

Green, greener, greenest



In January 2019, Milton Keynes Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to:

- **Make Milton Keynes 'The Greenest City' in the World;**
- **Be carbon neutral by 2030.**

MKC is developing a wide-ranging Action Plan to achieve these targets and members of the Parish Council have participated in workshops to look in more detail at what needs to be done.

At the Parish Council meeting on 2 March the following Statement of Intent was agreed:

Simpson and Ashland Parish Council endorses Milton Keynes Council's commitments. In all decision-making and day-to-day actions, it will seek to support the achievement of these targets.

Specifically, the PC will, in 2020:

1. Carry out a biodiversity audit and resident engagement in Simpson in order to develop a plan to maximise the local habitat for flora and fauna;
2. Use its role as the contract manager of open space within the parish to work with SERCO and residents to support this plan;
3. Engage with the Parks Trust to support the management of the green space in Ashland, to maximise benefit for local flora and fauna;
4. Be led by ethical and environmental standards in its management of assets such as Simpson Village Hall and, in future, the Ashland Meeting Space, and when considering planning applications;

5. To encourage and develop the use of public transport by those who live, visit and work in the parish.
6. Carry out community engagement to decide other ways to promote and support MK Council's Climate Emergency commitments.

Action in Simpson and Ashland

Simpson has many advantages when it comes to supporting and enhancing biodiversity: there are open spaces, established hedgerows, a variety of trees, the river, the canal and its towpath, the Linear Park, and domestic gardens of all shapes and sizes. All of these – singly and in combination – offer the potential to address ways in which our natural surroundings can become richer and more diverse and to stem the declines which are linked to global warming, carbon emissions and the like.

The Parish Council has commissioned Simpson resident Rebecca Hiorns to carry out a survey of landscape features and habitats in Simpson which will provide a plan and a good understanding of the range of different habitats and how they are connected. She will also record notable species present in different areas. This better understanding of existing habitats and how they are being managed will help to highlight opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

Rebecca's report will be available before the Annual Parish Meeting on 26 May and that meeting will be an

opportunity for residents to contribute ideas and experience to help develop an action plan. Rebecca has carried out a similar exercise in Woughton Park at the request of Old Woughton PC. will provide a plan and a good understanding of the range of different habitats and how they are connected. I will also record notable species present in different areas. This better understanding of the existing habitats, and how they are being managed will help to highlight opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

The large majority of the open space in Ashland is managed by the Parks Trust (who also have stewardship of the Linear Park) and the Parish Council will continue to work with them and draw on their experience and expertise to make the environment greener and to understand what needs to be done to keep it that way. Elsewhere in this issue there are details of the Parks Trust Community Action Day in Ashland on Sunday 19 April.

Looking ahead - Heritage Open Days

The (national) theme of Heritage Open Days in September 2020 is 'Hidden Nature'. Over recent years Simpson has contributed events, exhibitions and walks to the Milton Keynes programme and for this September we have begun to plan a walk that will focus on the natural heritage in and around the village.

Become involved

There is a lot of expertise, interest and commitment in the parish to all of these issues - witness the Simpson Garden Group's 'Open Gardens' programme and the tireless work of the Simpson in Bloom group. Add to that the personal knowledge of birds, mammals, wild flowers, trees, amphibians, fungi etc and it's quick to see the potential for informed 'citizen science' to contribute to enhancing our local environment. Please contact Peter Barnes peter.barnes@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk if you would like to become involved.

Apology: We apologise for the delayed arrival of this issue of the Newsletter but we wanted to include items that were dependant on decisions taken at the Parish Council meeting on 2 March.

Annual Parish Meeting

It will soon be that time of year again when we come together to celebrate all that has been achieved over the last twelve months and to hear about what the next year holds! We are soon (1 April) to take over the management of the open spaces contract and so to know more about the current state of health of our open spaces we have recently

commissioned a biodiversity audit of the local area. We will be discussing the findings of the audit and also our thoughts around how we can make this part of Milton Keynes more environmentally sustainable.

Watch out for your invitation to the Annual Meeting on **Tuesday 26 May at 8.00pm** in Simpson Village Hall.

Community Action Day in Ashland

This year, The Parks Trust, the charity that cares for the greenspace in Milton Keynes, are organising a series of Community Action Days. We want to be able to meet local people in their local park and work together on a series of vital tasks to make a positive contribution to the area.

The first Community Action Day is in Ashland in April - dedicated to helping local trees grow. On Sunday 19 April from 10.00 am -12.00 pm you will be tasked with spreading woodchip around the base of the trees. Doing this helps with general plant health and helps to establish the trees, allowing them to grow successfully. Other benefits to the woodchip are the suppressing of weeds and improving the soil.



The Parks Trust would like to see as many people as possible from Ashland join in. Please come prepared by wearing outdoor clothes and suitable footwear. Meet in the Ashland Lakes car park, Newington Gate, at 10am – 12pm. For more information contact events@theparkstrust.com

Two more Community Action Days are planned in July and November. More information on these last two events will be provided in future newsletters.

Simpson Garden Group Talk



How to grow Peonies - Speaker: Alex White

Tuesday 14 April at 8.00pm, Simpson Village Hall

Alex is from Primrose Hall Nurseries, Bedfordshire – a Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Gold Medal Winner which specialises in Peonies

All are welcome - non-members £ 3.00.

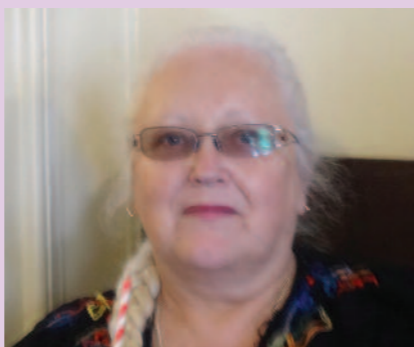
Gentle Exercise Class

Having enjoyed six weeks of chair-based workouts in the new year, the Friday morning exercise sessions have returned to qi-gong, with Nina. Do join us every Friday at Simpson Village Hall, starting at 11.00 am. £4, includes refreshments.

The last session before Easter is on **Friday 3 April.**



Meet your Parish Councillors



Hi, I'm Julie.

I have lived in Simpson for about 18 years after moving from the West Country with my husband's job. I am married with two adult sons. I work full time. I'm interested in travel, world religions, cultures, geology and fishing.

I see my role in the Parish Council as being supportive and trying to make Simpson a better place to live and I am interested in how we can make it a greener place. I think Simpson is a wonderful place with so many green spaces surrounding it, and lakes and wildlife.

● Julie Winter

Planning Matters

Raise high the roof beam

After a long gestation period, progress is being made with the construction of four detached houses on the site of the former Early Intervention Centre, also known as 211 Simpson. Bricklaying will start early in March and the timber frames will be constructed on the

remaining two properties. The work is scheduled for completion in September. An artist's impression of what they might look like then can be found at www.zoopla.co.uk/for-sale/property/simpson Rather more certain is the new name: Bowlers Close.



Five Acres...

Meanwhile, Five Acres, the former Simpson Rectory, was sold at auction for £1,110,000 on 13 February. (When it was rebuilt in 1872 there was a mortgage of £580 which was paid off in 1934!)

The property has been unused since the care home closed, suddenly, in March 2017. In recent months the interior of the house has been significantly vandalised, so it is good to know that the new owner is taking immediate steps to secure the property. He is considering options, including the plans (approved by Milton Keynes Council in September 2019) to convert the house into nine residential units.

Simpson Drive Crossing

The September 2019 Newsletter reported plans for a crossing of Simpson Drive into the picnic area car park. Those plans were subject to approval by other departments within MKC. Subsequently, the Highways Department and Road Safety Team raised concerns which have

led to significant changes. The raised asphalt section has been superseded by speed-reduction measures in the shape of verge-mounted speed indication devices (SID) in both directions which will inform drivers of their speed in this 30 mph zone. Road signs will be



introduced/upgraded to advise motorists to take care at the crossing point.

The crossing, itself, will be via a dropped kerb on both sides of Simpson Drive, leading to a surfaced path on the Linear Park side, running parallel with the road and entering the car park to the right of the existing height barrier. This will provide safe access for buggies, wheelchairs, mobility scooters etc. The Parks Trust has already cut back vegetation on the eastern side of Simpson Drive to improve sight lines for pedestrians and motorists alike.

The additional cost associated with these changes will be met by Milton Keynes Council. Work began on Monday 9 March.

John Napleton

January 1944 – February 2020

John Napleton died at home in Simpson on Friday 21 February. He had been in declining health for some time. John was not only a much-loved and respected member of our community, he was also pivotal in the success story of Milton Keynes.

He joined the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) in 1974, at the age of 30, to become the Chief Engineer for highways and traffic. As such, he was responsible for the design of city-wide infrastructure, including the standards for the grid roads and junction designs.

In 1978 John was appointed Project Director of a team of architects, engineers and planners from MKDC to design a new federal capital for Nigeria. The creation of Abuja was intended to unite the country's different ethnic groups. The project team was located at **The Mount** in Simpson which, for four years, was the centre for one of the

world's largest construction projects, producing documents for over £2 billion (at 1978 prices) of new infrastructure and commercial buildings. John was recognised in Nigeria as a founding father of Abuja.

In 1983 he became Property Management Director of MKDC, directing all commercial, industrial and housing activity in the city. He was Managing Director of the CMK shopping centre, at the time the largest shopping mall in Europe. Then, from 1988, he helped to put together the wind-up programme for MKDC, including the construction of all the remaining grid roads, in the space of four years. He then developed and formed the Milton Keynes Parks Trust, the largest private landscape trust in England.

After MKDC ended, John worked for the Commission for the New Towns. He played a major role as fundraiser for MK Theatre and Gallery. The Napleton Room

at the theatre is testament to his achievements. He was also a strong supporter of public arts in MK and was a Trustee of the Public Arts Trust after its inauguration in 2010.

Following exposure to Simpson during the four-year Abuja project at The

Mount, in 1983 John, Sue and their family moved to live at The Old Bakehouse, in the centre of the village. Despite heavy work demands, John played a significant part in the life of the community and those contributions increased when he retired from full-time work. He served on the Parish Council from 2009 to 2012 and his knowledge, contacts and advice proved invaluable in getting things done – the three SIMPSON signs at the entrances to the village and the roadside seat beside the road to Fenny Stratford are tangible legacies of his input.

John was also a regular attender at and supporter of a wide range of local events. In recent years, as multiple sclerosis took its toll on his physical abilities, he made his presence felt on his mobility scooter.

John will be sorely missed but he will live on in the collective memory as a man who gave so much to Milton Keynes, and to Simpson in particular.



Early construction of the V8 Marlborough Street, 1975



Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria

Coffee and chat

Another successful year has now been completed with the Tuesday Coffee Morning, which was started in January 2018 to foster the community spirit in this area. At present our weekly attendance is between 20 - 24 but we would still welcome more.

If you are feeling lonely, bored, fed-up or just fancy some company, why not come and join us. Tea, coffee, cake and biscuits are provided for the princely sum of £1.50, plus we have seasonal treats such as pancakes, Easter eggs, and hot cross buns. In addition to having a chat, there are the options to play board games such as chess, Scrabble, cards etc, which can be good fun. A weekly raffle is also held (£1 a ticket) if you wish to join in.

During the past year we have had a summer lunch at Dobbies in Fenny Stratford, a Christmas lunch at The Inn on the Lake at Mount Farm (both paid for by the weekly refreshment surplus!) as well as children from the Charles Warren Academy coming to us to sing Christmas

carols. In turn, we were invited to their Nativity Play at the school, which was a wonderful experience. In December a Bring and Buy stall at the coffee morning raised £102 for Willen Hospice.

On the first Tuesday of every month we welcome Ben, from the Hedgerows Centre, who is available to offer advice on matters such as housing, debt, neighbours or other relevant problems

(no appointment is necessary).

So, if you would like to join us, please come along to Simpson Village Hall on any Tuesday morning between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon - we would love to see you. If you have any questions, please feel free to ring me on the number below.

● Anne Monk, 07803 507625



Rev Nicola Vidamour writes...

I am looking forward to experiencing my first spring in Milton Keynes. When I lived in Russia, winters were long and hard. It was so life-giving to hear water trickling again as the ice thawed. Here, the flowers, bursting forth from buried bulbs, speak to me of the joyful message of Easter.



My deepest experiences of God have, however, been at times of pain and loss and so I find the whole journey of Lent and Holy Week - not just Easter Day - incredibly important and moving. The God I believe in is a God who shares in our human experience of suffering: who knows what it is like to make costly and difficult choices and to keep going when we would rather give up; who knows the hurt of broken relationships and of being betrayed by a kiss; who has to face physical agony, public humiliation and prayers of utter desperation. I meet in the Gospels a mother who has to watch her own son die; a man who commits suicide because he can't come to terms with his profound sense of failure; friends

who run away in fear when more is asked of them than they feel able to give.

Do you recognise yourself - or someone you know - in any of that? I am sure most of us do. The role of the church is not simply to offer people the

triumph of Easter Day when death is conquered by eternal life. The church is also there to accompany people on their path of sorrow.

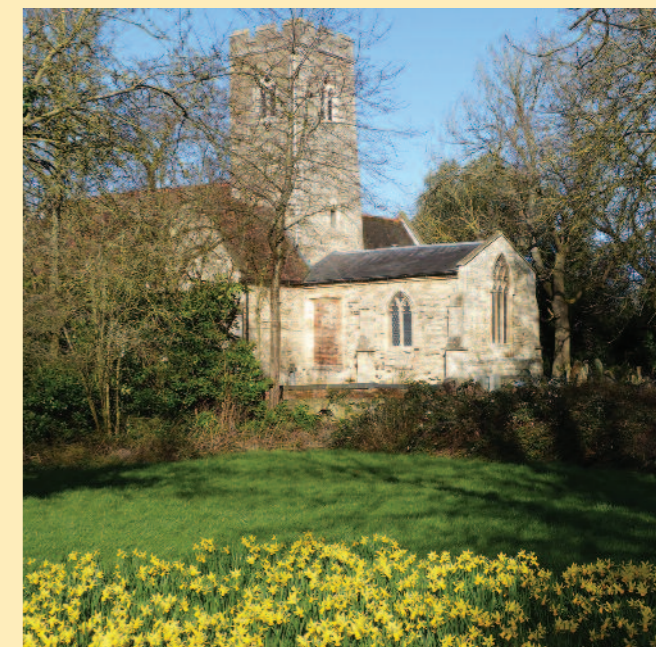
So please don't feel that you must be full of the joys of spring to come to church. I want church to be a place where people can be real. Doubts and pain are as welcome as faith and joy.

I'm also very willing to come and meet you where you

are. If there is something you would like to talk about confidentially - whether you come to church or not - please do get in touch and let's have a cup of tea together!

revnicolav@gmail.com
01908 322366

Details of Easter services at St Thomas's Church can be found in *What's on*, p.8



Church and daffodils on St David's Day

Getting There on Ashland!



The Ashland Steering Group are thrilled to tell you that the hard work on a Meeting Space for Ashland has now reached the stage where:

A Business Case to 'draw down' the Section 106 money has been delivered to Milton Keynes Council.

A Planning Application for a lakeside building has been submitted.

We have the support of the Parks Trust and the local ward councillor for the building, and hope that residents will be able to come along to events that will offer a chance to see the plans and to chat with the Steering Group, the Project Manager and the local parish councillors. The plans are based on what local residents have said that they want from a 'community space'.

Over the Easter school holiday period we will be holding two 'open tent' sessions on the Lakeside in Ashland – all welcome – as well as offering a time to meet at Simpson Village Hall during the planning consultation period (of 13 weeks) to discuss the plans. We will publish the link to the Planning Application on the website www.simpsonandashland.co.uk and on the parish Facebook. Look out for more information on these events.

The Steering Group is confident that they have made the best use of the creativity of the architect to produce plans for an exciting, green, practical 'indoor/outdoor' building that will 'sit' well within the beautiful landscape of Ashland parkland.

Pop up cafés

There was a real buzz in Simpson Village Hall on a recent Saturday morning when people dropped into the first Talking Shop café. Thank you to those who made cakes – they were much appreciated. The feedback was that it was relaxing and pleasing to have time to meet new people from across Ashland, Simpson and the surrounding area and that, for those who work during the week, it was great to catch up with neighbours.

As the Exercise Classes have proved so popular on Friday mornings, we decided to hold a 'Soup and Roll' Talking Shop cafe on Friday 6 March – and open it up to everyone. Local residents and friends from Walnut Tree, Two Mile Ash

and Cranfield (walkers who love walking round Caldecotte Lake and the nearby area) popped in and enjoyed the home-made soup. Ben, our local Advice Worker, was there too – thanks for coming along, Ben.

We have received a grant from one of our MKC ward councillors, Paul Trendall - thank you Paul. It is helping to buy wipe-down tablecloths and some children's play resources. We also now have enough in the kitty to ensure that everyone who contributes food is not out of pocket.

The next Talking Shop is on Friday 10 April when we will be offering Cream Teas between 2.00 and 5.00pm.

Thank you to Wendy, Julie, Sandra, David and others that helped with Talking Shop organisation. If you would like to help, too, please do get in touch.



● Sheila Thornton
sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

**THE NEXT
'Talking Shop'
POP UP CAFE**

**CREAM TEA
Friday APRIL 10th
2pm – 5pm
Simpson Village Hall**

EVERYONE WELCOME

Fund-raising in 2019

A magnificent £18,862 is the combined effort of the many events held in Simpson and Ashland during 2019. We have helped numerous charities ranging from local organizations, medical charities, animal welfare, the arts, human rights and many more. The quizzes, charity fayres and coffee mornings also get people together, often with food, so help to provide a social life for some who might otherwise feel lonely. The events have been staged at The Mount, St

Thomas's Church and Simpson Village Hall and have been generously supported by friends and families, as well as those who live in Simpson and Ashland.
Well done all of us.

Editor's note: At the heart of these fundraising activities are Pat and Neil Hodges, Sian Lewis, Monica Shelley, Karen Steeden and Rosemary Englander.



In support of Willen Hospice

Venue: **Simpson Village Hall**

Date: **Saturday 16 May**

Time: **2.30 – 4pm**

More info: **AFTERNOON TEA**
homemade scones & cakes
raffle
Offers of help welcome
Contact: Monica, 26 Harner Road, D190B 679989

Willen Hospice needs to raise £4.7 million a year, that's 19 a minute, to continue providing free, compassionate care to local patients and their families.

Charles Warren Academy

Can you help?

We are looking for some people who would like to hear our children read. This would involve helping them with words they are stuck on and discussing the text.

You will need to be able to dedicate one hour a week for a period of time and you would need to undertake a DBS check before starting.

If you are interested please contact admin@charleswarrenacademy.org

Thank you!

Farewell to Lisa

Well what can we say - Lisa Emmanuel has only been with the Parish Council as clerk for six months but she has made a huge impact. As a Parish Council we rely on our clerk to ensure that what we do is legal, to take the minutes at meetings and to manage our finances, but Lisa has done so much more than that. Hitting the ground running, she has helped us further refine our policies and procedures and offered wise advice and counsel as we move towards taking over the management of the SERCO open spaces contract in April this year. And she has been an invaluable part of the team working through the various stages of the planning for the S106-funded Ashland Meeting Place.

We will really miss Lisa and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all that she has done for the Parish Council and the community more widely and wish her well as she takes up an exciting full-time post at West Bleckley Town Council. But this is not a complete goodbye, as I am pleased to let you know that Lisa will be working with the Steering Group and the Parish Council (albeit in a different capacity to Clerk) to see the Ashland Meeting Place through its next stages and to completion.

● David Pye

What's On...

The following events take place at Simpson Village Hall unless otherwise stated...



MARCH

- **Friday 13th:** *Gentle Exercise, Simpson Village Hall.* 11.00am – 12.00noon.
- **Friday 20th:** *Gentle Exercise, Simpson Village Hall.* 11.00am – 12.00noon.
- **Friday 27th:** *Gentle Exercise, Simpson Village Hall.* 11.00am – 12.00noon.
- **Saturday 28th:** *Quiz in aid of Good News Romania.*

APRIL

- **Sunday 5th:** *Palm Sunday service at St Thomas's - Rev Nicola Vidamour.* 10.30 – 11.30am
- **Tuesday 7th:** *Advice session at the Village Hall.* 10.00am – 12.00noon.
- **Friday 10th:** *Pop-up café Cream Team, Simpson Village Hall.* 2.00 – 5.00pm.
- **Sunday 12th:** *Easter Sunday service at St Thomas's, with Holy Communion – Rev Nicola Vidamour.* 10.30 – 11.30am.
- **Tuesday 14th:** *Simpson Garden Group talk – How to grow Peonies, Simpson Village Hall* 8.00pm.
- **Saturday 18th:** *Quiz in aid of Wader Quest*
- **Sunday 19th:** *Parks Trust Community Action Day in Ashland.* 10.00am – 12.00noon.

MAY

- **Saturday 2nd:** *Quiz in aid of the Osprey Centre.*
- **Tuesday 4th:** *Advice session at the Village Hall.* 10.00am – 12.00noon.
- **Saturday 16th:** *Afternoon tea in support of Willen Hospice at the Village Hall.* 2.30 – 4.00pm.
- **Saturday 23rd:** *Quiz in aid of Works for Us*
- **Tuesday 26th:** *Annual Parish Meeting, Simpson Village Hall.* 8.00pm.

*All **Quiz Nights** start at 7.00pm. Suppers are chosen by those requesting the quiz night. For more info contact missquiz@sky.com or tel: **01908 644785**



Advice Service

Appointments available @ Hedgerows Family Centre every Tuesday. Call 01908 239000 to book.

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

Come along for a cuppa and a chat!

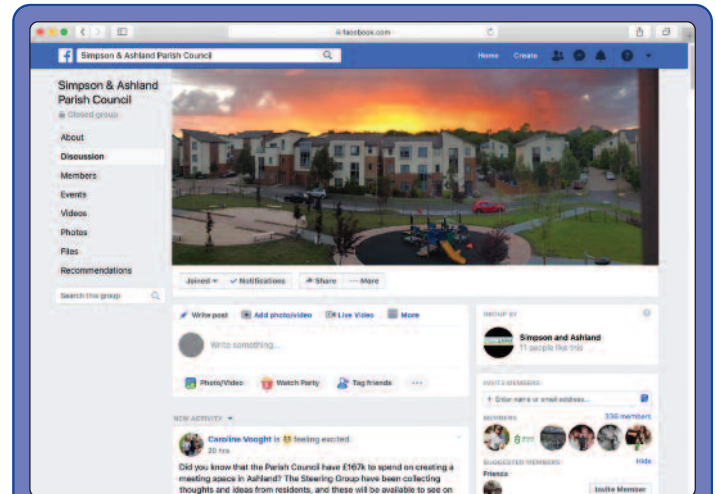
First Tuesday of every month

10am to 12noon

Simpson Village Hall



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



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

With thanks to the following contributors: Jane Anderson, Pat and Neil Hodges, Anne Monk, David Pye, Stephen Roberts, Emma Thompson, Sheila Thornton, Nicola Vidamour, Julie Winter

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