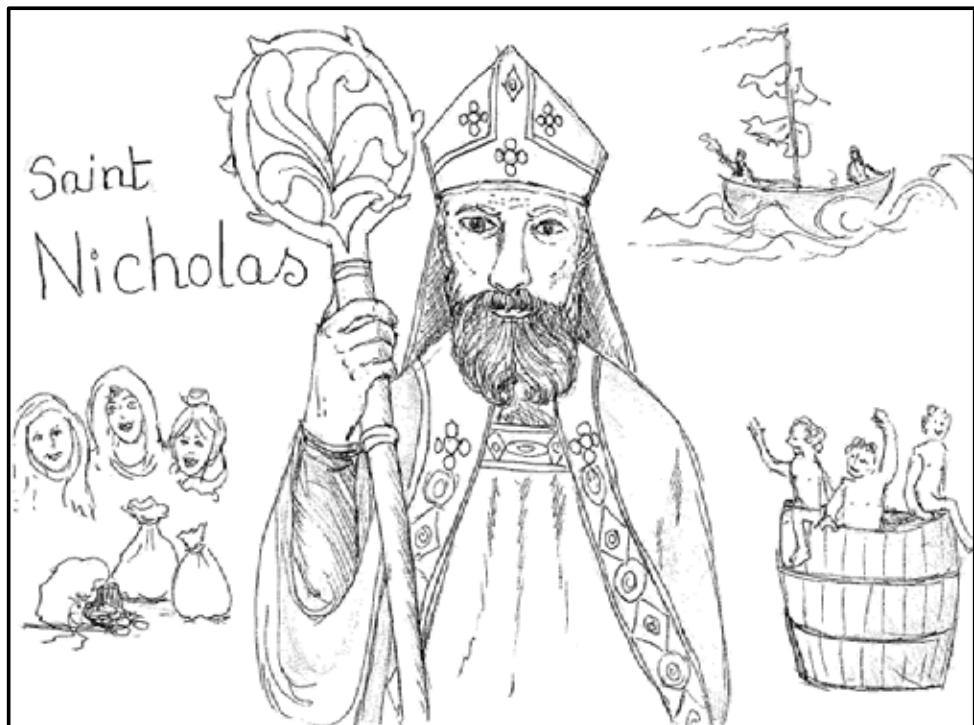


ASH WITH WESTMARSH  
PARISH MAGAZINE  
DECEMBER 2025  
£1



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>	Community Warden, Kerry Skirrow <a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens">www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens</a>	07977 982184
	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 cllr-trevor.bartlett@dover.gov.uk	07980 300084
	Cllr Martin Porter cllr-martin.porter@dover.gov.uk	07733 111334
	Sir Roger Gale MP suzy@galemail.com	01843 848588
	Ash Parish Council clerk@ashparishcouncil.gov.uk	07398 584 053
	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](http://samaritans.org)**

*~ If an error is noted please inform the editors ~*

# Welcome to the December 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](mailto:rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com)

## Front cover

St Nicholas by Pat Coles. See Cover Story page 33.

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## Share Your News

Email copy for the next magazine edition by **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December** to [rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## What's On

**AGE CONCERN SANDWICH** hosts a Christmas Craft Fair on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November from 11am-4pm with Santa's Grotto, competitions, mulled wine, food and drinks as well as artisan craft stalls.

**ASH ADVENT EVENTS** begin on Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup> with a tractor parade and Christmas lights switch on. See pages 21 and 24 for details.

**HAPPY HOUR** at Elmstone Church (or in Church Meadow if the weather is fine) will be held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December from 6.30pm. For more Elmstone news, see page 28.

**THE COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING** at Ash Village Hall is hosted by The Friends of St Nicholas Church on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December from 10am-12noon. See poster page 19 and report page 23.

**ST NICHOLAS CHURCH FLOWER ARRANGERS** Festive Arrangements Workshop. Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December. 11am-1pm. St Nicholas Church, Ash. £30 including tea and coffee. Booking required. Email [festivearrangements@gmail.com](mailto:festivearrangements@gmail.com)

**THE ASH SOCIETY:** A talk entitled, 'A Child's Life in the Middle Ages' by Imogen Corrigan will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2025 at the Ash Village Hall, in memory of Nina Vallack. Free entry.

**THE CHURCHYARD BASH.** Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December. 9am-noon at St Nicholas Church, Ash. Join volunteers to maintain the church grounds.

**WINTERFEST** is at St Nicholas Church, Ash, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2-5pm. See poster, page 20 for details.

**ASH BOWLS CLUB** Bingo and Supper night is on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December. 6.30pm. £6 members. £8 non-members. See page 26.

**THE RAILWAY SWING BAND** Christmas Concert at St George's Church , Deal. Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December. 7.30 pm. In aid of Walmer lifeboat RNLI. Tickets £10 on the door or via 07973 761651.

**THE LEES COURT ENSEMBLE** Candlelit Concert Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 5.30pm. Elmstone Church. Tickets, £12, including refreshments. See pages 12 and 29.

# **Church Services for December**

## Sunday Services during Advent

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November

10.30am Benefice Service, Elmstone Church

6.30pm Advent Carol Service, Holy Cross, Goodnestone

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December

9am Holy Communion Holy Cross, Goodnestone

10.30am Holy Communion Elmstone Church

10.30am Family Worship St Nicholas Day St. Nicholas, Ash

10.30am Service of the Word St. Mary's, Nonington

Sunday 14th December

9am Holy Communion All Saints, Chillenden

10.30am Holy Communion St. Nicholas, Ash

10.30am Family Service and Communion St Mildred's, Preston

9.30am Breakfast Church/Tree Festival St Mary's, Nonington

6pm Candlelit Carol Service St Mary's, Nonington

6.30pm Candlelit Carol Service St Nicholas, Ash

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December

9am Holy Communion All Saints, Chillenden

10.30am Holy Communion Elmstone Church

10.30am Holy Communion St. Nicholas, Ash

6.30pm Christmas Carol Service Holy Cross, Goodnestone

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December

10.30am Benefice Service Holy Communion St. Nicholas, Ash

## Christmas Services

### **Christmas Eve** Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December

- 4pm Nativity Service St Nicholas, Ash - Journey with Mary and Joseph from Pound Corner at 3.40pm
- 6pm Carol Service All Saints, Chillenden
- 10pm Midnight Mass and Communion St Mildred's, Preston
- 11.30pm Midnight Mass and Communion St Mary's, Nonington
- 11.30pm Midnight Mass with Communion St Nicholas, Ash

### **Christmas Day** Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December

- 9am Holy Communion Holy Cross, Goodnestone

- 10.30am Holy Communion St Nicholas, Ash

## Special Events this Christmas

- Wreath Making (booking required) Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 10am St Nicholas, Ash
- Christmas Tree Festival December 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> 11am-4pm St Mary's, Nonington
- Winterfest Christmas Fayre, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2-5pm St Nicholas, Ash
- Cribs from around the World Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2.30-4.30pm St Mildred's Preston
- Thanet Festival Choir Christmas Concert Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm, All Saints, Stourmouth
- Lees Court Ensemble Christmas Carol Concert Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December, 5.30pm Elmstone Church
- Bus Stop Family Carols Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 6pm Preston Village
- Community Carols outside the Church Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 6.30pm, St. Nicholas, Ash

## 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 upon request. Please note services may be taking place during this time.

## **Parish Register**

### Baptism

Tyde Rogers, St Mildred's, Preston, 12th October

### Wedding

Charlotte Burridge and Kyle Evans, Holy Cross, Goodnestone, 10th October

### Funerals

Barry Wilson, St Nicholas, Ash, 15<sup>th</sup> October

John Speers, Barham, 23<sup>rd</sup> October

Brian Marston, St Nicholas, Ash, 5<sup>th</sup> November

## Parish Letter

Here we are – the December edition of the Parish Magazine! And how wonderful it is to be celebrating Christmas again with you all. What a year it's been.

Some of the stand-out moments in our parish have been those times when church and community came together – from the Advent Window Trail that lit up our village last year, to the Maundy Thursday meal where we shared together in the story of Jesus' Last Supper; from the sunrise service at Challedon Windmill on Easter morning to the Ascension Day service at the top of the tower; from the Light Party filled with laughter, parachute games, and apple bobbing, to all those ordinary Sundays where friendships are made over cups of coffee.

All people, all ages, all welcome. That's what church is all about. Everyone is welcome because this is your church. It doesn't belong only to those who come on a Sunday morning; it belongs to the whole community. From the earliest days of the Christian story, the church has existed to make known the love that Christ showed to the world. Two thousand years on, that mission remains the same.

And so we come to Advent again, a season of waiting, of hope, of joy and peace. There is so much happening this month and everyone is welcome. We'd love to see families joining in – whether you come to church often, sometimes, or not at all.

St Nicholas Day Family Service on December 7<sup>th</sup> with St Nicholas himself putting in an appearance, along with stories, songs games and a meal to share in after.

The return of Winterfest on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December with many locally crafted goods on offer to buy as Christmas pressies, mulled wine a-plenty, stalls and activities for children and the usual fun of the fayre.

Our much-loved Live Nativity on Christmas Eve, where we'll walk through The Street from Pound Corner with Mary, Joseph, and a very real donkey, knocking on doors and hearing again the story of that first Christmas night. Come and be part of it. Join the drama of Christmas and make sure you/your children and grandchildren come dressed up in their best Nativity gear!

Then there are the Carols by Candlelight and Midnight Mass services. And on Christmas Day itself, we don't have coffee after the service, we have Christmas cake and shots of our favourite festive tipplers instead! A great start to the festivities of the day.

So why do we do all of this? Because this story, this church, this message of love - it's for everyone. The light that shines in the darkness shines for all people.

*As Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12).*

Our job is to shine that light to others. Perhaps this year ahead - 2026 - is the year when you discover that light for yourself.

May the joy, the peace, and the light of Christ be with you this Christmas and always.

*Rev Caroline Turvey*



**Rising Sun**

Ending domestic abuse. Together.



### Can you help?

To mark St Nicholas' Day, we are supporting Liberty House in Canterbury which provides accommodation for homeless young women who've experienced domestic abuse and who are pregnant or have a young baby. We've been asked to collect:

- Baby wipes
- Nappies
- Toiletries
- For the mums, a gift for Christmas (this is often the only present they'll receive)
- Baby clothes (new)
- Cot bedding (new)
- Toys

If you would like to contribute, please leave donations in the collecting boxes in church from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December

Thank you so much

## **St Nicholas Warm Space**

We've now opened the doors of our warm space and have welcomed people to come and join us for chat, coffee, soup and cake.

We would really love more people to know that this is open to everyone, especially those who want to meet new people, get out of their homes for a few hours, or to make the most of a warm environment with a friendly welcome.

Please share this with those who may not receive the Parish mag, or who you know may really need some company each week.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursdays, 11am-2pm, St Nicholas Church.

*Rev Caroline Turvey*

## **Christmas Concert**

### **Elmstone Church**

#### **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 5.30pm**



**A concert of Christmas music and carols with Lees Court Ensemble**  
**Followed by mince pies and mulled wine**  
**Tickets : £12 from Preston village shop**  
**or Janette Nickols 07803 086 584**

**Tickets available on the door**

# Onlooker

**A councillor's view of the Ash Parish council meeting held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November.**

## Highway Improvement Plan 2025–26

Thank you to everyone who responded to the consultation—over 100 residents took part. Based on your feedback, the following priorities have been agreed (subject to feasibility and further consultation):

- **20mph Speed Limit within the Village of Ash:** This was the most requested intervention across nearly every location. A public consultation will be carried out next year to obtain further views.
- **Extended Waiting Restrictions and a Keep Clear/Yellow Box Junction at The Street/ Pound Corner/ Chequer Lane junction:** Visibility and access issues were raised about this village centre location.
- **Reduction of Speed Limit to 50mph on A257 (Ash Bypass):** The A257 was repeatedly cited as a major safety concern due to perceived excessive speeds and poor junction visibility.
- **Parking and Enforcement:** Residents voiced strong concerns about:
  - Long-stay parking in The Street car park
  - Illegal parking on double yellow lines and junctions
  - Lack of enforcement causing unsafe conditions

The Parish Council will continue to engage with DDC to explore solutions.

## Recreation Ground Updates

- **Fencing Grant Application:** A grant has been submitted to Dover District Council under the Rural Prosperity Fund to replace fencing at the Recreation Ground.
- **Toilet Vandalism:** Sadly, the newly reopened toilets have been vandalised. Please report incidents to Kent Police. Toilets are now closed for winter and will reopen on 1 April.
- **Dog Owner Reminder:** Ash welcomes responsible dog owners. Please ensure your dog is under control at all times. If your dog injures another animal or causes fear during an incident, this may be an offence. Report concerns to Kent Police on 101.
- **Football:** The Council has been approached by a local football team to use the dormant pitch at the Recreation Ground and has agreed to temporarily host them until the end of the 2025/26 season. More information to follow if this goes ahead.

## Defibrillator Request

A resident proposed installing a fifth defibrillator near Pound Corner, supported by a British Heart Foundation grant. Ash currently has four defibrillators, but only two (Village Hall and Pavilion) are accessible 24/7. The Parish Council supports the proposal in principle, pending further details on installation and maintenance. This will be discussed further in December.

## Date for your diary

All welcome to view our plans for the new play area at Ash Recreation Ground on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December at Ash Village Hall, 10am to 12pm.

If you'd like to raise an issue or get involved in local initiatives, please contact the Parish Council or attend a future meeting. Your voice matters.

## Kent County Council Updates from Cllr Peter Evans

- **Adult Education Cuts:** Cllr Evans reported that central Government has reduced the Adult Education budget by £520,000, with North Kent expected to feel the greatest impact. The revised focus will be on equipping residents with skills to re-enter the workforce.
- **Workplace Placements Needed:** East Kent College in Dover is struggling to secure local work experience placements for students. If you run a business and can help, please contact the college on 01304 244332. An Open Day is scheduled for 24 November.
- **A257 Bypass Safety:** Cllr Evans has secured a meeting with the KCC Highways Portfolio Holder to discuss safety concerns on the A257 Ash Bypass and explore potential improvements.
- **Burford Alley Repairs:** Following resurfacing earlier this year, the gravel section of Burford Alley was damaged in June's heavy rain. This has been raised with KCC for repair.

## Dover District Council Updates from Cllrs Trevor Bartlett and Martin Porter

- **Parking & Potholes:** Cllr Bartlett met with DDC's new Parking Services Manager to raise concerns about potholes in village car parks and general parking issues. A request for more frequent enforcement has been submitted.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** Reports of drinking and disruptive behaviour at The Street bus stop were noted. Residents are reminded to report incidents—however minor—via Kent Police on 101 or online. Proper reporting ensures action.

- **Goshall Valley Solar Farm:** The planning application was expected to go before DDC's Planning Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> November.
- **Streetlamp Repairs:** Two faulty streetlamps on The Street have been reported and are scheduled for repair.
- **Guliton Parking Concerns:** Residents have raised concerns about inconsiderate parking at Guliton and Durlock Road. Please park responsibly to ensure safety and access for all.

The next Parish Council Ordinary Meeting will take place on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 7pm in The Library, Ash Village Hall.

Contact [clerk@ashparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ashparishcouncil.gov.uk)



**St Nicholas  
Church  
Ash**



**VILLAGE  
WARM SPACE**  
Thursdays, 11am until 2pm

**St Nic's is opening its doors to provide a warm welcome to local people this winter.**

**You are welcome to come along any time during our opening hours and access:**

- Warm Space to sit and relax
- Free coffee, tea and soup with a roll
- Wifi
- Signposting and information
- Someone to talk to



## Simon Gregory

14<sup>th</sup> April 1959 – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Simon Gregory, a long-standing resident of Ash, has died at the age of 66.

Born in Battersea, his early life was marked by a serious accident at the age of eleven, when he was struck by a lorry driven by an drink driver. The incident left him in a coma for six months and had a lasting impact on his health and future.



Following the accident, compensation enabled his mother, Antoinette, to secure a permanent home for him at The Old Forge in Ash. Simon referred to it throughout his life as his “palace,” and it remained his residence for decades. Before relocating to Kent, he spent a period working in London for the salon Toni & Guy on the King’s Road in Chelsea.

In adulthood, Simon pursued training in aromatherapy, converting the shop beneath his home into “Ash Aromatherapy” for a time. Antoinette, who lived nearby at Meadow View, The Street, passed away from breast cancer in 1998. During her final illness, she asked Simon to complete his aromatherapy exams—a commitment he fulfilled despite challenges. His work thereafter focused largely on supporting older residents of Ash, frequently providing treatments without charge.

Simon also served the community as a Parish Councillor, becoming the first dyslexic councillor in Ash. Although reading formal reports presented difficulties, he was open about his motivation for serving: to advocate for the welfare of older villagers.

Eight years ago, Simon experienced a serious fall down the stairs in his home. The resulting injury at the base of his spine triggered rapid progression of previously dormant ankylosing spondylitis, leaving him largely bed-bound and reliant on carers and close friends. Among those who provided significant support were Ian and Mary, his neighbours Nick and Fran, as well as others who maintained regular contact, including those known locally as Magic Al, Andy, Moz and Kevin. His longstanding Nokia mobile phone became an important means of communication as

his mobility declined. One neighbour continued the tradition of preparing his Christmas lunch each year.

Despite the considerable physical pain and limitations imposed by his condition, Simon remained known within the community for his generosity, humour and commitment to others. His presence in the village, shaped by resilience and a strong sense of service, leaves a lasting legacy among those who knew him.

Simon will be remembered with respect and affection by the many friends and neighbours whose lives he touched.

- Funeral service: Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 1-2pm, Barham Crematorium.

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## **A Place to Be Understood**

Have you lost someone close to you? You're not alone.

This small, understanding group brings together people who share the experience of loss — to listen, to talk, and to find comfort in each other's company. There's no pressure, no professionals — just people who understand.

Come as you are. Leave knowing you're not alone.

Weekly in Ash on Mondays at 7pm telephone Sarah on 07590 612989 or email [sjaneventures@gmail.com](mailto:sjaneventures@gmail.com)

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## **Backstage Help Needed for Ash Panto!**

The New Ash Players will be performing Beauty and the Beast towards the end of January, and we could do with another pair of hands to join our happy team. Pulling curtains, moving stage props - all the usual fun!

Please phone Maddie on 07709 668 999 for further details.  
We look forward to welcoming you aboard!

# Ash Rugby Club at 30

## Three Decades of Growth, Grit and Community Spirit

Ash Rugby Club began in late 1995, when Russell Timpson moved to the village and set out to form a social rugby side for anyone keen to try the sport.

Teaming up with local stalwarts and fellow rugby men Ian Castle and Mike Smalley, he gathered enough players for Ash's first match on 10 December 1995 against Whitstable at the Pfizer Social Club. The 10–0 defeat – in blue shirts – did little to dampen spirits—something important had begun.

In January 1996, the Parish Council granted permission for the club to use the village recreation ground. With newly acquired posts in place, Ash hosted its first home match on 11 February 1996, facing Faversham in what was also the debut of the now familiar green-and-white shirts. The club played eight fixtures that season, winning four.

The 1996–97 season brought rapid expansion, including Ash's first overseas tour to Dublin, where they beat Esso Fawley with Ray Biggs stepping in as referee—later becoming an honoured VP.

That same season marked a key milestone: the launch of minis rugby, offering Sunday morning sessions for children aged 6–11, with early successes against Canterbury and Aylesford.

By 1997–98, local clubs had taken notice. Stronger sides often fielded senior players against Ash, making fixtures tough, but the club continued to grow. The minis section became financially autonomous, strengthening its long-term development pathway.

In 1998, Ash hosted visitors from Lyon and later toured France, before deciding in January 1999 to enter the East Kent Leagues due to a growing need for balanced competition. The club began league play in 1999–2000, a year that also featured a major summer ball and a memorable tour to Fort William, Scotland.

The early 2000s brought stability and success, highlighted by winning the East Kent Plate (2004–05) against Ashford. By the late 2000s, Ash fielded two senior league sides for the first time, with the 1st XV

competing in the Kent leagues and the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV (Saxons) in the rural leagues.

The 2011–12 Kent Vase semi-final marked another high point, followed by securing a rolling lease with the Laslett family to establish a second pitch. In 2013, the installation of four county-standard floodlights – supported by the RFU and Jack Fosat Trust – enhanced facilities further, while the youth section expanded strongly.

In 2017, Geoff Gunter became head coach, overseeing the graduation of a full youth cohort into the senior squad. The result was historic: Ash won its first-ever league title in 2017–18, with 15 wins from 18 matches.

The 2020–21 season was effectively lost to the COVID-19 pandemic. No competitive rugby was played, yet the club remained connected through Tuesday evening and Sunday morning training, preserving its sense of community during a difficult period.

Rugby finally returned in August 2021, when Ash hosted Bexley in the first match after restrictions lifted. The 31–0 pre-season victory was more than a sporting result; it was an emotional moment for players, families and supporters. It was also the club's first match since the passing of Geoff Gunter making the performance a fitting tribute to his influence and leadership.



The 2023–24 season saw Ash reach its first Kent Final, and 2024–25 delivered further progress, including a strong late-season run and notable cup wins over Medway and Greenwich. Meanwhile, the minis section tripled in size and finished the season unbeaten in festivals, including the Kent Festival.

Ash RFC remains a thriving community club – built on commitment, resilience, and the belief that rugby belongs at the heart of village life.

## A memorable year for 9<sup>th</sup> Ash Scout Group

This year marked both our 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the Group's turn to lead the District in the annual St George's Day Parade.

To mark our 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of becoming 1<sup>st</sup> Ash on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1945, 80 years on we held a special birthday event in Scout HQ on the 30<sup>th</sup> October which involved performances by our talented Cub Pack consisting of Max, Jess, Isla and Toby, a special badge ceremony and

unfurling of a new Group Flag. Sir Roger Gale MP unveiled our new brass plaque inside the Hut. He along with Councillor Louise Venny and Reverend Caroline Turvey awarded each member a specially designed badge for the uniforms. Scouting in Ash in its various forms is actually 109 years old, so we have an excuse to celebrate a 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year.



We rounded off the special occasion with a parade. Over 40 members of the Group including Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers and Leaders proudly marched from Scout HQ through the centre of Ash village to St. Nicholas's Church. At the front of the parade our senior patrol leader carried the Union Flag, followed by the new Group flag held by Edan, Brodie carried the Beaver flag, followed by Jess and the Cub flag, with Connor and the Scout flag in the rear. Behind them were our fantastic band consisting of Rich on bass drum and his sons Sam and Jack, both on drums.

The service beautifully conducted by Rev. Caroline in the stunning church dedicated our new flag and blessed the group. The Rudyard Kipling poem "If" was read by Clementine, Joel read out the Scout Law and Values whilst Aria read out the words to the Scout Song. I gave a short reading reflecting on Baden-Powell's vision for the movement and where it sits in modern times.



*Continued over*



The Scout's annual parade falls on St. George's Day the patron saint of the movement. This year it was on the 27<sup>th</sup> April and was held in Sandwich, it was 9<sup>th</sup>'s turn to lead all the other Groups in the District. The parade was from the Guildhall Square to St. Mary's Art Centre. Following the dignitaries was our flag party with Harry carrying the St. George's flag.



This was the debut of our band with Rich, his son Jack on drums, Ethan on drums escorted by our two bugle majors Ben and Oscar. Readings were provided by brother and sister Aria and Edan, whilst Grace, Jess and Toby lead District in the renewal of the Promises.

*Craig Nimmo,  
Beaver, Cub and Scout Leader  
Group, Lead Volunteer  
9<sup>th</sup> Ash Scout Group*

## **Ash Wildlife Friendly Village**

Chequer Lane Nature Path

Work should soon be complete on digging over the first stretch of the nature path to plant with native and pollinator friendly plants. We also hope to have put up a noticeboard to share news of the wide biodiversity to be found along the stretch.



### Bulb Planting

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped to plant out the 1,400 daffodil bulbs donated by Ash Parish Council. Looking forward to Spring when we can all share the fruits of your labour.

# Ash Cartwright and Kelsey School

## Anti-bullying week 2025

The week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> November was Anti-bullying week in school and the theme was 'Power for Good'.

The children took part in a range of activities and assemblies. Children and staff loved the Beauty and the Beast pantomime in school on the Tuesday afternoon. This explored the transformative power of love and acceptance for all and the importance of kindness and compassion – very important in life.

We welcomed the NELFT well-being team into school for a special assembly and they spoke to the children about the importance of looking after mental health, as well as physical health. Our local PCSO came into school on Thursday morning and spoke to KS2 children about the impact of, reasons for and consequences of bullying. The children really listened attentively and shared a variety of thoughts and opinions. They also asked some pertinent questions.

We ended the week with our Odd Socks Day on Friday, this celebrated the ways that we are all different.

*Fiona Crascall, Headteacher*

### **The Friends of St. Nicholas Church, Ash Community Coffee Morning**

**Saturday 6th December 2025**

All Welcome from

**10-12am in Ash Village Hall**

#### **Featuring :**

**Tea, Coffee and soft drinks**

**Bacon rolls**

**Homemade cakes stall**

**Raffle**

**Hi Kent Hearing Aid Clinic**

**For more information please call 01304-813138/812049 or email [fstnicholas@gmail.com](mailto:fstnicholas@gmail.com)**

**Registered Charity No. 1045933**



St Nicholas, Ash

## WINTERFEST 2025

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December**

**2.00 til 5.00pm**

Father Christmas

Craft Stalls

Mulled wine and mince pies

Carol Singing

Meet the donkeys

Cake stall; refreshments

Christmas presents

Barnsole Vineyard

School choirs

Tombola; raffle; games



To book a stall or offer  
support, help or donations  
please visit  
[thecanonybenefice.org.uk](http://thecanonybenefice.org.uk)

## Ash Advent Events 2025

Ash is preparing to shine once again as Ash Advent Events 2025 return bringing fun and fundraising for Porchlight and The Trussell Trust.

Now in its fifth year, the much-loved Advent Windows Trail starts on December 1<sup>st</sup> and see homes and businesses across Ash transformed with stunning illuminated festive scenes. Maps will be on sale at local shops, priced £2.

A new event - the Ash Advent Tractor Parade, is on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November. The procession of decorated and vintage tractors will wind from Guilton to The Street from 5pm before the Christmas lights switch-on at Pound Corner at 5.30pm. For a full list of events, see poster page 24.

### How to Get Involved

Thanks to the many local businesses and individuals who have already supported us. There is still time to get involved through sponsorship, donating raffle prizes, contributing goods, or volunteering.

All proceeds support charities tackling homelessness and hunger. Last year's events raised £2,945, and we hope to exceed that total with your help. Email [ashvillageadvent@gmail.com](mailto:ashvillageadvent@gmail.com) or call/text 07443 605873. Find us on Facebook at Ash Advent Windows Trail 2025.

*Alison, Louise, Edith, Kaz and Rebecca*

## ASH SOCIETY

### “A Childs Life in the Middle Ages”

by

Imogen Corrigan

on



Thursday December 11<sup>th</sup>. 7.30 p.m.

Ash Village Hall. All Welcome. Free entry.

Festive Refreshments will be offered at this time.

## Lansdowne Singers



On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October Graham Royston and his Lansdowne Singers Choir performed for a large audience in St Nicholas Church to raise funds for the church.

They sang their hearts out and included numbers from various musicals and popular music plus some personal arrangements and songs composed by Graham.

The concert was free with attendees treated to refreshments which included cakes and savouries for which generous donations were made.

This was obviously a popular event and likely to be repeated, so keep a lookout for future dates.

*Chris Burnside*

## Ash Bowling Club

The indoor short mat Winter season is now fully underway with very good numbers of players coming along and joining in on the fun.

Our internal competitions have now been drawn with some great games to be played in what is sure to be hotly contested Men's & Ladies Singles, as well as Men's & Ladies Pairs games. Good luck to all!

This Winter we will be looking to complete some refurbishment in the clubhouse as we have been very fortunate to be supported by the Rural England Prosperity Fund. This will enable us to replace some aging kitchen and outdoor bowling equipment.

Thanks to Dover District Council's Cost of Living – Community Impact Fund, we can offer assistance with membership fees and bowling equipment for new members. This will come to an end in March so this really is your best chance to take advantage of this, so do come and enquire.

If you'd like to join our club you'd be made very welcome - contact us at [secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com) or come down during any of the games for more information and try your hand at it! It's much more fun than you think.

We offer short mat indoor bowls all year round with organised games on: Monday 2-4pm, Wednesday 2-4pm, Thursday 7-9pm, Saturday 10am-12pm.

We already have plans for a programme of social activities over the Winter, follow us on Facebook or check out our website for more information - [www.ashbowlsclub.org.uk](http://www.ashbowlsclub.org.uk)

Coming up:

Bingo 13<sup>th</sup> December – see poster page 26 for details. If you'd like to join us please contact Roy on email - [secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com)

Our members' Grand Presentation Evening is on November 29<sup>th</sup> at The Rising Sun. It is sure to be a great night with presentations, raffle and music from the wonderful Tara James. Look out on Facebook for the photos.

The club is pleased to be supporting the Warm Spaces initiative - we are open every Monday from 10am-12pm for anyone to join us for free coffee/tea and biscuits in the warmth of our club. It's another great opportunity to come and have a friendly chat over a cuppa and you'd be made very welcome.

...and finally - we wish all our members, supporters and friends a very Merry Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

*Roy Allen, Secretary*

## **The Friends of St Nicholas Church**

Community Coffee Morning Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December

Once again it is the turn of the Friends of St. Nicholas Church to host the monthly AVH Community Coffee morning.

We would like to welcome you all there to enjoy, bacon rolls, mince pies, cake stall, a Friends' raffle, tea, and coffee plus other stalls from the village, including Ash Parish Council plans for the Rec, Ash Advent team, supporting Porchlight and the Trussell Trust. See our poster elsewhere for

details. Please come along, meet up and chat with old friends over a coffee and mince pie, YUM!

Our next event after this is the Race Night on January 31<sup>st</sup> at Ash Village Hall. Tickets will be on sale from January 3<sup>rd</sup> and it's worth noting that if you are a member of the Friends, you can reserve tickets before then because they always sell out quickly. After all, where can you have that much fun and a hot 2-course meal for a Tenner? Contact 01304 813138 to take up the offer.

To join the Friends, a secular organisation, and help us preserve the fabric and architecture of the church call 01304 812049, all for a minimum of just £5 per year. Or pick up a membership form at the coffee morning.

Last, but not least, we now have the final profit figure for the recent Shuffleboard evening which raised a magnificent total of £1.367.35. Thank you, Ash.

*Chris Denby, Hon. Sec.*

Raising money for   ASH ADVENT EVENTS  
LIGHTING UP THE  
VILLAGE IN DECEMBER

**TRACTOR PARADE AND CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON -**  
**Sunday 30th November.** 5pm Guilton-The Street. 5.30pm lights switch-on. Hot chocolate and mince pies for sale. Donations appreciated.

**ST FAITH'S SCHOOL CHILDREN'S CHOIR -**  
**Thursday 4th December.** 3.30pm start. Pound Corner. Join us for a heartwarming performance of Christmas songs. Donations appreciated.

**FESTIVE BINGO FUN - with compere Andy Minter**  
**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December.** 7pm. The Chequer Inn. **SOLD OUT!**

**FUN CHRISTMAS QUIZ - with quizmaster Nick**  
**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December.** 7pm start. The Chequer Inn, 7pm start, £2 entry per person. **LAST FEW SEATS LEFT**

**CAKE AND GOODIES SALE**  
**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December.** 10am-noon. Pound Corner.

**PLUS... the magical ASH ADVENT WINDOWS TRAIL.** Maps £2



# St Nicholas Church Bellringers

## Ash Dash 2025

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October I went on my first Ash Dash. This is an annual bellringing day trip to five ancient churches where the bells are quickly raised, rung and lowered before everyone scoots off to the next venue - a bit like campanological speed dating.

As a novice bellringer I was extremely nervous because the prospect of a day spent whizzing between churches to try to ring rounds with a crowd of experienced ringers, not only from St Nicholas Ash, but from other towers, was daunting. I picked up my fellow newbie, Julie, and we set off in the autumnal gloom. Our destinations were Aylesford, East Malling, Wateringbury, Nettlestead and East Farleigh in that order and as I'd never even heard of the last three villages this also felt like quite an adventure.

The first stop was St Peter and St Paul in the beautiful village of Aylesford. The grey morning had given way to a clear blue sky and our spirits lifted as we drove up the pretty lane to the church in its tranquil churchyard. One of the great things about the Dash is the chance to visit ancient buildings you had no idea existed and this place is lovely. Bells were already ringing by the time we arrived so we climbed the spiral staircase hoping no one would notice us. We tried lurking in the shadows, but this didn't work. Soon we were attempting rounds under the watchful eye of Len, who was reassuringly ready to step in if we lost control of the bell. New ringers are prone to this and when it happens it's completely terrifying as the rope thrashes around like a manic game of Buckaroo. To our surprise though we got through it without incident and started to grow in confidence. It was time for the next church.

St James the Great in East Malling is a stunning building with a plaque by the entrance in memory of Mary Baker, who died in 1753 at the age of 105. Non-ringing partners were treated to an organ recital while we beginners rang rounds. We were quite pleased with ourselves until the experts performed Stedman Doubles and Cambridge Surprise Minors and we realised how much there is to learn. Their "ringing down in peals" at the end was really beautiful.

Then on to St John the Baptist in Wateringbury. To say the ringing chamber is eccentric is putting it mildly as it's pretty much just a tiny landing at the top of the stairs with six ropes. But it's very, very quaint.

After a few rounds and call changes here, it was time for lunch at the Wateringbury pub down the road.

After lunch we were on the dash again to St Mary the Virgin in Nettlestead. This is a beguiling little church with particular resonance for Malcolm Barden who was taught to ring here decades ago by the lady who met us at the door. On the stone by the window there's even a pencilled love heart with the initials MC and MB, the mischievous graffiti from Marilyn and Malcolm's youthful romance.

Our ringing activated some drowsy wasps from a nest in the ceiling and they buzzed languidly as we rang.

Our last dash was to the charming Church of St Mary in East Farleigh, which overlooks the River Medway. No climbing here as the bells are



ASH BOWLING CLUB

# BINGO and Supper

Sausage and Mash with Dessert  
£6 members: £8 non-members  
EVERYONE IS WELCOME

13TH DECEMBER 6.30PM. £3 PER BOOK	Ash Bowling Club Moat Lane Ash CT3 2DG
--------------------------------------	--

Book your place now to avoid disappointment. Put your name down in the club or contact Roy by email [secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.ashbowlsclub@gmail.com)

accessed from the ground floor by the church door, where hundreds of dozy ladybirds clustered near the ceiling. The thought of provoking an unexpected swarm was a bit unnerving, but thankfully they stayed where they were to hibernate through the winter.

And then it was over. The end of a beautiful Autumn Ash Dash and a drive home through a glorious sunset. It was a terrific day, full of laughter and friendship, challenges and achievement, architecture and music. Can't wait for next year!

*Jo Dilks*

## Ash Horticultural Society

### Autumn Show

From the RHS judge: "The standard of the show entries was excellent. Please do let your participants know their produce would look great and certainly hold their own at a national show!"



The cup Winners (l to r): **Jan Giles**: Salutation Cup Best Dahlia exhibit, **Sue Towntrow**: Charles Petley Rose Bowl Best Floral Art Exhibit, **Peter Ellis**: John Beer Cup Best Onion exhibit, **Linda Ellis**: Bates Cup Best exhibit in the Flower classes, the Jean Grugeon Award Best Pot Plant, **Christine Brown**: White Cup Best exhibit of roses, **Helen Higginson**: Evelyn Rumney Cup, for Best First Time Entrant, **Gary Bradbury**: Open Challenge Cup for the most points in the Show, **Linda Miller**: Photographic Cup, **Liz Rath**: Society Cup Best Fruit exhibit, **Mike Humphrey**: George Hills Cup Best exhibit of vegetables. **Christine Brown** was also awarded the RHS Banksian Medal for most points in the Flower Classes. **Suzy Rowe** (alas not pictured) won the Nina Vallack cookery prize which we hope to provide soon. Gary Bradbury won the Open Challenge Cup with 44 points, closely followed by Peter Ellis with

38 points. Ian Venables' pumpkin in the photo won the biggest vegetable. The members of The Ash Wildlife Friendly Village, whose pumpkin won last year, have a challenge on their hands.

Remember the summer? Hot and dry, then wet? Undeterred, the gardeners of Ash (& District) produced a memorable show, as commented on by the judge.

Mike Humphrey produced two splendid winter squash and Peter Ellis' shallots were deemed just beautiful. It was a memorable year for apples with 10 entries, won by Granny Smith's entered by Val McCulloch. Apples are often biennials so I hope the bumper crop doesn't mean that we shall have fewer next year.

There were fewer flower entries, reflecting the weather conditions, but there was a good display of dahlias. The flower arranging classes proved popular, with a new member, Sue Towndrow, winning two of the three classes.

Next year there will be classes for oasis-free arrangements to encourage entrants to move towards more environmentally sound displays as proposed by the RHS.

*Liz Rath*

## **Friends of Elmstone and Preston Churches**

### St Mildred's

**Remembrance Service:** This was held at St Mildred's, the well-attended service being taken by Barbara Way and Anne Talbert. The names of the fallen were read by Ivor Sneller and a wreath was laid at the memorial by Chris Anderson. A collection was taken in aid of the Royal British Legion.

**Family Crib Service – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December 10.30am with display of Cribs from Around the World – also 2.30-4.30pm:** At the Family Service, with Communion, there will be a large number of Cribs from Around the World on display. During the service, there will be a collection for Educate for Change, the charity we support in Uganda, which is run by Penny Cornet's daughter-in-law, Olivia, who will be speaking to us that morning. Money raised will be used towards the children's Christmas party and enable each child to have a present, the only one they receive each year. Please do support this very

worthwhile charity. The cribs will also be on view during the afternoon, with seasonal refreshments.

**Christmas Eve Service, St Mildred's 10pm:** Please note the time of this candlelit Communion Service.

**The Belfrey:** Having been unable to use some of the cupboards from the Vestry in the Belfry, due to the stalled internal improvements to the church, an oak cupboard has been obtained, free of charge, making the Belfry a much tidier place. Thank you to those who helped with this.

**Churchyard Update:** We hope to have a further working party, probably in late Spring, to uplift the Yew trees and tidy the last area of brambles.

#### Elmstone Church

**Candlelit Concert – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 5.30pm:** The Lees Court Ensemble will be performing for us once again with a selection of Christmas music. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served after the concert. Tickets, £12, including refreshments, are available from Preston Village Shop, the Village Christmas Fair, Janette Nickols (07803 086 584) and on the door.

**Happy Hours:** These events are held in the Church on the first Friday of the month from 6.30pm. The next two dates are 5<sup>th</sup> December and 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

#### Christmas Trees

We will once again have lit trees outside and inside at St. Mildred's and Elmstone Churches. It is anticipated that these will be in situ by early December.

#### Village Event

**Christmas Fair – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2.30-6pm, Preston Village Hall:** The Friends will be having a stall at this event, with our new Christmas cards and others for sale. The Elmstone Concert tickets will also be available. Please support this community event. All our Christmas cards are also available at Elmstone Church and St Mildred's.

#### Reminder – Parish Magazine Subscriptions

A renewal form was included with the November issue. If you wish to continue with your subscription, either a hard or electronic copy, please

would you return your form together with £10 cash as soon as possible. If you know of anyone who would like to take out a subscription, please let me know. Thank you.

### Our Services for December - Month B\*

- 1st Sunday – 7<sup>th</sup> December - Holy Communion, Elmstone, 10.30am
- 2nd Sunday – 14<sup>th</sup> December - Family Crib Service, Preston, 10.30am \* (with Communion)
- 3rd Sunday – 21<sup>st</sup> December - Holy Communion, Elmstone, 10.30am
- Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Eve Communion, 10pm, St Mildred's

Refreshments are normally served after all our morning services.

*Elizabeth Timms*

## **Sandwich Age Concern**

### A Warm Welcome This Winter

As the colder months draw in, Age Concern Sandwich is proud to be part of the Warm Welcome Spaces campaign — opening our doors to offer warmth, friendship, and a sense of community to everyone.

Our centre provides a safe, comfortable place to relax, enjoy a hot drink, and connect with others. Whether you'd like to meet new people, take part in activities, or simply enjoy some quiet company, you'll always find a friendly face here.

We understand that winter can be a difficult time for many, but no one should feel cold or alone. Our warm space is open to all — there's no need to book, just turn up and make yourself at home.

### Meet, Eat, Heat

Thanks to funding from Dover District Council, Age Concern Sandwich, is continuing to provide a 2-course lunch for just £4.50 on Mondays and Fridays at our Well-being Centre Café.

Book to avoid disappointment on 01304 614237.

# **The Arts Society Sandwich**

## Inspiring Lectures in the Heart of Sandwich

We meet at The Guildhall on the first Monday of each month. Enjoy a glass of wine from 6:30pm before our 7pm talk, delivered by expert speakers who bring art and culture vividly to life.

Coming early 2026:

- 12<sup>th</sup> January – Balenciaga, Dior and Fath: Haute Couture's Holy Trinity with Scott Schiavone.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> February – The British Crown Jewels: Every Stone Tells a Story with Laurie Wickwire.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> March – Greek Vase Painting with Stephen Kershaw.

We also support art in schools and local heritage projects, while members enjoy a rich programme of special events and volunteering.

Highlights for 2026 include a summer supper with entertainment, a trip to Stanley Spencer's Cookham, a conservation project at Goodnestone Park Mansion, a garden party, and our first-ever Arts Society quiz night.

Now's the perfect time to join for just £50 a year — and enjoy art, friendship, and discovery right here in Sandwich.

Visit [www.sandwichdfas.org.uk](http://www.sandwichdfas.org.uk) or contact Membership Secretary Howard Evans at [membership.artssocsandwich@gmail.com](mailto:membership.artssocsandwich@gmail.com)

Not ready to join? Come as a guest for £7 — everyone's welcome.

*Vicki Bates*

## **Subscriptions for 2026 Ash and Westmarsh Parish Magazine**

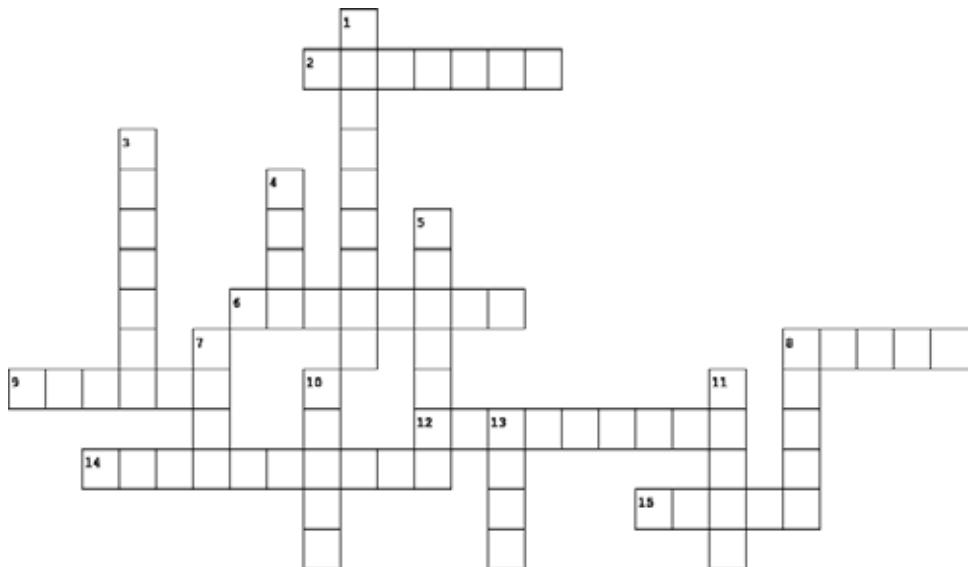
Regular subscribers, you should have received a resubscription note in your October magazine. Please return it along with £10 to your distributor by the end of January 2026.

If you are not yet a regular subscriber and would like to receive the magazine to your door every month, please get in touch.

Email Rebecca Smith at [rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccasmith.ash@gmail.com) or text/call 07443 605873.

## Across Ash: Clues from Our Past

A monthly puzzle by the Ash Heritage Group. Answers in the January issue (or in *Ash: An East Kent Village* by David Downes, available at the Heritage Centre)



### Across

2. Historic route connecting Ash to Sandwich, used since medieval times
6. Primary function of Ash's windmill before its closure
8. Tapered architectural feature atop St. Nicholas Church
9. Term for a small settlement, often used in Anglo-Saxon place names
12. Anglo-Saxon king who welcomed Christianity near Ash
14. Village primary school founded in 1721
15. Feudal unit of landholding common in medieval Ash

### Down

1. Missionary sent by Pope Gregory to convert the English in AD 596
3. Surname of a prominent landowning family in Ash's history
4. Traditional village gathering with stalls, games, and music
5. Popular sport played on Ash's village green in the 1800s
7. County in southeast England where Ash has stood for centuries
8. River that once supported trade and agriculture near Ash
10. Durable stone used in Ash's cottages and church walls
11. Material used in Ash's historic boundary markers, struck during beating of the bounds
13. Crop once picked by seasonal workers in Ash's fields

## Cover Story

### Saint Nicholas

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December at St Nicholas church we will be celebrating our name sake with a special service and possibly a light meal together.

Before the reformation in England there were over 400 churches dedicated to him, fewer now, so we are proud to be linked over the centuries with such a kind, honourable and real character: Nicholas was the Bishop of Myra, what we now know as Turkey.

He died in C350 and was buried in the cathedral's vault. In 1087 the Seljuk Turkish army was taking control of the country, the Saint's casket was taken secretly to the crypt of the Basilica in Bari, where his relics are still today.

Nicholas was famous for his generosity to the poor. Many legends are told around the word about him, 3 of the best known are suggested on the cover, this face is based on the photo of the saint carved in stone in a cathedral, but the online site I used did not say where or how old it is. An amazing sculpture though!

The most well-known story which does sound true, was of a poor family with 3 unmarried girls and no money for their bridal gifts. Nicholas heard of their troubles and secretly dropped 3 bags of gold to the family. Of course, someone spotted him and the story of that kindness and generosity soon became a legend.

The boys rescued from a barrel of hot oil where they were about to be used as meat by a very unsavoury inn keeper! Somewhat embellished over the years, I'm sure!

He was also said to have calmed a storm (as Jesus had) and saved the lives of many sailors.

He is the Patron Saint of children, sailors and strangely, money lenders! He is also the Patron Saint of Greece, Sicily and Russia. We should be proud that we have such an amazing figure as our own Patron Saint.

*Pat Coles*

## Garden Jottings for December

I can hardly believe that we are on the run up to Christmas.

At the time of writing (mid November) we have Roses, Geraniums, Busy Lizzies and Chrysanthemums all doing their upmost to prolong Autumn and leaves are only just falling in drifts of marvellous colour. However lovely they may seem remember to remove them from the lawn preferably by mowing as this chops them up, making them quicker to breakdown either in the

compost heap or in bags, watered them tied up and pierced then stacked in and out of the way corner for next year's useful leaf mould.

This is a time for tucking down for Winter to add a blanket of compost over resting crowns of tender perennials with some fleece to protect tender shrubs. Open green houses on mild days to prevent mildew on plants but have a heater at the ready to stave off heavy frost when forecast. Fleece will protect plants in the greenhouse but even sheets of newspaper will insulate plants from very deep cold.

November was a good month to renovate borders, usually needed every three to four years or so, though some Michaelmas Daisies and tall white Daisy plants seemed to double in size each year. It was the ideal time to split move and add new plants as the weather was damp and overcast with no frost. With good conditions it is possible to carry on with these tasks into Winter. Do add compost when replanting and always water in well afterwards. It is a good idea to place groups of biennials at the back of the border eg Hollyhocks and Foxgloves with Sweet Williams, Stocks and Canterbury Bells you have grown along with Wallflowers in small groups midway in the border and Forget-me-Nots, Polyanthus and Pansies nearer the edge.

Remember when ordering summer plants that Busy Lizzies (Impatiens) really do their best in shade or partial shade and can bring a dull dark area to life and colour, while small Begonia Semperflorens are excellent for hot areas. Petunias are another good subject. I like all these as they don't require deadheading through assiduous gardeners do this to the latter which actually does pay dividends, also cutting them back when they become straggly later in the Summer.

When working on the borders in Winter try to use a board to stand on while you work as it prevents flattening the lawn. Use a rubber rake to lift the grass and remove soil and leaves from the surface when you have finished.

Complete cutting down any herbaceous plants that are still standing leaving seed heads for the birds and Penstemons until the Spring when a new rosette of leaves appears. Also leave flower heads on Hydrangeas to protect the forming flower buds for next year. Chop up stalks to add to the compost along with any garden and vegetable matter and weeds.

Use some of your well-rotted manure mixed with last year's compost and leaf mould to mulch borders making sure not to mound it up around stems of plants but spread evenly over the open areas to suppress weeds and add

hummus and goodness to the soil. This is good practise for empty areas in the vegetable garden as the worms will pull it down into the ground for you!

Look out for flowering and fragrant Winter shrubs Sarcocca, Mahonia and Daphne Viburnum etc to place in planters by doors or gateways and by pathways. Under plant them with Cyclamen, Snowdrops, Crocus and ground cover plants such as Pachysandra or variegated Ivy.

Check roses shrubs and trees especially newly planted specimens for "wind-rock" as the hole made by this action can fill with water then freeze, damaging roots. Tread to firm the soil around the plants. Tie in firmly to support and also Wisteria and Rose tendrils to trellis and pergolas.

Make sure that any paths and patios are clean. Algae and moss can be very slippery and should be treated to kill and clean surfaces.

Bring out Christmas Cactus and Amaryllis to flowering positions loosening the soil surface and replacing a little with some fresh compost or soil maybe adding a top dressing of grit. Bulbs grown for indoor display look better with a little moss tucked into the surface of the pot around the bulbs. Small bowls of bulbs and Cyclamen make good presents with perhaps a small evergreen Hebe, Skimmia, or Euonymus which are easily grown from cuttings taken in Summer with some trailing Ivy. These make a good gift for people who cannot garden outside, flat dwellers or older ex-gardeners who may be housebound. It will bring a little of the outdoors in.

Decorative house plants are easy to split and grow on from cuttings. Philodendron, Jade Plant, Peperomia, Tradescantia and Maranta make excellent gifts with attractive an pot cover and saucer. I sometimes make a larger arrangement, grouping several together, making sure they all need the same amount of water - mostly applying once a week sparingly. If you make watering on a regular day you won't forget or over water. Many plants are lost due to overwatering. When a plant looks droopy it may be waterlogged not thirsty! Leave such casualties (on the draining board) to release most of the water. If it smells at all stagnant then it is best to repot into fresh soil or compost. In most cases plants will respond well. A feed once a month will pay dividends.

Small evergreen shrubs are a good addition to pots and baskets for a Winter display outdoors with Winter Pansies, Polyanthus and small ferns to brighten dull days.

A few ideas for Christmas gifts could be a small bird bath or a bird feeder and nuts, some small solar lights, a Rose bush or some special seeds along

with a trug containing garden twine, labels, secateurs or even a garden magazine subscription.

I wish you good health and successful year with your garden and joy and happiness with your family for Christmas and New Year.

*Christine Brown, President, Ash Horticultural Society*

## **Stories From the Archives (68)**

### Ash and the Last Labourers' Revolt

The mob arrived at Ash early in the morning. It was large, aggressive and threatening but “at least a thousand strong” was probably an exaggeration. Its destination – a farm at Westmarsh – was already decided and its target there was clear. One of the new-fangled threshing machines - an invention which stood between these angry men and their efforts to prevent their families from starving that coming winter – was reputed to be concealed in a barn there. If found, its destruction was assured.

The tools carried by many of these men – mattocks, pickaxes and staves – were put to violent use as the hated contraption was smashed. Where next? Richard Southee’s farm at Goldstone and then on to William Petley’s at Overland. The dismantling of more threshing machines was accompanied by increasingly belligerent behaviour, daring anyone to interfere and threatening those young men who appeared reluctant to join the procession. Demands for refreshments from farmers’ wives were made but insufficient was procured for all, so *The Rose* public house became the preferred source of further “vittles.”

Scuffles arose between those resisting recruitment and those in the vanguard of the aggression. Opposition among the farming families and their employees was swiftly neutralised but the Rev’d George Gleig and his churchwarden George Quested were not so easily brushed aside, after dashing on horseback from the village towards the noise of the disturbances to remonstrate with the men. Our vicar – a veteran of Wellington’s Napoleonic campaigns and of the burning down of the White House in Washington during his soldiering days – saw that many were not from Ash and he eventually dissuaded a few locals from further involvement, but the bulk of the gang had moved on, intent on further mischief. While some, who had walked a fair distance that day already, broke off and returned home, the march towards Stourmouth and then down through Preston to Wingham picked up more men along the way and further destruction was carried out.

By 4 o'clock James Dowker's farm at Stourmouth was reached, the yard entered and his machine found in the barn. It didn't last long. Tools being used as weapons had now become the worse for wear and replacements were calmly collected from here and there. Down at Wingham by 7 o'clock they threatened seedsman Robert Matson, who could only watch helplessly as they attacked his mother's farm at Wingham Court. Keys were demanded to enable the rioters to locate and drag out the threshing machine, which was then tipped over and broken apart with hammers and axes.

Was this shocking sequence on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1830 an isolated event? Far from it. Since late August, when the first attack had occurred at Stelling Minnis and then at Elham and Barham the following evening, machine wrecking and arson had spread across eastern Kent and further afield. By October the whole county was engulfed in nightly incendiarism as one barn or hay rick after another was razed to the ground. Indeed, earlier that month the parish overseer of Ash, Michael Becker of Goldstone – a man detested by the local labouring families - saw his barn full of produce go up in flames. The previous winter had been a *very* hard one for farm workers already fighting desperate poverty and unemployment, so the acquisition by local farmers of machines designed to do the winter work of many men and women carried with it a terrible foreboding for these families. How would they survive the coming winter? The parish relief system had all but broken down everywhere and frantic efforts to shore it up had failed. Those breaking the law by machine wrecking and arson were risking execution or transportation, yet felt they had no option but to protest and to prevent the use of these machines. They were at the end of their tether.

Local magistrate J.P. Plumptre interviewed Gleig, Quested, the farmers and those accused of the violent behaviour and several Ash men were arraigned before the Quarter Sessions. Meanwhile, further disturbances of a similar character continued in and around Ash. When Sir Edward Knatchbull, fully aware of the men's desperation, deliberately handed down comparatively lenient sentences (having already warned the government of the deep poverty being suffered by families in this district) many others in authority were distinctly unimpressed. At a further Special Sessions in November, subsequent transgressors, including a number of Ash men, were not so fortunate. In the crowded Sessions House at Canterbury, those convicted received sentences ranging from transportation for life to prison sentences with hard labour. Understandably, wives fainted with shock in the courtroom.

These families were among the comparatively lucky ones. By this time serious rural dissent had spread from this part of Kent to Sussex, Surrey,

East Anglia, the Fens, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. Magistrates in the three latter counties handed down sentences intended to act as the severest of deterrents, including 252 death sentences. Subsequent petitions saw most of these commuted to transportation for life but 19 men (two from Kent) were hanged – not in public, as was customary, but within the prison yards at dawn. Over 500 were transported and more than 600 imprisoned. One final, vicious gesture was reserved for those whose death sentences had been commuted to transportation. They were forced to stand in the execution yard to witness their erstwhile friends' last moments on this earth, as the drop fell and the struggling bodies writhed on the end of a rope.

The reprisals had the desired effect. The level of rural violence was curbed and eventually – but not immediately – threshing machines returned to the farm. But in Ash and elsewhere, even in the 1880s and '90s, many could still recall when the sky on the distant horizon had been red with the nightly burning of barns and hay stacks. And, suitably cowed for many decades, they remembered with sadness the tragic results which had followed. After their fateful voyage to Australia, did those men who had wept, wrung their hands and hidden their faces in their smocks while, in front of them, the full force of the law was meted out to their friends, ever wonder wistfully in later years about the land they had left? As one observer has reminded us:

*"There was much that England had not taught him. She had not taught him that the rich owed a duty to the poor, that the mere labourer had a share in the state, or might be considered in its laws, or that it mattered to its rulers in what wretchedness he lived or he died. But one lesson she had taught him with such savage power that his simple memory would never forget it; and, if ever in an exile's dreams he thought again with longing for his boyhood home, the memory of that last terrible dawn would break again before his eyes, and he would thank God for the wide wastes of the limitless sea."*

**Sources include extensive contemporary press coverage, Quarter and Special Sessions proceedings, local material and published works about the disturbances. The late David Downes' own detailed account of the events at Ash ("Barns Ablaze!") which also used some of the above and includes details of many Ash men is available at the Ash Heritage Centre.**

Peter Ewart



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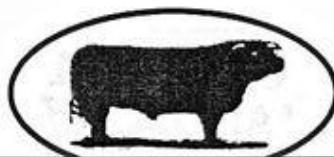
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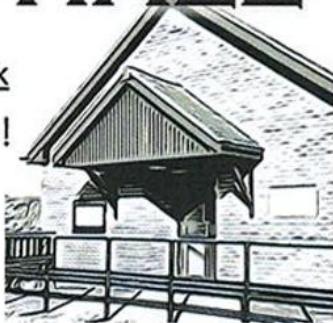


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