who started and ran Days bakery from the early 1700s. Their first proper home together was a newly built bungalow on the smallholding, which cost £1,750 in 1954.

Christine and Leo had two sons, John and Guy. In early 1967, Christine trained as an Infants Teacher and worked first at Hillshott School, then as a special needs teacher at Woolgrove School in Letchworth, until her retirement in 1989. Christine loved teaching and did supply teaching for another 10 years. In her retirement, Christine took up drawing and painting again, which she has always loved. She attended classes and still continues to paint. Leo died in 2005.

Christine has lived in Ashwell for 70 years. In the war, there were few men around to work in the fields, so in the autumn, canvas topped lorries would bring children from Letchworth, during the school day, to pick potatoes in the fields. Christine remembers this first visit to Ashwell, aged 12. As more men returned and there were more teachers, potato picking stopped. The country was in a very poor state after the war. In 1947 the winter was terribly cold and there were frequent power cuts. As a young girl, Christine recalls having to go with a bucket to fetch coal from the coal yard in Letchworth so they could have a fire.

Moving to Ashwell as a young married woman was 'a bit of a shock'. It was much quieter, with just cottages. There were plenty of open spaces and allotments over the road on Newnham Way. There were very few pavements and plenty of shops in those days. Christine remembers a cycle shop next to Days and a cobbler's next to the Rose & Crown. She also remembers the Bonnett brothers, who were tailors, sitting cross-legged in their shop window in Mill Street, as they sewed. It was a very different Ashwell.

Fred Bryant



Fred Bryant was born in Ashwell on the 27 July 1933. After five years National Service seeing him serve in Korea, he was married to Eleanor Bryant in 1958 and then went on to have one daughter.

He has seen lots of changes in Ashwell. From the days of horse and carts, to living through the Second World War. Ashwell was a big farming community with most people working locally on the farms, buildings or brewery.

Fred is a well known character having been very active in village life, playing football, running local allotments as well as being a member of the Royal British Legion to name a few. Fred is currently the oldest living Ashwell born man still living in the village.

The United Reformed Church in springtime.

Church and chapel



Ashwell Parish Church

St Mary the Virgin



St Mary's aims to be a welcoming and inclusive church, whose purpose is to share God's love with others. In 2023, we continued to do that in many ways including: through our regular pattern of worship, our celebrations of important life events, and our hosting of wonderful community functions.

Over the last year, particular highlights for me have included: welcoming our new curate, Rev'd Dr Paulet Brown-Wilsher; our passion play on Palm Sunday, where Jo co-ordinated an enthusiastic band of actors to bring to life the story of Jesus' journey to the cross; our Festal Evensong, marking the coronation of King Charles III; and our pet service, when dogs, hamsters and tortoises joined us in church to celebrate all God's creation!



Rev'd Chris Campbell with curate Rev'd Dr Paulet Brown-Wilsher

Alongside these there have been services of great celebration, such as our special dawn service (with fire and incense) on Easter Day, and services which are deeply reflective, such as our service on Maundy Thursday, with a meal, foot washing and stripping the altar, and our service of peace and justice, to pray for peace in all places of conflict. As well as our regular and special services during the church year, it has also been a privilege to marry new couples, welcome families for christenings, and to say goodbye to much loved villagers at funerals.

I've continued to experience first hand the part that the church plays in hosting amazing events, meals and exhibitions. In 2023, the Music Festival, the Book Fair, Flea Market and Christmas Fair were hugely successful and have together raised much needed funds for the church. These funds are more needed than ever, as we start preparing for important future

works including: the north aisle roof, the tower and the accessibility of the building. In the next few months, we will finish producing our long term plan, to help us schedule and fundraise for these, and we hope that you all will help us in both the planning and the realisation of these much-needed restoration and improvement works on our iconic building.

Nothing in the church can happen without the commitment of a huge collective 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 Church

✉ chris@revcc.uk

☎ 742277

St Mary's Church fabric report

It has been a very busy and interesting year for the Fabric Group. We have received two major reports, the Quinquennial Report, which is for the whole of the buildings and grounds, and a separate one for the church tower.

The tower has been inspected using two very skilled workmen, a climber and a rigger, abseiling down the outside and inside of the tower. There cannot be many professions which require both a deep knowledge of stonework and hanging on a rope to examine it. Photographs were also taken using a drone. The inspection found that some previous attempts at repairs have in fact made matters worse, which is a problem all old churches suffer from. The tower stonework is in a very poor state and some holding work will be required very soon.



Inspecting the church tower

Church and chapel

The Quinquennial Report on the church building has also shown that a great deal of restoration and repair work is necessary in the near future to ensure the satisfactory condition of the building. An indication of the work required is that five of our roofs (not the nave or chancel) will require major work. Numerous other projects will have to be undertaken: the repair of stonework, damp prevention, draining rainwater from the roof - all of these problems apply to the tower and boiler room as well. We are looking at something in the region of a twenty year programme to complete the known work required. All these projects will require several million pounds. Hopefully some of this will come from grants we can apply for, the remainder needing to be raised by St Mary's with your help and generosity.

Why restore an ancient building at such cost in time and expense? Our church is Grade 1 listed and has stood on this site for more than 800 years. Central to Ashwell it has served its community for all of this time. It is not only a place of worship but also serves in many other ways which are important to Ashwell residents. You are welcome to visit us and appreciate this most beautiful of buildings. Help received from you will ensure continuity for generations to come.

John D Chilton
Churchwarden

Ashwell Church Flowers

2023 has been a happy and successful year for the church flower team, a reflection on the wonderful group of flower arrangers we have. We would like to take this opportunity to thank every single person who has been involved for their hard work in making our church look so beautiful.



There have only been two weddings needing flowers in 2023 but we have been able to get creative on many other occasions, including Easter, Harvest and of course Christmas.



This year we have had to say goodbye to Christine Schwick who has been part of the flower team for many years and we would like to thank her for all that she has contributed over the years. A huge thank you also goes to Liz Moynihan, who although still part of our team, has decided to take a step back from the rota for the time being. We have also been lucky enough to add to our team and would like to take this opportunity to welcome Ann Hardy, Charlotte Firth and Christa Bosch.



We are always most grateful for the generous donations we receive throughout the year for the flowers and for all the kind comments we receive. If you would like to discuss the flowers for any occasion or would like to be involved with our team, please contact one of the following:

Caroline Feast
☎ 743233

Suzanne Humbert
☎ 07941 529849

Michelle Notley
☎ 742556

Ashwell Mothers' Union

Ashwell Mothers' Union has had another busy year. We continue to meet on a monthly basis and have enjoyed a variety of activities and speakers throughout the year. We heard from Kim Wilkinson, our past president, who led a session helping us to recognise our resources and how we can use them to help others.

We also heard from Jo Adams about the work of Homestart, an organisation which, like us, supports families in need.

Other meetings have included a prayer workshop led by Rev'd. Chris Campbell and a talk about the plight of refugees by Margaret Gilliam. Rev'd. Patrick Forbes also played us extracts from his inspirational *Traveller's Tales* and we have had a craft session making items to sell at the Christmas fair.

In July we held our afternoon tea in Wolverley House. Several residents were able to attend and enjoyed the delicious tea that MU members had prepared.

We continue to support the Royston Refuge for those who have fled domestic abuse and Donna, who runs it, came to talk a little more about it and the problems she faces with these often traumatised people. We have supplied them with home packs throughout the

year and Advent Calendars and Easter eggs for the children. We also give them some of our knitted baby packs.

We continue to support the Lister Hospital with cheer up bags for children and emergency wash bags for all patients admitted in a hurry. I'd like to thank everyone who donated their hotel toiletries in the box at the back of the church. Thanks to your kindness we were able, with a few additions of our own, to send 14 bags and I now have enough to make up about the same amount again!

As well as our activities within the village, some of us have also attended joint cluster events such as services and coffee mornings which enable us to enjoy fellowship with other MU branches.

By the time you read this article, we will have changed our status from 'branch' to 'diocesan group'. This won't make a great deal of difference to our meetings and project work but it does mean a lot less administration, as we no longer have a committee or a bank account, with members paying their annual subscription directly to the diocese. We always welcome new members so if you'd like to join us do get in touch.

Viv Hollow

Group Contact

✉ viv_and_ken@yahoo.co.uk

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St Mary's by summer, and inside with the crib in winter

St Mary's Choir

The choir remains such a vital part of church life in the village. It brings people of all ages together to do something they love. It is about singing to the glory of God, but it is also about teamwork, and having fun, and giving pleasure to others.

In January we sang a new piece by Philip Stopford – *Do not be afraid*. Originally commissioned for a christening, the words can probably be apt for nearly every Sunday in the year. Other new music in the first half of the year included *Jesu Dulcis Memoria* (Victoria), *Emendemus in Melius* (Byrd) and *For the beauty of the earth* (Stopford).

I know I say this every year, but as the lucky soul who chooses the repertoire, Lent is the time for reflection and the haunting despair lends itself to some of the most meaningful compositions (in my opinion!). *Jesu grant me this I pray* (Whitlock), the lacrymosa from the Mozart *Requiem*, and the previously mentioned *Emendemus* (Byrd) were some of my favourite moments. Lent ends with Holy Week where we sang *Compline* on the first three evenings. Ladies from the choir now join the gentlemen doing this.

Maundy Thursday is so dramatic with the stripping of the altar as the service closes, and we sang *psalm 22*: "My God, my god, look upon me. Why hast thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health and from the words of my complaint." Easter brings hope and joy and fulfilment of Old Testament promises. Chorally we move from sad to happy overnight, typified by the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* (from the *Messiah* by Handel) at the end of the service.

Back in February we raised funds for music in the church by putting on a Hymnathon. A marathon seven hour singing session where we sang (I think)

82 hymns. We had asked people to sponsor a hymn choice and were knocked over by kind donations and phenomenal support. We raised well over £2,500 and plans are that we may repeat this. Thanks go to Ruth ten Hove and a team of helpers making this work with aplomb.

In July we needed to say goodbye, at least for normal term times, to the Coldstream boys, Kit and Theo. They have been choir regulars for nine years and have developed such skills that people rush to be by their side in practices. I know they'll be back but we all miss them.

Christmas is a time for families and celebration of the birth of our dear lord, Jesus Christ. Chorally it has always been a favourite time of year not just for the choir but for the whole congregation.

Our carol service included lesser well known works, *Myn Liking* (RR Terry), *Hail Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wood) and *Masters in the Hall* (arranged by Willcocks) along with classics. We sang *Lully Lulla* (Stopford) and *Ding dong merrily on high* on Christmas day, and everyone was then in the mood for turkey.

We have a few new faces in the choir, but we can do with more. Please, if you want to sing, just come and give it a shot.

Lastly my thanks go to the Rector, Chris Campbell, our new organist Pete Eaglesfield, and choir librarian Sheelagh Bennett. It's all about teamwork... did I say that earlier?

Bene't Coldstream

✉ bcoldstream@yahoo.co.uk

☎ 742288

☎ 07971 404481

Bell ringers

Over the course of 2023 we rang to celebrate three weddings and for the first time for several years we were able to raise a local band for each one instead of relying on ringers from other towers to make up numbers. Our learners are all competent enough to ring for Sunday services and weddings now and are starting to move on to learning more advanced ways to ring such as Plain Hunting.

In April we played host to the Northern district of the County Ringing Association for their regular monthly meeting which gave some of our ringers the chance to ring some more complicated methods.

On Saturday 6 May we joined with many other towers around the country in ringing to celebrate the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla. All our ringers had an opportunity to take part in the ringing and as part of the celebrations we rang a piece called *Coronation Changes* that was originally composed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second.

In September we welcomed our newest and youngest recruit who made good progress over the rest of the year.

10 November saw us ringing half muffled to mark Remembrance Sunday. We have tried to ring for services at least twice a month through the year, as well as for the village carol concert and Christmas services in December.

We are always happy to welcome new ringers to the tower, whether beginner or experienced. We practice on Thursday evenings from 8pm, come along to the tower and you will be made most welcome.

Steve White

Tower Captain
☎ 01763 853538

Ian Chandler

Tower Secretary
☎ 743091

Ashwell Food Pantry



In the Spring of 2023, Ashwell Food Pantry was three years old. It started as a response to the pandemic, but one thing after another has meant it has continued to be in demand and we're glad to say that, so far, the generosity of the village has always managed to keep up with the need.

The pantry lives in St Mary's Church and is accessible every day. It is completely anonymous to use and anyone experiencing trouble in making ends meet is

welcome to come and take up to six items a day. We also display information on the larger local food banks and other sources of financial help. At times, we may also have supermarket vouchers to distribute.

A dedicated team makes sure the pantry is stocked up daily and we're very glad of the support from local people to keep it going. Donations are placed in the box in St Mary's or left at the village store and taken over by one of the team. If you are able to add something regularly to your shopping list to donate, please do! We always need tinned meals, tuna, tinned vegetables and fruit, mayonnaise, cereals, desserts, tea, coffee, long life milk, cordials, jam, biscuits and toiletries. There is also a fresh food box for people to drop off any excess produce from their gardens, which all villagers, especially pantry users, are welcome to take.

The pantry has been described as a lifeline at difficult times in the month and is a way for people who can afford to give to make a big difference to those in need locally. It's only a small operation, but its existence means that no one in Ashwell has to go to bed hungry and we think that's worth all the effort. Thank you again to everyone who keeps it running.

Julia Mitchell

for the Ashwell Pantry team
✉ ashwellfoodpantry@gmail.com
☎ 743091

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St Mary's Church Discoverers

"Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a real blessing." *Psalm 127:3*

During 2023 our church family has continued to welcome and encourage children and families to take part in a range of activities. The children and youth team, comprising Chris, Sarah and Jo have prioritised making our activities appealing, accessible and inclusive.

Discoverers sessions for children aged 3-11 are offered during the 10.45 service on three Sundays out of four. Each week, our games, stories and craft activities are linked to the theme of the Bible readings for the day. Towards the end of the service, we are invited to share what we have learnt with the congregation. This usually generates a round of applause!

Young people are very welcome to sing in the choir. Unfortunately, changes to the arrangements for choir practise have meant that we no longer have separate junior choir rehearsals. Children now have the opportunity to do some singing at the Friday@5 youth group.

We love to encourage children to participate in our all age 'Thank God It's Sunday' services. These less formal, monthly services provide more flexibility enabling greater interaction and creativity, with opportunities to sing, act, read etc.

Our Easter egg hunt in the churchyard was well attended on Easter Saturday followed by an interactive story in church.

Following the popularity of last summer's 'Holiday drop-in' sessions, we offered a Saturday session in July on the theme of welcome, two Friday sessions in

August based around the miracles of Jesus, and one in half term.

Special services: baptisms have taken place this year, during which children were welcomed into God's family, supported by their parents, godparents, friends and family members. Following a series of meetings to discuss and learn about commitment to God, three of our young people were confirmed at a deanery service in Buntingford parish church in November. During this service they renewed the promises made at their baptisms and were blessed by the Bishop of Hertford. St Mary's Church was packed with children, parents and teachers at the Ashwell Primary School harvest festival service in the Autumn term. All the children sang along enthusiastically to the harvest songs and the Year 6 pupils took centre stage with their poems and readings.

Our church is open daily for visitors of all ages. There are books, toys and stories for little ones to enjoy in the children's area. We have plans to add to the resources and enhance the area once roof problems can be resolved and it can be moved to a dedicated space on the North side of the building.

We are looking forward to welcoming lots more happy faces to our services in December, especially the Christingle and the Crib Service.

If you would like to find out more about our children's activities, please contact:

Rev'd Chris Campbell

Rector of St Mary's Church

✉ chris@revcc.uk

☎ 742277

Jo Adams

✉ adams561j@gmail.com

☎ 01763 241587 or email

🖱 www.stmarysashwell.org.uk



Two churches walking the cross around Ashwell at Easter

Sunday Parish Teas

Sunday afternoons can be a quiet time in Ashwell so it is good to know that there are opportunities to meet people over a cuppa and a piece of homemade cake. Parish Teas run for six months of the year between 16 April and 1 October and Museum Teas fills in the other half of the year. The Parish Room has been an ideal meeting place for locals, visitors, walkers, cyclists, together with those visiting the church or museum.

None of this could take place without a band of dedicated volunteers who have kept things going through offers of serving teas, baking or both. In all, around 55 people have been involved in Parish Teas in 2023 and have been responsible for raising a grand total of £2,189 which will go towards the St Mary's Restoration Fund.

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

Judy Banham
 ☎ 07580 154020

Ashwell Village News

The *Ashwell Village News* is produced by a team from St Mary's Church, but our remit is to cover all aspects of village life and to help publicise and promote groups and charities that are active in the village, as well as letting people know what is happening at St Mary's and the United Reformed Church. It is available every month as a paper copy available from the church, Parish Room and some village shops. It is also available online, with regular readers in Norway, New Zealand and America amongst other places.

In December 2023 we were grateful for a donation from the Ashwell Show which allowed us to deliver a free copy of the Christmas edition to every house in the village.

Please support us by buying a copy when you can, or donating via the donation boxes, and by sending in articles, pictures, poems, letters or items of interest. We are always pleased to have contributions.

We will be looking for more help with the production of the village news in 2024. If you can offer help or would like to know more about what's involved, please email us. Many thanks to all who help put the AVN together, contribute articles and distribute it in the village.

To find the electronic version:
<https://tinyurl.com/Ashwell-Village-News>

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Prayer candles for Ukraine 24 February

United Reformed Church



The
United
Reformed
Church

During 2023, our beautiful chapel has been used for more than Sunday services, giving many more people an opportunity to enjoy its special atmosphere and to admire the

beautiful stained glass windows and other features fitted during its early 20th century restoration.

On Friday 24 February, we welcomed many Ukrainian families and their local hosts for a very moving anniversary service to remember the invasion of their country. Prayers were said and hymns sung in both English and Ukrainian. It was a truly memorable occasion.

In May, Ashwell Music Festival once again programmed two concerts in the chapel and hall and, in December, both Ashwell's Big Sing and Ashwell Theatre Club asked to use the church for their productions.

We have continued with two Sunday services each month, generally on the 2nd and 4th Sundays but with occasional alterations to accommodate Easter Sunday or other special occasions. Sadly, the new minister called during Autumn 2022 to serve our North Herts Group of United Reformed Churches was unable to take up his role, so there has not been a stipendiary minister during 2023. During November, we heard that another minister has expressed an interest in coming to North Hertfordshire, so once again we are moving through the process of 'calling' him. There are, currently, very few people coming forward for training for ministry in the United Reformed Church so the denomination is struggling, nationally, to provide paid worship leaders for its

churches.

In the meantime, the church at Ashwell welcomes local preachers to lead worship. At Harvest and at Christmas we usually arrange our own services. We especially 'treasure' Jim Dalgleish, a retired minister who has become a member of our church and who gives us great encouragement. We also very much enjoy sharing special occasions during the Christian year with friends at St Mary's – a prayer breakfast during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a Walk of Witness on Good Friday.

Our monthly CAMEO meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month continue to be popular. There is usually a theme for the session, quite often involving making things, joining in with a discussion or listening to someone sharing thoughts and ideas – but always rounded off with tea and cake and a special 'thought for the day'. Everyone is made very welcome.

We are few in number now on Sunday mornings but still maintain a warm and friendly presence on the High Street. Do come and join us on Sundays or Wednesdays (not forgetting the occasional Saturdays for lunches!) if you are interested in exploring your faith with us. There is always more information about our activities in each monthly edition of *Ashwell Village News*.

Chris James

Church Secretary:
☎ 742684

San Carswell

Hall Bookings
☎ 742757

Rev'd Jim Dalgleish

Our retired Minister
☎ 01763 257499

Zoar Baptist Chapel

Gardeners Lane



Service times:

Sunday 10.30am and 2.30pm

Tuesday 7.15pm

All are most welcome at our services. We believe the Holy Bible is God's word, and the message it contains is central to our worship. We use the authorised (King James) version.

Our services are simple and reverent, and are conducted by visiting ministers.

From our registers

St Mary's Church

Baptisms

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 22 January | Sebastian Fisher Gabriel Fisher Jonathan Fisher |
| 22 April | Jack Parsons |
| 20 May | Hughie Bessent |
| 21 May | Oscar Stockwell |
| 18 November | Michael Holmes-Rudgley |
| 19 November | Daisy Moss |

Confirmations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 22 November | Daisy Moss Thomas Mahony Laura Mahony Jonathan Fisher |
|-------------|--|

Marriages

| | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 May | Hollie Wilson and Harry Blumenau |
| 24 June | Victoria Treadgold and Matthew Ford |
| 5 August | Sophie Tyler and Thomas Smith |

Funerals

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| 25 January | Rosemary White |
|------------|----------------|

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| 30 January | Dorothy Greenbank |
| 4 July | Eric Gurney |
| 14 July | Denis 'John' Simmons |

Burial of ashes

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1 April | Peter Tunnard |
| 12 May | Alan White Rosemary White |
| 10 November | Betty Lee |

United Reformed Church

Funeral

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| 25 January | Frances 'Fran' Smith |
|------------|----------------------|

Ashwell Parish Council

Interments at Ashwell Cemetery

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 25 January | Frances Smith |
| 10 February | Dorothy Marshall Greenbank |
| 6 April | Eileen Maude Stewart |
| 19 April | Mary Chloe Coleman |
| 10 June | Pasquale Peter Mansi |
| 14 July | Denis 'John' Simmons |
| 30 August | Roy Joseph Embury |
| 30 September | Eleanor Bryant |
| 18 October | Josephine Florence Berry |



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Marking the lives of Ashwell people who sadly left us this year.

Those we have lost



Dorothy Greenbank 1937–2023

Dorothy was born in Huddersfield in Yorkshire, as the middle child of three. Her father was a tool-maker; her mother a specialist mender in the woollen mills. Dorothy refused to follow her mother into the mills. Leaving school at 15, she went to secretarial college in Huddersfield and then into a job at ICI.

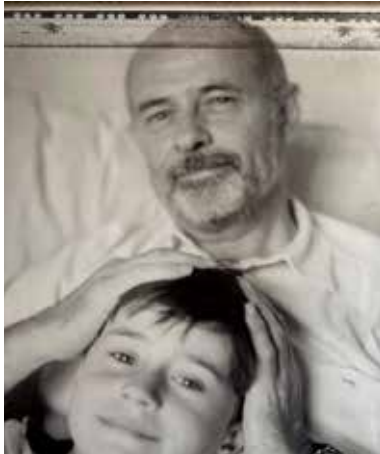
Dorothy was a committed christian all her life. In her youth, she was active in local Baptist church youth groups and through those groups met Stuart. They were married in Huddersfield in 1961. Their married life was at first rather nomadic. But, after homes in Yorkshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, they settled in Sutton Coldfield to the northeast of Birmingham, where they lived for 26 years.

Along the way, they had three sons (Ashley, Alistair and Kevin), and Dorothy had various jobs – for many years working for the National Children’s Home – first, as secretary/financial controller at a day centre, and then as a PA to the regional director.

The bare facts of Dorothy’s life will never do justice to the effect that she had on other people. Wherever she lived, she was always on the look-out for others. In her rather understated style, it was often done with an offer of hospitality - an invitation to dinner, the offer of a cup of tea or a slice of cake. She took a cup of tea to an elderly neighbour every morning for over 10 years.

In retirement, Stuart and Dorothy moved to Ashwell in 2005, to Ashe Cottage, in Mill Street. Dorothy loved living here. She and Stuart threw themselves into the life of St Mary’s Church and the community. They opened and closed the doors of the church every morning and evening for 12 years. Dorothy helped out at Ashwell at Home, Ashwell at Christmas, and the Book Fair, served teas and coffees after church and on Sunday afternoons at the Parish Room, made soup lunches, cleaned the church, and arranged the church flowers. During this time, Dorothy was an enthusiastic grandmother to her now seven grandchildren. She was a generous baby-sitter, a regular at school plays and concerts, and a loyal supporter of her grandchildren’s sporting triumphs and disasters.

After a tragic fall in February 2022, the final year of Dorothy’s life was difficult, but she bore it all with great fortitude. She spent her final days and weeks at a nursing home in Histon and not in the Ashwell that she loved. The packed pews at her funeral at St Mary’s reflected the affection in which she was held by the village and by many others from far and wide; a life dedicated to others and well-lived.



William 'Bill' Hogan 1944-2023

Bill or 'Billy' as he was known to many members of his family, was born in Liverpool on 30 April 1944 to William 'Bill' and Barbara Hogan. Bill's early years were happy enough, but unfortunately his catholic parents divorced when this was far less acceptable than it is today and so 'Billy' relied very much on his older sister Anne for emotional support and this continued all his life. As a consequence, he didn't excel at school, but began his working life as a draughtsman on the docks in Liverpool but his talents were soon recognised and he rose quickly to the top of his chosen profession, running large semi-conductor industry companies.

When Bill and Sheila met in 1993, almost 30 years to the day when Bill died, he already had four very successful children living all over the country, one is an accomplished author and another a very successful photographer to the celebrities. Later came five grandchildren. To the eldest Ollie, who is in the photograph, a baby Honey Adele was born just weeks after Bill died. How proud he would have been to be a great grandfather! Bill and Sheila enjoyed scuba diving in the UK and all over the world, including the Great Barrier Reef, hence, when the time comes their ashes will be scattered together off the Farne Islands in Northumberland where they dived with the seals.

Bill and Sheila moved to Hertfordshire in 2003 when Bill took over the running of a large, international factory in Boreham Wood.

Unfortunately, just after Bill's retirement, he was diagnosed with colon and liver cancer, but was later given the all clear. However, he developed Parkinson's, an insidious and debilitating disease which gradually took over his life. He was a great handyman and a creative cook, so it was very frustrating for him when these activities were limited by Parkinson's. The cancer did come back to haunt him in 2022, when liver cancer was rather belatedly diagnosed as having returned.

Bill remained a Liverpool football supporter all his life and the highlight of his week in later years was to watch Match of the Day at the weekend. Bill's sister Anne died a few months before Bill and she expressed the following wish in the last days of her life: "I want to go first to be there for Billy". Anne's sentiment and desire surpassed any religious context.

At Bill's request, no funeral or memorial service was held. However, the family expressed the wish that they would be delighted if people would make a donation to Parkinson's UK in Bill's memory. Quite a sizeable sum has been raised to help research!

Bill passed away at 79 at home with his wife beside him as he had wished. He was much loved by his wife, family and friends and will be greatly missed as a loving husband, caring father and grandfather, and latterly great grandfather but he leaves an impressive legacy.



Rod Evans

1938-2023

Rod died peacefully on 20 April, he and the family having lived in Ashwell for over 40 years. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2007, Rod lived a full life until he sadly succumbed to a recurrence of cancer.

Born in 1938, Rod was raised in Bromley along with older brother, Bryan, to whom he remained close throughout his life. In 1949 the family moved to Welwyn Garden City where Rod attended Sherrardswood School. In the late 1950's, Rod started his National Service in the Royal Military Police; he was proud of being in the RMP and often referred to that period as important in terms of character building.

Early in his working life Rod met future wife, Wendy, at a business event where she was engaged as a cookery demonstrator. They married in September 1961 at the church in Wendy's home village, Clifton, Bedfordshire. In 1965 daughter Lindsey arrived, followed in 1968, by Elizabeth. In 1976 the family moved to Ashwell taking up residence in The Adelong. Later, both Lindsey and Elizabeth married in St Mary's.

The family settled into Ashwell life and Rod continued his daily commute to London as director of a computer consultancy. Rod and Wendy became involved in village life, also forming long-lasting friendships. They were wonderful hosts, plus Rod too was an accomplished cook. On Millenium night they hosted a memorable celebration; later, ever-thoughtful Rod, presented friends with a cutting of a winter-flowering honeysuckle from the garden as a memento. With close friends, Rod and Wendy formed a dining group at which the men undertook the cooking.

One of Rod's many interests included golf; he started as a youngster, becoming junior section captain in Welwyn Garden City. Having abandoned golf during his working life, he took it up enthusiastically, once retired. Rod loved horse riding and was often seen exercising his beloved horse, Cherry, on Ashwell lanes. For some years, he was Chairman of the Ashwell Show Committee, and his equestrian knowledge was often called upon. On Christmas Eve, in his Father Christmas outfit, Rod delivered presents to High Street children accompanied by the family pony, Dandy, led by Elizabeth. Rod also fixed a Christmas tree outside a bedroom window over the High Street.

In 1988, Rod formed his own company, Business Presentations, creating bespoke presentations for a range of clients. Around this time, Rod was partly instrumental in forming the Ashwell Small Business Group. Clients always received first class, personal service from Rod and his team. One client arrived for an important London presentation to royalty and, only then, realised some of the data on her slides were incorrect. Although it was not even his fault, Rod generated a new package, drove straight to London and delivered the correct slide directly to the client. Such was the man.

On his retirement in 2003, Rod and Wendy moved from The Adelong, their home for nearly thirty years, to The Willows on Lucas Lane and in 2019, they moved to Suffolk to be near to Elizabeth. In 2021 they celebrated, with family, their 60th Wedding Anniversary, also receiving a blessing in their church in Ixworth. Devoted husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend, Rod was a warm, generous, supportive man who loved life; he was seldom seen without his signature smile.



Jo Berry 1940-2023

Jo, husband Geoff and their young children Lisa, Maria and Richard moved into one of the newly built houses in Fordham Close in 1975. Over the years in Ashwell, Jo also lived in other Ashwell properties, including another in Fordham Close, Bacon's Yard, Dixies' Barns and then Wolverley House. On 22 April this year Jo passed away peacefully in her retirement apartment in Temple Court, Baldock with Richard by her side.

Jo was an only child, born in the East End of London during the Second World War. She achieved a place at the local grammar school and when she left, she worked as a receptionist in the Cumberland Hotel in the West End of London. Hotel guests would comment how similar to the late 1950s film star Elizabeth Taylor she looked. Jo remained elegant and beautiful all her life.

In the 1960s Jo went on to work as a secretary with Taylor Instruments in Stevenage, where she met Geoff. They briefly lived in Hungary, Teesside and Stevenage before moving to Ashwell.

Jo threw herself into Ashwell life in the 70s and 80s, such as preparing and delivering meals on wheels, regularly helping with the Thrift Shop weekly at the village hall and being an active member of the Ashwell Theatre Club. Amongst other parts, she took the lead as Maria Martin in *Murder In The Red Barn*. Jo was always elegant and well presented. For the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 she embraced the fancy dress garb as royalty, as did many of the Ashwell residents even appearing with most of them including a six year old Richard, Geoff and a number of notable Ashwell folk on the front page of the local newspaper.

She also worked at Grant Boughton estate agents on the High Street in the mid-80s. Sadly, in the late 1980s Jo was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and her mobility and general health gradually deteriorated over the years. She leaves behind her three children and seven grandchildren, who miss her dearly.



Pasquale Peter Mansi

1949-2023

Pasquale was born in London EC1 to Alfonso and Maria Mansi who made their living as caterers. He was brought up in a large house shared with family and friends, where his grandmother spoke to him in Italian slang, which came in handy when visiting his roots, Minori on the Amalfi coast. He was educated at Aloysius' RC College and Dame Alice Owen.

He lost his father at the young age of 17, after which, as an only child, he inherited the responsibility 'Man of the House'. They moved to Southgate, N14 and he so appreciated having a back garden, compared to the concrete backyard of EC1. Imagine how he felt when he lived in Ashwell!

He fast became a super car enthusiast but naturally had to make a living if he was to fuel his passion. His cars included: an MGBGT, TVR, Alpha Romeo, Porsche 911, Toyota RAV4, Lotus Elise, Mercedes Benz Vito and a Mercedes Benz GLC300.

He met Ruth in 1993. They married in 1996 and enjoyed a short period in Woolmer Green, before moving to Ashwell in December 2002 with their children and Pasquale's mum Maria, who having sadly lost her second husband, was unable to live on her own. They all loved the beautiful and tranquil countryside setting of Ashwell.

He started out in business as a banker but quickly realised he was rather more suited to sales and worked his way through various trades until he found himself in the office furniture industry. He worked his way around the furniture industry and many years later, boldly started his own company UFFICIO Limited in 2006 (at the mature age of 57), from his home study in Ashwell and his treasured Alpha Romeo, selling bespoke office chairs and standard office chairs, desks and other office products. Ruth joined him in 2012 and in 2013 they moved the company to offices in Letchworth where UFFICIO Limited is still up and running. He bought his cherished company van in 2009, a black Mercedes Vito which he kept going for 14 years, and 300,000 miles later, it gave up, just after he died.

He enjoyed exercising to keep himself fit and healthy until sadly in 2022, whilst he was clearly struggling (unnoticed) with many symptoms of lung cancer; was finally diagnosed with Stage 4 in January 2023, he fought a brave battle for 4 months. His eldest son Vincent was with him by his side at home, as he went to sleep for the last time.

Rest in peace Pasquale!



Denis 'John' Simmons 1941-2023

John was born in Ashwell on 22 November 1941 and together with older sister Julia and younger brother David, were Nancy and Bernard's three children. He spent his whole life in Ashwell, attending Ashwell Primary School before going to Baldock Secondary School (Knights Templar).

At the age of 15 he left school and joined Crumps Butchers. Except for a few months at the Letchworth Bacon Factory, he worked his whole career at Crumps. At 19, John met Rose at an Elvis de-mob party at Radwell Village Hall. On 7 September 1963 John married his beloved Rose at St Nicholas' Church, Norton. September 2023 would have seen them celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary. Other than the very early days of their marriage John and Rose lived in Ashwell Street.

John was very much a family man and with Rose they had three children: Gary, Mark and Melanie. The family enjoyed many summer holidays in England and Wales, venturing abroad on one occasion. John and Rose also had many holidays together and with friends, visiting many countries - all creating very happy memories. John and Rose also have six grandchildren: Tom, Dom, Alice, George, Rebekah and Matthew and one great granddaughter, Elsie Rose. He would always be interested in their lives, asking how they were getting on.

In terms of village life, John joined Ashwell Badminton Club, he was a leader at 1st Ashwell Scout Group, a member of Ashwell School PTA and supported Ashwell Cricket Club. John enjoyed his whist drives and would play at a variety of venues but his true sporting passion was golf. He was a member of Wyboston Golf Club for many years and occasionally won the monthly medal. He had many golfing buddies and together with his sons and all four grandsons shared many treasured moments on the golf course.

After John's and the family's 'journey' during his last few months, in June 2023, John passed away at home which was his wish. John is missed every day and will be loved forever by his family and friends. At John's service on 14 July, Gary wrote his dad's eulogy whilst Rose and all John's children and grandchildren made heartfelt contributions. John is remembered as a quiet, gentle, family man with a lovely smile. As one line of the poem that was read out at John's service says:

"We know deep down in our hearts that you have not left us."



Eric Gurney

1934-2023

Eric was born in 1934 in Ashwell and was the middle child of five, they lived in Ashwell Street where his father ran a corn merchant's business. He went to school in Ashwell and later went to Norton Road Secondary School leaving at the age of 15 to work in his father's business.

He joined the RAF in 1953 and in March of that year he married Audrey in Ashwell Church. After 3 years' service in the RAF, he rejoined his father's business, but after his father passed away in 1958 Eric and his mother were left to run the business.

In 1963 the opportunity arose for Audrey and Eric to buy Ashwell Stores which they ran as well as the corn merchant's business.

However, Eric's passion was to be a farmer so when the corn merchants business was sold to Sherriff's of Hatfield and an offer arose from Lawrence Pack to take over his farm, the Ashwell Stores was sold and life as a farmer began.

The family moved into Dew Mead Farmhouse in Hinxworth whilst Ashridge farmhouse was built and Eric ran the farm, rent free for the first year, to learn as much as he could about farming. In 1968 the family became full time farmers.

Over the years Eric was able to purchase the farm field by field but as farming is not always profitable he took other jobs including: being a salesman for Dalgety, contract lorry driving, driving the school coach, starting a firewood business and setting up the caravan park and developing it.

He was churchwarden for 14 years, and was instrumental in saving the Parish Room, the installation of the tower floodlights and saving the tower when the buttresses started moving.

At the same time, he was an independent district councillor for 12 years and on the Ashwell Parish Council for 28 years as well as a trustee for the Moss Cottage Homes and the museum. He was one of the founding directors of Pinehill Hospital when it was first set up and was involved along with Fergus Moynihan in the establishing of Wolverley House.

Eric died on 15 June and by some strange twist of fate Claire, his youngest daughter, also died on the same date 13 years ago.

He will be dearly missed by his family, friends and so many others. May he rest in peace.



Roy J Embury

1943-2023

Born on the 19 July 1943 at Neasden, London, the youngest of six children; Roy was a very private, kind, gentle and loving man always ready to listen.

On 16 March 1945, when people were celebrating the end of the war, the family home was hit by one of the last rockets of the World War II, killing his eldest sister, Doreen who was just 16, destroying their home and everything in it, so he was a survivor from a very early age!

When Roy left Kilburn Grammar School in 1959, he started a five-year refrigeration engineering apprenticeship with York Shipley, earning the princely sum of 1s and 4d an hour, 6½p in today's money.

It was also at this time that Roy met Jackie and started dating, love at first sight a real love match, Jackie was only 14, they were together for 64 years – a lifetime! They were married on 30 August 1965 at Neasden Methodist Church, and moved to their first home in Kenton, Harrow.

Roy had finished his apprenticeship which led to him working on government buildings, hospitals, ships, food processing factories, warehouses, travelling the country and abroad which included Malta making a report for the government on the possible use of the caves for meat storage. When air-conditioning became fashionable this also became part of his work.

However, in 1984 Roy and Jackie decided to change direction, moving to Ashwell taking on Ashwell Stores with their children Robert and Anne-Marie. This was to be their life until retirement but Tesco and Sainsburys soon put an end to that dream! After only three years they sold the shop but stayed in Ashwell moving first to 47 Ashwell Street and later to 13 Silver Street, Roy returned to his profession.

Roy had three grandchildren, Abigail, Caitlin and William he was so proud of their achievements, their honesty and love, his message to them was always, "follow your dream!"

In 2022 Roy and Jackie moved to independent living accommodation in Melbourn, it quickly became home where he enjoyed talking books, watching nature in the garden and maintaining as normal a life as possible with the support of the wonderful carers. Roy's health declined further during a hospital stay; he passed away on 18 August 2023.

Due to health issues, Roy's life was in some ways an unusual one, however he made it work with the support of family and friends, he will be missed by all who knew him.



John William Mills 1933-2023, and

Josephine 'Jo' Mills 1932-2023

As John and Jo died within six weeks of each other after 70 years of a very happy marriage, it does seem appropriate to write about their shared lives in this obituary. They both passed away in Hinxworth Place, the home they loved, having lived there for 60 years - the place that their children Dylan and Andrea regarded as home.

Most of us who knew them will recall the interesting garden and John's studio where he designed and produced many of his memorable sculptures. They were known and loved by so many of us in Ashwell and Hinxworth,

John and Jo contributed much to both Hinxworth and Ashwell communities.

John, who was born in London, was taken to Northumberland during the war. His artistic flair led to him attending Hammersmith Art School. Later, while teaching at St Albans Art School, he began to be recognized as a successful sculptor. For a while John and Jo, who had married in 1953, lived in Digsweil, Herts: an artists community. In 1966 they found Hinxworth Place where John was able to build his studio. John lectured and set up many exhibitions in the area as well as abroad. He is known for many sculptures in public places including *The Women at War* in Whitehall London and the *London Fire Fighters* in St Paul's Cathedral. Locally we are very proud to value the risen Christ figures in both Ashwell and Hinxworth churches.

Jo was also born in London where she grew up during the background of World War II living for most of the war in fire stations where her father Cyril Demarne was Head Fire Officer. She studied ballet from a very early age, joining Ballet Rambert and travelling professionally and extensively throughout Europe. She also became an exceptional swimmer and diver. It was here at the Tooting Bec Baths that she met John and as a pair they continued to compete together with John becoming a physical training instructor during his National Service. Jo continued her ballet career, for a while becoming part of the Lionel Blair Dancers and dancing in the first Benny Hill Show in 1955.

Once settled in Hertfordshire and with the arrival of both children, Jo devoted her time to family life, supporting John, sewing, cooking and teaching yoga to many of us. With John's growing acclaim and success Jo would support him with creating a lovely home life and travelling with him. She was always kind to so many of us and supported many local charities but above all there was the devotion to John and in her last words to their daughter she said, "I so love your Dad."

In spite of John's fame both he and Jo were a private couple who only wanted a small celebration of their lives with immediate family and friends so their services were organised as they wanted by Andrea. They were both very fitting tributes for which we are sure they would be grateful.



Brian Bonnett **1944-2023**

Brian who most knew as Dougal, was born on 21 April 1944. Dougal was a true Ashwell gentleman. He was born in Green Lane, where he was given the nickname Dougal; it was home births in those days and a doodle bug fell just before he was born opposite the house and his dad Clifford introduced Brian as his little doodle bugger, but over the years the name got changed to Dougal and the name stuck.

He met his wife, Janet, at the Three Tuns pub and together they had three March born children, Catherine, Sarah and Sam. Dougal was widowed in January of 2021.

He left school at age 11 (with potentially the worst school report ever issued) to work at Low Pack's before later becoming a bricklayer. After developing allergies to lime he retired from brick work and many will remember him pushing his lawnmower around the village from job to job. He often claimed to walk more than twenty miles every day and briefly carried a step counter to prove him right.

Dougal leaves behind two sisters, Janet and Mary, his older brother John having died previously.

Dougal had five grandchildren, the eldest of whom is Lewis, who regularly spent time with 'grandad' walking the lanes and trudging in the fields of Ashwell. Lewis was followed by four other grandchildren in America: William, Christian, Maggie and Doyle, and each one grandad maintained was his favourite! Dougal regularly spent three months of the year with them visiting places from the Twin Towers and the Empire State Building in NYC to the Yellow Brick Road in Kansas to the Grand Canyon in Las Vegas.

Dougal was diagnosed with terminal cancer but until then had kept very fit and active, digging for hours in his large vegetable garden, his family, friends and neighbours all benefitting from his fruit, vegetables and flowers. Walking such long distances may have lessened in later life but he still enjoyed visiting friends around the village, particularly Fred Bryant (the oldest man to be born in the village) to check on him. Dougal's cancer progressed so rapidly that no one saw it coming and although he lost the ability to speak he very much enjoyed visits from his family - and friends such as Kevin, who recounted tales of visits to the horse races or Yarmouth.

He will be very missed for years to come by all who loved him... and many loved him.



Byron Searle 1936-2023

Byron was born on 16 May 1936 in Back Street to William and Lilian Searle. His parents ran two village shops on the High Street and a taxi business. In between attending the village junior school, Merchant Taylors' senior school and Baldock secondary modern school, Byron was a regular helper in his parents' businesses.

Byron loved all sports, representing the school and North Herts at football and cricket as well as winning the area schools high jump. At the age of 17 he was struck down with polio but by late summer 1954 was back playing his beloved cricket and returned to football a few years later.

He met Fay in 1961 and they married in September 1964, initially living at Sunnymead Orchard until moving to Dixies Close. It was at this address that Jonathan, Emma and Rachel grew up with Byron living there until his passing.

Byron enjoyed a variety of careers from working at J M Dents, printers in Letchworth from 1956 before moving to ICI Dataset Printing in 1971. In 1972 he also began delivering newspapers on Sunday mornings before leaving ICI in 1978 to deliver newspapers full time. In between delivering newspapers Byron was a painter and decorator, he drove coaches for Gentles Coaches in addition to spending hours at Ashwell Recreation Ground as the groundsman. For many years he volunteered at the Ashwell Gymkhana Show and was also involved in the annual May Bank Holiday Sports Day. Byron also served as a parish councillor for 25 years.

Byron and his late wife Fay both loved being involved with village clubs and were a very social couple too attending many village events. Byron retired in 2001 and he and Fay started to enjoy a variety of holidays, including several cruises.

Sadly, Fay passed away in 2005 but with his three children and grandchildren living in different counties he enjoyed visits to Suffolk, Norfolk and the Isle of Wight. He kept himself busy in the village delivering for the local florists, offering lifts for non-drivers to the local supermarket and enjoyed tending to his garden allotment. He also helped the primary school and playgroups during December when a certain annual visitor was due! Byron continued to attend cricket dinners and British Legion events.

Byron had so many valued friends. The family have received many lovely messages all highlighting Byron as a well-loved gentleman who was fondly respected. He will be missed.

Weather

| 2023 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|---|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|---------|
| Rainfall (mm) | 33.3 | 4.1 | 71.0 | 37.4 | 53.6 | 16.8 | 67.9 | 34.3 | 52.3 | 87.4 | 46.4 | 64.8 | 569.3 |
| 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 | 15.0 | 5.0 | 17.0 | 15.0 | 10.0 | 4.0 | 18.0 | 20.0 | 13.0 | 15.0 | 13.0 | 18.0 | 163.0 |
| Max. temp. °C | 13.1 | 14.9 | 15.8 | 20.0 | 21.9 | 31.5 | 28.3 | 27.2 | 31.9 | 24.1 | 14.4 | 13.9 | |
| Min. temp. | -4.9 | -1.3 | -1.6 | -0.2 | 4.6 | 7.2 | 9.6 | 9.9 | 8.5 | 3.0 | -1.4 | -2.4 | |
| 2023 month avg. max °C | 7.9 | 10.1 | 10.2 | 14.2 | 17.3 | 24.1 | 21.4 | 22.1 | 22.5 | 16.4 | 10.1 | 9.4 | |
| Month avg. min °C | 2.6 | 4.0 | 4.8 | 5.3 | 9.0 | 13.3 | 13.8 | 13.8 | 14.2 | 10.3 | 5.3 | 5.6 | |
| Av max °C 2014-20 | 7.4 | 8.6 | 11.2 | 15.2 | 18.7 | 21.3 | 23.2 | 21.8 | 18.9 | 14.5 | 10.3 | 8.9 | |
| 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 | 9.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 20.0 |
| Sunshine hours (Cambridge/ Heathrow) | 68.2 | 93.5 | 64.5 | 140.1 | 149.2 | 227.2 | 165.6 | 171.1 | 141.9 | 112.9 | 85.1 | 26.2 | 1,445.5 |
| Average sunshine hours 1996-2020 (Cambridge) | 59.1 | 78.8 | 106.7 | 136.8 | 163.6 | 160.0 | 160.2 | 143.4 | 128.5 | 100.1 | 70.9 | 60.7 | 1,368.8 |

Ashwell Weather 2023

It's been hard to ignore the weird weather in 2023. We've had news coverage of storms, heatwaves, floods and wildfires on a near-weekly basis – almost certainly due to globally rising temperatures. In the last five months of the year the UK as a whole suffered nine storms which were strong enough to be named by the Met Office. This compares with four for the previous year. Most of these passed well clear of Ashwell, though we did have stronger winds and more rain from the closer ones.

January and February were warmer, drier, and sunnier than usual, with Ashwell's February rainfall of 4.1mm the lowest it has been since Peter Bryant started recording it in 1976. Much of that rain came in only two days, with 2.8mm on 22 and 23 February combined.

In March the rainfall was considerably higher than average and the sunshine noticeably lacking. During April and May the rainfall, and sunshine, were closer to the average, but temperatures for all three months were below the norm so spring was a disappointment.

"For the UK overall, 2023 was the second hottest year since records began in 1884."

The summer was mixed. June was generally fine with temperatures above average, plenty of sunshine, with some unsettled periods which produced a small amount of rain. For July the sunshine was about average, and it was often cool and wet. August brought the first two named storms of the year to the UK. Antoni on 5th brought floods to Yorkshire but Ashwell only had 6mm of rain and a daytime temperature of an abnormally low 16.7°C. Then Betty (18th and 19th) brought wind and rain to the west of the UK and brought Ashwell only about 4mm rain, with temperatures slightly above average at around 24°C.

4–10 September gave us a welcome warm spell with temperatures above 28°C, and, at 31.9°C, the warmest day of the year on the 9th. The month also had the wettest day – 26.6mm (more than an inch) of rain on the 20th. On 27 and 28 September storm Agnes brought wind and rain to parts of the UK but left Ashwell relatively unaffected.

The first 10 days of October were pleasantly warm, with temperatures in excess of 19°C for all but two of those days. The daytime maximum then fell to a low of 10.1°C on the 15th, to be followed by a short wet spell (18–21 October) when storm Babet drenched parts of Scotland. The month ended and November began with another storm (Ciaran, 30 October–2 November) which passed further south but brought

about 17.5mm of rain to Ashwell. Another storm on 9 and 10 November brought strong winds and about 9mm of rain.

November ended and December started with five nights of subzero temperatures to remind us what winter is supposed to be like, but the rest of the month was well above zero. On Christmas Eve the minimum temperature was in double figures, 11.9°C. The relative warmth came with cloud cover, so the sunshine hours were abnormally low and there was slightly more rain than usual. Storm Gerrit on 27 December brought some rain to Ashwell, but only 4.9mm, and a very strong wind with a peak gust (as measured in Cambridge) of 90 kmh (56 mph).

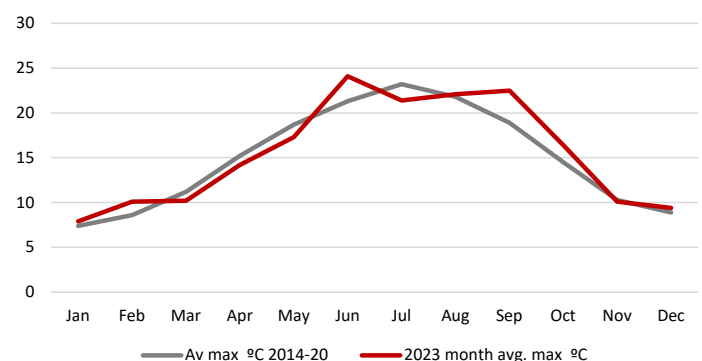
For the UK overall, 2023 was the second hottest year since records began in 1884. Only 2022 was warmer. Overall, UK rainfall was a somewhat higher than average, though in Ashwell it was lower. A BBC news item noted that widespread flooding in the UK into the 2024 New Year was due to exceptional rainfall in the period September to December. However, in Ashwell it was nowhere near a record, with the local 2023 total of 250.9mm exceeded 13 times since 1975. The highest total here was in 2000, at 413.5mm.

Storm names

The first usage of personal names for cyclones was by the Queensland government meteorology office, between 1887 and 1907. In the 1940s the practice was revived for the Western Pacific and has now been widened to cover most of the world and severe storms as well as cyclones. In most regions pre-determined alphabetic lists of alternating male and female names are used, with our storm names coming from a joint list drawn up by the met offices of Ireland, UK, and the Netherlands. A name is given if it is expected there is the potential to cause disruption or damage. The UK storm season starts on 1 September, and the names are given alphabetically from that date as they occur.

Bob Carswell

Monthly average maximum temperatures



Local services



Hertfordshire County Council



General enquiries

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk
 contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
 03001 234040

Children's services

The county council has oversight of educational provision in Hertfordshire.

For enquiries about schools or child protection:
 03001 234043

For enquiries about free school meals
 freeschoolmeals@hertfordshire.gov.uk
 03001 234048

School admissions

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk, click on school admissions

Ashwell Primary School admissions

www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk
 742297

Early education and childcare

childcare@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Disabilities

Go to:
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk then click on 'Adult Social Services/Disability', or 'Blue badges', or
 03001 234042
 Textphone / Minicom 01992 555506

Social care help

To apply for a social care assessment, go to:
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk then click on 'Adult Social Services', and then on 'Ask for social care help'.

Emergency out of hours contacts

Children's social care emergency, 24-hour service:
 03001 234043

Adults' social care emergency, out of hours service:
 03001 234042
 Textphone / Minicom 01992 555506

Highways

Maintenance of roads, pavements and street lighting is the responsibility of Hertfordshire Highways.

Faults, including any problems with grass cutting in the summer, should be reported to them online. Go to:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk, then click on the 'Report road or pavement problem', then on 'Report a fault', or
 03001 234047

Bus passes

Enquiries:

csc.concessionarytravel@hertfordshire.gov.uk
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk then click on 'Bus passes'.

To apply for or renew a bus pass, including 11-25s Hertfordshire Savercard (half-price bus travel):
 03001 234050

HertsLynx on-demand bus service. Download the HertsLynx App (Android or Apple), or:

01992 555513
<https://bookings.hertsllynx.co.uk/login> (bookings)

Fire and Rescue Service

In an emergency contact:

999

Fire safety enquiries:

cpd.customerservices@hertfordshire.gov.uk
 03001 234046

For non-emergencies - Baldock & Letchworth Fire Station, Weston Way, Baldock, which also connects to the district office at Stevenage:

01438 847313

Police: please see separate section overleaf, p138

North Herts Council responsibilities



General information and enquiries

www.north-herts.gov.uk, or
474000 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday)
☎ Textphone / Minicom 474800

Deaf or hard of hearing

☎ Use the Relay UK App: 18001 followed by 01462 474000.

Customer service centre

NHC Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF. Please book an appointment online.

Payments service

www.north-herts.gov.uk/pay-online, or
☎ 03004 560535 (24-hour service)

Emergency out of hours service

Homelessness, environmental health, street cleaning, parks, public buildings, car parks:
☎ 03007 774125

Postal correspondence address for all services

Excluding Electoral and Legal:
North Herts Council, PO Box 10613, Nottingham, NG6 6DW.

Electoral and Legal Services:

Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF.

Follow NHC on social media

Twitter: @NorthHertsDC, Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr

For Hertfordshire County Council services please see separate entry and for Police and other local services please see overleaf.

Refuse collection

At the time of writing the normal refuse collection day for Ashwell is Monday, except in Bank Holiday weeks. Bins should be left at the front of your property by 7am on collection days.

Food waste (small brown caddy) is collected weekly.

Recyclable material - glass, tin cans, cardboard, brown paper and plastic other than rigid plastic or plastic bags (large, grey bin) and paper (blue/black box) - is collected fortnightly.

Household rubbish which cannot be recycled (purple bin) is collected on the alternate fortnights, with a change to 3-weekly collections planned for 2025.

Garden waste (large brown bin) is not collected free of charge. It is collected fortnightly on the same day as recyclable waste. To register and pay for this service, £49 per year at the time of writing, go to:

www.northhertsgardenwaste.co.uk

To report a missed bin collection:

✉ northhertsenquiries@urbaser.co.uk, or
☎ 474000, and choose the 'Waste' option

Household waste recycling centres - our nearest recycling centres are at: Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, SG6 1HB (closed Tues and Wed), and Beverley Close (off York Road), Royston, SG8 5HF (closed Thurs and Fri)

Street cleaning

This is the responsibility of the North Herts Council. A sweeping lorry visits and public litter bins are emptied every four weeks. Additional visits are made to clear fallen leaves in the autumn, with manual sweepers where needed. If you feel that additional visits are needed, or that any work is not being done properly then please report it online at:
www.north-herts.gov.uk, or
☎ 474000.

Planning

The responsibility for planning matters is held by the North Herts Council. For the full range of planning services, see:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning-reception

The planning officer responsible for Ashwell at North Herts Council can be reached on:

✉ planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk, or
☎ 474000

If parishioners write to the Council with comments, either in favour of or against a planning application, Ashwell Parish Council asks them to send copies, please, to the Parish Council Clerk (✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk) so that these comments can be taken into consideration by parish councillors when they meet.

Independent living

and Meals on Wheels



The County's Meals on Wheels service is provided by Hertfordshire Independent Living Services (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 welfare check.

You can choose from a wide range of meals, including 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.

Our prices are liable to change. For the latest information on any of our services, you can call the number below or visit our 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
- In-home eye testing, delivered by A1 opticians
- 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, or to sign up for our two-day free trial, please contact:

Hertfordshire Independent Living Service

✉ info@hertsindependentliving.org

☎ 03302 000103

🌐 www.hertsindependentliving.org

Community housing

Settle (formerly North Hertfordshire Homes) is responsible for Wolverley House, some cottages in Back Street, and some of the houses and flats in Dixies Close, Ashwell Street and Station Road.

Wolverley House in Gardiners Lane provides retirement living accommodation. Facilities include 30 flats, communal kitchen and lounge/dining area, guest facilities, laundry and garden. There are regular social activities for residents. Contact:

Settle

Blackhorse Road, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 1HA

customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk

☎ 03303 430016

🌐 www.settlegroup.org.uk

Ashwell Housing Association and Moss Cottage Homes: please see p27.

Post Office

The Post Office has changed the opening times for its service in the Parish Room, Alms Lane. The new times are:

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| Monday | Noon-3pm |
| Wednesday | Noon-3pm |

It provides most of the Post Office services, including banking.

BUGS 'N' THINGS



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office@bugsnthings.co.uk

www.bugsnthings.co.uk






Citizens Advice

A local charity, available to all, offering free confidential help and support:

Office open Monday to Thursday 9.30am-4pm

49 Station Road,
Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3BQ

☎ 01462 689801

🖱 <https://northhertscab.org.uk/services/>

Police

In an emergency, when there is a danger to life or a crime is actually taking place: ☎ 999

To contact the local Police team please email:

✉ Royston@herts.police.uk

The Royston Rural Safer Neighbourhood Team is based at Royston Police Station. The local Police Community Support Officers for Ashwell are:

PC Tom Woollard

✉ Thomas.woollard@herts.police.uk

PCSO Chris Brabrook

✉ chris.brabrook@herts.police.uk

PCSO Hannah Moss

✉ hannah.moss@herts.police.uk

The team is managed by

A/Sergeant Lisa Perks

✉ lisa.perks@herts.police.uk

To speak to either A/Sergeant Lisa Perks or PCSOs Brabrook or Moss, please 'phone: ☎ 101 and ask for them in person.

For non-emergencies where police attendance is required, to report a crime or to report any other incidents: ☎ 101

Please do not use social media as a channel of communication in any of these circumstances.

Public transport from Ashwell

Information correct as at 22 January 2024.

Buses



Hertfordshire travel information is available from Intalink at:

☎ 03001 234050

🖱 www.intalink.org.uk

By post:

Intalink Passenger Transport Unit,

County Hall CHN101,
Hertford, SG13 8TJ

The HertsLynx demand responsive bus service can be booked via an App, on the website or by telephone. Download the HertsLynx app - available on Android (Playstore) and Apple (Apple Store).

Hertslynx bookings:

☎ 01992 555513

🖱 <https://bookings.hertslynx.co.uk/login>

Travel information can also be found on the Traveline:

☎ 08712 002233.

🖱 www.traveline.info

Other bus services in Ashwell are operated by Richmonds Coaches. Bus timetables are displayed opposite the village stores on the wall outside Bear House, and at the bus stop opposite the Three Tuns.

Route 90, Letchworth Broadway to Royston Bus Station via Bygrave, Ashwell and Ashwell & Morden Station.

Route 91, Letchworth Broadway to Royston Bus Station via Newnham, Ashwell and Ashwell & Morden Station.

The rush hour bus service between the village and the station no longer operates.

Trains



Ashwell & Morden Station is at Odsey, just over 2 miles from the centre of the village. Railway timetables, maps, journey planners and tickets can be found at:

☎ 03450 264700

🖱 www.thameslinkrailway.com

🖱 www.nationalrail.co.uk

Royston and District Community Transport



We offer door-to-door transport for people living in Royston and the surrounding villages of north and east Hertfordshire and south Cambridgeshire who are unable to use conventional public transport or do not have the use of a car.

We can help with any kind of trip, all types of medical journeys, and, where drivers are available, social or shopping trips. Our current charge is 60p per mile and there is a minimum charge of £6 for journeys of ten miles or shorter.

Volunteer drivers provide the transport, using their own cars. We also have wheelchair accessible MPVs and mini-buses.

New volunteer drivers are needed urgently.

🖱 www.roytrans.co.uk

☎ 01763 245228



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Tel: 01462 659884 - 01767 631046

Mob: 07760 241922

Email: sdbrownb@aol.com

www.sdbrownbuildingcontractors.co.uk

If you're thinking of
selling or letting your home,
get in touch & have a free valuation.

Find out the possibilities with our friendly experienced team.



Find out the possibilities with our experienced team.

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