

Ashland Meeting Place



We have a meeting place arriving soon... We know it's been a long journey to get here, especially for those of you who have lived in Ashland for years. Covid hasn't helped anyone, and certainly not this project.

The Parish Council has approved some additional spend from funds and, alongside this, the deposit has been paid for the shipping containers that will form the building.

So, we're OFF! The containers are due to arrive mid/late May, and the groundworks to ready the site will start in earnest around four weeks before. We'll advise actual dates as soon as we have them, but there may be some disruption to the car park area of Peshurst Crescent when they start. This won't be for longer than necessary, and we'll aim to keep any inconvenience to a minimum.

The containers will be craned into

position when they arrive, and we hope some children and residents will be able to come along to watch (we'll certainly be there to take photos!). And this is when the community involvement can really start.

We've been given a grant by Guinness to equip the internal aspects of the building, and we thank them for their support. MK College will be supporting us by using their students to complete the interior fit out, including plastering, along with masonry inside and out. It's a brilliant project for the students to work on and should create a great case study that will also promote our Meeting Place in the local area. And then we need YOU...

We'll have some landscaping work to do externally, and some Gabions to fill with stones to protect the underside of the building – these are fantastic ways for families to get involved, and we'll be



coming back to you with more details soon on how YOU can take part.

Our building will need a name. Whilst it's currently known as Ashland Meeting Place (which will remain legally the case), we'd love residents to help choose a name. Lake View? Bank Lodge? Willow Hideaway?

Please email your ideas to Louise, our clerk, on clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk by 31 May.

Want to keep updated? We're very social:

www.facebook.com/groups/503812663055871 and

www.facebook.com/search/top?q=simpson%20%26%20ashland%20parish%20council



And for email updates, email our Clerk, details above.

Finally, on behalf of the Steering Group, may we thank Lisa Emmanuel, our project manager and Andrew Armes, our architect, who are now working for free to make this happen. Both have also helped to build the hibernaculas, which we hope you have all seen! Neither of them are Simpson or Ashland residents and their work is so much appreciated. We'd also like to thank the Parish Council for their support, and the members of the Steering Group who have given up their time to make this happen.

● **Caroline Vooght (on behalf of the Steering Group)**

Open Spaces – Apple trees on Hanmer Green

On Wednesday 10 February members of the Simpson Garden Group, the Hanmer Green Group and the Parish Council met three members of the Serco Landscape Department on Hanmer Green to plant four apple trees.

The young trees had been propagated by grafting scions of known species of mature trees onto a dwarf root stock. If the grafts succeed, new trees of the same variety will be produced.

As Simpson has a collection of heritage apple trees, many of which are over 100 years old, the Garden Group decided to try to preserve some varieties. Members of the group spent a



happy evening learning how to graft under the expert tuition of Simpson resident Maurice Barnes, who has looked after the trees for three years.

The most successful grafted trees are now in their permanent positions for all

to enjoy.
Thank you to all involved.

● **Lena Bates (on behalf of Simpson Garden Group)**

Our wildlife needs us all

As you may have read in the November 2020 Newsletter, last year the Parish Council commissioned Lissel Road resident, Rebecca Hiorns, to carry out a habitat survey of Simpson. Her report has proved to be a valuable asset as it not only captures the wide range of habitats and wildlife in the local area but also provides suggestions for what we could all do to encourage greater biodiversity and sustainability. Working with residents, we have developed a plan to ensure that our local areas become even more welcoming to

wildlife, in all its forms. This means that over the next six to twelve months you should begin to see differences in the way that some of the open spaces within Simpson are maintained.

Working with SERCO, who hold the maintenance contract, we have agreed that some grassed areas in the village will be cut less frequently this year and planted with wildflower and meadow plants. Little did we know that we would be ahead of the curve on this, for over the past autumn and winter there has been a lot of media coverage of the

need for 'rewilding'. The Royal Horticultural Society and experts such as Sir David Attenborough and Monty Don have encouraged us to think more about flora and fauna and cut our lawns less frequently and intensively. Clearly, all of this is a living experiment and we will need to take stock, over time, of the impact of this approach on our wildlife and our open spaces more generally.

Everybody is welcome to get involved in the ongoing conversation about how we will treat open spaces in the future, especially as we, as a Parish Council, are managing the work of SERCO across the parish, which means we can alter how things are done.

● **David Pye, Chair**

A Litter Picking Experience

Fun is not something one typically considers when picking up other people's old beer cans. However, last month, along with my little sisters (Esmee, 8 and Eva, 6) we decided to give it a go and it turned out to be a surprisingly interesting experience. After picking up our litter-hunting gear at the Village Hall, we embarked on our journey up to the Caldecotte dam and back. Along the way, my sisters made sure to pick up every scrap of litter they could find, leaving no rock unturned and no bush unruffled. They found it fascinating to try and reason how a can of coke could end up so far at the back of a hedge, and I found it even more



fascinating just how easy it is to forget how much litter we walk past on a daily basis.

Of course, no walk with my sisters would be complete without some hard-to-answer questions about human behaviour, and they've finally reached the age when they start to question their surroundings, frequently asking 'why would somebody litter?' and 'why are there so many sweets in Simpson?'

Whilst the later was significantly harder to answer, the former set us onto a very interesting and (hopefully) educational conversation, as I attempted to help them grapple with the fact that some people



just can't wait until they can find a bin.

Despite the bombardment of questions and complaints of tired legs, I found this to be quite a satisfying walk. Not only had we all got a better sense of our surroundings, we'd also done our bit for the community and helped keep Simpson looking as green and tidy as it should do. I've been told this is a monthly thing, and as such, I'll definitely be showing my face at the Village Hall to do it again.

● **Kai Wilkinson, 17**

Lissel Road Open Spaces Group – Operation Birdbox

During the winter, Malcolm Dyson has been very busy building ten small bird boxes and one huge owl box. He used scraps of wood from his hoard and followed RSPB guidelines, making the holes squirrel proof. With permission from MK Council and The Parks Trust, Malcolm has secured the boxes in trees and shrubs around communal areas in Lissel Road with strips of used bicycle inner tubes, kindly donated by our local Halfords.

The owl box has been placed in the first oak tree as you enter Simpson Warren Field through the gate at the top of Lissel Road. The fixing of the box was



quite difficult and created a lot of interest from passing walkers!

I am writing this at the beginning of March when all the birds are very busy getting ready to nest. Malcolm has numbered the boxes and their positions



are marked on the attached plan. We will be monitoring their use and recording activity. Please feel free to come and look from a distance, so as not to disturb the birds.

Simpson Sightings

Following the RSPB's Garden Birdwatch weekend (29-31 January), eleven Simpson residents pooled their sightings to help build up a database of birds that are present, locally. An impressive total of 20 different species were logged, the most common being blackbird, blue tit, great tit and robin (seen in 10 or 11 gardens). Chaffinch, great spotted woodpecker, song thrush, long-tailed tit and wren put in an appearance in just one garden in the space of the hour.

Beyond our gardens, there have been two particularly exciting sightings along

the River Ouzel. At least two kingfishers have been seen, flying up and down, low over the surface of the water, between the Open University and the flood control barrier at Caldecotte Lake. And most spectacular of all, an otter has been spotted on several occasions along the same stretch. Otters are larger than you might think: their body is 60-80 cms in length and their tail 35-55 cms, so they make quite a stir in the water – and out of it.

It's also good to see that a pair of mute swans are nesting again just south of the road bridge between Simpson and Walton Park.



Tidying up Simpson

On Saturday 27 February, nineteen residents, young and not so young, pickers in hand, scoured Simpson for litter. They found enough to fill twenty or more bags – not to mention a box of glass bottles.

During the same morning, members of Simpson Garden Group cleared the vegetation around the muddy footpath from Bowlers Bridge, under the H9 Groveway, and laid quantities of wood chippings.

A further sweep took place on Saturday 27 March and there are plans for this to be a regular monthly event, not least because the volume of litter tends to increase in the better weather.

In between times, remember that anyone can report fly-tipping by calling 01908 252570 or emailing envservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Blue Light Hub

This poem was addressed to the workers at the Blue Light Hub, together with the drawings and messages of thanks accompanying the Parish Council's recent donation of 'goodies'.

To the ladies and gentlemen at the Hub. Thank you all from us at The Mount.

Staff at the Hub are very appreciative of the thoughts and good wishes of the people of Ashland and Simpson. They will be writing about life for the fire and rescue, ambulance and community police services, there, in the next issue of the Newsletter.

As we get older it has to be said,

The thought of a tumble fills us with dread.

We may need an ambulance once in a while.

Or a policeman or fireman to bring back a smile.

That's not a problem because they're all close at hand

Thanks to the new Hub, it's ever so grand.

It's all in one place and just down the road,

They will arrive very quickly to lighten our load.

So next time my toaster catches alight,

Or prowlers start prowling to give us a fright,

Or we need paramedics should we take a fall,

Those ladies and gentlemen will come to us

In no time at all.

Jan Jeffery

Spring is sprung! Cheer up Simpson & Ashland!

Saturday 20 March was the first day of Spring. To mark the occasion, the Parish Council launched a Cheer up Simpson and Ashland initiative via Facebook and the email distribution list. Over thirty residents responded to the invitation to decorate the outside of their property in a bright and colourful fashion, for the benefit of those out for an exercise walk. It certainly attracted a lot of attention and positive feedback, including the suggestion that it should become an annual fixture. These photographs give a sense of the variety on display (with apologies for those who missed out for lack of space).



The Mount

Residents at The Mount have been busy with their knitting needles and wool to make their contribution to Cheer up Simpson. The result was an attractive display of colourful bunting at the southern end of the village.



We have also welcomed spring and the anticipated new beginning, by planting four cherry trees in the garden. These have been paid for from

the proceeds of our coffee mornings.

● Karen Steeden



Energy...

How do you make changes that will make a difference to your energy consumption? What are the options when it comes to replacing a boiler? How can you make, and keep, a church warm? What does my fuel bill really tell me? Is it worth considering solar panels on my house?

These are some of the questions behind a group of residents meeting online recently with Jane and Marie two representatives from MK Community Energy/Future Wolverton. They shared their experiences of setting up community energy projects and schemes across Milton Keynes, from which we learned that what people usually want is:

- **Advice and Guidance** - getting

information out to people and supporting them to work out what changes they want, and are able, to make;

- **Demonstrations** – showing people through visits to local 'show homes' (when allowed), videos and discussions, in order to find out what is possible;
- **Shows/Exhibitions** where you meet local suppliers and advice workers to find out what is available, how much it costs, if there are any grants and so on; all focussing on your home.

We found out that there are people living locally who have knowledge and experience that we can tap into, and that Jane and Marie are happy to support us if we form a local group to make a difference around 'Energy'.

There are many different types of homes, locally, with different

opportunities and challenges as regards heating and energy. That means it is even more exciting to explore the opportunities. Do you want to be a part of this? Can you give a bit of time to reach out to neighbours and find out what people want to know? It's the first step in making positive change across the community, as we seek to tackle the climate crisis. It would be good to hear from you about the energy issues that are of interest to you.

Get in touch: sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk and also take a look at some useful websites:

- <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/>
- <http://www.nef.org.uk/>
- <http://miltonkeynescommunityenergy.co.uk/>
- <https://fullycharged.show/>

(lots on transport, but homes too)

News from St. Thomas' Church

The spring flowers in the churchyard are a joy and delight! We now have a small group working with Rebecca Hiorns to identify and photograph what is emerging. We also plan to leave some areas in the churchyard unmown, in order to protect and enhance the biodiversity. There will still be mown paths to access the newer graves.

We are currently facing a £12,500 bill for some urgent investigative structural work at the east end of the church. We are not sure, yet, when this work will begin but it will require scaffolding to be erected outside.

We have been opening the church for private prayer on Saturday afternoon during Lent and you may also have spotted Jesus sitting in the wilderness in

our church porch – with a snake and a spider! - during the week. We will be reopening for public worship on Easter Sunday (4 April) when there will be one service, at 10.30am. Pre-booking is essential, so please contact me if you would like to attend. After that, we will be running two services each week at 10am and 11am. Our church warden, Iola Samuels, will be taking bookings for these (contact details below).

I will be on sabbatical from Monday 12 April and will return to work on Monday 2 August. I had originally planned to spend most of this time in Russia but that will no longer be



possible. My main aim for this period is to work on a book which I have already started writing. The book is called *Where two rivers meet* and is a series of reflections on the church year, as seen through the windows of ten icons from Pskov (the Russian city where I lived from 2003-2009).

If you need support or information from the church during my absence, please contact our church warden: iola.jb.samuels@gmail.com 07855 757 005 or the parish office: office@woughton.org 01908 392583.

● **Rev. Nicola Vidamour**
revnicolav@gmail.com
01908 322366



Simpson & Ashland Parish Council Elections

Elections for all Parish Councils in Milton Keynes are taking place on 6 May 2021. If you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor, please read on!

We can have up to 8 councillors across Simpson & Ashland. As a councillor, you can have a key role in working with and alongside residents to shape what happens in our local communities to make the area a better place to live. Currently there are four councillors (David Pye, Sheila Thornton, Chichi Ezeh and Peter Barnes) and it would be really great to have more people with new ideas, experience and views. There is so much that residents are keen to do locally, so if you want to be a part of this please consider standing for election.

If you are interested or just want to find out a bit more about what your Parish Council does, please contact any of the current councillors or Louise, the Parish Manager:

clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

david.pye@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

chichi.ezeh@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

peter.barnes@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

Young voices – got something to say? Well, we're all ears...

My name is Chichi and I am really excited to let you know that, as a member of the Parish Council, I have a new responsibility which is about making sure the voices of children and young people in this wonderful part of Milton Keynes are listened to and have an impact on what and how the Parish Council does things. These have been



interesting times for us all but I hope that you have returned safely to school. I really want to hear your views on what you like about living here and how this could be made better. Then we can all have a think about how we might achieve this.

So, if you have any thoughts, please contact me at

chichi.ezeh@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk. I also want to make sure that the parish newsletter gives greater coverage of the views and experiences of children and young people, so please feel free to share your articles for the newsletter and let me know your thoughts on what would be good to include. Hope to hear from you.

● **Chichi Ezeh**

Enigmatic Simpson

In 1941, four brilliant Bletchley Park codebreakers – Harry Hinsley, Charles Allberry, Hrothgar Habakkuk and Jocelyn Bostock – were living at 456 Simpson, the White Cottage, opposite the Village Hall.

Eighty years later, three intrepid young codesetters – Maddy, Flynn and Charlotte Eatwell – live just down the road, at 442 Simpson. In February, they set a half-term challenge for passers-by out on their exercise walk.

By locating and noting down a succession of clues posted around the village, determined codebreakers – young and old – were able to

piece together a timely message – **HAPPY HALF TERM.**

Well done, Maddy, Flynn and Charlotte. Harry, Charles, Hrothgar and Jocelyn would be proud of you.



Simpson Book Exchange

Who said that 'no one reads books anymore'? They obviously hadn't been to Simpson and seen the turnover at our own little library. What better way to get through the dark days of lockdown in winter than curling up on the sofa with a good book? It is good to see the books being well used and we would like to thank all you readers for taking good care of them, and for your donations. As space is so limited, we would remind you to limit your donations to fiction, biographies and children's books, in good condition. Unfortunately, we are building up quite a collection of donated books which don't meet these requirements and will have to be disposed of.



Do contact us if you have any comments or suggestions about the library and please do – Keep reading!

● **Gill Needham and Margaret Young**
gillneedham3317@gmail.com

Heritage Open Days

September 2021 – Edible England

Most years, in the recent past, Simpson has contributed to the activities in Milton Keynes as part of the national Heritage Open Days programme. In September 2020, the theme of Hidden Nature was celebrated in two well-attended guided walks exploring Simpson's Nature: past, present and future.

In September 2021 the theme is Edible England - www.heritageopendays.org.uk/organising/edible-england

What could we offer this time? A walk to learn about past farming practices in this area? Sources of food and how it was gathered, stored, preserved, cooked and eaten? What we grow in our gardens and allotments today and how we use it?

Please contact Peter Barnes peterwbarnes@hotmail.co.uk with any ideas.

Demand Responsive Transport

If you live in Simpson, you will probably be aware that the last ever number 18 bus drove through the village on Wednesday 31 March. As of 1 April, the service has been replaced by the more flexible MK Connect minibuses. Every household in Simpson should have received a leaflet through the letterbox, with details of the features of the provision and how to book a trip, using a smartphone, tablet, computer, or landline (01908 252526).

More information is available at <https://ridewithvia.com/mk-connect/#faq-sec-1>

The Parish Council is keen to know how you get on with the new service. Please pass on any feedback – both positive and negative to the clerk clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk or one of the Parish Councillors.

Street Champions are here!

On the 9 February, the Parish Council's Street Champions met for the first time, on Zoom. Street Champions keep an eye out for neighbours, raising any issues or challenges with the Parish Council, as appropriate. At times, circulating relevant information from the Parish Council to residents. It is a totally informal role.

So far, we have three Street Champions for two roads in Ashland and eight covering most parts of Simpson. You may have already received a communication from your street champion but if you have not- they are:

Ashland:

- Langham Way - Krishan Patel and Lars de Wijngaert
- Newington Gate - Caroline Vooght

Simpson:

- Abbey Road – Chichi Ezeh
- Hanmer Road - Peter Barnes and Sheila Thornton
- Simpson from Bowlers Bridge to the church - Peter Barnes
- Lissel Road – Margaret Carrel
- Warren Bank- Catherine Scanlon
- Chandler Court – Sheila Thornton
- Millholm Rise and Mount Pleasant - David Pye
- Walden Croft – Christine Stevens
- The Mount – Karen Steeden

To know more about Street Champions or if you want to become one, contact Cllr Chichi Ezeh
Chichi.ezeh@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

We need representatives for the following roads in Ashland and Simpson:

ASHLAND:

Felstar Walk
Fenlandia
Flexerne Crescent
Genesis Green
Heywood Gate
Kelsale Chase
Lexham Road
Penshurst Crescent
Shelsley Avenue
Southcott Way
The Martlet
Wetheringsett
Wraxall Way
Yearlstone Square

SIMPSON:

Old Groveway
Simpson Road south.



Advice Service

Call 01908 239000 for advice

Whatever the issue, we will do our best to help you...

- General advice, support and someone to listen
- Pensions
- Tax Credit help
- Eviction
- Rent arrears advice
- Managing a bereavement
- Form filling
- Housing advice
- Work issues
- Food vouchers
- Health & mental wellbeing signposting

Service provided by Woughton Community Council



Simpson & Ashland Parish Council on Facebook

Are you a Facebook user? Become a friend of Simpson & Ashland on Facebook. Stay in touch, comment on and ask questions about what is going on in your neighbourhood. We also tweet! @SimpsonAshland



www.simpsonandashland.co.uk
clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk
07597 304 054 Twitter: @SimpsonAshland



This newsletter can be downloaded from the website – just scan the code

This edition of the parish newsletter has been edited by Peter Barnes and designed by Dylan Jeavons.

With thanks to the following contributors: Lena and Steve Bates, David Baume, Louise Brazier, Lars de Wijngaert, Ross Eatwell, Chichi Ezeh, Jan Jeffery, Gill Needham, Monica Shelley, Karen Steeden, Sheila Thornton, Nicola Vidamour, Caroline Vooght, Kai Wilkinson, Margaret Young.

Delivered to your letterbox by: Ruth Aguila, Jane Anderson, Jane Ashby, Peter Barnes, Brenda Daghish, Chichi Ezeh, Julie Jones. Sian Lewis, Helen Morland, Lena Parmar, Cathy Pope, David Pye, Karen Steeden, Sheila Thornton, Caroline Vooght.

This newsletter is printed by Prontaprint, 16 & 17 Darin Court, Crownhill, Milton Keynes MK8 0AD