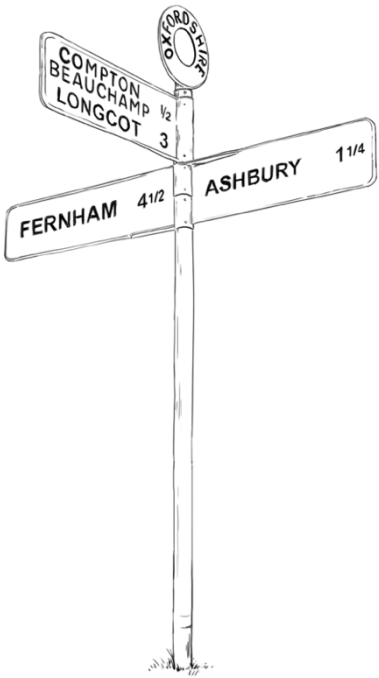
ASHBURY
COMPTON LONGCOT FERNHAM
NEWS

December 2026/ January 2027



Community Club Lunch 12th Dec
Stations of the Nativity 18th Dec

Burns Night 23rd Jan
Public Cinema Night "Pressure" 29th Jan

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Chiaroscuro: Finding the Light in the Darkness.

Whilst thinking about light and dark for December and January I have been thinking about the Italian word chiaroscuro. It means the contrast between light and dark, and is used in the art world to describe how strong contrasts of light and shadow give paintings drama, atmosphere and depth.

We find ourselves in this dark season, short days and long nights. Our response to this is provide light, we bring out candles and fairy lights, we hold carol services in semi darkness where we find ourselves holding the candles which demonstrate the bringing of light into the world.
In these dark months we have many opportunities to think about light and darkness. One of the favourite readings for carol services is the beginning of John's Gospel, in particular "In him was life; and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John1:4-5)
John acknowledges that there is darkness, and we certainly experience this in December and January, but there is also light.

There are many paintings of the Nativity which use chiaroscuro to remind us that Jesus brings light. An early one is Night Nativity by Geertgen tot Sint Jans from 1490. It is in the National Gallery in London. Or later Caravaggio painted the Nativity with St Francis and St Lawrence in 1609.
In so many pieces of art we see the light from Jesus as a newborn, later he will describe himself as the light of the world.

We travel to Christmas distracted by the lights of the season. Then comes January, lighter in the evenings but due to our geography the mornings drag behind in the increase of light. This may seem a long slog. At the end of January we celebrate Candlemas in the church calendar, we remember Jesus being presented at the temple and Simeon recognising him as the light of the world. We fill the church buildings with light; in previous centuries people would present candles as gifts to the church and bring their domestic candles to be blessed.

So we come to recognise that darkness exists, but that there is also light. This dark season of the year we celebrate the light with joy, and bear our responsibility to carry light for others in their dark places, and let them carry that light for us also.

Rev Janet Anderson-MacKenzie



Night Nativity by Geertgen tot Sin Jans

Ashbury

Ashbury Community Club

Thursday **17th** December: Christmas lunch at The Rose & Crown.
If you would like to join us, please contact sue_reade@btinternet.com before 10th December as numbers are limited and we have to pre-order our meal choices.

We are already arranging speakers and outings for 2027 so that we can continue to meet socially on the last Thursday of every month. Talks are open to all, whether you live locally or are just visiting the area.
Our first talk will be on 28th January.

Ashbury Village Hall.
For your diary, the Village Hall will be hosting the following:
Christmas wreath making - Evening of 11th December or morning of 12th December.

Ashbury Cinema –
We are very pleased to announce our first public cinema night in Ashbury Village Hall for **Friday 29th** January 2027. Our film is "Pressure" (*certificate 12A, duration 100 minutes*). Pressure follows the tense 72 hours before the Normandy D-Day landings in June 1944. With so much at stake, Allied meteorologists (*Andrew Scott as meteorologist James Stagg*) and commanders (*Brendan Fraser as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Damian Lewis as General Bernard Montgomery*) debate weather forecasts for the English Channel, decoys to deceive the enemy, optimal tides and phase of the moon for the troop landings on Omaha Beach.

Doors open at 7pm with the film starting at 7.30pm. Chairs are available but you may wish to bring your own cushions or throws. Bring your own nibbles and drinks. £5 a ticket paid on the door (cash or card reader).

To cover licencing costs, we require a minimum of 25 people to attend so please indicate your interest to Sandra Dagnall on sandrajdagnall@gmail.com or 07773 379703.

Attendees will be able to select the film for the next film night currently scheduled for Saturday 27th February 2027.

STATIONS OF THE NATIVITY
This now famous community event takes place again on **Friday 18th December** from 6pm
Ashbury once again turns into Bethlehem for this year's Stations of the Nativity
Starting at Ashbury Crossroads - Join the shepherds and follow Mary & Joseph as they search for a place to stay for the night before the birth of baby Jesus.
Carol singing with the Rose & Crooners and mince pies around the manger at the end of the evening.

Bucket collection proceeds to The Salvation Army so **please bring some cash**
BE SAFE: Ashbury High Street will be closed for the event, but please follow the Directions of our Traffic and Pedestrian Wardens as you travel to and from the event.
Wear warm clothes, sturdy shoes, carry a torch and keep little ones close.
Thanks to the Prentice family for allowing the use of their beautiful barn.

Burns Night 2027



A traditional Burns Night Supper and entertainment event will take place in Ashbury Village Hall on **Sat 23rd January** 2027 from 7.00 pm.
Enjoy a 'wee dram' to toast the haggis, a traditional Burns Night Haggis Supper, and be entertained by a traditional Scottish Piper, together with the poetry and Music of Robert Burns presented by members of our community.

Early booking is recommended, as places are limited.
Booking closes on 18th January

Raffle prizes and Cash Bar serving wine/beer/soft drinks available

Tickets £18 pp to include welcome drink, 'whisky toast' and supper – all proceeds will be shared between Ashbury Village Hall and St Mary's Church

If you'd like to reserve your tickets contact Sandra Dagnall
- sandrajdagnall@gmail.com

And if you'd be willing to recite a poem or join our Rose & Crooners Burns Night Group to sing some Burns music on the evening contact **Judy Clarke**
- judithannclarke@outlook.com

CHURCH MATTERS

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

The service times are correct at the time of writing (16 November). For the latest news and information, please download the weekly Newsletter from our website.

The churches in Ashbury, Longcot and Compton Beauchamp are also open daily for private prayer.

Sunday 6 December	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
	11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 13 December	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
	11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
	6.00pm	Carol service + Choir	Compton
Thurs. 17 December	6.00pm	Carols (in church)	Fernham
Saturday 19 December	5.00pm	Carol service with Choir & Bells	Ashbury
Sunday 20 December	11.00am	Morning Prayer	Ashbury
	4.00pm	Carol service with Choir	Longcot
Thursday 24 December	4.00pm	Crib service	Ashbury
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass	Longcot
Friday 25 December	9.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Compton
	10.30am	Family Service + Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 27 December	10.30am*	Benefice Holy Communion	Fernham

2027

Sunday 3 January	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
	11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 10 January	9.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Compton
	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
	11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 17 January	9.30am	Morning Prayer	Longcot
	11.00am	Third Sunday service	Ashbury
Sunday 24 January	9.00am	Matins (BCP)	Compton
	9.30am	Holy Communion	Longcot
	11.00am	Holy Communion	Ashbury
Sunday 31st January	10.30am	Benefice Holy Communion	Longcot

*****_Although everyone is welcome to attend any services, those marked with an asterisk are designed as services for the whole benefice_

All online Morning Prayer, Communion services and sermons can be watched on the Shrivenham and Ashbury Facebook
If you are unable to join us in person, do join online through services and study groups on the Benefice Facebook page. You do not need a Facebook account to access these events. Details of online services are on the weekly sheet and on Facebook.

Ashbury prayer cycle for December- 6th Berrycroft, 13th Berrycroft Lane, 20th Chapel Lane, 27th Church Lane.

Ashbury prayer cycle for January- 3rd College Farm Lane, 10th. Ashdown Estate, 17th High Street, 24th Idstone Road, 31st Idstone.

PASTORAL CARE If you have need for prayer or pastoral support, or wish to discuss a wedding or baptism, do not hesitate to contact Rev'd Patrick Mabhunu (vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk) on 07471 434276 or Rev'd Dr Janet Anderson-MacKenzie (associatevicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk) on 07821 474711`

Support your local church or the Benefice as a whole with a text donation using the numbers below

For Ashbury Text STMARYS 5 to 70085 to donate £5 or Text STMARYS 10 to 70085 to donate £10

For Longcot and Fernham Text LONGCOT to 70085 to donate £4
For Compton Beauchamp Text 5CB to 70450 to donate £5 or Text 10CB to 70460 to donate £5
For the Benefice as a whole
Text GIVEfive to 70470 to donate £5 or Text GIVEten to 70470 to donate £10

Your standard text message rate applies.

Thank you!

TEA & CHAT' 1st Tuesday of each month from 2.00 to 3.30pm 'Tea & Chat' will take place at Ashbury Ambassador Bible Church (known also as Ashbury Evangelical Free Church). Plenty of coffee and cake to be had as well as 'tea and chat'. Admission free. All welcome, including children. The meetings will now be in the church as the cabin was rather noisy!

The Ambassadors Bible Church meet at what was the Ashbury Evangelical Free Church at 10:00 am each Sunday morning. All are welcome and there is also a Sunday School for the Children which meets at the same time.



Ashbury Information by email Ad hoc emails are circulated to residents with up to date particulars about Ashbury events and other relevant information. If you would like your name added to the circulation list please email: **news.ashbury@gmail.com**

NEW RESIDENTS TO ASHBURY, IDSTONE & KINGSTONE WINSLOW

A pack is available for new residents which contains useful information. If you have moved into the village recently and would like to receive a pack, or if you have a new neighbour, please contact Jackie Baker (710358) for Ashbury & Idstone or Anne Taylor (07491 035582) for Kingstone Winslow

From the Parish Registers: An unexpected anniversary

Exactly three hundred years ago, at the font in St Mary's church, Ashbury, one Thomas Rusley was baptised.
Why did this entry in the church records catch my eye? Usually the clerk was sparing of ink, but this one was different. It states that Thomas was a "Jamaican who had been brought over by James Dawkins who then lived at Rusley". (Now Russley, on the downs above Bishopstone and at that time a newish mansion.)

This was his baptismal record for 28th December 1726, the very end of the year that Dawkins had bought Over Norton and other estates in Oxfordshire. Presumably Rusley was chosen as his surname because Thomas had been living there, however briefly. It seems possible that by December 1726 at the latest, for whatever reason, Thomas was no longer a servant of or enslaved by Dawkins, a third-generation plantation owner and one of the biggest slave owners in the country. The precise status of previously enslaved people once they entered the country was unclear and argued over in the courts and elsewhere for many decades to come. Christian baptism was in some cases used as a refutation of slave status. Whatever Thomas's motivation, he was the first recorded Black person in the parish.

What happened to him? Why was he baptised in Ashbury rather than Bishopstone? Did he remain in the village? Unfortunately these questions remain unanswered -as yet.
These few words in the baptismal records show that the outside world touched the Ashbury of three centuries ago, just as it does today. M.T.



Ashbury St Mary's 15th century font, photo 1910. (P.A.W.)

SEVERAL PEOPLE AND HORSES FROZEN TO DEATH AT ASHDOWN.

On Friday last, inquests were held at Ashdown Park, before Mr James Bathe Barnes, Deputy Coroner, touching the death of William Goddard, of Longcott, labourer, aged 19, and William Thatcher, a lad of the same place, aged 11. Thomas Patience, of Longcott, labourer, stated that he, in company with Thomas Daniels and the deceased man and boy, went to Lamborne on Tuesday, the 18th inst., to deliver coal. They had with them five horses drawing four carts. They left Lamborne on the return journey about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the snow was falling fast and a high wind blowing. The road by Maddle Farm and Knighton Bushes being the nearest way home, they took that route. After passing Maddle, the weather became so fearfully rough that it was impossible to see their way, and they became quite lost on the Downs, and wandered about for hours. The horses were obliged to be taken out of the carts, and after that he and his companions were frequently stopped by the snow drifts. The boy Thatcher was then taken ill, and after carrying him a long time he died. Patience then put the body on the ground, and, leaving the horses in charge of Goddard and Daniels, started again in search of help. After a time he at last reached Ashdown, and called upon Mr Jesse Jones, the gamekeeper, who went back with other helpers to the spot, when William Goddard was also found dead, as well as the boy Thatcher. Witness is

The witness Thomas Patience said that William Goddard had no topcoat. There were many other deaths in the surrounding countryside during this great storm.

Country Matters

Research for my new book Remarkable Farmers for £20.00 has identified a number of lessons marking the road to success. Motivation features because I have found numerous examples where it was the youngest son in the farming family who against the odds went on to the highest achievements. My own grandfather is an example. The youngest of eight, he left Somerset in 1901, taking a 250 acre tenancy from Lord Faringdon at Shellingford and in 1923 bought two adjacent farms with 10 houses on 500 acres for £13,500 to do better than his elder siblings.

Rex Paterson aged 18, travelled widely in Canada before returning to the Uk, making eventually a huge success in dairy farming both in Hampshire and Wales. The only variable on his many dairy farms was the herdsman. In his time, it was men only! Research by Nottingham University classified the herdsmen's personality traits for confidence and the degree of introvertism / extrovertism displayed. His many herdsmen on different units with the same blue print facilities were classed in order best to worse for their cow's milk yields: Confident introvert, confident extravert, unconfident Introvert and a confident extravert as the worst.

Successful Innovation is a recurring theme for success. In my lifetime what has changed is that innovation within the farming business to improve output or cost efficiencies is not enough. The really go-ahead farmers today have innovated with other income streams from diversification projects either to add value or as a stand alone integrated new business.

Diversification is not new but frustration with poor returns making life precarious for reinvestment has encouraged a search for better margins elsewhere. This has been exacerbated by the rise in freehold land prices over the last 30 years where today the earning capacity of land bears no relation to its cost. Modern success stories increasingly add margin, alongside farming with farm shops, retailing, leisure and wedding facilities, construction teams to capitalise on planning change of use and energy creation from biodigesters. These can additionally provide heat for glass house cropping.

The book features many instances of today's amazing success stories across the south of England. As Churchill pithily observed "success can consist of going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm". Rwgreen42@gmail.com

Richard Green

Contacts

Ashbury Parish Council
Chairman: Christopher Prentice 01793 710821 chair@ashbury.org.uk
Clerk to the council: Laura Evans email clerk@ashbury.org.uk
Defibrillators: On the wall by the School entrance and outside the Rose and Crown.
St Mary's Ashbury Parochial Church Council
Church wardens: Maggie Simons 01793 710801 Richard Green 01793 791310
Vicar (Shrivenham) Revd Patrick Mabhunu mail to:
vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk 07471 434276
or Revd Dr Janet Anderson MacKenzie
(associate.vicar@shrivenhamandashbury.co.uk)
on 07821 474 711
Ashbury Village Hall
Chris Millard mailto:villagehall@ashbury.org.uk
Secretary Sandra Dagnall 07773 379703 sandrajdagnall@gmail.com
Bookings: Laura 07766 338551 and Steve Pilkington 0773 9692076 mail to:
steve_pilkington@yahoo.co.uk
Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp CE(A) Primary School and little Berries Preschool Headteacher Tim Miller 01793 710259 mail to: office@ash.cambrianlt.org
G.P. Surgeries Shrivenham 01793 782207 Lambourn 01488 71715/72299
Post Office at the Rose & Crown Wednesdays and Fridays 9.30-11.30am
Vale of the White Horse District Council 01235 422422
http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/
Recycling/Rubbish collection queries admin.vale@biffa.co.uk
Food waste is collected weekly, green/black bins alternate each week. Garden waste brown bins fortnightly. Mondays except Bank holidays.
Your Local District Councillors are: Katherine Foxhall 07916 285305
katherine.foxhall@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and Viral Patel
viral.patel@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
County Councillor: Emma Markham emma.markham@oxfordshire.gov.uk
M.P. for the Witney constituency: Charlie Maynard:
charlie.maynard.mp@parliament.uk

Newsletter entries for February. Submit your entries by January 24th. to: M. Turner Claremont, Ashbury SN6 8LN. marionlturner@me.com 01793 710302. See also www.ashbury.org.uk and the community page on Facebook.
All views expressed are those of the contributors