

# Ashton News



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March to May 2011

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## Ofsted hails school progress

### Inspectors praise improvements in every category

When Ofsted inspectors came to Ashton First School in June 2008 they detected problems.

It had had three head teachers in a short period and one teacher had been absent for six months. Writing standards in years 1 and 2 were below average, and most pupils did not know how well they were doing.

As a result, they gave the school only a grade 3 rating, officially "satisfactory" but in fact lower than the national average. And they warned that schools in that category might be specially monitored.

They did, however, recognise that the school had already started to achieve steady improvement under the strong leadership and clear vision of headteacher Bryony Baynes, appointed 18 months earlier.

Now that confidence has paid off, as



*Didn't we do well? Headteacher Bryony Baynes with pupils Luc Thomas, Olivia Griffiths, Seth Kirke and Connie Archer.*

shown by a new report following the latest Ofsted visit in January.

Previously the school was rated as outstanding only in matters relating to pupils' behaviour. In more than 30 other categories it was assessed only as good or satisfactory.

In contrast, the latest report gives and outstanding or good verdict on every aspect of school life.

The contrast has been most remarkable at the lower end of the school.

"Children get off to an excellent start in Reception," the inspectors said, "where virtually all achieve their early learning goals."

They said the pattern of decline in the main school had been reversed, and improvement in each year now saw attainments significantly above the national average at Key Stage 1 and when pupils left for the Middle School.

Attendance was good because pupils enjoyed going to school, and in a poll of parents, 95% said they were happy overall with their child's experience there.

Recognising the school's outstanding capacity to go on improving

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## Anti-social youths? Not any more

Good community action has meant there was not a single reported incident of youths behaving anti-socially in Ashton during the past year.

Pc Gary Shephard told the parish council there had been three violent crimes reported, mostly domestic.

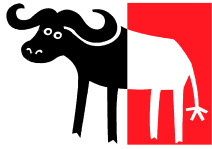
There were four burglaries - all in outbuildings, nine thefts - mainly on the A46, one case of criminal damage to a car, and 11 of anti-social behaviour relating to such things as dogs or loud music. None involved youths behaving disruptively.

Several burglaries had occurred at night in Bredon. He urged villagers to leave lights on if away, suggesting time-controlled dimmer switches, and offered to look out specially for any residents who felt vulnerable.

A priority under the community partnership scheme PACT is speeding. This and other policies can be explained when the mobile police unit visits Ashton on 19 May, 1-3pm.

Pc Shephard and Community Support Officer Simon Williams can also be reached on 01905 725765.

## Mystery crop will provide flowering roof cover



### Farm life

by Charles Archer

What a tonic the sunshine is! People have been saying that it has been a long cold winter and that they await the spring with eager anticipation.

The crops have all had their first application of nitrogen to encourage their growth which has been delayed due to the cold temperatures and wet ground.

Loud bangs can be heard from neighbouring parishes which are a means to keep Wood Pigeons at bay from decimating the crops of Oil Seed Rape, a favourite food of theirs.

Many people are baffled by what is being grown adjacent to Old Manor Farm.

It is dwarf varieties of Sedum which is grown for "Green Roofs." It is cultivated on Coir matting and harvested like turves

Its purpose is to help blend vast expanses of roof into the landscape and to slow down water run off in heavy downpours. It consists of a variety of rock type plants which are very shallow rooted and have pretty flowers throughout the summer.



*Royal approval: Ashton's plans get the thumbs up from two interested well-wishers.*

## Wills and Kate - let's all party, say pupils

If the invitation to that wedding seems inexplicably lost in the post, do not worry. Ashton is to stage its own celebration.

The First School will hold a playground street party on Thursday April 28, with bunting and a magician on stilts. Mothers' Union members will make cakes and the school is looking for other helpers.

For £1, villagers can design a piece of bunting to decorate the scene.

On the previous day, Wednesday 27th, the school is inviting grand-

parents - and surrogate grandparents - to join pupils in activities with a Royal Wedding theme.

This week the parish council voted 3-2 to give £200 toward the cost of providing celebration mugs for the pupils.

Meanwhile the school has appealed for villagers to donate Sainsbury's Active Kid vouchers (or any others) which will go toward volleyball equipment.

Please drop them through the front door, or contact the school office about any of these activities.

## First School wins plaudits - from page 1

the inspectors recommended further refinement in marking, setting targets and assessing progress in reading.

They also noted that a few parents and carers were hard to reach and urged the school to continue its efforts to get them more involved in the education of their children.

Mrs Baynes said: "The inspector told me it had clearly been a remarkable journey for the school over the last three years. He paid tribute to everyone involved for their hard work in achieving these wonderful results.

"All the lessons observed were good or outstanding. The inspector said that was quite rare. I always knew we had outstanding pupils and excellent teachers."

## Lent and Easter activities at St. Barbara's

Children and parents are invited to The Old Farmhouse, Elmley Road, from 2.30 on Saturday April 2 to make posies for mums and grannies at the Mothering Sunday service at 10am in St. Barbara's the next day.

The united parish Palm Sunday service will be held at 10am on April 17. Following Family Communion at 9.30 on Easter Day, a week later, there will be an Easter egg hunt and hot cross buns.

Spring cleans take place in the churchyard on Saturday April 9, and in the church on Saturday 30th, both from 9.30 to noon. The church depends on volunteers to look its best.

Lunches take place in the parish every Friday in Lent at 12.30, this week March 11 at The Old Farmhouse, with further events at St. Benet's RC church hall, Kemerton, Elmley Castle, Beckford, Bredon and Overbury.

For details on all the above, call Alex Dodge, 881487, or Sylvia Kennedy (church spring clean) 882919.

## Anyone see saw?

A chain saw was stolen from outside an Ashton house on Thursday March 3. This was the second opportunist theft recently.

Villagers are asked to be vigilant, to secure sheds, and to report to neighbourhood watch the numbers of cars being driven suspiciously, eg driving slowly past homes.

## WI recalls wartime for 70th anniversary

Ashton WI trawled the archives in February to celebrate its 70th birthday.

The original minute and report book from 1941 showed familiar names—Humberestone, Nicklin, Scott and Archers.

The village seemed to be lightly affected by wartime, and there were pictures of happy occasions, such as canning fruit and tomatoes at Stanley Farmhouse.

Marion Nelson directed amusing sketches, one of them a mime she had written, performed by six members, and Rosemary Hammond gave a cake.

The branch is to hold a coffee morning on Friday May 20 at the home of Sandra Farquhar for the Evesham Macmillan unit in memory of Sylvia Evans who was a well-known community member.

Anyone able to help or offer cakes, raffle prizes, books or items for sale should please contact Sandra on 881205 or Diane Stephens, 881467.

More details can be found on the village website.

### Join Big Society - join the council

Nomination packs for the May parish council elections are available from clerk Jane Hopkins 881497 or from Wychavon Electoral Services 565437. Completed packs must be returned in person to Wychavon District Council by noon on Monday April 4.



*Best feet forward: Members set out on the first of their local walks every third Tuesday of the month. Right, the splendid birthday cake donated by Rosemary Hammond.*



## Open gardens: Can you help?

**by Malcolm Nelson**

Despite the harsh winter, preparations are progressing well for Ashton Open Gardens on Saturday and Sunday June 11-12 from 1 to 6pm each day.

We hope to have around 20 gardens open. If you might like to open yours - perhaps for the first time - contact John Dodge 881487 as soon as possible. Your garden doesn't need to be large or perfectly neat and tidy - our visitors tell us that they always like to see work in progress. Our theme will be 'Grow Your Own' so we are particularly keen to hear from anyone with a vegetable or fruit plot.

St Barbara's Church will show fascinating botanical paintings by Gloucestershire artist and RHS gold medallist Beth Phillip.

She will work in St Barbara's throughout both days and her paintings, prints and cards will be available to purchase.



After a very successful debut last year, talented local musicians *Maxed Out* will again perform in the church at 2.30 and 4pm on the Saturday.

Each year Ashton Open Gardens aims to raise funds for our community. Last year, we made donations to the Community Centre, St Barbara's, the middle school's garden club, to the first school, the guides and WI. This is only possible through the efforts of many willing volunteers - can you help please?

If you could help with car parking, directing traffic, selling programmes, serving teas, distributing posters, putting up signs, banners or notices, we'd love to hear from you.

If you're not available on the day, there are several jobs which need doing before the event. Any help would be very much appreciated. Please contact John Dodge 881487, Jeremy King 881273 or Malcolm Nelson 881778.

## Village wish proved no pie-in-the-sky

Back in 2006, the people of Ashton decided that among things they most disliked in the village were the overhead power lines that disfigured the skyline. Now the wires are gone, and that is due largely to the determination of David Hancock to see the project through.

Visit David's Ashton home and he'll show you the thick files of paper and 248 emails that have grown since Central Networks told him that its regulator had decided that excess profits should be used to put some cables underground.

He took photographs, and with the help of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty made an application on behalf of the parish council.

The company approved the plan, but progress was not easy. He liaised with consultants, visited those who would have cables in their gardens, and wrote to MP Sir Michael Spicer to bring the work forward.

Now the £250k scheme is complete but for one pole at Gorse Hill. Remaining overhead cables belong to BT, which has refused to move them, although the National Parks Authority hopes to put pressure on them via Ofcom.

David, a former project manager and electricity industry consultant, said he was disappointed to see the low level of productivity of some staff working on the project, and said that contractors had not always been as helpful as they might have been in giving people access to their houses.

But he added, "We should

### Just one pole to go - pity BT won't do the same

be thankful that they spent all this money."

This week parish councillors praised his work.

"David has done a great service to the village," said Ted Williams.

"Without his involvement, sometimes at the highest level, the job would easily have fallen between the cracks."



**Wow factor:** The lads of Maxed Out with their awards.

Three talented lads from Bredon Hill Middle School, Ashton, are preparing for more local gigs after winning their category in Wychavon district council's W Factor competition.

James Kirk, Benjamin and Jacob Coley, who make up the soul/funk band *Maxed Out* performed their own composition *Keep on Writing* before 200 listeners at Evesham Arts Centre.

They received their awards from Wychavon chairman Cllr Linda Robinson.

### Catch them before they're famous

The band has previously performed at Number 8, Pershore, and further dates will include Ashton Open Gardens, where they will play on Saturday June 11.

As part of their prize they will also get the chance to work with experts to develop their abilities.

## New homes – and a yurt?

The number of homes built in Ashton in the next 20 years is unlikely to change, despite reduced demand for new houses in the region, district councillor Adrian Darby told the parish council.

He said household estimates for the new South Worcs. Development Plan predicted fewer people coming into the area, particularly near Worcester, but this was unlikely to have much impact on villages.

"The idea is that villages should make decisions about what they want, but the government will still try to enforce its own requirements," he said.

### Hope for solution at Willow Cottage

Discussions have been taking place between the owner of Willow Cottage and Wychavon, Cllr Adrian Darby told the parish council. "I hope there is going to be a sensible proposal coming forward," he said.

Several plans for the site, opposite The Star, including one for gipsy caravans, have been refused permission.

"The amount is still probably what you would want over 20 years."

Wychavon plans to consult parishes in September about their preferred options.

Among recent planning applications, A.J. Woodward and Sons, of Home Farm, Back Lane, Beckford, have asked to site a yurt - a circular domed tent - behind Dacha, Ashton Road, for a holiday let.

Approved plans include:

- ◆ Thomas Archer, Old Manor Farm, convert former ballroom to dwelling.
- ◆ Mr Roebuck, Field Cottage, Cheltenham Road, rear building extension.

◆ David Ward, Walnut Tree Cottage, front door and garage roof extension.

◆ Moore/Sanger Davies, The Sett and Acacia Cottage, Elmley Road, porch and rear extension.

## Web designers set up business in Ashton

Kathy Sellick and Sandra Rowland are setting up Ashton Web Design on April 6, and are looking to sponsor a local charity for a year. Contact Kathy, of The Maples, Elmley Road, on 881256 or at [kathy@sellick.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:kathy@sellick.eclipse.co.uk).

"We will explain every step, keep customers informed and involved from the start, and provide all the support needed," Kathy said.

If your business is based in the village, you can publicise it by sending details to [colin.davison@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:colin.davison@hotmail.co.uk).



*Fit for purpose:* New exercise equipment at the playing fields is proving popular with adults and older children, the Community Centre has reported.

## Weeds will grow where walkers once went

Two of Ashton's least used footpaths are likely to become effectively redundant under a new priority maintenance plan.

Parish Paths Warden Joe Aspey told the parish council that the county intended to give greatest attention to paths with most use. Dangerous or duplicate paths would be least favoured.

He indicated two likely to go as a result, one to a quarry between Little and Great Hills, the other from Church Close through John Satchell's land on Bakers Lane.

Mr Satchell had once paid a council official believing he could extinguish the latter, but the former official had pocketed the cash, Mr Aspey said. The path was now blocked and the gate locked.

The Wychavon Way is to be rerouted, coming into Ashton from Broadway instead of Winchcombe.

# Council on the warpath

Ashton parish councillors have demanded county council action to repair the footpath from Old Manor Farm to Willow Close despite worries about the large cedar tree there.

County councillor Adrian Hardman admitted that the tree was very large and that the disabled were unable to use the footpath, but he added that work was likely to harm the tree, and raising the level of the path would be

expensive and temporary.

After parish chairman Gerry Barnett insisted that the council had long believed the footpath should be repaired and the tree roots removed, however, Cllr Hardman agreed that action should be taken.

He also agreed that the Beckford road needed resurfacing, but resisted demands for the county to provide a grit bin at Cornfield Way. The parish could buy one, and would

have to pay if the county filled it, he said.

Mr Barnett said he was impressed by the way the county had gritted local roads during the winter, but was disappointed it could not spare a few pounds to provide the bin. He hoped the new council would do so.

Clerk Jane Hopkins said private arrangements were in hand to repair the wall outside Doreen Cope's house. The council agreed to write to the owner of Bramble Bank after Jeff Fletcher said its wall was quite dangerous.

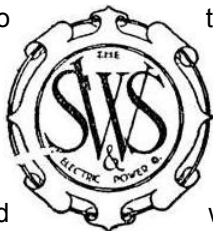
Mr Fletcher expressed disappointment that only five people, three of them councillors, supported the village litter pick that he has run for 15 years. He said more support was needed for it to continue.

The next meeting on May 10 will follow elections on the 5th. Mr Barnett thanked all who had worked for the council over the past four years.

## When electricity came to Ashton

It was interesting to read in *Ashton News* about the markings on an electricity pole removed recently.

The earliest record I have of poles installed in Ashton is 1929 when a Wayleave Agreement was made between my grandfather Thomas Archer and Harry Bailey, Laurence Langridge's grandfather, who farmed together, and the Shropshire, Worces-



tershire and Staffordshire Electric Power Company (whose logo is shown here).

Their signatures were witnessed by Gerald Barnett's grandfather Tom Whittle. This was called the Great Hampton (Evesham) to Beckford line. Electricity did not reach Paris until the autumn of 1957.

- Charles Archer

# Lark Rise to Candleford

Following the success of the award-winning BBC TV series, the acclaimed New Perspectives Theatre Company brings *Lark Rise to Candleford* to Ashton on Sunday May 8.

Flora Thompson's classic story tells of growing up in rural Oxfordshire at the end of the 19th Century.

This captivating new adaptation, suitable for adults and older children, combines drama, storytelling and live folk music.

When Laura Timms sets out from Lark Rise to start a new life in Candleford, she finds herself torn between love of the village and the lure of the market town. Past traditions conflict with the hopes of a new century, soon to be destroyed by World War.

A cast of unforgettable and much-loved characters create an affectionate yet unsentimental picture



*Country life:* Ruth Westley, Morgan Philpott and Kate Adams. Photo: Robert Day.

of life in a forgotten England - like that of Ashton several generations ago.

The show runs from 7.30 until about 9.30, including

an interval. Seating is theatre style, with a bar.

Tickets cost £8 and are available from Penny Scotland, 01386 881594.

## Praise for Star as pub plans spring menu

Customer comments have given an extra boost to *The Star*, as it plans to release its spring menu.

The pub revamped its customer cards, seeking honest comments from visitors, who need not identify themselves.

Those who did have said that food and service were much improved, said they would recommend it to friends. Another asked that the specials should change weekly.

The spring menu is due this month. Meanwhile the pub plans Cheltenham race week breakfasts Mon-Fri March 14-18.

It will also offer a special menu for Mothers' Day on April 3, as well as its usual Sunday roasts.

The Tuesday night 2-for-1 main meals deal remains popular, so booking is essential.

Beer drinkers will note the pub has been awarded the Cask Marque recognising a "Great pint of real ale." Black Sheep and Greene King IPA are on draught, plus guest ales.

For latest updates on the Star menu see its website, [thestar-ashtonunderhill.co.uk](http://thestar-ashtonunderhill.co.uk)

### Howzat for a great night?

Ashton cricket club holds its annual general knowledge prize quiz at 7.30pm on Saturday March 19.

Entering a team of four costs only £10, and it's not necessary to be a sporting buff.

Contact David Wood on 881402

## No need to go Dutch to hear stars

Parish Music present three outstanding classical music concerts in spring, starting with the Canteloube woodwind trio on Saturday April 2 in Beckford church.

Jennie-Lee Keetley, oboe, played with the World and the European Union Youth Orchestras and last year recorded Graham Whittam's oboe quartet with the Carducci Quartet.

Richard Russell, clarinet, and Stuart Russell, bassoon, graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music. Their programme includes Mozart, Milhaud and Gordon Jacob.

On Saturday April 30 in Teddington, the Cotswold Flute and Harp Duo present a concert of "suites and bonbons" by JS Bach, B. Godard, transcriptions from Bizet's *Carmen* and *The Pearl Fishers*,

and variations on *Greensleeves*.

Since moving from the USA, harpist Catherine White has been principal harpist with the Ulster and the Birmingham Chamber orchestras. She is partnered by Diane Clark, principal flute of the Orchestra of the Swan.

On Saturday May 28 in Overbury the Lendvai Trio perform pieces by Sibelius, Max Reger, Martinu and Beethoven.

The programme has been changed to match that which they will perform at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in June. Overbury is closer and rather less costly - so don't miss them.

All concerts start at 8pm. Admission costs £10 at the door, with an opportunity to meet the performers after the concert over a glass of wine or fruit juice.