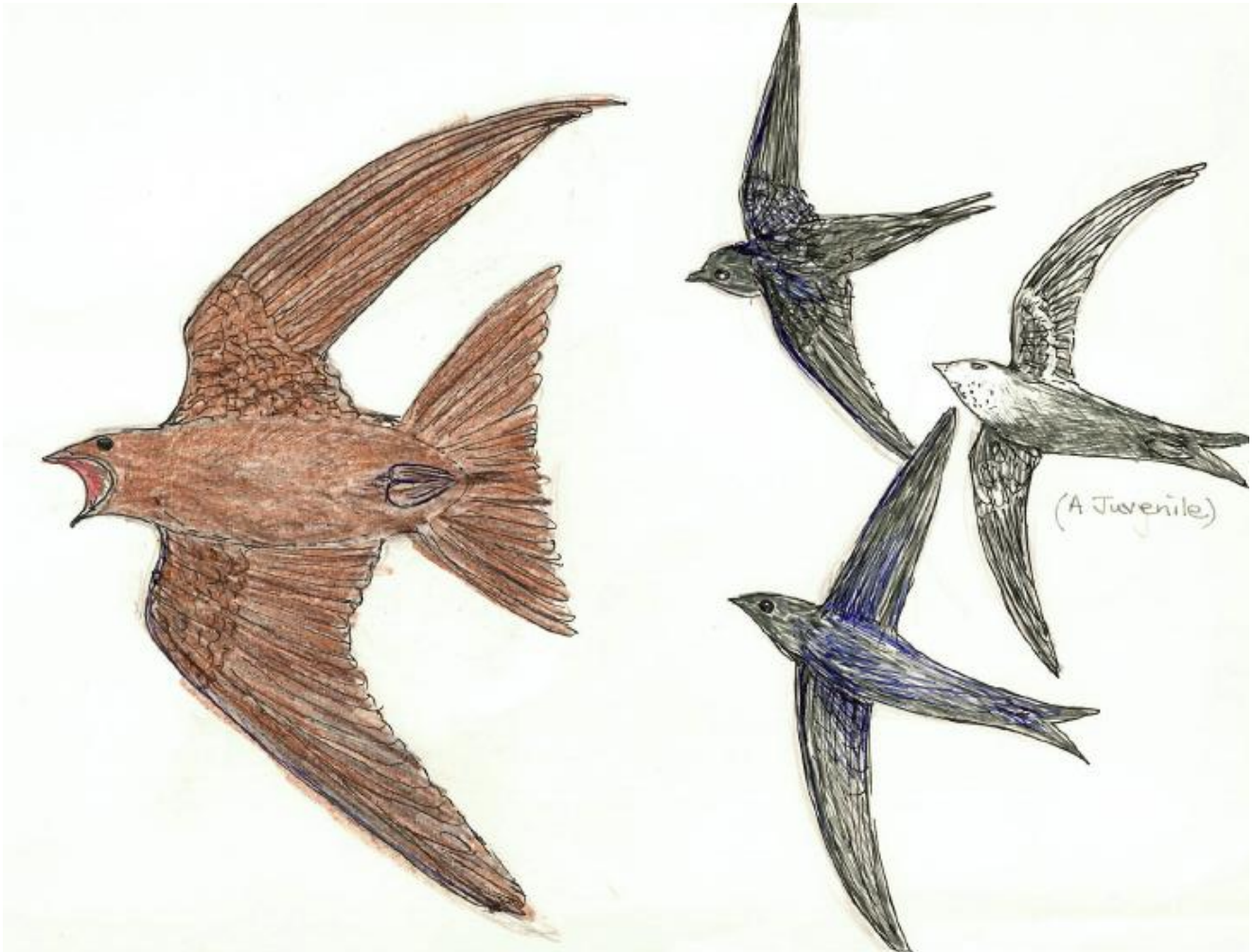


ASH WITH WESTMARSH
PARISH MAGAZINE
MAY 2026
£1



The Canonry Benefice of
Ash – Chillenden – Elmstone – Goodnestone
Nonington – Preston – Stourmouth

Useful Contacts

Service	Organisation/Name	Contact
<u>Emergencies</u> 999	Gas Emergency (24hrs)	0800 111 999
	UK Power Networks (24hrs)	105
	Water Leak Line (24hrs)	0800 820 999
<u>Community</u>	Non-urgent and other enquiries	101
	Ash Neighbourhood Watch	
	Josh Coombs	07546 212154
	Crime Stoppers	0800 555111
	Community Safety Dover	01304 872220
	Childline	0800 1111
	Kent County Council	08458 247247
	Dover District Council	01304 821199
	District Councillors:	
	Cllr Trevor Bartlett	07980 300084
	cllr-trevor.bartlett@dover.gov.uk	
	Cllr Martin Porter	07733 111334
	cllr-martin.porter@dover.gov.uk	
	Sir Roger Gale MP	01843 848588
	suzy@galemail.com	
	Ash Parish Council	07398 584 053
	clerk@ashparishcouncil.gov.uk	
Citizens Advice (Dover area)	0844 8487978	
Ash Village Hall Enquiries	07947 832807	
Environmental Health	01304 872215	
Trading Standards	0845 4040506	
Ash Library	01304 812440	
<u>Healthcare</u>	NHS Medical Helpline (24hrs)	111
	Out of Hours Doctor Service	0844 8001234
	Ash Surgery	01304 812227
	Hospitals - Kent and Canterbury	01227 766877
	QEQM Margate	01843 225544
	William Harvey	01233 633331
	Pharmacy - Ash (Boots)	01304 812242
<u>Education</u>	Cartwright and Kelsey School	01304 812539
	St Faith's Prep School	01304 813409
	Sandwich Technology College	01304 610000
	Sir Roger Manwood School	01304 613286

**Times can be tough. There's always someone you can talk to 24/7.
The Samaritans: call 116 123 or visit samaritans.org**

~ If an error is noted please inform the editors ~

Welcome to the May Magazine

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Magazine Subscription

Never miss an edition of your favourite parish magazine! To arrange a subscription including magazine delivery to your door (within the parish) phone Rebecca on 07443 605873 or email rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com

Front cover

Swifts. By Pat Coles. See Cover Story page 30

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Share Your News

Email copy for the next magazine edition by **Thursday 14th May** to rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com or post hard copy at 69, The Street, Ash.

Advertise in the Parish Magazine

Reasonable rates and a loyal readership

Send advertising enquiries to
ashpm.ads@gmail.com

Publisher's note:

This magazine is produced by St. Nicholas Parish Church. We welcome items from individuals and local organisations. All items should come with a note of the contributor's name. The editor reserves the right both to edit and not to publish anything she receives. Items on church matters do not represent the official position of the Church of England.

Regulars

Ash Pain Management Support Group – For anyone who suffers from long-term pain. Second Wednesday 11am-1pm at Ash Scout Hall, Molland Lea. £2 entry includes refreshments and a raffle. Contact Maureen on 07922 096932 or email maureenloveash@gmail.com with any queries.

St Nicholas Church Warm Space – Thursday 11am-2pm. There is free tea/coffee and a mug of hot homemade soup with a roll.

Ash Bowling Club Weekly Free Community Coffee Morning – from 10am-12pm every Monday at the club in Moat Lane. All residents of Ash are welcome. Free tea/coffee and biscuits.

Age Concern Sandwich Meet, Eat, Heat – two course lunch for £4.50. Mondays and Fridays.

Ash Library opening times

Monday 11:30am - 5pm (closed 1pm - 2pm)

Tuesday 9:30am - 1pm

Wednesday 9:30am - 2pm

Thursday: Closed

Friday 11:30am - 5pm

Saturday 9am - 2pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Ash Toddler Group – meet on Mondays in Ash Village Hall from 10am-11.30am in term times.

Ash Heritage Centre – opens Saturday mornings 10am-12noon and is home to a wide range of local historical items and records. (Not August.) www.ashheritagegroup.org.uk

Walk and Talk – slow-paced walking group meeting on Fridays at Ash GP surgery. 11.30am

Guides, Brownies and Rangers

1st Ash Brownies 7-10 yrs: 1stashnextsandwichbrownies@gmail.com

1st Ash Guides 10 - 14 yrs: 1stashnxtswichguides@outlook.com

1st Ash Rangers 14 - 18 yrs: 1stashrangers@gmail.com

What's On

HAPPY HOUR at Elmstone Church (or Church Meadow if the weather is fine) Friday 1st May from 6.30pm. For more Elmstone news, see page 27.

THE COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING at Ash Village Hall hosted by Ash Bowling Club is on Saturday 2nd May from 10am-12noon.

ART EXHIBITION AND SALE, St Nicholas Church, Ash, Saturday 2nd May-Monday 4th May. See poster page 11.

ASH BOWLING CLUB Village Societies Open Competition is on Saturday 9th May. Open to all to watch. See page 21.

ELMSTONE VILLAGE FETE - Sunday 10th May, Church Meadow, 2.30-4.30pm. See poster page 14.

THE WHITE MILL SANDWICH opens for National Mills Weekend Saturday 9th May-Sunday 10th May 10am-4pm. Enjoy the museum, gardens, workshops, craft stalls, music and more.

ASH AND WESTMARSH WI meet on May 14th at 2.30pm at Ash Village Hall for a talk by Alan Haines on The Baby Boom Part 2.

THE ARTS SOCIETY SANDWICH talk The History of Colour: Blue with Alice White. 11th May. 6.30pm for 7pm. Guests £7. See page 29.

THE GOOD COMPANIONS meet at Ash Village Hall on Tuesdays 12th and 26th May. 2-4pm. Games, conversation and companionship.

SANDWICH HISTORY SOCIETY Wednesday 27th May: Dr. Sheila Sweetinburgh -The 'lost' St Bartholomew's Day Procession of 1532. Sandwich Guildhall 6.30pm for 7pm. See page 29.

THE CHURCHYARD BASH. Saturday 9th May. 9am-noon at St Nicholas Church, Ash. Join volunteers to maintain the church grounds.

ASH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY lecture Thursday 28th May. 7.30pm, Ash Village Hall, Sophie Leathart - Growing Plants for Cutting. Visitors welcome. Entry £3.

Coming up next month... The New Ash Players Summer Variety Show on Saturday 13th June from 7pm. See page 15.

Church Services for May

Sunday 3rd May

Holy Communion 9am Holy Cross, Goodnestone

Holy Communion 10.30am Elmstone Church

Morning Prayer 9am St. Nicholas, Ash - pray for our artists
(there is no 10.30am service due to the Art Exhibition)

Holy Communion 10.30am St. Mary's Nonington

Sunday 10th May

Holy Communion 9am All Saints, Chillenden

Holy Communion 10.30am St. Nicholas, Ash

Family Service 10.30am St Mildred's, Preston

Breakfast Church 9.30am St. Mary's Nonington

Rogation Sunday Walk 2pm, Holy Cross Goodnestone

Sunday 17th May

Holy Communion 9.00 Holy Cross, Goodnestone

Holy Communion 9.00 St Nicholas, Ash

Service of the word 10.30 Elmstone Church

Holy Communion 10.30 St. Nicholas, Ash

Sunday 24th May

Holy Communion 9am All Saints, Chillenden

Holy Communion 10.30am St. Nicholas, Ash

Evensong 6.30pm Stourmouth

Sunday 31st May

Fifth Sunday Benefice Service 10.30am St Mary's Nonington.

Private Prayer

Churches are open at the following times:

St Nicholas, Ash

All week 9.30am to 3pm

Holy Cross, Goodnestone

All week in daylight hours

St Mary's Nonington

All week in daylight hours

All Saints, Chillenden

Weekends 10am-5pm

All Saints, Stourmouth

All week in daylight hours

Other churches can be unlocked on request. Please note services may be taking place during this time.

Parish Register

Baptisms

Isabelle and James Weller, 22nd March, St Nicholas, Ash

Noad Edmunds, 19th April, St Mary's, Nonington

Edward Bosher, 26th April, St Nicholas, Ash

Parish Letter

Here we are in May and in my mind this is the best month of the year; with winter and spring behind us. January and February may not have been the coldest on record but must rank as one of the wettest. March is traditionally the drying month with the ground drying out and when farmers starting planting their spring crops. April is a month with Easter and the emergence of leaves in the hedgerows but can still experience some cold days. Then May brings with it all the glorious soft fresh greens all around us and the warmer weather. This lifts our spirits and gives us hope for better times ahead.

It is always good to have something good to look forward to, in fact it is vital; for looking forward gives us hope. Hope can be defined as the joyful expectation of good things to come. Without hope life ceases to have purpose; hope lifts us out of gloom and misery, can give us strength and courage and endurance. It will help us to see things in a different light; a more positive light which helps us put problems in their right perspective.

With all the destruction, turmoil, killing and hatred in the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, we all need hope that these wars, and all hostilities, will cease and peace be restored to the world we live in.

Faith, hope, and love are the basis of our Christian faith and St. Paul in his wonderful letter to the Corinthians underlines this. It is not only between nations that peace needs to reign but also in our own hearts and lives. If we can live by these principles then perhaps we can make this a better world to live in.

Rev Nigel Hale

Rogation Sunday 10th May: Fifth Sunday after Easter, a time for prayers for God's blessings on agriculture, communities and farm workers. Rogation Sunday walk at 2pm. See poster.

The Feast of the Ascension May 14th : The 40th day after Easter. There will be a service from the top of Ash church tower at 8am! Followed by croissant and coffee. The view is beautiful!

Pentecost 24th May: Celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit. Celebrated on the Sunday 50 days after Easter, the name comes from Greek pentekoste, "fiftieth". Join at Chillenden, Ash, Stourmouth (evensong). Tradition is to wear red and to celebrate that we are not left alone, the Holy Spirit lives in us.



Rogation Sunday

Canonry Benefice Walk Church

Starting at Holy Cross,
Goodnestone, to All Saints,
Chillenden, ending in St Mary's,
Nonington for refreshments,
stopping at each church to pray.

2.00pm start
Sunday 10th May

Onlooker

A report of the Ash Parish Council meeting held on April 13th.

Council News

Ash Parish Council are co-opting new members. If you're passionate about Ash and would like to help shape our community, please contact: clerk@ashparishcouncil.gov.uk or come along to a Parish Council Meeting to speak to us.

New Ordinary Meeting Dates

From May, ordinary Parish Council meetings will move to the first Thursday of each month, at the later time of 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Next meeting: Thursday 7th May which will also include the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Public Contributions

Residents raised several important issues, including:

- Improving wildlife and ecology data, and reviewing the Neighbourhood Development Plan to better protect habitats.
- Concerns about drug use, drinking, and parking issues around Pound Corner and The Street bus shelter.
- Why Sandwich Road is not included in the proposed 20mph limit.
- Questions about proposed spending on risk assessments.
- Ongoing erosion and water run off affecting Burford Alley.

Finance

- Parish councillors are entitled to a Basic Allowance, but the three elected members have chosen not to claim it.
- A review of energy suppliers for the Recreation Ground toilets has been completed. We will be switching to Scottish Power, securing a much lower rate.

Recreation Ground & Play Areas

- The Ash Carnival Association presented updated plans for the summer event. The Council remains supportive, pending further detailed event and risk planning.
- The public toilets have been redecorated and will remain open until winter.
- Play Area 2: A pre-construction meeting took place in March. Work is expected to start mid-May, with completion in June.

Roads & 20mph Consultation

Thank you to everyone who responded to the consultation, which closed on 31 March.

- 71% of respondents supported / partly supported the introduction of a 20mph limit
- 29% were against

The analysis has been submitted to Kent Highways, who will advise on next steps and final costs.

A reminder: Parish funds cannot be used for road repairs or potholes — highway maintenance is the responsibility of KCC Highways. Please report any issues direct to KCC.

The damaged safety bollards at the War Memorial have now been replaced.

Kent County Council Updates

Roads – From 1st May, Ringway will take over the highways contract. Expect a period of catch up due to winter damage.

Dover District Council Updates

Great British Spring Clean: Thank you to everyone who took part - a fantastic community effort. Ash collected 25 bags with the help of local volunteers.

Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy: DDC is reviewing sports facilities and future needs. If you run a sports club and haven't yet been contacted, please get in touch with Cllr Martin Porter or Cllr Trevor Bartlett.

Deal Leisure Centre: Construction has officially begun on the new multi million pound centre.

Kearsney Abbey Play Area: A £155,000 renovation begins this spring, including new multi play equipment, slides, tunnels, climbing walls and more.

Kent Police

Residents are reminded to report all incidents directly and as soon as possible to Kent Police:

- 999 – danger to life
- 101 – non emergency
- Online – Kent Police website
- Live Chat – fastest route to the control room in Maidstone

Posting on social media does not count as reporting.

Additional updates:

- Speed enforcement continues on the A257
- Criminal damage to a window in Ash: no further action
- Assault in Ash between known parties: no further action

- www.ashparishcouncil.gov.uk

Friends of St. Nicholas Church 22nd Annual
ART EXHIBITION & SALE

at **St. Nicholas Church, Ash**

Dates and Times:

Saturday 2nd May
10.00 – 18.00

Sunday 3rd May
10.00 – 18.00

Monday 4th May
10.00 – 17.00

Featuring:

- ❖ Over 500 exhibits
- ❖ Church Tower open 2-4pm each day
- ❖ Home Made Food
- ❖ Debit/Credit cards accepted



Admission - £2.00 for Adults
Children under 16 Free

Kindly Sponsored by Rex Cadman



[www.facebook.com/
friendsofstnicholaschurchash](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofstnicholaschurchash)

For more information
or entry forms

Email fstnicholas@gmail.com
or Call 01304 812049/813138

Church Website:
[https://thecanonrybenefice.org.uk/our-
-churches/saint-nicholas-church-ash-
village-in-kent/](https://thecanonrybenefice.org.uk/our-churches/saint-nicholas-church-ash-village-in-kent/)

Registered Charity No. 1045933

Congratulations to Ash RFC

Ash RFC has clinched victory over arch rivals Snowdown to win the Kent Rural league for the first time in their 30-year history.

Coming from behind in the dying seconds of the game, a converted kick took Ash ahead to seal the top spot.

The game, at Ash Rec on Saturday 18th April, was a formality as Ash had already won the title with two games in hand.



Coach and chairman, Neil Parfitt, was delighted with the win and paid tribute to the hard work of the squad, adding: "They played hearts out all year and I am truly humbled by the passion and commitment they have shown to the club. A huge thanks to all our sponsors and supporters, without whom none of this would be possible."

Ash Scout Hut Update

No one can be unaware of the popularity of the 9th Deal (Ash) Scout Group that has headquarters in Molland Lea.

It was, however, the very sad loss of Victor Marsh who had been with the Ash Scouts for most of his life, that prompted many local people into thinking that a new Scout Hut should be funded in Victor's memory.

No time has been wasted. Meetings have been held with senior officers at Dover District Council and Craig Nimmo, the Scout Leader, has put forward the case for a considerably larger and more modern headquarters.

The Scouts have had a lease on their existing site with Dover Council for many years. Officers were impressed to learn from him that there are now 60 members in the Group including Beavers aged 5-8 years; Cubs aged 8-10 years and Scouts aged 10-14 years.

Sadly, the Hut that is now nearly 50 years old is no longer big enough

or fit for the purposes of scouting, nor indeed, adequate for other users. It needs constant repairs. Most recently, Officers from DDC Estates visited the Molland Lea site. Craig described this meeting as “very positive and engaging”.

Everyone appreciated that larger premises would enhance the experience and opportunities for the Scouts, and by hosting other clubs and groups from within the village, it could become a valuable and much needed community facility.

Craig is now organising architect’s drawings and initial designs so that this ambitious proposal for the Scouts and the village can be costed and plans put in place to fund this exciting new venture.

Mary Smith

Ash Level Solar Farm Plans Appeal Announced

Statkraft, the Norwegian state-owned energy company which applied to construct a large solar farm on the Ash Level, has now issued a Notice of Appeal which has been filed with Dover District Council planning department.

The original application was unanimously refused by the Planning Committee on November 27th 2025.

Numerous new documents have now been issued by Statkraft’s Agents. The "Statement of Case" lays out their reasons for opposing the committee’s Reasons for Refusal. The Statement for Common Ground identifies areas where there is agreement, and they claim that this will narrow down the issues that remain in dispute. These and many other documents can be read on the DDC planning portal ref: 23/01363.

A Planning Inspector has been appointed and the Appeal hearing will commence on September 15th at 10am at the Dover Council Offices in Whitfield. It could last for up to 7 days.

Anyone wishing to present information should read the very specific guidance and submit their request by May 12th.



Elmstone Village

Fete

Sunday 10th May

Church Meadow

2.30-4.30pm

Stalls/BBQ/Teas/cakes

Games

All profits to Age Concern Sandwich and Elmstone Church

20mph Speed Limit Proposals

The results of the recent consultation on introducing a 20mph speed limit in parts of Ash have now been submitted to Kent County Council.

A total of 276 residents responded to the survey, including 194 online submissions and 82 returned by post. The results show that 62% (172 people) supported the proposal, 9% (25 people) partly supported it, and 29% (79 people) were opposed.

Ash Parish Council will pass all responses to Kent County Council, including residents' comments both for and against the scheme. As the highways authority, Kent County Council will review the findings and decide whether to proceed. They will also advise on the process required and confirm the final cost to the Parish Council.

The proposed 20mph limit would primarily be implemented through new signs and road markings, with any enforcement carried out by the police.

Kent County Council identified roads where a 20mph limit could be suitable - Gilton to Collar Makers, Chequer Lane, Queens Road, Molland Lane and surrounding roads, and New Street. Sandwich Road was not included because the average speed registered is too high.

If approved, the scheme is expected to cost around £17,000, which Ash Parish Council would fund.

Ash Variety Show

The New Ash Players are presenting a Summer Variety Show on Saturday 13th June from 7pm.

We will be very interested to hear from any individuals or groups who would like to take part. We will welcome actors, bands, comedians, contortionists, dancers, jugglers, magicians, musicians, singers, ventriloquists, in fact, performers of all kinds and ages.

If you feel you have a talent and would like to show it to the village, or would like to help backstage at this event then please contact Philip or Sally on 07949 462034 or email bpmoore51@gmail.com for more details

Continued over

and an application form May 9th. We look forward to hearing from you. Tickets available at £7: bring your own food and drink: sitting at tables of 6 to 8. You can make up your own table or sit with others when you arrive. Tickets on sale from Poparound or call 07949 462034 - email bpmoore51@gmail.com

Philip Moore

Ash Cricket Club

Spring has arrived at last! The days are longer and warmer and the scent of freshly mown grass is everywhere. The muddy winter quagmires have given way to surfaces latterly dried by the March and April easterlies and the clocks have gone forward. Keen young players (and a few not so young) are digging out their bats, rummaging for their whites and have been engaging in earnest practice. Mowers and rollers have been at work on the Rec and knives are being energetically sharpened in excited anticipation to buttering endless mountains of sandwiches from May to September – purely in order to enjoy the sight of a couple of dozen players wolfing down their morning's work in twenty minutes, a solemn ritual acted out in Ash since 1708. This can only mean one thing: the local cricket season is upon us!

At Ash Cricket Club we're all looking forward to the 2026 season. Practice is underway and the pavilion and the pitch are being attended to in readiness for the first match. We play in the Kent League and from early May you'll see us "flitting o'er the greensward" on summer afternoons in keen tussles against visiting teams from all over. We'll naturally strive for a successful outcome on every occasion but at Ash - win or lose – we shall follow the game with a convivial glass or two with the opposition and each other, together with any family, friends and villagers who wander over to join us. We begin with an inter-club six a side T20 day on Saturday 2nd May.

As with all clubs, we're always keen to welcome new players of any age, sex or ability, so if you're new to the area or are thinking of taking up the game again after a break, do consider joining Ash CC – you'll receive a warm welcome and enjoy a friendly atmosphere. One feature of club cricket which has sadly declined since the Covid restrictions of 2020 is the gradual disappearance in many clubs of traditional cricket teas, with players' heads tucked into their Tupperware instead of launching themselves at a trestle table groaning with sandwiches, scones, sausage rolls and cake. Well, at Ash we choose *not* to turn our back on three

centuries of rural tradition because our ladies are as keen as ever to provide our weekly teas in time-honoured fashion. At least, we're almost sure that's what they said. So, the summer tea rota was drawn up weeks ago – and at Ash we'll continue to defy the Tupperware trend.

Last season was a challenging but very enjoyable one, both on and off the field. Tom Laslett's captaincy over a dozen years saw the club go from strength to strength and we now look forward to being skippered by Dan Laslett this summer. At our AGM in November it was a privilege to announce the creation of four new Honorary Life Members – Andrew Dunn, Steve Laslett, Tom Laslett and Nigel Whitburn – who were thanked for their unselfish efforts over very many years on behalf of the club, and their achievement was acclaimed enthusiastically at our annual Christmas dinner in December. We're looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Rec this summer!

Peter Ewart, President, Ash CC

League of Friends of Kent and Canterbury Hospital (Ash Branch)

Thank you to everyone who supported us at the March and April community coffee mornings when we raised another £132 and received quite a number of used postage stamps which we are able to pass on for selling. Please continue to give us your stamps, both British and foreign, along with any remnants of knitting wool.

Plans for a 'Summer Fest' are now underway. This will be held in the hospital grounds on Sunday 19th July. This year the event will take on a slightly different format, with more focus on music and food, plus of course, the Grand Draw. There will be various live music groups and a variety of food and drink items on sale. There will also be activities for the children. More details to follow but please do put the date in your diary.

In Ash we are always seeking to welcome new members to our small committee. The work is not very time consuming and is extremely rewarding. Please do contact me if you are interested.

We look forward to seeing you again on Saturday 2nd May 10am-noon in the village hall for the next monthly coffee morning.

Hazel Damiral
01304 772363

ASH WITH WESTMARSH WI

Meeting at
ASH VILLAGE HALL

Thursday May 14th 2026 1.30 pm
(Every 2nd Thursday in the month.)

This Month Our Speaker Is

ALAN HAINES

The Talk Title Is

The Baby Boom Part 2

**Everyone is welcome to check us out and find out
about the various activities we have going on.
*Its not all Jam & Jerusalem you will be surprised***

“Look us up on www.thewi.org.uk
Enter your postcode to bring up the Ash with Westmarsh WI pages”
For further information please contact
sec.ashwmarshwi@yahoo.com or phone 07970 669448

**Come along and see for yourself.
Non-members £4.00**

Ash Guides and Rangers

The first few months of 2026 have been busy for Ash Guiding. The Rangers have been working towards their cooking badge with their own Bake Off challenges. They have mastered bread making, chocolate brownies, pizza and even gypsy tart. Keeping on the theme of food, the Guides created their own Chinese food and hosted a Chinese New Year party.

We have been busy within the Ash community, hosting the Ash Community Coffee morning in March and taking part in the Ash Village litter pick. We will be supporting the Ash Art show in May, helping to run the café in the church.

Camp is getting closer and lots of outdoor cooking, candle making, campfires and circus skills are planned for the weekend as well as showing our expertise in putting up our Icelandic and Bell tents. Over the next few weeks, we will be practising our knots, planning our meals and packing our bags for camp.

We are welcoming in several new Guides to our unit in the next few weeks and we are excited to announce that the Ash Rainbows unit will be re-opening in September. It will run alongside the Ash Brownie unit on Thursday evenings, 5.15pm–6.45pm at Ash Village Hall. If know any girls who would like to join the Ash Rainbows please contact:
Firstashrainbows@gmail.com.

If you are interested in supporting Ash Guiding or have girls who would like to join any of our units, Rainbows 4 – 7yrs, Brownies 7-10yrs, Guides 10 – 14yrs or Rangers 14 – 18yrs, please contact us, we would love to hear from you?

We are proud of our UK national Guiding statistics that girls in Guiding are 30% more confident and 15% happier than the UK average girl. So come along and join in

Madeline Lambie 1st Ash Rangers,
Instagram: 1stashrangers
1stashrangers@gmail.com

Mamma Mia!

A NIGHT IN GREECE WITH
ABBA'S GREATEST HITS

ESCAPE TO PARADISE... AND SING ALONG!

**SING-ALONG
FILM SCREENING
& GREEK MEZE**

SATURDAY 16TH MAY | 7PM for 7.30PM

TICKETS £20

ASH VILLAGE HALL

Bring your own drinks.
16+ only

For tickets email
ASHVILLAGEADVENT@GMAIL.COM

Ash Bowling Club

The sun is out (if only briefly some days) and our outdoor green is open!

We are very pleased to welcome some new members to the club and our membership window is currently open. Age, gender and ability are no barriers. Come along and see us any Friday evening from 5pm and have a chat and perhaps even have a go.

Steve has been working really hard preparing the outdoor green and our friendly matches are already underway. For all our activities please see our 'What's On' poster for details.

We will be hosting the Village Coffee Morning on Saturday 2nd May from 10-12, please do come along and see us, you'll be made very welcome. Bacon rolls, tea, coffee and the now infamous Cake Stall will all be available for you.

Following the success of last year's event, our Village Societies Open Competition is being held on Saturday 9th May. Do come along (if you're not playing) to cheer the teams on! Last year's Knit & Natter Winners are hoping to join Rory McIlroy in making it two years in a row.

Don't forget, we have a weekly Free Community Catch Up from 10-12 every Monday morning at the club, and all residents of Ash are welcome. We offer free tea/coffee and biscuits. This is a great opportunity to have a chat in the warmth of the clubhouse with a coffee. Please come along - it's completely free and will continue to run into the summer!

Throughout the year we will be hosting different social events which you will see advertised through our Facebook page, or alternatively you can visit our website www.ashbowlsclub.org.uk or contact Roy for further information - secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com

Roy Allen

The Parish Magazine is YOUR magazine.

We welcome articles and information from groups and individuals. Share your stories, news and views.

Email rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com or post hard copy at 69 The Street, Ash.



ASH HORTICULTURAL &
DISTRICT SOCIETY

SOPHIE LEATHART:
GROWING
PLANTS
FOR CUTTING

www.blacknightflowers.com

Thursday 28th May

7.30pm

Ash Village Hall

Visitors welcome.

Entry £3.

Ash Wildlife Friendly Village

Connecting with Local Groups

Ash Wildlife Friendly Village joined other local environmental groups, including Bridge Ecochurch, WASUP (Wingham Against Single Use Plastic), and the Four Village Eco Group to share ideas and experiences.

Swallows Return

Graham Doyle, reported the return of Swallows to Ash on April 14th. Mr Doyle, has been tracking the arrival of the birds along Cooper Street Drove since 2015.

Glebelands Footpath Progress

Work continues on the footpath leading to Glebelands, with more bluebells and snowdrops planted to enhance the display next year.

While the ground conditions - hard, gravelly, and full of rubble - have proved challenging, steady progress is being made.

There are plans to explore tiering parts of the path and introducing alpine planting better suited to the dry soil conditions.

Chequer Lane Nature Path Update

Further improvements have also been made along the Chequer Lane footpath, with volunteers planting snowdrops, bluebells and Alstroemeria.

Thanks to No Name Nursery for a generous donation of plants specially selected to suit to the largely shady spot.

Ash Horticultural Society

Spring Show

What would be the best weather to ensure a super Spring Show? It would not be a sudden blaze of hot weather to bring on all the blossom, then more heat to dry said blossoms (the gardeners were the only people looking miserable while everybody else was trying out their shorts and suntan lotion). And then very windy weather to blow away the shriveled blossom. Great. That's what we got.

But Ash Gardeners rose to the challenge and produced some lovely exhibits, some of which would usually have graced a summer show.

There were daffodils in nearly all classes, including those not usually ready earlier in the year. Gary Bradbury entered N.bulbicoidium, the lovely hooped petticoat daffodil, which has never been exhibited in the show before, but the Boylett Cup was awarded to Jan Giles for her beautiful white Thalia daffodils. The weather had brought on more tulips, the winning entry by Rosemary Lines. There were many pot plants entered, the winning pot of spring bulbs - daffodil bulbs bought from Asda! The orchids were spectacular and Sarah Neden was awarded the Tower Cup for the best exhibit of flowers or vegetables for her orchids. It was too early for most vegetables although Gary Bradbury entered all four classes, triumphant in three of them, except the rhubarb which was won by Susan Hudson.

For the first time, there was a class for oasis-free flower arrangements and the Jutson Cup was won by Christine Brown whose arrangements were all oasis-free. All the entries were of a very high standard and the judge queried whether the exhibitors were professionals. Unfortunately, several arrangements exceeded the width limit and were disqualified. The Society awards the Ted Sheppard Cup for the best first-time exhibitor. Usually, this is someone who has just joined the Society. This year, it was one of our oldest members, Esther Spanton, who won. Esther waited over 20 years before entering a show. But then she didn't wait to collect her cup at the prize giving! That will have to be awarded at the May meeting (Sophie Leathart – Growing Plants for Cutting).



The Nina Vallack cookery prize was won by Suzy Rowe for her very professional-looking (and tasting) blackcurrant jam tarts beating the many ginger cakes and fruit loaves.

There were lots of entries for all the photographic classes, especially the

close up of flower, which was won by first-time entrant Sue Comte for her photo of a double daisy (bellis). Sue also won the class for a question of balance, a dragonfly balancing on a twig, but the Gerry Edwards Cup was won by Liz Rath for the winter scene photo of decoy ducks covered in snow.

The Sylvia Profitt Cup for the best effort in the Children's classes was won by Birdie Thomas for her flower arrangement and for her (partially melted) jelly in a rabbit mould. We hope she will be back next year to repeat her performance.

The Coat of Arms challenge produced a wide range of entries, from several Girl Guides, several families and even one generated by AI. But it was the village talent hot spot in School Road which came first and second, with a Lego-built entry from the Steed family and a beautiful canine related entry from Tam Avery which included a dog Latin motto.

The Cornelius Challenge Cup for the most points in the show was won by Liz Rath (27 points); joint second Gary Bradbury, Sarah Neden and Julie Waller with 17 points)

The Summer Show will take place on Saturday 19th September

Liz Rath

Martin Newcombe: The History of Garden Plants

The previously scheduled speaker had to pull out through ill health, and Martin stepped into the breach with just a few days' notice, for which he was warmly thanked. Martin is an ecologist with a long career behind him, and continuing: he is currently engaged in a biodiversity survey at Sissinghurst. He lives in a house that was once occupied by Noel Coward's gardener!

For his talk to us, he presented an easily overlooked aspect of gardening: how did those familiar plants come to be in our gardens in the first place?

Some have been developed from native species; some originate from far away; all are intriguing.

His jumping-off point was honeysuckle. It was first known from Palestine about a thousand years ago, and now there are about 120 species of honeysuckle worldwide, ranging from large climbers that will overwhelm your house given the chance, to shrubs, including a variety that is

widespread in Britain as a topiary or hedge plant but goes largely unrecognised: Wilson's honeysuckle. We were urged to look it up to see if we have it without knowing we do. (I did: it looks like box but produces small cream flowers and tiny purple berries which are toxic, neither of which box does. So that's how you tell the difference.)

From there, Martin proceeded to list familiar and less familiar garden plants and the stories behind them. Some had been bred for their aesthetics, some for their food value, and some for medicinal purposes.

Guelder rose, aka dogberry, is an example of all three: it produces a circular spray of flowers and bright red berries and has been used as a cure for baldness and urinary incontinence. Raspberries are native to Britain, and elsewhere, and have been selectively bred for their food value. Foxgloves were originally cultivated as a medicinal plant: a country doctor in Staffordshire was treating a boy with heart disease. The leaves and seeds cause the pulse to accelerate (sometimes fatally) and the pupils to dilate, and the boy was apparently helped by this. In renaissance Italy it was even used as a sinister kind of trademark, planted outside the homes of hitmen.

In Victorian times there were as many as 200 British plant collectors roaming the world, and the result was an influx of plants too numerous to list. A couple of examples will convey the sheer range of them and their uses.

Vinca (periwinkle) is not just an attractive ground-coverer; it was used for medicinal purposes for centuries, e.g. to remove warts. It still is. A Mexican variety, similar to the one we know here, produces a latex which has been used not just for warts but as a treatment for cancer. Forget-me-not has its associated myths in many cultures.

Many medicinal uses stemmed from the pre-scientific 'doctrine of signatures', whereby if a plant was thought to resemble a part of the body, it was used to treat disorders in that part. Aconites, for instance, were once used to treat mental illness: the flower head was thought to resemble a human head, and the leaves appear 'depressed'. Hellebores were also used for this purpose.

Onions have been eaten at least since the Romans, who also used them to cover household smells. They can be used to treat sore throats, even today: eat them raw, or simply place a small piece in your mouth. But don't breathe on anyone.

In fact, the Mediterranean region beyond Rome has been the source of a lot of strongly flavoured or scented plants, such as herbs: the dry, hot climate leads to a concentration of their essential oils, sometimes to make them unpalatable to animals. But, unfortunately for them, they are appealing to humans, for cooking and medicine, and have been bred to be more so. Lots of plant lore to do with this region came to us with the returning crusaders in medieval times.

There was much more in this vein; Magnolias, for instance, have been traced in the fossil record back to the time of the dinosaurs. In fact, there is a whole encyclopedia to be written on this topic, far more than can be contained in one talk. Martin left us with a strong flavour of this aspect of our gardens, which will lead us never to look at them in the same way again.

Ken Manktelow

Friends of Elmstone and Preston Churches

St Mildred's

Easter Sunday Service: The Communion Service, taken by Nigel Hale, was extremely well supported, with 50 adults and 10 children attending. The church was beautifully decorated and included Lilies in memory of loved ones, as well as an Easter Garden. The children made Easter decorations during the service and took part in an Easter egg hunt. Refreshments were served after the service. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this occasion so special.

St Mildred's

Churchyard – April:

Blessed by beautiful weather, a large number of people came to clear brambles, trim trees and shrubs and tidy up other areas. Since then, the seat in the Churchyard has been refurbished. Thank you to everyone who helped, especially Jeremy Hodges, Stephen Bradley and Tim Offord.



St Mildred's Spring Clean – May: The ceilings and high walls will be cleaned on Friday 1st May. On Monday 4th May, we would welcome as many people as possible to come and help clean the rest of the Church, starting at 10am.

St Mildred's – tea and stalls – Sunday 14th June 2.30-4.30pm: We would like to have some helpers for setting up late morning/early afternoon and clearing up afterwards and we would also welcome homemade cakes. Please let me know if you can help. 01227 722704 or 07783 777854.

Elmstone Church

Elmstone Village Fete: This will be held on Sunday 10th May from 2.30-4.30pm. There will be stalls, a BBQ and games. The Friends will be helping with teas in the churchyard. We hope that you will support this community event in aid of Age Concern Sandwich and Elmstone Church.

Happy Hours: The next two dates are 1st May and 5th June, from 6.30pm. We hope to be able to hold these events on Church Meadow, weather permitting, otherwise in the Church. Everyone is welcome.

Our services in May

1st Sunday – 3rd May - Holy Communion, Elmstone, 10.30am

2nd Sunday – 10th May - Family Service, Preston, 10.30am (No Communion on this occasion)

3rd Sunday – 17th May - Holy Communion, Elmstone, 10.30am

Refreshments are normally served after all our morning services.

Elizabeth Timms

Goodnestone Music

We have two wonderful concerts at Goodnestone in May. We aim to make quality classical music concerts accessible to as many people as possible and so endeavour to keep ticket prices as low as possible.

Saturday May 2nd 7pm: An Evening of song with Catherine and Sabrina. Catherine Fatcher -Soprano; Sabrina Curwen – Soprano; Tim Frost-Piano. A wonderful concert of Classical Soprano duets. No ticket required, retiring collection.

Friday May 15th 7.30pm: Zvarder Trio. Savva Zverev-Violin; Sid Ramchander – Piano; Aristide du Plessis – Cello. Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49 & Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50. We are delighted to be welcoming the fantastic Zvarder Trio to Goodnestone for what will be a truly amazing evening. Tickets £15.

For tickets or further details of concerts see www.goodnestonemusic.com

Denyer Kittle

Sandwich History Society

Meetings are held at Sandwich Guildhall at 6.30 for 7pm. £5 for non-members at the door.

Wednesday 27th May: Dr. Sheila Sweetinburgh (Leading Medievalist and Historian of Kent), The 'lost' St Bartholomew's Day Procession of 1532: an exploration of discord in Henrician Sandwich.

For more information go to www.sandwichhistorysociety.org.uk

Mike Vaile

The Arts Society Sandwich

TASS Spotlight Collection

If you follow us on Facebook you will have spotted our new initiative. Each month we are featuring a new local artist - all are TASS members or closely associated with our society. Many exhibit their work at our, now biennial, Summer Art Exhibition.

Our April spotlight was on tapestry weaver Gillian Bull and May features figurative artist (and author), Veronica Liote. On the 1st of each month our new Spotlight will be revealed. You can see it first on our Facebook page and the entire collection is uploaded monthly onto our website.

www.sandwichdfas.org.uk We hope you will enjoy seeing the collection grow.

Reuniting History

TASS members and members of the Arts Society Dover, Deal & Sandwich have been volunteering at Goodnestone Park Mansion cataloguing historic documents. The house forms part of a rich literary and social history. The daughter of the 3rd Baronet married Jane

Austen's brother, Edward Austen, and Jane herself was a frequent visitor to Goodnestone. Today, the estate is owned by the 22nd Baron FitzWalter, Julian Plumptre.

To ensure the work meets professional conservation standards, volunteers attended a training day led by Caroline Bendix, a highly respected and accredited library conservator and Arts Society lecturer.

Goodnestone Park Mansion contains an extensive library. Sets of books that have been separated over time are being reunited. Within the collection are a number of antiquarian books, alongside hundreds of additional volumes that are gradually being cleaned, catalogued and carefully returned to their rightful places on the shelves.

The project will create a complete inventory and location system for the collection, preserving an important part of the house's heritage for future generations.

Monthly Lectures

Our monthly evening lectures at the Guildhall Sandwich continue. Guests are very welcome, £7 at the door. Refreshments from 6.30pm with the talk starting at 7pm.

- 11th May - The History of Colour: Blue with Alice White
- 1st June - The Bayeux Tapestry: International relations then and now with Hilary Williams.
- Summer break.
- 7th September - The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz: A story of survival and music with Anne Sebba

Vicki Bates

Age Concern Sandwich

The Sunflower Centre and Dementia Roadshow

Based within the Well-being Centre at Age Concern Sandwich, The Sunflower Centre provides a warm and welcoming space for people over 50 living with dementia.

Each day is designed to be engaging and enjoyable, with activities games, quizzes, crafts, music and conversation. A key part of the centre is the Cogs Club, aimed at those with mild dementia or memory loss. It

offers opportunities to revisit familiar skills, try new activities and build confidence, while also providing valuable respite for carers.

Additional support is available through Dementia Drop-in Clinics, offering free advice and guidance, including information about local services and the Memory Service. The centre also runs Dementia Memory Cafés and social sessions across the month, creating relaxed opportunities for people to meet others, reduce isolation and form new friendships.

Monthly Create and Chat sessions combine crafts and conversation in a friendly setting, while one-to-one memory assessments help identify needs early and guide people towards the right support.

Working alongside the centre, the Dementia & Me Team provides free, tailored support from pre-diagnosis onwards.

A Dementia Roadshow will be held at the Guildhall, Sandwich, on Thursday 21st May offering a chance to learn more about local services and support available.

Events

Events in May include a VE Anniversary Lunch on May 8th with a two-course lunch for £9 and Spring Afternoon Tea on May 22nd. Find out more at www.ageconcernsandwich.com

Cover Story: Swifts

No bird spends more of its life in the air than the Swift. They collect food (hence the very wide 'gape' to catch insects while flying) and nesting materials in flight. If they do have to land on the ground they become very vulnerable as taking off is not easy. They never land voluntarily.

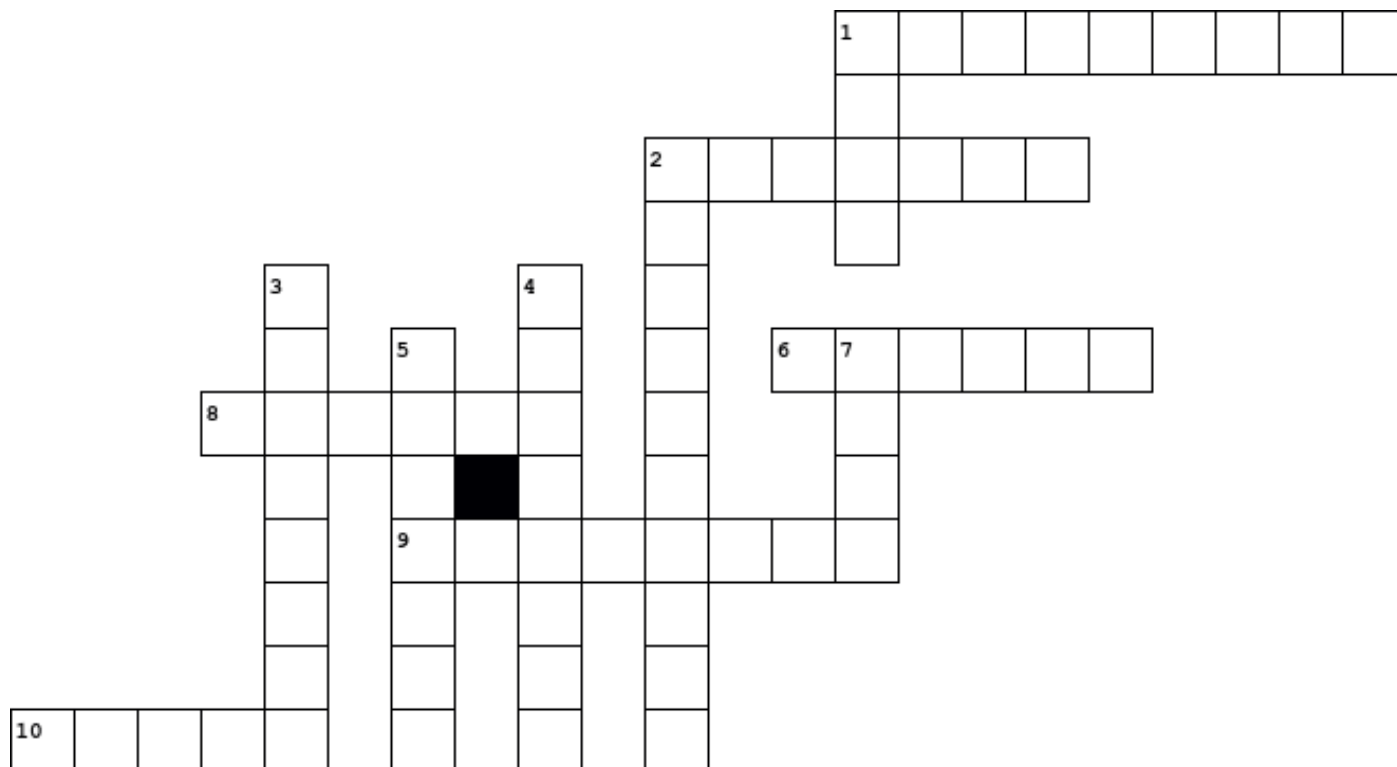
Their hawklike toes enable them to cling onto house walls or cliff faces where their nest holes are found. Swifts and Martins are becoming endangered as modern housing is not always suitable for them. They are a sooty brown but look black when we see them silhouetted against the sky.

In May, listen out for their harsh 'scree' call. I think it's exciting to hear them.

Pat Coles

Across Ash: Fields, Fêtes & Fun

A monthly Ash Heritage Group puzzle. Answers in the June issue!



Across

1. Popular Ash event once showcasing local produce
2. Colourful decoration hung for fêtes and summer events
6. Early-summer fruit long associated with Kent orchards
8. Traditional fruit tree grown in old East Kent orchards
9. Game often seen at Kent fêtes and pub gardens
10. Decorated platform used in village parades

Down

1. Outdoor village gathering with stalls and games
2. Traditional Kent pub-garden game played outdoors in summer
3. Wood from this tree was used for making hop poles
4. Long-running Ash summer celebration now being revived
5. Springtime display in orchards around Ash
7. Kent crop harvested in late summer and once central to local farming

April answers

3. CINQUE
4. WHARF
6. MOTE
8. BOURNE
9. BARGE
10. ROPE

- 1.MINT
- 2.GUILD
- 5.HUNDRED
- 6.MARSH
- 7.QUAY
- 9.BREW



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secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com**

Garden Jottings for May

Once again, as last year, Spring has arrived about 3 weeks earlier than is normal. What a truly mixed month April proved to be with record-breaking hot days preceding cold ones with night frosts followed by strong gale force winds.

Unpredictable weather really is a problem for the unsuspecting gardener. Unfortunately the unusual weather overwhelmed the Daffodils which just withered and dried up too soon. Tulips, which should be at their very best late in April and through May, have mostly been and gone while all the ornamental cherry trees have given a marvellous explosion of blossom and colour everywhere - not successional as usual - but all at once!

Thankfully a little recent rainfall has helped to ease the plight of struggling border plants and we have more seasonably normal temperatures which are easier to work with. So, after the beautiful blooms of early Spring have faded it is time to prune Forsythia and other early flowering shrubs taking out one or two of the oldest stems and pruning back to a nice compact shape. Feed Rhododendrons and Azalia with ericaceous fertiliser. Hydrangeas can have some colourant powder watered in round the soil at the base of the bush to enhance or alter the colour of the blooms. Give these plants and Peonies some feed to encourage strong growth and large blooms. Feed roses, if not done last month, and apply a spray against black spot and aphid infestation. Always spray on a still quiet evening when bees are less in evidence.

Plant out Dahlias and Chrysanthemums making sure they have been hardened off well, keeping an eye out for slugs which love any new young shoots. Cut off any remaining seed heads on Daffodils and Tulips leaving the stems and leaves to die back naturally to feed the bulbs for next year.

Harden off hanging baskets you have previously planted up by placing them outdoors during the day and back indoors at night until they're finally acclimatised and can be hung up in their final positions. This practise should be followed for any tender plants that have been inside where it is warmer than outside.

Rockerries should be at their best just now but keep dead heading and clip over to prolong flowering. Any gaps can be planted up with Mesembryanthemums, Sweet Alyssum, bedding Begonias, Pansies and

Dwarf Dianthus. Keep Snow in Summer and dwarf ornamental nettles under control as they can swamp more delicate and attractive plants. As spring gives way to summer, Wallflowers, Double Daisies and Polyanthus will need to be replaced with Antirrhinums, Ageratums and other bedding plants you may have grown. Polyanthus can be planted in a shady corner with some leaf mould or compost added. When planting these plants can be split up and replanted in the autumn but don't forget to water them in dry periods. Pansies you have removed can also be utilised in old spots and rockeries after cutting back and tidying the plants. Keep all new plants, seedlings and soft fruit well-watered. Rather than little and often, a good soak less often is more beneficial as the water goes deeper into the soil and therefore the roots.

Sow spinach, carrots, lettuce and radish again now for a continuation of cropping. Plant out dwarf French beans after all danger of frost is past also runner beans a little later on. Grow these up between poles or on cane wigwams. Keep these beans tied in to start them climbing up supports and water them well, preferably in the evenings when water soaks in better. It aids fertilisation of the flowers if they are sprayed lightly with water at the same time.

Potatoes should be earthed up to keep them and their new shooting leaves free from frost, making a ridge over the row. Plant main crop potatoes now to harvest in September and October. Sow radish, spring onions and coriander which will be ready to harvest in a couple of months.

Weed onions by hand to avoid infection by onion fly keeping the scent of the onions from attracting the pest. Place straw around strawberry plants as they begin to produce fruits as this will keep them clean and dry. Make sure to net the bed. Netting can be stretched over hoops or upturned pots on top of canes. Always anchor these nets securely. These cages are useful to protect brassicas from pigeons and butterflies though they need to be considerably larger and taller.

Keep indoor tomatoes growing on steadily moving up only to a slightly larger pot one size at a time and give a high potash feed. Remove side shoots as they appear and tie the plant onto the cane. Outdoor tomatoes must be carefully hardened off keeping fleece at the ready in case of a chilly spell. Herbs should be growing strongly now and can be split up if they are too large and straggly give them a trim and pot on adding sharp sand or grit to aid drainage to the compost.

Ventilate green houses and cold frames. Carefully pot up cuttings of Geraniums, Fuchsias and white Marguerites to make good strong plants for pots and borders next month. Plant up Dahlias, adding a cane as you plant to avoid piercing the tuber if you add it later.

On a drizzly day, if it's warm enough, give house plants a shower to clean the leaves. Even hairy leaves will benefit from a shower but not heavy rain which can damage leaves. Smooth leaves can benefit from wiping with a little milk to give a shine. It is a good idea to replace the top couple of inches of soil with some fresh compost and add a top dressing of grit if liked.

Check ponds and maybe purchase new plants such as Irises or Marsh Marigolds, rushes and Arum Lilies.

If it is at all possible try to have a bog garden at one end to encourage toads, frogs and other invertebrates and insects all of which enhance the garden and help to keep down slugs and bugs. If the area is planted up with ferns, grasses and Astilbes it will give cover to wildlife and a safe area for birds to bathe and drink.

Keep bird feeders and tables cleaned to avoid the spread of avian diseases.

Place supports round herbaceous plants before they need to be tied up, adding canes or twigs tied in securely around the plants as the plants grow up. There is nothing worse than trying to prop up plants that have flopped over or broken in bad weather - prevention is better than cure! This time of year is so enjoyable as the daylight hours lengthen giving more time in the garden at this busy season.

Hoping for some much-needed rain to moisten the soil and prepare for planting out and sowing annual seeds and being able to apply lawn feed and even some seed on bare worn patches.

Lookout for seeds of biennial Sweet Williams and Foxgloves for example as they will need to be sown later in June to be ready to plant out and make sturdy plants to flower in the border next year.

Enjoy your garden.

*Christine Brown,
President, Ash Horticultural Society*

Zvarder Trio

Friday May 15th 7.30pm

Holy Cross Church

Goodnestone



Sevva Zverev Violin

Sid Ramchander Piano

Aristide du Plessis Cello

Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

Tchaikovsky: Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50

Tickets £12

www.goodnestonemusic.com

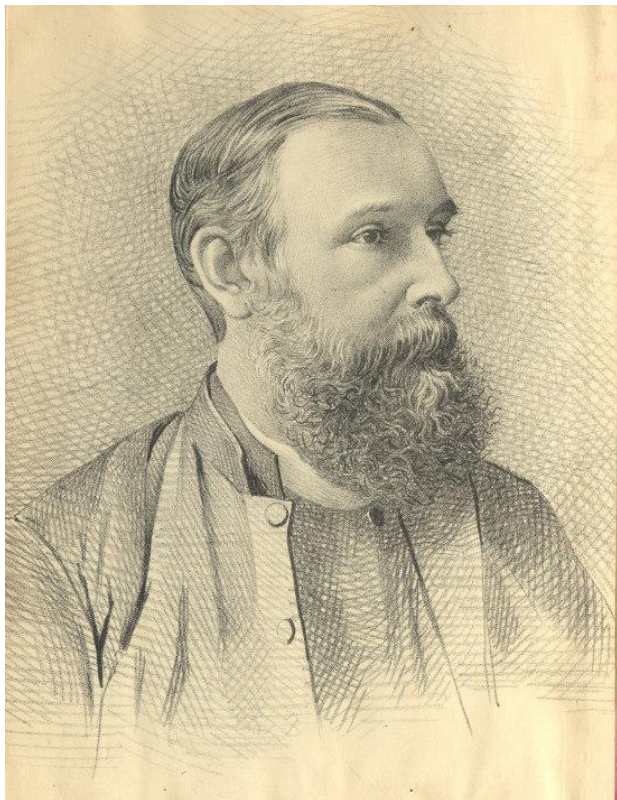
Stories from the Archives (73)

From Canterbury to Ash via Calcutta

“He hates anything that is mean, vicious or impure.” And if that seemed a little too good to be true, the writer then added: “He has a hot, hasty temper which makes him, I think, unfit to have the charge of young children, but he sees his own defect and speaks sorrowfully of it.” This might seem a rather less than ideal description a young West Country school teacher, but his widowed mother was writing in support of her son’s application to a missionary training college in 1859. Francis Rodon Michell, a native of Ilfracombe, was studying hard to get up to scratch and his efforts - and his mother’s testimonial – were successful in persuading Right Rev’d Henry Bailey, Warden of St Augustine’s College in Canterbury, that he might, after three years of hard training, turn out to be “the right stamp of man” for service in the Empire’s mission field.

The austere life at St Augustine’s College in its early years would test anyone. The buildings and quadrangle were – and are – very beautiful but the sequestered life there, frugal almost to the extreme, was designed to steer the student towards devout and earnest study and a practical preparation for a lifetime in lonely, unhealthy and dangerous corners of the world. Graduating in 1862, Michell made his solemn vow to serve in the overseas mission field for the entirety of his working life and sailed for Singapore under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). There he was to learn Mandarin (among

people whose language he discovered was Malay!) and the following year was sent to Peking (now Beijing), where the British Legation frowned on the presence of missionaries.



The following year he was transferred to Shanghai and, on ordination, became the first ordained British missionary in China. Ministry in Malacca followed and afterwards in India. In 1866, at St Peter’s Chapel, Bishop’s College, Calcutta at the age of 27, he married Adelaide Lachlan Mclean, the daughter of an officer in the Bengal army, and who should perform the service but a former colleague of Michell’s at St Augustine’s College, Rev’d Dr John

Coe, an accomplished scholar and now the principal at Bishop’s College.

Francis and Adelaide brought up a large family in India, where Assam and Jubbulpore were the scenes of Michell's endeavours until he was appointed Archdeacon of Calcutta in 1889.

By 1895 he was back in England as a vicar in Bedford for several years, interrupted by a short spell in the Transvaal where he now had three sons and from where he wrote to his alma mater in Canterbury warning of coming trouble with the Boer – “and I know what I'm talking about.” That conflict broke out in 1899 and by its conclusion in 1902 he had been appointed here at St Nicholas, Ash. Eight years earlier, his friend John Coe had returned from India and become vicar of Westmarsh, then a separate parish. It seems too much of a coincidence that Michell, too, should be appointed to so close a living without some influence somehow from Coe. Some Augustinian missionaries who stuck to their vow until ill health or death had overtaken them didn't always look kindly on those who “broke” their vow and walked into an easier life in English parishes. It was certainly a fact that none of these “non-Oxbridge” Anglican clergy would have become clergy in this country had they not squeezed in through the “back door” of overseas ordination. Broken health was the usual reason for a return but not all were convinced.

Was Michell's service in China and British India – a far cry from church life in a rural English parish – a suitable preparation for his ministry here? He undoubtedly found things very different, as had one of his predecessors at St Nicholas who arrived in 1869 after 20 years in India. Michell moved into the vast Sandwich Road vicarage and two years later buried the man who had married him, his friend and colleague, Coe, in our churchyard more than 40 years after they'd studied together in Canterbury. It wasn't long before adjustments would be needed to settle into parish life but he was soon admonishing his parishioners for not baptising their children promptly – or at all. Perhaps the late David Downes, in his published history of Ash [available from the Heritage Centre], came closest to getting Michell's measure with a few wry observations about his taking his duties and himself very seriously and being unable to laugh at himself. The well-entrenched customs associated with the rigid social status adopted by the British in India would certainly need to be loosened a little.

The Parish Magazine was the medium by which Michell tended to harangue his flock and never more so than after the outbreak of the Great War. A solemn service of intercessional prayer was held in August 1914, to be repeatedly regularly as long as the war lasted. In the church porch he hung a list of all those parishioners who had volunteered for military service and was keen that it should contain as many names as possible.

Both moves received strong local approval but his appeal in 1915 in support of the growing need for conscription may not have gone down so well, even after quoting from a recent speech by Kipling. Michell criticised “any persons in Ash who are still opposed to national service.” When Zeppelin raids caused the authorities to switch off street lights earlier than usual Michell supported the move by bringing forward his Sunday evening services to 3pm. Did his ardent patriotism get the better of him, however, in early 1916 when conscription was finally introduced? Men could appeal to a local tribunal against their call-up papers depending on their family circumstances, but Michell used this Magazine to insist that any man who refused to take part “is surely not fit to be called an Englishman, much less to be entrusted with a vote in the government of his country.” Dismissing those who disagreed as “foolish cranks” who are fit “only for the lunatic asylum” or who hold “foolish excuses made sometimes by silly children”, Michell was no longer in the mood to hold back. Setting aside his provocative language, however, the serious manpower shortage of 1915/16 and the need to maintain food production were genuine concerns everywhere, which is why he also insisted that all Ash women should now be set to work in the absence of all the serving men, preferably on farms or in gardens.

In the manner of clergy everywhere he endeavoured to keep up the spirits of local people and ruminated on the changes being wrought in Ash, England and throughout the world, acknowledging that many things would be different when peace arrived. He was proud that Ash had already sent over 200 men to the Army and Royal Navy and continued, sadly, to add more names to the roll of the fallen. His heart melted a little after he and Mrs Michell received hearty congratulations throughout the parish on their Golden Wedding anniversary in November 1916. It didn't last long. He was soon complaining about “very bad attendances” at the intercessional prayer services. The darks streets at night were, he felt, no excuse, because “curiously enough this does not seem to affect the attendance at whist drives” or other entertainments. On 4th March 1917 Michell held a memorial service in church in memory of all those who had fallen in the war (so far), attended by many soldiers billeted in Ash as well as those convalescents recovering in the village hall's VAD hospital. A fortnight later an impressive Roll of Honour was unveiled on the exterior wall of the village hall [which can be viewed in the Heritage Centre, together with a photograph of the ceremony] and when the Derbyshire Yeomanry arrived at their new billets later that year, the Sunday service took the form of a parade.

Ash's vicar spared nothing in his constant efforts to remind his parishioners of their patriotic duties – as did clergy up and down the land – and although his strident language may raise the odd eyebrow today, it was much less objectionable than some of the bloodthirsty polemic which issued forth from pulpits throughout the country between 1914 and 1918. Finally, in November 1918, the bells in our tower rang out to mark the signing of the Armistice.

In July 1919 the whole country celebrated the Peace with services and huge parades but the Venerable Francis Rodon Michell outlived that day by only a week or so. That “hot, hasty temper” finally stilled, he was interred in his own churchyard, where the memorial stone to him and Adelaide, who survived him by a decade, reminds us today of a remarkable man.

The Ash Parish Magazines of the period (Ash Heritage Centre and Canterbury Cathedral Archives) have been helpful, as have the archives of St Augustine's College (Cathedral Archives) and further general research.

Peter Ewart

A fundraising poster for Dover District Lotto. The background is a collage of yellow, orange, and pink geometric shapes. The text is arranged as follows:

Dover District Lotto
PLAY NOW TO BOOST OUR FUNDRAISING

Tickets just £1 a week

To buy tickets visit www.doverlotto.com and search for your local good cause

ASH VILLAGE HALL

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FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH

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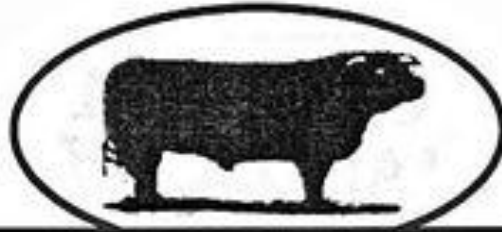
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