

**ASHBURY
COMPTON LONGCOT
FERNHAM
NEWSLETTER APRIL 2017**



Thought for the month-

I find myself writing this piece just before leaving for two weeks' holiday so really quite early in March. There are signs of spring with the daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops beginning to vie with the snowdrops for space in our gardens and along the hedgerows, but it's quite possible that by the time you read this there may well be wind and rain again. Someone has even mentioned the possibility of snow!

But that shouldn't stop us enjoying the beauty now. There is a lot to be said for living fully in the present moment: really giving ourselves time to make the most of the place we happen to be, the people we are with, or whatever it may be that has taken our breath away and reminded us that there is more to living than doing. Sometimes we just have to be still and silent.

So I'm trying, this Lent, to get better at being still. Silence may be more of a challenge! My inspiration is a book called Finding Your Hidden Treasure, by an Augustinian friar called Benignus O'Rourke. It was given to me by a hospice patient, shortly before she died, because she had found comfort in the practice of stillness – of resting quietly in God's presence. She found that, as she did, her feelings of fear and uncertainty became less and she was better able to face her future. O'Rourke says this:

“Even though we may be dealing with problems, and be deeply troubled when we begin our time of silence, gradually as our mind comes to rest, we look at our difficulties in a less anxious way. We see them, but find we are able to look without judging. We are no longer tempted to sort things out, to plan our future action... Being in the present [in this way] helps us to be wiser about life, more compassionate, more alert to what needs to be done. Our prayer of silence helps us to see deep into the reality of the present moment and into the life of everything around. We are freed from the muddle of our minds.”

Wiser, more compassionate and more alert – it has to be worth a try.

Revd. Norma Fergusson

Shrivenham and Ashbury Benefice Services in April

Sunday 2nd April		Passion Sunday
7.45am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Shrivenham
9.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Compton
9.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Fernham
10.15am	Family Service with Baptism	Shrivenham
11.00am	Morning Worship	Ashbury
3.00pm	Joint Service	Longcot Chapel
5.00pm	Choral Evensong with St Andrew's Choir	Watchfield

Sunday 9th April		Palm Sunday
8.00am	Holy Communion Said	Longcot
9.45am	Palm Sunday Procession	Shrivenham
10.15am	Palm Sunday Benefice Service	Shrivenham

Thursday 13th April		Maundy
8.00pm	Maundy Liturgy	Shrivenham

Friday 14th April		Good Friday
9.30am	Children's activity Easter Garden	Shrivenham
12.00pm	An hour at the Cross	Longcot
2.00pm	An Hour at the Cross	Ashbury
3.00pm	Good Friday Liturgy	St Alban's Watchfield

Saturday 15th April		Easter Eve
8.00pm	Easter Eve Liturgy & Communion	Shrivenham

Sunday 16th April		Easter Day
9.00am	Holy Communion	Compton
9.30am	Communion by Extension	Fernham
9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
10.15am	Parish Communion	Shrivenham
11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
11.00am	Joint Easter Sunday Worship	Watchfield

Sunday 23rd April

9.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Watchfield
9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
10.15am	Parish Communion	Shrivenham
11.00am	Family Service	Ashbury
6.00pm	Evening Prayer	Fernham

Sunday 30th April

11.00am	Benefice Service with Ashbury School choir	Ashbury
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The Ashbury prayer cycle for April will be 2nd College Farm Lane, 9th Ashdown Estate, 16th High Street, 23rd Idstone Road, 30th Idstone.

Ashbury Evangelical Free Church

Sunday April	2 nd	10.15am	Communion	
Wednesday	5 th	2.15pm		Tea and Chat
Sunday	9 th	10.15am	Communion	
Sunday	16 th	10.15am	Communion	
Wednesday	19 th	2.15pm		Tea and Chat
Sunday	23 rd	11.00am	Joint Service	St Mary's
Sunday	30 th	10.15am	Communion	



Tea and Chat, all welcome, free.

Ashbury News

Vacancy for Parish Council Clerk

There will be a vacancy as from the beginning of May for the role of parish council clerk. James Greenham has decided to step down at the council's AGM after 13 years' service.

The role is largely administrative, including organising meetings, minute taking, financial management & reporting and liaising with the district and county councils where necessary.

Please contact Kate Watkins (Chairperson of the PC) by email (kate_l_watkins@hotmail.co.uk) or 01793 710444.

Churchyard Spring Tidy up- Please join us on Saturday **8th April at 10am** when we carry out an annual Spring tidy up of the old & new Churchyards- lasting about 2 hours. Free hot drinks and refreshments available. New helpers always welcome. Good social occasion.

Friday 21 April, 10.00-12 noon - Children's Craft Morning, in the Village Hall

If your child is of primary school age (5-11) please bring them along to try different crafts. There will be a choice of activities suitable for both boys and girls, and Mums, Dads and carers will have time to chat over a cup of tea or coffee! There's no charge, and no need to book - just turn up. Sue, Norma, Richard, Margaret and Stewart will be helping with the various crafts.

Ashbury Community Club

Thursday 30th March 10.30am-Pottery demonstration at Aston Pottery.

We have a few places left to watch the potters in action, then spend some time in the shop and café. If you would like to join us please phone sue Reade on 710208 by Wednesday 29th March to book up and arrange transport.

Thursday 27th April

Kate Watkins from Red Lily body pampering products will tell us about her hand-made soaps and lotions and show us how to make a Bath Bomb. Ashbury Village Hall 2.30pm. Visitors welcome. £2 which includes tea and biscuits. Details from Jackie Baker 01793 710358.

Ashbury Village Stores: Drop in for those needed or forgotten items; stay for tea or coffee and cake (and a chat). Pick up your dry cleaning; choose a locally made card or gift. The more we all use it, the greater the choice can be!

Longcot and Fernham News

Longcot Flower Festival 6-14 May in St Mary's Church, Longcot The church will be open 10 – 4 each day.

Proverbs and Petals is the 9th flower festival in our beautiful church. We look forward to welcoming you to our way of saying it with flowers.

Again we are supporting our village artists open for **Oxfordshire Artweeks**. For art exhibition locations and times see details under Emma Ablitt, Pat Elmore, and Sharon Rich at www.artweeks.org

Contact: Shirley Dalton-Morris: 01793 782989 or hirsleyvillage@mybtinternet.com

Fernham & Shellingford WI

April's meeting will be at Shellingford Hall on **Wednesday 19th** at 7.30pm. The speaker will be Graham Harrison on the fascinating subject- "Poisons for medicines: Victorian pharmacists and quack doctors."

Enquiries to Joan Turner - 01367 820607 or Elli Wickham - 01367 820544.

Longcot Churches working together -Chapel News

SUN. 2nd 3pm -Everyone is welcome to our monthly joint service which this month will be led by Revd Keith Osborn. Tea and biscuits will be served after the service.

FRI. 28th 3pm-T-TIME FELLOWSHIP-Afternoon tea will be available from 3-4.30pm. Everyone is welcome and there will be no charge but if you'd like to make a donation the money will go to one of the charities that we have supported over the years at our Coffee Mornings. Everyone is welcome and if transport would help or for more information then please ring Stella on 782584.

HUGE THANKS – to all who joined us at the last T-time Fellowship and contributed to the £26.25 which has been sent to Age UK (the name which has replaced 'Help the Aged').

Benefice News

Breakfast Groups

Men’s breakfast: continues as usual at 8am on Saturday 1 April in the village hall. Everyone is welcome, the conversation is great and the English breakfast is free – we just ask for a donation if you can. Please call Norma on 710055 for more information or (ideally!) to say you are coming so we can be sure to have enough food.

Breakfast Bible Study: this monthly discussion group will meet next at 8am on Saturday 29 April. Again, all are welcome to chat about anything and everything over a cup of coffee and a simple breakfast. Again, please call Norma on 710055 for more information.

Lent course: Risen

Continues on Tuesday 4 April at 7pm

Annual parish meetings – all welcome

Ashbury: Thursday 6 April

Longcot with Fernham: Thursday 27 April

Compton Beauchamp: Friday 28 April

Easter services – all welcome

9 April	Palm Sunday	8am	Said Communion	Longcot
		9.30am	Procession and benefice service	Shrivenham

13 April	Maundy Thursday	8pm	Benefice Communion and vigil	Shrivenham
14 April	Good Friday	Noon	Hour at the cross	Longcot
		2pm	Hour at the cross	Ashbury
15 April	Holy Saturday	8pm	Benefice service	Shrivenham
16 April	Easter Day	9am	Holy Communion	Compton
		9am	Communion by extension	Fernham
		9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
		11am	Holy Communion	Ashbury

NB: instead of a children's activity in Ashbury on Good Friday morning, there will be a Children's craft morning in the village hall on Friday 21st April

Vocations month

May has been designated as vocations month by the church – a time to think about what we do and, more important, what we would like to do as part of our church life. More details to follow in next month's magazine but, if you are interested in playing a different or more active part in church life, please talk to Richard Fergusson

Prayer

I don't know whether it's ever occurred to you that there is no cheery greeting for Lent or Advent, these great but difficult seasons of preparation for what is to come? Observed properly, they are too uncomfortable for that, but there is a blessing:

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

May you be truly blessed in this Lenten season.

Norma

Country Matters

Here I am writing on March 12th and already some harbingers of spring are passing. Aconites are over, snowdrops in decline but spring has hardly begun and we hope there is much to look forward to. Planting our spring barley has begun but slowly so far as we wait for drier weather.

During the cold spell in January and later into March I was planting two hedges on the high downs at 800 ft. My next job is to erect some electric fencing on either side to deter browsing by the increasing deer numbers. Way up above Bishopstone you might expect this to be solitary experience but not so. I had my dog for company who busied herself sniffing and digging and getting in an awful mess as the sticky frost came out. The odd walker came over the top sometimes stopping for a chat. When the wind dropped I would hear the continuous crescendo song of larks ascending. The rising notes of a chaffinch was heard in a nearby copse and the call of a cock pheasant marking his patch, now that shooting is over. Way over head most days if you spend hours on the high downs you will hear the unmistakable croak of a passing raven.

Last year I counted seven on one occasion but so high they were only specks in the sky, where this sighting here would have been most rare twenty years ago. And then I was treated to another quite unusual sight on a lovely clear day. A large flock came in from the east flying skein fashion in a ragged v formation and again their call gave them away. This was the largest flock of golden plover I have ever seen. There could have been over 500 together. Google tells me that the collective noun for plovers is a congregation or a wing in flight. Sometimes we see them in the autumn in much smaller numbers, particularly if we are working with lights, and a small group settle ahead on the worked ground or at dusk a group will fly round and round low over a hill almost so low that we say “they might knock your hat off”.

Another visitor on the downs at this time is the little stonechat, smaller than a robin and with a colourful chestnut breast they hop along a fence line keeping in front of one’s vehicle. So far this year I have not yet spotted a wheatear which can also be autumn and spring visitors but they behave in the same way but displaying their distinctive white rump as they move ahead.

Richard Green

Benefice Clergy

Vicar	Rev Richard Hancock	01793 780183
NSM	Revd Norma Fergusson (Except Monday and Friday)	01793 710055

Newsletter entries for May 2017 Submit your entries for May by **21st April** to:
M. Turner Claremont, Ashbury SN6 8LN. marionturner@me.com 01793
710302

Website www.ashbury.org.uk