

Winter draws on...



*Melissa (5) and Matthew (3) with their father, Richard Hird, litter picking by the canal
Inset: Emily and Holly, litter picking at Ashland Lakes in June*

Many folks are wondering what autumn and winter hold in store – how surreal will it be as we continue with physical distancing, masks and the other interruptions to ‘normality’? How can the Parish Council best support residents to stay alert to the needs of their neighbours and to keep in good mental as well as physical health?

There is a lot of help, support and advice available [see *Information on p.12*], and we will continue to share ideas and information through emailed bulletins and on the parish Facebook page. If you are not already on the distribution list for either, please do sign up by sending your email address to:

clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk If you do not have an email address, then call **07597 304054** and leave your phone number so that we can contact you to arrange to send a print copy.

In recent months, some people have met to do outside exercise, for a coffee from the mobile van [see *p.9*] – a ‘habit’ which is continuing and adapting as rules and regulations change. Open spaces have been used for impromptu

gatherings to catch up (bring your own chair and drink), sing and even, in the case of one small group meeting at the Simpson Drive play area, to practise the ukulele! A Book Exchange has been set up outside Simpson Village Hall [see *p.11*] and, most importantly, people have been looking out for others through telephone trees and Zoom coffee meetings and door-knocking.

So, what else could happen as the colder weather comes along? Is there any interest in regular small-group walks, at a pace which can fit with mobility scooters or the slowest walker? What about more online coffee-and-chat ‘gatherings’?

If you are interested in improving the environment, then you could link you with one of the groups working in Simpson, or a litter-picking group (the Parish Council has the equipment needed) or you could help with planning for the use of the new Ashland Meeting Place.

Please get in touch – **sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk**. We need to work together to make sure we all stay well.

Simpson in Lockdown

How have Simpson residents experienced the changes in our daily lives brought about by the global pandemic? We’re living through history and we’re interested in capturing it through the experiences of individuals and groups in our community. We would like to collect people’s stories, photos and documents which could eventually form an exhibition and/or a publication.

Every one of us will have our own story of living and coping through lockdown – there may be stories of illness, shielding, births, deaths, home working, key working, home schooling, travel, family disruption and much more. Some will be sad and some may be happy or funny. There will also be stories of community efforts to help and support one another. We think it is important to try and capture these before they are forgotten.

Would you like to share your story? You might like to write it yourself or tell it to one of us, either in person or by phone. We would give you a few broad questions to get you started and suggest some topics you might like to cover. We would also love to know if you have any relevant photos, documents or pieces of artwork (rainbows spring to mind!).

Please contact us if you would like to be involved:

- **Gill Needham**
gillneedham3317@gmail.com
07815191705
- **Sue Napleton** sanapleton@aol.com
01908 666994
- **Monica Shelley**
monicaannashelley@gmail.com
01908 679989
- **Sheila Thornton, Margaret Young, Ruth McCracken**

If you are reading this in Ashland, how about organising something similar for your part of the parish? If you would welcome help and advice on setting it up, please contact Sheila Thornton **sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk**

Ashland Meeting Place – Planning Permission Granted

As you can imagine, there have been a few celebrations in Ashland! Finally, we have planning permission for the meeting place. There are a few conditions (as there always are) that the Council requires us to meet, but nothing that we can't achieve.

So, what are the next steps? Now we have permission, we can start to draw down the S106 funds which Milton Keynes Council are holding for us. Some of this money will go to the Parish Council to reimburse the fees they have paid to get us to this stage, and the remainder will all be spent on the build.



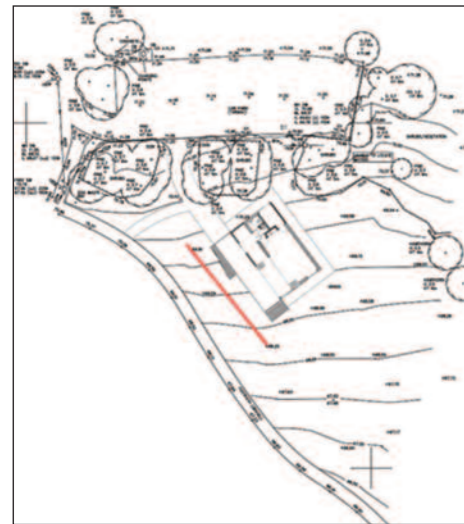
Our architect, Andrew Armes, is in discussion with the business supplying the containers. This is critical work to make sure the specification is correct, and we're supplied with the building we've planned for. We can then start to draw up timescales and plans, and we will be working with MK College to enable their students to support the fit-out with plumbing and electrical services – a 'proper' community collaboration!

Once work is underway, we will be looking for Ashland residents to help complete the building with some landscaping and small odd jobs. **YES - WE NEED YOU.** So, watch for news and updates on Facebook, the PC website and in the newsletter for information and how you can get involved. Please

support the project in whichever way you can. We know that many of you have been waiting years for this project, and it's exciting that we're properly underway.

Finally, on behalf of the Steering Group, may we thank Lisa Emmanuel, our Project Manager and Andrew Armes, our architect, who are working beyond their remuneration to make this happen. Neither are Simpson and Ashland residents and their work is so much appreciated. We would also like to thank the Parish Council for their support, and in particular Sheila Thornton, who has supported this project from a very early stage.

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



Electric Scooters

Earlier in the summer, Milton Keynes Council began a year-long trial of electric scooter use. You can find out more about the scheme on the Get Smarter Travel MK website: www.getsmartertravelmk.org/smart/e-scooter-trials There are currently three operators: Lime, Spin and Ginger.

There are two types of operation, 'free flow' or docked. Free flow is where you can ride a scooter and, when you've finished, park it for the next user. Scooters can be left almost anywhere and there's a risk that they can be seen as 'abandoned'. This is not usually the case and the scooter is re-assigned for the next journey fairly soon after it is left. The app shows where the scooters are after a ride has finished. The scooters are fitted with GPS, so the operators know where they are at all times. Where one is not re-used within a defined period - typically 24 hours - the operations team is dispatched to relocate it.



You can check whether a scooter is available for use and the amount of charge in the battery left by pressing the screen in the middle of the handlebars, which then lights up (see photo). If you are concerned that a scooter has been abandoned or is inconsiderately parked, you can

report it to the relevant operator. You may be asked for the ID number of the scooter.

- Lime: support@li.me 0800 808 5223 www.li.me/en-us/home
- Spin: <https://spinpm.wpengine.com/>
- Ginger: <https://www.ginger.town/>



The Blue Light Hub



The Blue Light Hub, located at the far western end of the parish, opened on 30 June. In its first phase it is home to the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, replacing the stations at Bletchley and Great Holm and bringing together the crews, staff and appliances under one roof.

Before the end of the year, they will be joined by the ambulances and crews of the South Central Ambulance Service, relocating from their current base at Milton Keynes University Hospital. Following them will be the Thames Valley Police Community Support Officers, and finally there will be

accommodation for the National Health Blood and Transplant Service.

At the end of July, I was invited to join a small party to view the Hub and hear more about how it will operate. Station Commander Barrie Ackerlay explained the function of the spaces and facilities, both now and in the future. The crews have a canteen, storage space for their kit, showers and, on the first floor, a fitness room. Crew members are required to log a prescribed amount of time each shift on exercise machines and with weights, and while we walking round I observed what appeared to be competitive press-up competitions in



the yard! Also on the first floor is open-plan office accommodation which is designed to become a control and command centre in the event of major disaster or civil disorder.

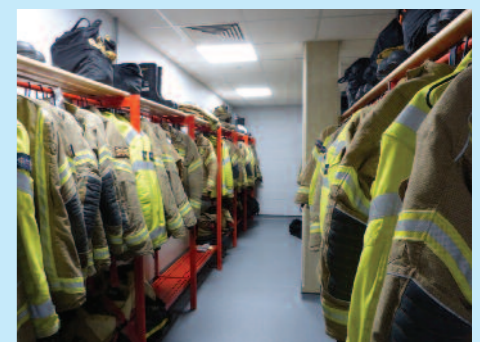
While we were being taken round there was a genuine 999 call-out which enabled us to see, at first hand, the speed and efficiency of the response as the sliding gates moved aside to allow the appliance quick passage on to H9 Groveway.

The ground floor of the Hub accommodates two meeting rooms, and the intention is that, when conditions allow, they can be made available for community use. Barrie Ackerlay is also



keen to welcome members of the local community to see inside the hub in due course and understand more about how it functions. As one of the first centres of its kind in the country, the Hub is attracting a lot of interest from other blue light services and it's good to know that this pioneering work is going on within our parish. It's also reassuring that a positive and constructive relationship is developing between the Parish Council and those in charge at the Hub.

● **Peter Barnes**



It rained and it rained and it rained...

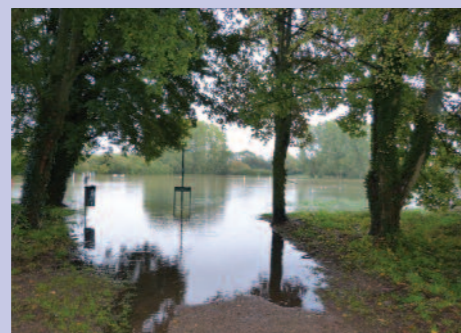


It rained and it rained and it rained... In the wake of Storm Alex, Saturday 3 October was the wettest day in the UK since records began in 1891. According to the Met Office, enough rain fell to fill Loch Ness. Closer to home, some found its way into the River Ouzel which, in turn, flooded the Linear Park on the Sunday and rose further still overnight so that, by Monday 5th, the road through Simpson was under water from the Plough Inn corner to the Church corner. Some properties also came under threat and sandbags were deployed. The level of water in the lakes at Ashland rose, in line with their intended function, but the only people to be significantly discomfited were the dog walkers.

On the Monday, a number of Simpson residents joined the effort to manage the consequences of the flooding. David Pye demonstrated that, like King Canute/Cnut before him, even the Chair of the Parish Council was powerless in the face of the advancing



tide. David and others encouraged drivers to reduce their speed as they drove through the surface water. Most complied and appreciated the advice being given. The number 18 bus service ran to schedule. The water began to recede late in the afternoon and the road was dry again by the following



morning.

Simpson has not witnessed flooding on this scale for many years. Probably the most dramatic scenes were recorded in March 1947 when there was a rapid thaw following a sustained, hard winter. The high water mark from that time – recorded on maps as the 1947 Flood Line – helped to define the boundaries of the Linear Park during the early development of Milton Keynes.

One outcome from the most recent experience has been the establishment of a 'contingency group' of residents who are willing and able to be called upon to assist in the event of similar emergencies. Thanks to those who have already signed up; if you would like to be added to the list, please email Sheila Thornton sheila.thornton@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

Enquiries are being made as to why the flooding was so extensive. In particular, it is unclear whether the procedures for diverting water from the river into Caldecotte Lake worked efficiently. The Parish Council is being updated on progress.

● Peter Barnes



Flooding in Simpson, 1947



News from St Thomas'



St. Thomas' Church reopened for Sunday worship on 13 September. We are now holding two services - at 10am and 11am - in order to accommodate everyone safely. The chairs are sanitised between sittings! All are welcome, but it is advisable to contact Rev. Nicola in advance so that we can make sure we have space for you – revnicolav@gmail.com or 07986

160335.

During July and August, we opened for private prayer on Saturday afternoons. This proved very meaningful and helpful for people. We also held coffee after church on Zoom over the summer, meeting at 11:30 on Sundays to share news and our responses to a question which Nicola had circulated earlier. We were invited, amongst other

things, to talk about what we are afraid of; what would be in our lunch box if we went out for the day; and to tell a story which involved us and water!

We have also been involved in providing pre-recorded video services for the parish. St. Thomas' is responsible for this once a month. Our September offering had a harvest theme, and we were delighted and excited to include within it a short film of Rebecca Hiorns, who produced the recent Habitat Survey, talking about the biodiversity in the churchyard. We are very grateful to Rebecca and to her film- producer son, Sam, for putting this together for us. You can watch it here:

<https://vimeo.com/462099626>

On Saturday 31 October and Sunday 1 November the church will be open from 2.00-4.00 pm for people who want to come and remember those who have died – either recently or longer ago. Please bring your own tea light and face covering with you. Every half hour (at 2:15, 2:45, 3:15 and 3:45) a minister will lead a short act of remembrance. If you would like your deceased friend(s) or family member(s) to be prayed for, please write their name(s) on a piece of paper and give this to the steward when you arrive. Space in the church is limited and there should be no more than six people in each family group.

● Nicola Vidamour

Parish Manager

Thomas Walker, who became Clerk last February, resigned in October following an increase in the demands of his other part-time employment. Parish Councillors decided to redefine the post to become that of Parish Manager, combining the responsibilities of the Clerk with those of the management of Simpson Village Hall and, in due course, the Ashland Meeting place. We are delighted to announce that Louise Brazier has been appointed as our first Parish Manager. She will take up her duties (part-time) on Monday 16 November.

Hello, my name is Louise, and I am overjoyed to be appointed as your new Parish Manager. This position includes the duties of the Parish Clerk and also additional responsibilities to support, with your contributions, the communal facilities and also to be active in monitoring the way our open spaces are managed.



Previously, I worked for 11 years within the head office of a limited company, after graduating in Business

Information Systems. I worked extensively in the area of data systems, from analysis, development and project management. I have also enjoyed working closer to the local community as a volunteer for Age UK, and as a Trustee for Heartline Families.

As I have lived in Walton Park, next to Simpson and Ashland, for the past 20 years, I already feel close to the community. I appreciate and respect our open spaces, local nature and wildlife. I am thrilled for this opportunity to serve SAPC, to help plan and implement the aims and objectives of the Council and the parish. I realise, with the challenge of Covid-19, that the usual gatherings and ways of communication within the parish are limited. I will be working with councillors to provide inclusive communication and hope to meet more of you face-to-face when that is safely possible. From Monday 16 November I can be contacted at clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk and 07597 304054.

Open Spaces

What a great place we live, here in Simpson and Ashland. The last Saturday in September I spent having a coffee from the mobile van with residents on Ashland, talking about the news that planning permission has been granted for the new Meeting Place, before heading off to mow the grass on the site so that no nosey newts are tempted to come that way – we do NOT need any more holdups. Then off to check out a group in Simpson (one of several) that

are working to improve the habitat for bugs, birds and butterflies in their area. As part of the discussions I was reminded that many people are unaware of the great resource that is My Milton Keynes (<https://mapping.milton-keynes.gov.uk/>). Just plug a postcode into the home page and you can find a ton of information on local services and access maps which show what land is the responsibility of Milton Keynes Council and which is owned by Parks Trust, which roads are maintained during winter blizzards and so on.

Your Parish Council is now overseeing the landscape services delivered by Serco in our area.

Councillors have walked Serco managers around the village and described the changes that residents are planning, and are meeting monthly with the team to report back on the quality of the delivery.

Serco also deal with waste collection and fly-tipping. You can report problems easily by calling 01908 252570 or emailing envservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk That is the quickest and most efficient way of getting problems sorted. Please, only get in touch with the clerk or councillors if there is an issue following your initial report.

● Sheila Thornton

Biodiversity

The front page of the last issue of this Newsletter, back in early March, was headed Green, greener, greenest. Since then, in spite of the strictures of the pandemic, there have been a number of positive moves in local efforts to identify a plan to encourage increased levels of biodiversity in Simpson and Ashland and to begin to act on that plan.

A major step forward was the publication, in July, of the Simpson Habitat Survey, researched and written by Lissel Road resident, Rebecca Hiorns. Rebecca's starting point was to establish and map the variety of environments to be found within the parish: the water environment of the River Ouzel, the Simpson brook, Caldecotte Lake, the Grand Union Canal

and assorted small ponds; the woodland, scrub and hedgerow environment; grassland; and the built environment – properties and their adjacent gardens. The report identifies the variety of plants, mammals, birds, butterflies and amphibians that have been seen. It was one of the unlooked-for benefits of the lockdown period in the spring and early summer that many of us spent more time out of doors on exercise walks and became more aware of – and more appreciative of – the wildlife on our doorstep. As well as recording these, the report focuses on the significance of key wildlife corridors such as the River Ouzel and the canal, and of havens located around the parish, such as the churchyard. Also of importance are the gaps in those corridors and the impediments to movement – of hedgehogs, for example – often unintentionally created. The report concludes with suggestions for ways in which

improvements can be made at a variety of levels: the management of open spaces, now more under the control of the Parish Council; the efforts of groups of residents with local knowledge of their particular part of the village and a determination to improve it; and individuals with the power to effect change in their own homes and gardens.

Here, you will find examples of some of the actions under way. Maybe, they will inspire you to follow their lead...

If you've not already read it, the illustrated can be found here: www.simpsonandashland.co.uk/uploads/1/8/7/7/18770520/item_9_-_simpson_habitat_survey_-_27_july_2020.pdf

Hedgehogs

One creature that endears itself to many of us is the hedgehog. But there are fewer and fewer to be seen, either alive or dead on the roads, where they have been run over. One estimate is that numbers have declined by 90% over the past 75 years. There are a number of contributory factors, including the compartmentalisation of land into private gardens. Hedgehogs need space to create territories, forage and find mates; in open country they may travel a mile or so each night in search of food and sex. So, the fences, walls and other obstructions to their movements that typically surround our gardens are bad news for them.

During the lockdown there were increased numbers of sightings of hedgehogs in Simpson and Ashland, as people spent more time out of doors, and that has raised levels of interest as to how best to support and encourage them. Residents at The Mount have purchased 'hedgehog houses' and specialist food, and Hanmer Road residents are being encouraged to create corridors between gardens by cutting CD-sized sections out of the bottom of fences or channelling gaps underneath them. Another project being encouraged, is to create piles of leaves which might prove an attractive place for hedgehogs to hibernate.

The website Hedgehog Street



www.hedgehogstreet.org has many examples of practical measures that can be taken. Why not try some of them and observe and record what effects they have on sightings? Also, take a look at <https://bighedgehogmap.org/> and type in your postcode to see what's on the record so far – there is plenty of scope to add to that.

Village Hall Working Party



During the time that Simpson Village Hall has been closed since March, the vegetation that surrounds it has not been inactive. And autumn leaves falling from the surrounding trees have added a further layer of evidence that some sort of action was required to maintain a degree of order on the site. So, on two Saturday mornings in October, local volunteers wielding brooms, rakes, loppers and secateurs engaged in an

extensive tidying-up operation, cutting back the undergrowth at the side and rear of the hall, pruning the shrubs on the raised bed, clearing the gutters and sweeping-up the leaves in the car park. The 'harvest' filled six green bins. Grateful thanks to: Steve Bates, Ed Jordan, Ashlynn Wilkinson, Eva Wilkinson (6), John Hammar, Esmee Wilkinson (7) and Jane Anderson (Left to right in the picture). Esmee and Eva did a first-class



job of sweeping up leaves, putting them into bins and compacting them, using their own weight. The previous weekend, Ross Eatwell had begun the assault, ably assisted by Madison (7) and Flynn (5).

For many years, members of the Simpson in Bloom group have included the Hall in the list of sites in the village that they maintain. Now that the group is smaller, they are having to prune that list, though they will still look after the tubs and basket at the front to the hall. Now is an opportune moment to thank the group for all they do – and have done – to enhance the attractiveness of the village and to support and encourage biodiversity.



Simpson Christmas Tree

In the run-up to Christmas, members of the Simpson Garden Group will, once again decorate and illuminate the Christmas tree near the church. However, because of the Covid-19 restrictions, they regret that there will be no carol singing, mulled wine and mince pies.

Greener Living

One way in which to help the environment is to be more energy-efficient in the ways in which we lead our lives. This website has details of government schemes that work toward that end. www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme

Simpson's Nature: Past, Present and Future

Every year, in September, there is a nationwide programme of Heritage Open Days in which local heritage is showcased and celebrated in a variety of ways. Milton Keynes generates its own panorama of events – 99 of them this year – which included two guided walks in Simpson over the weekend of 12/13 September. The national theme for 2020 was 'Hidden Nature', which neatly (if unintentionally) coincided with the publication of the Simpson Habitat Survey, described elsewhere on these pages.

The themes and examples of Rebecca Hiorn's report were combined with the well-established story of Simpson's long history, to create a narrative which reflected on some of the ways in which changes to the landscape over time have had consequences for the lives of both human and animal occupants.

The walk began in the churchyard, the single space in the village which embraces the most history and the greatest diversity of plant life (see page ?). Then, standing in Simpson Warren Field, people considered the changes to the landscape and agricultural practices brought about by the Enclosure movement of the late 18th century. A much more recent development, the creation of Caldecotte Lake in 1983, has brought a host of new wildlife to the vicinity, particularly birds. Another major change to the landscape was the arrival



of the canal in the early 19th century and the consequent movement of people and goods between London and Birmingham. The canal is now viewed, along with the River Ouzel, as one of the important 'wildlife corridors' traversing Milton Keynes.

The walk's route skirted Ashland's lakes, which have quickly established themselves as home to several resident and migratory species of waterfowl which are much appreciated by local residents – another example of recent local heritage. The walk ended in Hanmer Road which, until nearly 50 years ago was the site of an apple orchard. Today, the many well-tended – and less well-tended – gardens support

a diversity of wildlife in other ways and offer scope for further productive engagement with the natural world, one that has become a more explicit part of our lives during the pandemic.

The two walks attracted a total 45 participants from Simpson and further afield in Milton Keynes, who left with ideas about how they might adapt their own lives and environments in ways which would help to create an inheritance fit for future generations. In the recent words of Sir David Attenborough, 'Whatever happens next is up to all of us.'

● Peter Barnes and Rebecca Hiorns

St Thomas' Churchyard

The churchyard of St Thomas' is recognised in the Habitat Survey as being of special interest. By its very history – parts of the church date from the 13th century – it is the oldest-established single site in the village and partly because of that it has a rich variety of plants and grasses. In addition, the older tombstones are home to lichens and the fabric of the church building is an attraction for mason bees and, this spring, a nesting blue tit. Rebecca walked the churchyard regularly during lockdown and notes the sequence of wild flowers, including this Star of Bethlehem in early May.

Rebecca is working together with Rev Nicola Vidamour and members of the church congregation, to develop a plan for the management of the

churchyard, and especially the location, type and timing of mowing during the spring and summer. The church has to balance its wish to support biodiversity initiatives and plans with the expectations of those who visit the churchyard to tend the graves of their relatives and friends. Part of the plan over the coming months is to map the site and to chart the location and timing of the emergence of flowers and other natural events. This offers opportunities for local residents with some knowledge of plant identification to take part in the recording exercise. If you are interested,



please contact Peter Barnes peter.barnes@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk An additional part of the project will be to produce an information leaflet explaining the maintenance plan and enabling visitors to identify flowers in season.

The sun shone on the working party!

A group of Hanmer Road residents got together on 17 September to tidy the paths, pick up all the odd bits of wood, cut back brambles and undergrowth and generally improve the look of Hanmer Green. Fortunately, the weather was perfect and we were all really pleased with the results of our efforts. Now we've just got to keep it that way!

● Monica Shelley



Coffee time in Ashland and Simpson

The Really Awesome Coffee Company is visiting Ashland every Saturday morning at 11am on Wraxall Way. Everyone is welcome to pop along and buy a coffee and support a local MK based business.

The van also continues to visit Simpson at 11.00 on Thursday mornings, stopping outside the church.

More details on The Really Awesome Coffee Company can be found at <https://www.reallyawesomecoffee.co.uk/partners/miltonkeynes/>



Remembrance Sunday



This year, Remembrance Sunday is on 8 November. As always, there will be a service and ceremony around the war memorial, surrounding the nationwide two-minutes' silence at 11.00. Much will be familiar and traditional but some features have had to be adapted to conform to Covid-19 regulations.

Rev Nicola Vidamour has prepared an Order of Service that will begin at the memorial at 10.50. In the lead up to 11.00, Harvey Norton will speak the words from Laurence Binyon's poem (*They shall grow not old...*) followed by the sounding of the Last Post. The end of the silence will be marked by the Rouse, on the bugle, after which poppy wreaths

will be laid by Eric Coles, on behalf of St Thomas's Church, Peter Barnes, on behalf of the Parish Council, and three members of local uniformed organizations. Prayers will be followed by the stirring words of the Kohima Epitaph. Much of that will be conducted from within a cordon around the memorial, demarcated by strings of the inspiring poppies that were knitted by local residents in 2018, to mark the centenary of the Armistice that ended World War 1.

There are two important changes to usual practice. First, there will be no service inside St Thomas' Church and no singing outside, during the ceremony.



Second, those attending will be required to stand at marked, spaced, locations outside the cordon. There will be 36 of them, either for individuals or couples/households clustered together. There will be stewards on duty as people approach, who will record a name and contact phone number or, ideally, ask you to use your NHS app to register via the QR code that will be provided. One of the implications of this operation, which it is impossible to trial in a meaningful way, is that if you plan to attend for the 10.50 start, you should arrive in plenty of time and be patient while your presence is recorded and you find a distanced place.

Please note that if you wish to plant your own Royal British Legion wooden cross at the memorial you will be able to do so, in your own time, once the ceremony has concluded – or at any time later in the day. Also, if you left a painted pebble on the memorial last year and wish to retrieve it, please do so before 7 November. Any remaining pebbles will be removed to a safe location.

● Nicola Vidamour and Peter Barnes

Victory in Japan Day Remembered

The Simpson Garden Group commemorated VJ Day on 15 August – the 75th Anniversary of the end of hostilities of the second World War - with a display of knitted poppies around the Simpson war memorial, the memorial bench and the Christmas tree. The poppies were made in 2018 by many of Simpson's ladies to mark their respect for those injured and dead from world conflicts.

Two information sheets were placed on the memorial to explain what was being honoured and the painted poppy pebbles were put to good use.

The Kohima exhortation, shown, was a reminder of what so many had given their lives for: *When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.*

Japan formally surrendered on 2 September 1945.

The next poppy display will be on Armistice Day.

● Lena Bates

Simpson Book Exchange

A place to bring your pre-loved books and find some treasures to take away



Have you seen our new little library? If not, you will find it tucked under the entrance porch of the Village Hall. You should find books to suit all tastes – detective stories, mysteries, modern classics, romantic fiction, biographies and more, as well as a small collection of children's books (in the old-style desk). Do have a browse and take away any books that catch your eye.

Donations are welcome, but not boxes full, as space is limited. And the books should be clean and in reasonable condition.

This is part of a growing movement across the UK and worldwide called 'Little Libraries'. Communities like ours have their books in bus shelters, telephone boxes and even modified rabbit hutches! We are fortunate to have an ideal sheltered space outside the Village Hall. A big thank you to everyone who has helped with this, and we are delighted to see that it is already being well used.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please get in contact.

Gill Needham
gillneedham3317@gmail.com
07815 191705

● Margaret Young

On the Buses

Now:

An hourly bus service during the day from Monday to Saturday. The number 18 bus winds its way through some areas of the city where commercial services (usually run by Arriva) do not travel, including Simpson. The service is heavily subsidised and since last March the number of users has plummeted. During July, it is estimated that as few as 600 bus users travelled regularly on ALL subsidised bus routes in MK. While numbers are expected to increase, they are unlikely to recover to pre-Covid-19 levels. Revenue from parking charges across Milton Keynes have been used to subsidise routes such as the 18, and it is estimated that in the financial year 2020/21 there will be a shortfall in that income to MK Council of £9m (65% of budget).

The future:

As Simpson residents live more than 400 metres from a commercial service bus stop, from 1 April 2021, people should be able to use demand responsive transport (DRT). This is a smaller vehicle that can collect passengers from a fixed point and take them to their destination or a suitable interchange. The service will have to



meet fixed maximum wait times and an average response time. Route planning relies on software to make the most efficient use of the vehicles.

In the meanwhile:

Bus operators, such as Z&S that run the 18 service, will see both their income and the subsidy from MK Council reduced, because of the decline in business. Also, the reduced rates for pre-9.30am travel may cease, from the

end of October. There is no certainty about how this may affect the timetables and regularity of the buses. During October, two Simpson residents who are regular users of the service attended a presentation about the plans and are now having input to the Steering Group. The Parish Council will continue to promote information through the website, Facebook, bulletins, newsletters and noticeboards.

● Sheila Thornton

Information

Your Covid Recovery is an online platform for you to support yourself or a family member, relative or friend following a Covid illness. This can be a very stressful time and the information on the website provides reassurance and support during recovery. As you recover, you may still be coming to terms with the impact the virus has had. These changes should get better over time, some may take longer than others, but there are things you can do to help. **Your Covid Recovery** helps you to understand what has happened and what you might expect as part of your recovery.

www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/

Children and Family Centres have activity packs that parents can collect from outside of centres. They are also running sessions virtually and offering telephone support. Contact your local centre for further information.

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/early-years-andchildcare/children-s-centres

They also have Foodbank Xtra (01908 565852), this can be collected or if there is a need, delivery can be arranged.

Covid-19 Urgent Eyecare Service (CUES)

People with any of the following symptoms should go directly to the emergency eye service at the hospital:

- Chemical or penetrating injury
- Severe pain
- Sudden complete loss of vision in the last few hours

Contact the single point of access on 0333 015 1844 from 8.00am to 8.00pm or see a list of accredited optical practices currently providing the service at www.primaryeyecare.co.uk using the 'Find a practice' tool.

Great fun and for all ages! MK Arts Centre has commissioned 31 unique fun and engaging workshops delivered by 15 artists from across the UK and Europe. These workshops and tutorials demonstrate a range of disciplines, techniques and materials from clay to digital to found household objects.

<https://miltonkeynesartscentre.org/Creative-Courses-online>

MIND is offering a wide range of online support for mental health. 01525 722 225 or

e-mail Victoria.Sharp@mind-blmk.org.uk or

www.mind-blmk.org.uk/how-we-can-help/milton-keynes/

There are many more resources to support residents through difficult times. The Parish Council can signpost you and help you access what you need. Get in touch and keep an eye on the parish Facebook page where we regularly post information. And don't forget to sign up for our mini-newsletters.



www.simpsonandashland.co.uk
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07597 304 054 Twitter: @SimpsonAshland

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, Louise Brazier, Lars de Wijngaert, Ross Eatwell, Chichi Ezech, Andrea Gray, Gill Needham, Monica Shelley, Sheila Thornton, Nicola Vidamour, Caroline Vooght, Margaret Young.

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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!

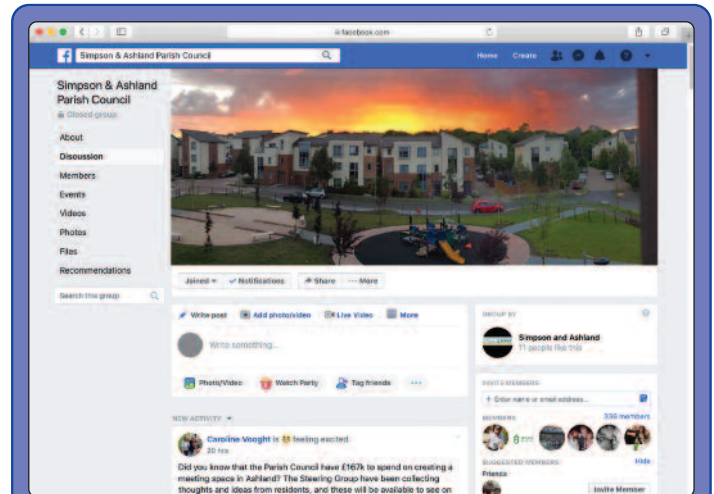
First Tuesday of every month

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



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