

## Nearly there...

Work on Ashland Lakeside Community Centre is all but complete, at long last. With just a short list of 'snagging' points to be resolved the building has already hosted some events as part of a phased programme of 'supervised' activities, such as the Breakfast Club and the Ashland Social, reported on here.

A major step forward is the appointment of a part-time Facilities Manager, who will have responsibility for the day-to-



day running of the facility. We extend a warm welcome to **Natasha Cheriyan**, who starts in post at the beginning of May. She will also have equivalent responsibilities for Simpson Village Hall. As Natasha becomes familiar with Ashland Lakeside it will be possible to open it up to a wider variety of uses and hirers

The commanding external vista of Ashland Lakeside is there for all to see. If you have yet to look inside, there will be an opportunity on **Monday 15 May at 7.00** when the Annual Parish Meeting will be held in Ashland, for the first time (see David Pye's invitation on page 5).

Go to the Parish website [www.simpsonashland.co.uk](http://www.simpsonashland.co.uk) in the coming weeks for more information.

## Ashland Lakeside Social



Ashland Lakeside Social was successful and was held weekly from the 13 March to 3 April. It was the first event to be held at the new community centre. The turnout and feedback were encouraging. We want to say a big thank you to the Street Champions and other volunteers who led the event. We look forward to more community-based activities at the Lakeside.

● Chichi Ezech

## Ashland Breakfast/Brunch/Holiday Club

I just wanted to tell you about the 'Easter Breakfast Club' at the new Ashland Lakeside Community Centre, during the school holidays. It was great! We had lots of toys, games, and crafts for families to enjoy. Also, lots of delicious food and drink.

We have received great feedback and we are already planning our next event. If you missed out on the Easter Breakfast Club, don't worry. We'll be open for a brunch club during the May school holiday from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. You should come and join our friendly and welcoming community – see you soon.

● Teresa

– Treetop Childcare MK



# Ten years hard labour



In 2013, members of Simpson Garden Group submitted an entry to the Britain in Bloom competition. Their hard work in enhancing the appearance of the village resulted in a well-deserved Gold Award in the Regional category. The achievement is celebrated on the three road-side signs, at entrances to Simpson, each of which hosts a floral display.

Since 2013, the small Simpson in Bloom team has maintained many sites around the village including: the Christmas tree and the encircling snowdrops, the war memorial, the planters outside the Village Hall, the Community Garden on the cut-through to Hanmer Road, the herb bed by the former bus stop and the heritage fruit trees on Hanmer Green.

They have been ably assisted by residents who look after trees and borders near their own properties, for the benefit of the wider community and visitors to Simpson. This tenth anniversary is an opportune moment to thank: Lena and Steve Bates, Jane Anderson, Brenda Ladd, Pam Lambourne, Wendy Jordan, Gary Howard, Simon Black, Teresa and Brian Breedon, Heidi Wenn, John Cartwright, Herman Louw, Helen Boyce and David Tucker.

## Four legs better...

In the November 2022 Newsletter, Ashland resident Ruth Aguilar wrote about her Cha Char Chimps sessions for pre-school children that were then running in Simpson Village Hall. Since then, she has changed the focus of her activities from two legs to four. Comfy Paws Canine Care is a daycare and boarding service for dogs, for the benefit of owners who are working from home, in the office, busy with family or have other calls on their time. Comfy Paws offers them peace of mind, knowing that their dog is in safe hands.

Ruth invites a small number of dogs into her home, to provide them with a home-from-home experience: walks, play, enrichment activities, rest, general personal care, cuddles and lots of love.

She is licensed, insured, qualified, and has an enhanced DBS, together with dog first-aid training.

Further information can be found at [www.comfypawscaninecare.co.uk](http://www.comfypawscaninecare.co.uk); Facebook: Comfy Paws Canine Care; Instagram: comfypawscaninecare



## News from *The Mount*

Here at *The Mount* we have been busy celebrating Easter by holding a buffet lunch. We played a round of Bunny Burrow golf, which was won by Barbara, and had an Easter quiz which was won by the Hot Cross Buns team, who all got a chocolate bunny prize.

We are very much looking forward to the King's coronation in May and plan to hold a celebration outside, weather permitting.

● Karen Steeden



# Electra – Milton Keynes Community Boat

On-line booking for this season is now open for cruises on the Grand Union Canal, starting in late June and running right through until December. These include the popular Friday Evening Fish & Bubbles and the Cream Tea from Great Linford, plus a new cruise for this season, running from Campbell Wharf southwards to the Red Lion pub in Fenny Stratford and back. For details, visit the website: [www.bmkwaterway.org/electra](http://www.bmkwaterway.org/electra)

Electra will soon be returning from her original boatyard, following some minor works. These will keep her looking as good as new, together with improvements to her battery and electrical management systems.

We are always looking for new volunteers to join the team. You should be friendly, like working with others and enjoy time spent on and around the canal. We are particularly looking for people to help with three 'shore-based' roles:

- **Marketing:** helping promote sales of Electra cruises across a variety of media;
- **Community engagement/outreach:** making contact with sponsors and community groups with special needs, to help deliver cruising experiences for these groups.



Photo: Gill Prince Photography

- **Training administration:** supporting the volunteer Training Lead with the logistics of volunteer training, such as booking events and keeping records of training outcomes.

If you are interested in finding out more about these volunteering activities, please email Gill on [volunteers.electra@bmkwaterway.org](mailto:volunteers.electra@bmkwaterway.org)

● James Clifton



# Remembering Eric Coles – 1926-2023

Long-time Simpson resident, Eric Coles, died on 5 January at the age of 96. Born in Woughton on the Green in October 1926, he was the first of the three children of George and Ada Coles. George had been born in Simpson, the Coles family having arrived in the village in the 1890s.

In 1935 the Coles family, now including Eric's sister Dorry and brother Dennis, moved from Woughton to the newly-built Abbey Road – to number 4.

Eric's early education was at Simpson and Woughton School, on Newport Road. At the age of eleven he progressed to Bletchley Road School where the shoots of his horticultural talents became evident. One of his responsibilities as Head Boy Gardener was to tend the school smallholding in the grounds of Bletchley Park.

Eric's first job, at the age of thirteen-and-a-half, was as an errand boy at W.B.Moss's grocery store in Aylesbury Street, Fenny Stratford. Before long he made the move to Abundance Nurseries, between Simpson and Wavendon. It was there that his knowledge of plants was nurtured – especially tomatoes, of which the nursery produced 60 tons in a season. A move to Ramsbotham's nursery in Bletchley, as a chargehand, provided further experience. Along the way, Eric was able to draw on the experience of his father, who tended a successful allotment in Simpson – so successful that in 1946 George won first prize in a national *Daily Express* competition.

In 1948, Eric married June Goss in St Thomas's Church and they set up home at 8 Abbey Road, opposite his parents' house.

The challenges of living on an agricultural wage led Eric to a job at Joe Lyons and Co., who had a depot in Fenny Stratford. As a salesman, he was responsible for deliveries to shops and cinemas over a wide area of central and Eastern England. In time, he became Area Manager.

From Lyons, he moved to C. & T. Harris, the highly-regarded bacon and pork pie manufacturer, based in Calne, Wiltshire. In the early 1960s it handled over half of Britain's bacon pigs. During his twenty and more years with the company, Eric worked his way up to become the Group Sales Training Manager. In 1983, after twenty years' service, he was made redundant, following a major reorganization.



Eric's work life then came full circle. He joined Frosts Nurseries in Woburn Sands selling greenhouses, and then on to Cramphorns, later Wyevale, becoming Distribution Manager. The last ten years of paid employment were spent at Hunters Farm Shop, until he finally hung up his trowel in 2005.

Alongside work, Eric's abiding passion was for cinema organs. That began in 1935, when he went with his mother to the Granada Cinema in Bedford and was captivated by the mighty Wurlitzer that rose up from the floor. At the console was the legendary Reginald Dixon, of whom Eric became a lifelong devotee. He claimed that he possessed everything that maestro Dixon had ever recorded, and he spent many happy hours listening to his vast array of LPs, CDs and audio-cassettes.

After June's tragic death in 2014, Eric was increasingly supported by the local community and his family – his sister,

Dorrie, living two doors away in Abbey Road, and his nephew and family at a distance in Kent. He was a loyal member of the congregation at St Thomas's, a regular participant in village quizzes and social gatherings. He generously contributed his extensive memories to the local history initiatives in Simpson, shared his horticultural knowledge with the Simpson in Bloom group and was a familiar face at the Tuesday Coffee mornings, where he played a mean hand at Scrabble.

Eric's garden at 8 Abbey Road was his pride and joy, including a greenhouse replete with tomatoes and a grape vine. And in the summer of 2022 he was an enthusiastic competitor in the sunflower competition organized by Maddie Eatwell. A lifetime's experience of horticulture was rewarded by winning first prize, with a plant which topped 3.39 metres.

● Peter Barnes

## Parish Council News

### Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting for Simpson and Ashland Parish Council will be held at 7.00pm on Monday 15 May at Ashland Lakeside Community Centre. Our annual meeting provides residents with an overview of the year just gone (as, for electoral purposes, the council years run from May to April) and also gives a further opportunity for the work of the Parish Council over the next twelve months to be shaped by the community. An annual general meeting can be a rather dour affair, but we want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your contributions to Simpson and Ashland. So please do come along for a cup of tea and a biscuit and help us celebrate what we have achieved together over the last twelve months and let us know where you think the PC should focus its efforts going forward. If you are able to come along, please email Katherine at [clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk) to let her know you will be there.

● David Pye

### Council Tax and the Parish precept

As you may have heard on the news, the Council Tax that we all pay to Milton Keynes City Council has gone up, as at 1 April. When you received your Council Tax Notice for 2023/24, you may have noticed that the bill is made up of a number of charges that include adult social care, the fire authority, the police and crime commissioner, MKCC itself, and one for Simpson and Ashland Parish Council. The amount you pay to SAPC is called the Parish Precept and this is what funds the work of the parish council.

The precept amount is set by the Parish Councillors in February each year. We know that it is tough, financially, as the cost of food, energy and other bills has increased rapidly over the last twelve months. As a parish council we did not want to add further to the financial burden for local residents, so we took the decision to reduce the precept by 2% on the 2022/23 figure; that translates as a 5.6% decrease (equivalent to £5.81 for a Band D property). We have done so despite the opening of a second community space at Ashland Lakeside and with the bills for the parish council's services also increasing. We have managed to do this by carefully managing the finances and I would like to thank Katherine Harmsworth, our Clerk, and also Councillor Peter Barnes, for all the work they do in managing parish council funds.

● David Pye

## Annual Parish Celebration

MONDAY 15TH MAY 7PM  
AT ASHLAND LAKESIDE  
COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
MK6 4AJ

Join Simpson and Ashland Parish Council in celebrating the achievements of the last year and discussing ideas for the future.

Due to space constraints, we ask that you please email the Parish Clerk if you will be attending: [clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)

## And then there were four...

Sometimes, being on the Parish Council feels like the plot of an Agatha Christie novel... not that there have been any murders or illicit poisonings (or not as far as I'm aware...) but over the years we have seen a reduction in the number of local residents standing as parish councillors. At the end of 2022 we were fortunate that David Tucker joined the ranks, but that addition has to be set against the departure of two members - Sheila Thornton in April 2022, when she moved elsewhere in Milton Keynes, and Ross Eatwell, who will be off the pastures new this summer.

As a consequence, we currently have just four councillors when our full complement is eight. Though we are able to function legally as a council, if one of the four had to leave, for whatever reason, the council would no longer be quorate (this being the number of members legally required for the council to continue) and would cease to function. Not that any of the current members are thinking of stepping away, but circumstances may change for any of us. So, if you are interested in finding out a bit more about what it is like being a parish councillor and what the role involves, please do speak with any of the current members or email me on [david.pye@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:david.pye@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk) for an informal chat.

● David Pye

### Your four Parish Councillors are:

David Pye (Chair) [david.pye@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:david.pye@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)  
Peter Barnes (Vice Chair) [peter.barnes@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:peter.barnes@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)  
Chichi Ezech [chichi.ezech@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:chichi.ezech@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)  
David Tucker [david.tucker@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:david.tucker@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)



# Hanmer Road's Golden Anniversary

Hanmer Road is 50 years old, this year.

We are planning on celebrating the occasion with an event on the **1 July at Hanmer Road Green, from 11am onwards**, with a bring-and-share food and drink picnic.

There will also be an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia in Simpson Village Hall.

For further information contact Panayiota Sutcliffe

[Sutcliffe.panayiota@gmail.com](mailto:Sutcliffe.panayiota@gmail.com)

Tel: 07941846695 (mobile), 01908 607177 (landline).

● Panayiota Sutcliffe

## Peter Womersley – architect

The initial design of the Hanmer Road houses was the work of the distinguished architect, Peter Womersley. Monday 1 May sees the publication of Peter Womersley, a biography by Professor Neil Jackson

[www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/book/10.3828/9781802078640](http://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/book/10.3828/9781802078640)

The book includes several pages on the significance of Hanmer Road in Peter Womersley's portfolio.



Photo: Living Archive MK

## Litter Picking



A mass litter pick of Ashland and Simpson was carried out on Saturday 18 March, to usher in Spring. A depressingly large amount was collected from roadways, verges, the canal towpath and around the lakes. The contents of the bags stacked



outside Simpson Village Hall were from Simpson alone.

Many thanks to those residents – young and old – who took part. The next litter pick is scheduled for **Saturday 13 May**. We invite you to join in to keep our

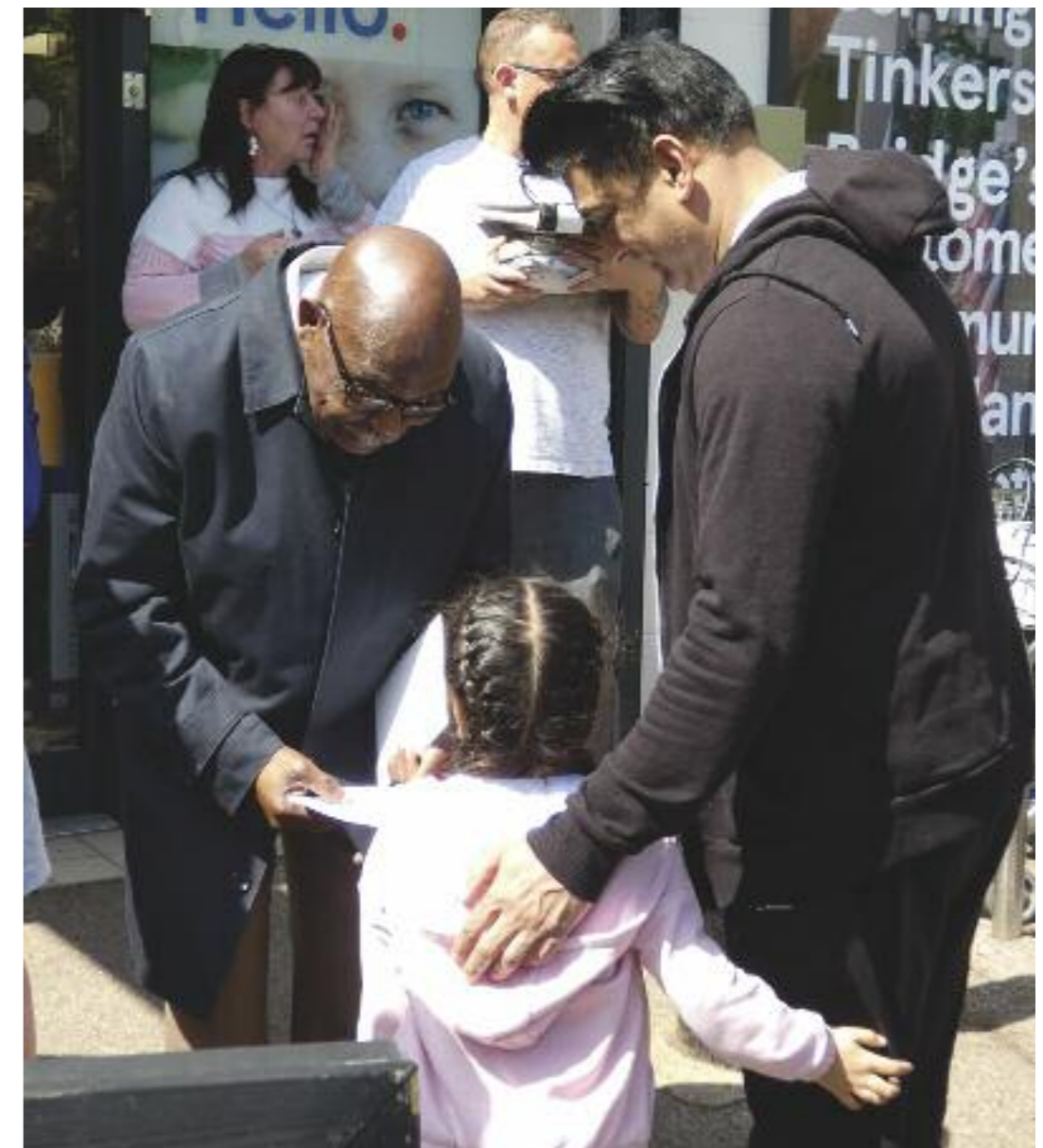
Parish clean. For Ashland, 11.00 at the car park next to Ashland Lakeside; for Simpson, 12.00 at the Village Hall. Bags and equipment provided.

● Chichi Ezeh and Ross Eatwell

# Past master Postmaster



At 12.40 on Saturday 29 April, George Selormey emerged through the doors of Tesco Express at Tinkers Bridge for the last time as Postmaster. Awaiting him was a large crowd of residents from Tinkers Bridge and Simpson, eager to mark his 28 years of service behind the Post Office counter. In that time, George has been a familiar and much-loved presence for so many people – far more than just a dispenser of stamps and a gatherer-in of parcels, but a source of advice and reassurance and a reservoir of thoughtful words. Not surprising, then, that so many residents wanted to show their respects, give George a tearful embrace, and pass over gifts, letters and cards of appreciation, and a fine framed certificate. In response, George made a typically modest speech, saying how much he will miss being behind the counter. The community will miss him, too, as a valued friend. We hope to see him around, still, once he's finished the daily crossword and sudoku in *The Times*.



● Peter Barnes



# MK Marathon passes through Simpson

Roads were closed in Simpson on Bank Holiday Monday, 1 May, as they were transformed into the route of the MK Marathon and Half Marathon. Hundreds of runners from all over the UK streamed south through the Ouzel Valley Park, across the river bridge to the church, then up Simpson Drive (the 11 mile mark) before heading up through Woughton on the Green. Those running the full marathon did the circuit again, encompassing the north extent of Willen Lake and part of Caldecotte Lake. They had the good fortune to pass through Simpson twice and were appreciative of the applause and encouragement of locals who had turned out to watch.

● Peter Barnes



## Simpson & Ashland Events

### Ashland Coronation Event

A poster for the 'Celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III' event. The poster has a white background with a blue and red Union Jack border. At the top center is the Royal Coat of Arms. The text reads: 'Celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III', 'Join us at Ashland Park (Langham Way) to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III', 'Coronation Party', 'On Monday 8th May 2023', 'Ashland Park (Langham Way)', '1pm - till late evening', 'Bring your own food, drinks, and chairs (No BBQ's)', and 'Dogs on leads welcome'.

### Crowning Glory

Please join the Garden Group in celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III by making Crowns/Coronets/Tiaras, in any medium or size, to display outside or inside your home during the weekend of **5 - 8 May**.

This is a celebration event to enhance the community during a memorable weekend.

● Lena Bates

### Quizzes and Concerts

**Friday 5 May** at 7.00 p.m.  
**CORONATION CONCERT**  
in St Thomas's Church.  
Bring & Share Buffet.  
Collection for Church funds.

**Saturday 10 June** 7.00p.m.  
Quiz for Motor Neurone Disease Association in the Church.

**Sunday 2 July** in the afternoon,  
the Salvation Army band will be playing in the Church grounds.  
All are welcome.

**Saturday 22 July** 7.00 p.m.  
**Quiz for HULA**  
in the Church

Please book quizzes with Pat Hodges  
[missquiz@sky.com](mailto:missquiz@sky.com) £15.00 p.p. or £7.50 p.p. without the supper. Bring your own drink – teas served.

Maximum of 8 people on a table.

No need to book for the musical events.



# Simpson Village Hall

The Simpson Village Hall page on the Parish website has recently been developed. Go to [www.simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk/simpson-village-hall](http://www.simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk/simpson-village-hall) for information about facilities, charges and availability and how to book.



## What's On...

### Mondays

**Table Tennis 7.00 – 8.00pm**  
(See facing page)

### Tuesdays

**Coffee & Chat 10.00 – 12.00**

Play card and board games, or just chat. Refreshments £2; optional raffle. Come along – we'd love to see you!

### Wednesdays

**Forever Green 10:30 – 11.15 am**

Chair-based exercise for older adults £4 per session.

**Evergreen Yopalates 6:30 - 7.30 pm**

Yoga for older adults.

## Coffee & Chat

Tuesdays: 10.00 – 12.00



**Simpson Village Hall**

**AVAILABLE TO HIRE**  
FOR REGULAR CLASSES TO ONE OFF EVENTS

*We offer a bright space for up to 50 people.*

*With a fully equipped kitchen.*

*Wifi.*

*Accessible toilet and baby changing facility.*

**Hourly Hire Rate**  
£20 Standard Hire Charge  
£15 for Charitable Organisations  
£12.50 for Residents of Simpson and Ashland

**Further info & online booking is available at:**  
<https://simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk/simpson-village-hall/>

**Forever Green**

Chair based exercise class for older adults  
For everyone – all levels and abilities welcome  
**Move it or Lose it!**

Come and have some fun, improve your sleep and better manage those aches and pains

**Movement and exercise helps you:**

- Improves your balance
- Increases your stability
- Reduces the risk of falling
- Aches and pains reduce
- Stronger bones
- Sleep better
- Flexibility improves
- Posture is better
- Muscle strength and tone increases
- Better blood pressure control
- Lowers risk of stroke
- Better blood sugar control
- Breathing is better

Join Shakila to get moving, feel healthier and happier  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June  
10.30am to 11.15am at Simpson Village Hall, Hanmer Road, MK6 3AD  
£4 per session  
For more information call Shakila on 07752378878

# Table Tennis

Simpson Village Hall has recently become home to a new Table Tennis Club that started in March. The club has already gathered a significant following, with players of different ages and skill levels.

The club was established with the aim of promoting physical activity, social interaction, and healthy competition. It provides an opportunity for people to come together and enjoy the sport, while developing and improving their table tennis skills.

The sessions cost £2.00 per person and are held on Monday evenings from 7.00 – 8.00 pm. No experience is necessary and bats and balls are provided, so you don't need to bring anything other than enthusiasm!

If you're looking for a way to get active and meet people, this club is definitely worth checking out. To get involved, contact Ross on 07943 886613, as spaces are limited for each session. The club is for adults only, but the hall and equipment are available to hire for families, starting from £12.50 per hour.



● Ross Eatwell

# Evergreen Yopalates

Come along to gently move your body, calm your mind and feed your soul



Wednesday at 6.30pm to 7.30pm with Shakila

Simpson Village Hall, Hanmer Road, MK6 3AD  
Bring your mat, water and small cushion/towel



# News from St. Thomas' Church

The church was packed for the funeral of Eric Coles on 9 February. We still miss him enormously and have not yet got used to his absence at Sunday worship, quizzes and other events. In due course, his ashes will be interred in the churchyard.

The various surveys and investigative work we have had done in recent months have established that the structural issues in the chancel are being caused by the surrounding trees. Some of the roots have gone down more than three metres to find water and this has dried out the ground beneath the church. The next stage is for an arboriculturist to do a survey of the trees in the churchyard and advise us how best to manage each one.

During Lent, we started *Soup and Soul*. A light lunch is served after the morning service (about 12:30) followed by some conversation about the Bible. No prior knowledge is required and there are no wrong answers! This will be continuing on the last Sunday of every month.

We have been delighted to welcome new people to our services and had a bumper attendance on Easter Day. Once again, we decorated a cross with flowers.

We now have a church choir. Come and join us if you like singing! We rehearse in the church at 6pm on the second and fourth Mondays of each month and sing during the morning service on the last Sunday of the month.

Plans for the first weekend in July, when we celebrate the feast of St. Thomas (our patronal festival), will be announced soon.

● **Nicola Vidamour (Minister) and  
Iola Samuels (Church Warden)**



## 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](http://www.simpsonandashland.co.uk)  
[clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk)  
07597 304 054 Twitter: @SimpsonAshland



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

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

**With thanks to the following contributors:** Lena Bates, James Clifton, Ross Eatwell, Chichi Ezeh, Katherine Harmsworth, Pat Hodges, David Pye, Iola Samuels, Karen Steeden, Panayiota Sutcliffe, Nicola Vidamour and Lars de Wijngaert.

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