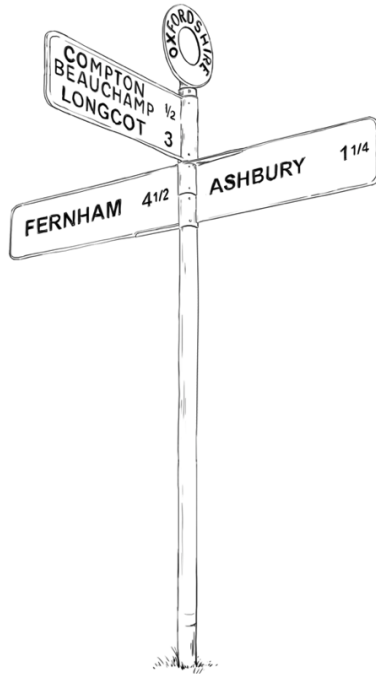


**ASHBURY
COMPTON LONGCOT FERNHAM
NEWS
JANUARY 2021**



I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown”

New Year Messages

Thought for the month

In a previous edition of this newsletter I talked about ARK – Acts of Random Kindness. There have been so many acts of kindness in the past months, many intentional and not at all random, and these have contributed hugely to the emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing of our different communities. As we prepare to move into a new year perhaps it is fitting to consider another subject, that of hope. I realise that this is a word I use almost unthinkingly several times a day, as in “I hope you are well”, “I hope it doesn’t rain” or “I hope I don’t have to queue too long”.

But hope has a far more profound meaning, which is very pertinent to our times. We do have great hopes of the vaccine, of the lifting of restrictions, of being able to gather together again without fear, and for many, hopes for employment, improved finances or wider educational opportunities. In many impoverished or conflict-ridden areas of the world, hope can lift people from the edge of despair, although it needs to be accompanied by very deliberate acts of kindness to be more than aspirational.

Hope is all the more meaningful when times are hard. Henri Nouwen expresses it well: “Often it is the dark forest that makes us speak about the open field. Frequently prison makes us think about freedom, hunger helps us appreciate food, and war gives us words for peace. Not seldom are our visions of the future born out of the sufferings of the present and our hope for others out of our own despair.... the paradox is indeed that new life is born out of the pains of the old.”

Although it is only mid-December, aconites, hellebores and other spring bulbs are visible in our garden. I know this is because of the mild weather thus far this winter, but it is a sign of hope, of new life, of the spring to come. In terms of the pandemic we have similarly tentative promise of a brighter future. The Christian faith can help that promise find fulfillment. I like the translation of Hebrews 11 verse 1 in the International Standard Version “Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.” May we all find hope in the coming year.

Isobel Weller

Views expressed in “Thought for the month” are those of the contributors

Ashbury News

Church Cleaning and Flowers

Thank you to everyone who has helped keep the church clean and decorated throughout the last year. I have really appreciated your support during the very different months. We would normally be holding a special event to say thank you but, as you will know, this is not possible at the moment. Please be assured that just as soon as we can, we will be in touch.

Maggie Simons

Samaritan's Purse Shoeboxes

Thank you to everyone who donated a shoebox or items for one. We collected 17 boxes and the school added a further 8 boxes all of which I took up to Highworth collection centre together with two bags of extra items. They tell us that they received 1657 shoe boxes from as far apart as Malmsbury and Wantage. They are all boxed up, put on pallets and sent to the Oldbury Processing Centre in the West Midlands to wait for a time they can be distributed. Each box is for a child and it will make a difference to that child.

SILENT AUCTION on 28 November, raising funds for St Mary's Church

One of Paul Richardson's (our new Associate Vicar's) first jobs was to open all the bids received for the Silent Auction. He was filmed doing this and people were able to watch it live on the Benefice Facebook page. Paul and his wife Katriona were kept busy as we received 111 sealed bids. Many lots had multiple bids - in particular the home-made Christmas cake! Thank you to everyone who offered a 'lot' to be auctioned and to those who put in bids. We were truly delighted, and grateful, for the amount raised - £2,545.06.

Church Matters

The information below was correct at time of going to print ... but please check the website for latest information and times www.shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk

JANUARY SERVICES IN ASHBURY, COMPTON, LONGCOT & FERNHAM WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

Sunday 3 January	9am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Compton
	9.30am	Morning Prayer	Longcot
	10am	Holy Communion	Ashbury

Sunday 10 January	9.30am	Morning Prayer	Ashbury
	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
Thursday 14 January	10.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 17 January	9.00am	Matins	Compton
	9.30am	Morning Prayer	Longcot
	10am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 24 January	9.30am	Morning Prayer	Ashbury
	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
Sunday 31 January	10.00am	Benefice Communion	Shrivenham

Our churches are open once a week for private prayer

Ashbury 10am – 4pm on Thursday

Compton Beauchamp 9am – 5pm on Sunday

Longcot 10am – 3pm on Wednesday

Face coverings are mandatory in churches

There is an exemption for those who are officiating at services and presiding at Holy Communion, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, preaching, or leading prayers) who do not always need to wear a face covering, although one should be worn if physical distancing cannot be maintained (such as at the distribution of Holy Communion).

In line with government advice, children under 11 and people with disabilities or certain health conditions are also exempt from wearing face coverings.

Please do not come into church if you think you may have symptoms of Covid 19.

We do understand that not everyone will feel ready to come back into church just yet, so if it doesn't feel right, please take your time, knowing that we will be delighted to welcome you back when you are ready.

Ashbury Prayer cycle for January: 3rd Ashdown Estate, 10th High Street, 17th Idstone Road, 24th Idstone, 31st Kingstone Winslow.

Rev'd Norma Fergusson (Vicar)	01793 784338
Canon Paul Richardson (Associate Vicar)	01793 710241
Maggie Simons, Ashbury churchwarden	01793 710801
Dennis Blease, Longcot churchwarden	01793 780708
Joanna Lambert, Compton churchwarden	07990 898175

LONGCOT CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER – CHAPEL NEWS

It must have been a different Christmas for us all but hopefully, you were able to celebrate safely and happily and are now looking forward to a much better year ahead. Let's give thanks for the fact that a vaccine has been developed and pray for all those involved in ensuring that every member of the human race receives their jab in due course – what a logistical nightmare it's going to be!

2021 will be another venture into the unknown so it may be worth remembering the poem by Minnie Louise Haskins -

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
 "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown"
 And he replied,
 "Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God.
 That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a know way."

Services and other activities in the Chapel will resume as soon as possible and until then, every blessing for the year ahead.

Stella

Ambassadors Bible Church (at AEFC) While the current situation is so fluid please look at our website www.ambiblechurch.co.uk

A New Year Message from Canon Paul Richardson

A new year, and a new beginning. 2021 dawns brightly with expectation, hope and joy as the vaccines for Covid 19 are being deployed across the country. Though we will have to carefully continue good hand hygiene, face covering, and social distancing for a few months more, hopefully life will begin to return to a kind of normality. Though things will never be the same.

This is true of a recovery from any kind of traumatic event or experience. The impact of what we have faced endures with us. We need time to take these things on board in our hearts and minds and discover new ways of living and of relating to others.

It can be hard to give up old and familiar ways. It can be frightening to try something new and different. But this is how life is. Living involves growth and change. People or things that do not grow or change will decay and fade away.

We have been on a journey together through 2020, the year of Coronavirus. Together we faced lockdowns and restrictions. Together we clapped for the NHS and Key Workers. Together we queued in long supermarket lines of masked shoppers. Together we learned new ways of communicating, by Skype, or Zoom, or Facetime; the only way to keep in touch as we were prevented from meeting friends and family face to face.

In the story of the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, in Matthew's gospel, we are told that the Wise Men were warned in a dream to return home by a "different way". Their journey of discovery had led them through many perils, not least the evil scheming of King Herod. They could not go back on a familiar track, but had to set off on another unknown route, along uncharted territory.

But they did so having reached the destination of their calling, having unburdened themselves of those things that they offered up to the new-born King, Jesus.

Whatever 2021 holds for you, be ready to take a different way in the assurance that God travels with you; ahead, behind, within, and all around you. Fear not! Is the message the angels give to those who were ready to hear them, Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, and Wise Men. Fear not! Is God's message to us today.

Just because this year will be different, indeed much of what lies beyond Coronavirus will be different, should not be a reason to be fearful. Instead step out with faith and hope and enjoy a Happy New Year!

Paul Richardson



Country Matters

I have been asked whether I have seen any special birds lately. Flocks of golden plover swooping, little stone chats with their rusty chest on a fence post, wheatears flying away with their white rump are not too unusual, and also becoming more common are egrets. Three appeared in the dingle at Bishopstone one morning. But really special is a great bustard which a friend tells me they have spotted on the downs near Wantage. I have viewed their compound near Shrewton on Salisbury Plain where they have been introduced with imports of adults from Russia and more recently, fertilized eggs from Spain which have been more successful.

They died out here in 1832 and the release programme has been gathering pace over the last decade. It's an enormous game bird with a wingspan of 2.5 metres. The English or grey partridge used to be numerous, now scarce, but farmer George Ponsonby near Lechlade has worked hard to build up wild stocks on his farm. His shoot covers 2000 acres with unsprayed margins round nearly every field to encourage insects for chick survival. He has a full-time keeper to control vermin and with no releases of reared game for three years, this year's dry spring has seen numbers of wild game explode to the 100's. He had a shoot in October with a bag of 60 English, 68 French partridge and 11 pheasants which was a rewarding and notable achievement. I think a second outing has produced another useful bag with more pheasants now they are fully in season.

After lockdown in November the country sports of hunting and shooting have been allowed to restart in December. Social hunting meets are required to be less social and shooting parties are meeting outside taking their own soup, sandwiches and cake. It's of course hard on pubs and restaurants who are unable to cater for parties of different bubbles.

I started over 60 years ago with an air gun and then a .410 with which I would stalk and shoot a rabbit which was skinned and in the frying pan for breakfast. My pigeon shot at roost was preferred one year to turkey on Christmas Day! My favourite shooting tale came about when I was with a party on the edge of the Yorkshire moors three years ago. Believing to see a partridge, one of our team made the mistake of shooting a grouse. The keeper pointed out that in January grouse are out of season and for this sin a penalty would be imposed. Deftly, with a finger up the vent, a little bright blob of grouse liver was extracted and placed into the offender's palm with the instruction to enjoy the meal. Like a man it went down in one with no further repercussion to his digestion or honour!

Richard Green

Contacts

Ashbury Parish Council

Chairman Cliff Davies 01793 710712 chairman@ashbury.org.uk

Clerk to the council: Laura Evans email clerk@ashbury.org.uk

Defibrillator: On the wall by the School entrance

St Mary's Ashbury Parochial Church Council

Associate vicar: Paul Richardson 01793 710241

Church wardens: Maggie Simons 01793 710801 Richard Green 01793 791310

Secretary: Roger Simons 01793 710801 rogersimons1@outlook.com

Vicar (Shrivenham) Revd Norma Fergusson 01793 784338

rev.n.fergusson@btinternet.com (not Monday)

Ashbury Village Hall

Maggie Simons 0193 710801 maggiemsimons@outlook.com

Secretary Margaret Smith 01793 710800 mbsmith5@hotmail.co.uk

Bookings: Lin and Kevin Clarke 01793 710326

Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp CE(A) Primary School and little Berries Preschool

Headteacher Rachael Smith 01793 710259 www. <http://www.ashburyprimary.org.uk>
office.3851@ashbury.oxon.sch.uk

Ashbury Village Shop 01793 710068

G.P. Surgeries Shrivenham 01793 782207 Lambourn 01488 71715/72299

Post Office at the Rose & Crown Wednesdays and Fridays 9.30-11.30am

Vale of the White Horse District Council 01235 422422

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/>

Recycling/Rubbish collection queries admin.vale@biffa.co.uk

Food waste is collected weekly, green/black bins alternate each week. Garden waste brown bins fortnightly. Mondays except Bank holidays.

Your Local District Councillors are: Elaine Ware 01973 783026

elaine.ware@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and Simon Howell 01793 784491

simon.howell@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

County Councillor: Yvonne Constance: 01235 751475/07976934884

yvonne.constance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

M.P. for the Wantage constituency: David Johnston david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk
0207 219 3000

Newsletter entries for February 2021. Submit your entries for February by **20th January** to: M. Turner Claremont, Ashbury SN6 8LN. marionlturner@me.com 01793 710302 For more of "what's on" and local information see the Ashbury Village Website www.ashbury.org.uk and the community page on Facebook.