

Water, water everywhere...

Heavy and persistent rain over the weekend of 21 and 22 September led to flood warnings for Simpson, as the level of the River Ouzel rose and the brook through the village backed up, as a consequence. By early on Tuesday 24th the road through the village was flooded and the Highways Department of Milton Keynes City Council erected Road Closed signs.

Over the same period of time, the level of Ashland lakes rose dramatically, and by the Tuesday morning water was lapping around the Ashland Lakeside building. Staff from Anglian Water and The Parks Trust responded, but it became clear that the immediate cause of the problem was that the grating at the exit culvert at the eastern end of the lake was blocked by weed. That significantly reduced the outflow, such that the volume of water entering the lake was greater than the volume able to leave. Efforts to dislodge the weed proved ineffectual.

More heavy rain towards the end of the week caused the level to rise further and in the small hours of Friday 27th it exceeded the height of the concrete spillway and surged through the underpass under Marlborough Street. The culverted brook under the canal couldn't cope, and water sped through the brick arch and along Mount Pleasant to the road. The force was such that a section of the substantial brick wall around the Old Bakehouse was knocked down and water entered the house itself, for the first time in living memory. A property on the corner of Mount Pleasant was also flooded. The devastating effect was felt further downstream, too, as a third house, opposite the church, was flooded.

Over the following week the level of water in the lake remained just below the top of the spillway, rising and falling by no more than 20 cms a day, depending on the weather. It was only once Anglian Water had installed siphon pipes on 3 October that there was any



Thursday 3rd October



Friday 4th October; Siphoning



Thursday 17th October; the aftermath

measurable progress and, in due course, that was accelerated by the introduction of generator-driven pumps. That made it possible for a diver to reach the grating on 17 October and remove the accumulated weed, after which the levels quickly returned to normal.

The aftermath of the flooding was plain to see and much of the damage remains in evidence – grassland covered in silt, bushes and other vegetation looking brown rather than green, and three fallen willow trees at the western end of the lake system now cut up and awaiting removal. The fountain in the ornamental lake is out of action, pending repairs to the electric control box that was partly flooded. And Ashland Lakeside had to close as the digester, which processes waste water

from the building, required a new part to get it up and running.

But there is progress to report. Ashland Lakeside has now re-opened for hire. The Parks Trust have carried out a programme of path and bridge cleaning and litter collection. Anglian Water have installed a second grating, further upstream, designed to filter weed before it reaches the critical point and, from late November, they will be carrying out major work around the spillway, designed to ensure that there is no repeat of the catastrophic events of September and October. The Parish Council remains in contact with The Parks Trust and Anglian Water to monitor any further steps being taken.

● Peter Barnes

Troubled oil on waters...

The September and October flooding wasn't the only disaster to strike Ashland Lakes, recently. On 19 August, observant Ashland resident Allie Humphries noticed that some of the waterbirds were covered in oil. The Parks Trust and Anglian Water were quickly on the scene and installed booms in an effort to stop or slow the spread from the water course at the western end. The pollutant was identified as light cooking oil, which had the relative advantage of staying on the surface rather than sinking deeper into the lake.

Not that that was good news for the birds. Allie quickly summoned assistance from MK Swan Rescue (of which she is a leading light), the Milton Keynes Angling Association and the Waterfowl Sanctuary, based in Godmanchester. Volunteers arrived promptly and began to remove affected ducks, geese and swans from the water and started the delicate task of cleaning and treating the feathers. Some were taken into the care of the Waterfowl Sanctuary.

Over the following days the presence of the oil was reduced as some of it was vacuumed off into a tanker and some flowed on out of the lake. Ironically, it was the flood that completed the flushing out task. The Parish Council has made donations to the three charities involved in the rescue, as a token of our appreciation for their work. And a big 'thank you' to Allie, herself, for the ever-watchful eye she keeps on Ashland birdlife.

● Peter Barnes



ASHLAND LAKESIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Available To Hire

Facilities include an accessible toilet, wifi, kitchenette and free parking.

HOURLY HIRE RATE

- £25 standard rate
- £15 for charities
- £12.50 for residents of Simpson and Ashland

For more information and online booking:

- www.simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk/ashland-lakeside
- simpsnashlandhalls@gmail.com
- Ashland Lakeside, Penshurst Crescent, Ashland, MK6 4AJ

Skills on Display

The 'Skills on a Saturday' events in Simpson Village Hall have continued to attract an enthusiastic audience. In September, the focus was on family history, with contributions from local residents Sian Lewis, Monica Shelley and Margaret Young talking about their research into their respective Canadian, German and Huguenot roots. Then, in October, Panayiota Sutcliffe, Monica Shelley and Jenny Cameron demonstrated their prowess at repairing, restoring and upcycling –



Monica Shelley [R] with Rachele Dalgarno



Panayiota Sutcliffe [L] with Becky Stevenson

clothes and wooden furniture. On hand were Philippa Tipper and members the Wolverton Repair Café, who talked about the services that they offer to their local community.

The final session of 2024 will take the form of an exhibition, paying tribute to all the skills, hobbies and interests in our community. Are you a stamp collector, a potter, a birdwatcher, a model maker or a marathon runner? Do you paint watercolours, decorate



cakes, make greetings cards, play table tennis or play a musical instrument? If you do any of these or have any other hobby or interest, please come along to share it with your neighbours. All you need to do is book a table and then bring your photos and artefacts along on the day.

To book a table please contact Monica Shelley monicaannashelley@gmail.com or 01908 679989.

Saturday 7 December 2.00-4.00 p.m. in Simpson Village Hall
Everyone welcome – free. Seasonal refreshments.

We are now making plans for events in 2025. If you have suggestions, please email gillneedham3317@gmail.com

● Gill Needham

News in Brief...

Coffee and Chat – no more

The weekly Tuesday coffee mornings in Simpson Village Hall began in January 2018, offering an opportunity for people to meet with friends and neighbours to enjoy a chat, play board games, cards, etc and have refreshments. This initiative of Anne Monk attracted a regular following for two years until the Covid pandemic required the closure of the hall.

Once it re-opened, the reins were taken over by Brian and Theresa Breedon, following Anne's move to Devon. Together, they have done an excellent job which was greatly appreciated by all concerned. Sadly, a combination of dwindling attendance and their own health issues has led to the decision to shut up shop - the last coffee was drunk and the last chat enjoyed on 5 November. Many thanks to Brian and Theresa and to all who contributed to this valued venture over the past seven years.

● Peter Barnes

Gone fishing...

In mid-November the River Ouzel at Simpson was stocked with 1000 dace, 1000 roach, 500 chub and 250 barbel. This was funded and organised by the Environment Agency, in partnership with Milton Keynes Angling Association. The underwater ecosystems need healthy fish stocks which are important, not just to those who would fish for them but also as part of the underwater food chain.

Calling all dog walkers...

The contractor responsible for emptying the dog waste bins ceases trading in December. The Parish Council has appointed Marcus Young as the replacement contractor, with responsibility for weekly emptying of the four bins in Ashland and three in Simpson. If the changeover prompts any concerns, please contact Katherine, the Parish Clerk clerk@simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk

East West Rail

There will shortly be another round of in-person public consultations over plans for the railway linking Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. The nearest sessions are on **Wednesday 15 January** (2.00-7.00 p.m.) at Bletchley Masonic Centre and **Friday 17 January** (2.00-7.00 p.m.) at The Summerlin Centre, Woburn Sands (near the railway station). You can find out more about the proposals at eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024

Our voice in Westminster

At the General Election in July, Simpson and Ashland became part of the new parliamentary constituency of Milton Keynes Central. Emily Darlington (Labour) was elected as our MP. Her contact details are: emily.darlington.mp@parliament.uk or by post to House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

More advice on offer

Following further positive feedback on the drop-in sessions run by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in July and October, there will be another opportunity to benefit from their advice on **Friday 17 January from 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. at Simpson Village Hall (MK6 3AD).**

If you have things on your mind that you cannot resolve, pressures that you are finding it hard to deal with, or a need for information and support that you are struggling to identify, why not call by and talk to an experienced listening ear who can help you find ways forward. The advice sessions are free to residents of Ashland, Simpson and Old Woughton parish. Booking not required.

There will be a further opportunity at St Mary's Church, Woughton on the Green on **Friday 4 April (10.00-1.00).**

Friday 17th January
11:00am - 2:00pm
Simpson Village Hall

Need advice?



citizens advice Milton Keynes



If you live in Simpson, Ashland or Old Woughton Parish and you need advice, you can drop in and see one of our Advisers on the dates below.

• Friday 17th January 2025

The session will take place at:

Simpson Village Hall
11:00 am - 2:00 pm



- There's no need to make an appointment.
- Just drop in between the times advertised and an Adviser will see you as soon as possible.
- If the Adviser is busy there may be a short wait.

The service is for residents only and is funded by both Old Woughton and Simpson & Ashland Parish Councils



News from Charles Warren Academy

Year 6

At the end of the summer holidays, the year 6 (age 10-11) class were invited into school for 'Kingfisher Fest'. As a school, we felt it would be a wonderful chance for pupils to catch up with friends and build new relationships prior to starting the academic year. The school field was set up into different areas and the pupils had a chance to create tree faces from clay, paint pebbles for our sensory garden, make pizzas and play chess and tennis. They all helped set up the tents which they stayed in overnight, as well as enjoying songs by the campfire and toasting smores. What a lovely start to the term!



Community Art

This term we have been part of a community art project with a local artist, Sarah Harper. Alongside two other schools and Harry's Rainbow, we have been asked to support with designing and making a mosaic for the Blue Light Hub. We have been visited by police officers and a police vehicle and a local Illustrator, Maria Christania, who have supported us to create designs for the mosaic. Over the next term we will begin to support Sarah to make the mosaic.

Time Detectives

Also this term, year 4 (age 8-9) became Roman Villa Time Detectives when they visited Bancroft Villa. They had a great time discovering all about life, there, in the Roman Period. They looked at all the rooms of a villa and had the opportunity to explore artefacts that had been found, such as pottery and animal horns and skulls.



Year 3 visit to Flag Fen

Year 3 (age 7-8) visited Flag Fen Archaeology Park to explore how the prehistoric people of the fen lived over 3000 years ago. They were able to wander through a Bronze Age village and sit within the reconstructed roundhouses, as well as exploiting prehistoric iron, bronze and stone age artefacts. They also created clay pots and decorated them with sticks and pine cones.



Let's Celebrate!

We invited the parents of Tadpoles into school to celebrate their child's first term with us. Parents joined us for arts and crafts and were also treated to observing their children in a phonics lesson taught by Miss Gunn. It was lovely to see all the parents and children interacting with each other and building new relationships. Thank you to all who came.

Year 2 forest school

This term we have developed a new forest school area. It has already been well used with year 2 enjoying some wonderful outdoor learning experiences. They have had the chance to create leaf mobiles, build habitats, create conker fireworks, leaf stitch, weave spider webs and make autumn potions.

● Danielle Barnes

Defibrillator awareness



Following the installation of defibrillators at Simpson Village Hall and Ashland Lakeside (see February 2024 Newsletter), the Parish Council organised an awareness-raising session in Simpson Village Hall on 12 October. Fifteen local residents observed Stephen Hickman, from the charity South Central Ambulance, demonstrate the circumstances in which a defibrillator comes into its own and how to respond to someone experiencing a cardiac arrest. He explained how to access the yellow box and showed how the kit should be used in an attempt to revive the patient.

In the following session, supported by Steve, Katherine and Emma (all first responders from SCA), there was an opportunity for everyone to practice compression on a dummy, fondly known as Annie. That brought home the physical demands of maintaining the frequency and effort required in administering compressions. It was also valuable to experience the sequence for locating the pads and administering the electric shock – having first stood back!

Those taking part included two former nurses, who commented on how 'good practice' has changed over time, all the more reason to keep up with the latest technology and evidence-based advice.

Following the success of this session, we will be providing a similar opportunity for Ashland residents in 2025. In the meantime, you can acquaint yourself with a ten-minute video which explains how to use a defibrillator at <https://vimeo.com/557677120/e7524918c5>

● Peter Barnes



Thanks to Janet

Janet Chapman, who has been the cleaner at Simpson Village Hall since the 1980s, has decided that it's time to retire. Monday 28 October was her last day with mop and Henry vacuum cleaner, and the occasion was marked with the presentation of a garden voucher and a bouquet of autumn flowers. The message in the card thanked Janet, on behalf of countless users of the hall, for her hard work and dedication over the years.



Following an advertisement and interview process, we are pleased to welcome Cassie Robinson as the new cleaner.

● Peter Barnes

Christmas is coming...



On Saturday 14 December at 4.00 p.m. the Simpson Christmas tree lights will be switched on, carols will be sung, and mulled wine and mince pies will be available for consumption. As always, thanks to members of the Simpson Garden Group for decorating the tree and organizing and funding this (free) event.

If you need directions, the tree is in the green, 50 metres from the church.

News from St Thomas' Church



The St Thomas Troopers: (L-R) Kay Di Marco, Alison Statham, Philip DiMarco, Philip Coppen

Members of the congregation and Simpson residents were very generous in donating tins of food for our Harvest Festival. Those who attended the 'Bring and Share' Harvest concert, organised by Pat Hodges, also donated tins for the Food Bank.

On 16 October, four of our members - *The St Thomas Troopers* - joined over fifty

teams in Campbell Park for the **MK Can Quest**. They participated in several challenges over a four-mile course. The Troopers did the Church and Simpson proud.

The boiler, which has been out of action for some time, due to a faulty valve, has now been repaired and the church can be warm again, just in time



Flowers by Olive Neal

for the winter weather.

A large piece of damaged lead flashing on the roof of the north transept has been replaced. The large cracks in the chancel wall have reduced during the recent wet weather. We are working with the building department and the Archdeacon in Oxford in order to establish the way forward.

The Service of Remembrance

Sunday 10 November, the church was full for the annual Service of Remembrance, as the congregation was joined by Guides, Scouts, Brownies and Cubs, accompanied by their colours. At 10.50 we processed to the War Memorial, where the service continued together with other members of the community. The two-minute's silence was observed at 11.00 and wreaths were laid at the memorial, which was covered with knitted poppies.



War memorial

Looking ahead to Christmas

- **Saturday 14th** 10:30 – 1.00 pm, Christmas fayre in aid of church funds and St Mark's Meals.
- **Sunday 15th** 4.00 pm, Carols singalong led by Pat Hodges.
- **Friday 20th** 7.00 p.m, Carol concert with the MK Salvation Army band and a bring-and-share supper
- On **Tuesday 24th** our Christmas Night Service will commence at 9.30 p.m. Hence at 10.00 p.m. in Simpson it will be midnight in Jerusalem. Everyone is welcome to this special service.
- There will not be a service on Christmas Day.

● Iola Samuels - Church Warden

News from *The Mount*

The Mount has had a facelift and is looking very smart, with new windows and doors and a fresh coat of paint.

In other news, Karen and Wendy are off to pastures new. After eight-and-a-half years here at *The Mount*, we are moving to our new home in south-west Wales.

We have loved living in *The Mount* and Simpson village and have made many friends here that we will miss. I think I have walked every footpath with my four-legged friends and have never tired of the beautiful countryside right in



the middle of the new city of Milton Keynes.

We would like to thank everyone for their kind wishes for the future and bid you a very fond farewell.

Hwyl fawr a diolch!



Karen Steeden

Following Karen's departure at the end of September, Peabody, who own and manage *The Mount*, have appointed a replacement live-in warden. She is expected to take up the post in the new year. Watch this space

Road Safety: H9 Groveway – Simpson Drive



The junction of H9 Groveway and Simpson Drive has been the scene of many collisions over the years. There were two more in October. Following requests from the Parish Council and Old Woughton Parish Council, the Highways Department of Milton Keynes City Council carried out a traffic survey in March and April 2024. Video evidence helped to identify the types of driver behaviour at the junction which increased the risk of collisions.

The Department then consulted on a plan to reduce the risks – see <https://simpsonashland-pc.gov.uk/consultation-h9-groveway-simpson-drive-junction/>. The most significant feature of the plan is to ban eastbound traffic from turning right off Groveway into Simpson Drive. Simpson and Ashland Parish Council's response to the proposals recognized the potential benefits but also encouraged more far-reaching action, affecting

other junctions between Simpson Drive and V8 Marlborough Street.

The Highways Department is taking account of the responses to the public consultation and is revising the plan. Details will become available shortly, but indications are that significant improvements will be made to safety at the Simpson Drive junction. These may be implemented in early 2025.

● Peter Barnes

Local Running Club and its Volunteers given Royal recognition

As a decade-long member of the Redway Runners and latterly a volunteer Run Lead, I'm extremely proud to share the following press release (14 November) about our wonderful local club. In addition, if anyone is curious about the running scene in MK, I will be at Simpson Village Hall on Saturday 7 December (2.00 – 4.00 p.m.) as part of the Skills on a Saturday event. I'll be the one in green!

● Gary Howard

Milton Keynes running club granted the King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest honour a voluntary association can receive.

Fourteen years after it started, Redway Runners of Milton Keynes has now become one of the biggest running clubs in the country and is honoured to have been granted the King's Award for Voluntary Service. The club, which began as a group of ten, now has over 3,000 active members and puts on over forty runs a week. "The club has grown, but the £5

annual membership cost hasn't changed", club founder Martin Lawrence says. "We take great pride in offering running experiences for all ages and abilities. The club is run entirely by volunteers and there would not be a club without them."

The King's Award for Voluntary Service is recognition for outstanding service to the Milton Keynes community. Volunteers lead runs, marshal events, organise socials and undertake all roles that the club needs. As the club has grown, so has its positive



Gary Howard (right) with Club founder and Chairman Martin Lawrence celebrating the award with a few hundred others at this week's Parkrun.

impact, undoubtedly improving members physical and mental health as well as working closely with local charities to which over £80,000 has been donated so far.

For further details please contact club chair, Martin Lawrence on 07968 782821 or redwayrunner@yahoo.com.

Redway Runners – "We Run Milton Keynes"

Transforming mental and physical health across the community, volunteer led, one run at a time.



**WE ARE HONOURED
TO HAVE BEEN GRANTED**



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Enterprising and socially aware young Simpson residents chose to mark Halloween in a somewhat unconventional way with what they dubbed 'Reverse Trick or Treating'. Rather than appear at front doors in the expectation of sugary treats, Maddy, Finn and Charlotte Eatwell, together

with their friends James, Jack and Georgia, asked for donations for the Food Bank.

The response was rewarding – bigger than when they made a similar collection in 2022 - and several journeys with a wheelbarrow were required to transport the tins, boxes and packets to



Finn, Charlotte and Maddy



their home base before delivery to the Food Bank at the end of the school day. It's salutary to note that the donations received account for only a third of the parcels provided for those who need them. The remainder has to be covered from cash donations.

Re-introducing Ross Eatwell

When Simpson resident Ross Eatwell first joined the Parish Council in May 2021, he played a particularly valuable role in overseeing the final stages of the development of Ashland Lakeside. He resigned in the summer of 2023, as his family embarked on an extended period of travel, worldwide. Once back in Simpson, Ross offered his services, once again, and we are delighted to welcome him back as a Parish Councillor.



● Peter Barnes

Yoga classes

There are regular Yoga classes at **Ashland Lakeside** on **Mondays at 18:15**.
For further information and to book, go to www.beingwellholistichealth.com/book-online

The Northern Lights come to Ashland

Lars de Wijngaert writes:

As many of you may know, I have a great interest in photography and often like to go out on walks in our area to find interesting opportunities to take photos, mainly nature orientated.

I had never been able to witness the

Northern Lights, so I had been keeping an eye out all evening on Thursday 10 October, hoping they would appear. Suddenly, at around 22.00, the sky started to change colour, so I was able to get my son, Finn, to witness it with me, before we started to shoot some photos.

It was a most enjoyable experience and I was glad the community of Simpson and Ashland reacted positively after I had posted the photos on the local social page.



10 October 2024 @ 22.03

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Further info & online booking is available at:
<https://www.simpsonandashland.co.uk/simpson-village-hall.html>

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£5 PER SESSION
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL
SHAKILA ON 07388 023175

Family Coffee & Craft

Come and join us for a coffee and a chat while your children are entertained with a variety of toys, games and crafts.

Schedule
Friday 2nd January

Time
From 10:00 - 12:00

Location
Ashland Lakeside Community Centre,
Penshurst Crescent,
Ashland,
MK6 4AJ

Everyone welcome
No booking required

Funded by:
Simpson & Ashland

Contact Us clara@simpsonandashland.gov.uk www.simpsonandashland.gov.uk

What's On...



An overview of upcoming events around the parish...

PLEASE NOTE: Quizzes **MUST** be booked with Pat Hodges missquizz@sky.com. No need to book for concerts. Donations of raffle prizes gratefully accepted.

DECEMBER

- **Saturday 7th** Skills on a Saturday – Skills on display. Simpson Village Hall, 2.00-4.00 p.m. Free. Seasonal refreshments.
- **Saturday 7th** Quiz & Curry Supper at Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 p.m. for ipeace.
- **Saturday 14th** Christmas Fayre at St Thomas' Church, 10.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. in aid of church funds and St Mark's Meals.
- **Saturday 14th** Switching on of the lights on Simpson Christmas tree at 4.00 p.m. Carols, mulled wine and mince pies. Free.
- **Sunday 15th** Carols Singalong at St Thomas' Church, 4.00 p.m.
- **Friday 20th** Salvation Army Brass Band. St Thomas' Church, 7.00 p.m. Bring & Share Supper.
- **Tuesday 24th** Christmas Night service at St Thomas' Church, at 9.30 p.m.

JANUARY

- **Friday 3rd** Family Coffee and Crafts at Ashland Lakeside, 10.00 – 12.30 p.m. Free.
- **Monday 6th** Parish Council Meeting, Ashland Lakeside at 8.00 p.m.
- **Saturday 11th** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for National Animal Welfare Trust (HULA).
- **Wednesday 15th** East West Rail consultation, Bletchley Masonic Centre, 2.00-7.00 p.m.
- **Friday 17th** Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) drop-in advice session, Simpson Village Hall 11.00 – 2.00.
- **Saturday 25th** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for Community Voices, Water Eaton.

FEBRUARY

- **Saturday 8th** Quiz in St Thomas' Church at 7.00 for Church funds.
- **Saturday 22nd** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association.

MARCH

- **Saturday 8th** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for Unity(MK).
- **Saturday 22nd** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for Bucks Vision.

APRIL

- **Friday 4th** Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) drop-in advice session, St Mary's Church, Woughton on the Green, 10.00 – 1.00.
- **Saturday 5th** Quiz in Simpson Village Hall at 7.00 for ipeace.

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

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

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