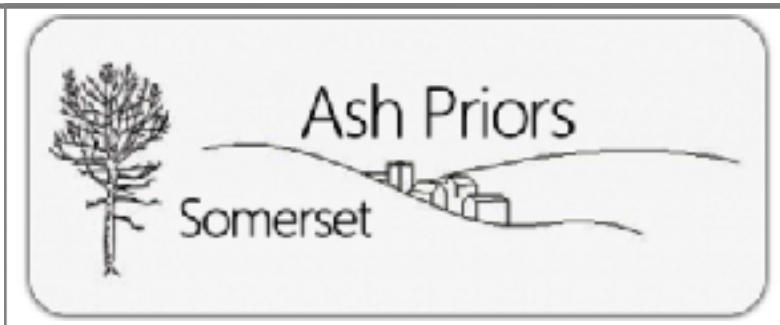




This month

- John White MBE
- Library news
- From the Vicarage
- Forthcoming events
- County Council updates
- ... and much more!

Contributions

If you have a story to contribute or an event to publicise then please let me know. The deadline for the next edition is the 20th of each month.

Subscribe

The Villager is delivered freely to your inbox every month, contact Simon Harrison (srbharrison@me.com) to subscribe (contributions welcomed). For back issues and to find out the latest about the village go to www.ashpriors.org.uk

Contact

mark.atlay@btinternet.com
Phone 07889 486071

Editorial

Remembering John White MBE

John White - a soldier, businessman, sportsman, consultant on the filming of *Lawrence of Arabia* has died aged 89.

John lived at Court House in Ash Priors until 1947. He was a keen cricketer, High Sheriff of Somerset in 1985 and spent 24 years as a Justice of the Peace. He was also Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset, and held the title of Lord of the Manor of Taunton and Taunton Deane.



John was known for chairing the St Margaret's Hospice New Build Appeal - which raised £1.5million in the space of a year. In 2010, he was awarded an MBE for his charitable efforts in the county. For 26 years, John was also the director of Taunton Racecourse. He was also Deputy County Commissioner for the St John Ambulance and was a council member of the Royal Bath and West Show. He was appointed Commander of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, and chaired the Somerset Territorial Army Reserve Association (now the Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association).

Mark

(With thanks to John Williams and the Somerset County Gazette for the background.)

Parish Meeting - All welcome

Wednesday 27th May @ 7pm

Village Hall



Ash Priors

Village Hall dates for your diaries

Saturday 6th June - **Roving Supper**

Sunday 27th September - **Harvest Lunch**

Quantock Brewery

Every single Sunday, all our glorious cask beers are just £3.25 a pint—yes, really, no catch, no wizardry (well... maybe a little).

The Taproom doors swing open from 12-5pm, but with the sun showing off, we're stretching the good times till 6pm.

Expect ridiculously fresh, cool pours flowing freely—cask, keg, cider, wine, spirits, and plenty of softs for the sensible among you.



Roving Supper

Numbers are limited - early booking is recommended

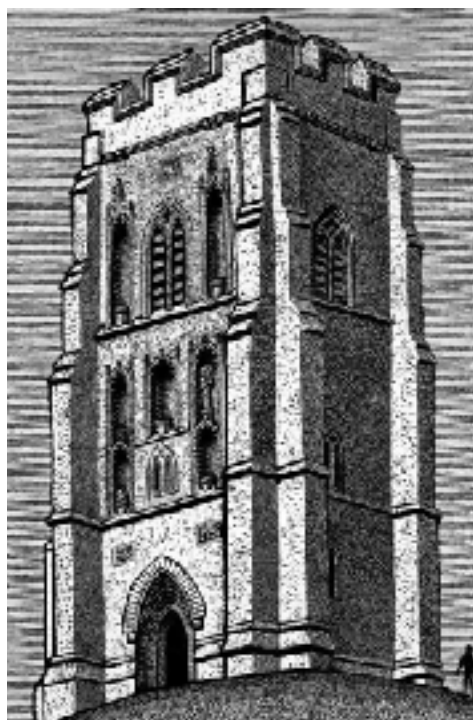




Rural Life Museum

'Ways with Wood', is a major exhibition celebrating the life and work of renowned Glastonbury-based artist Harry Brockway (1958-2024).

Harry Brockway was an exceptionally accomplished printmaker, sculptor, illustrator and stone carver. The exhibition features a selection of his wood engravings, woodcuts and wooden sculpture, offering a rich insight into the creativity and craftsmanship that defined his distinguished artistic career.



Staplegrove traffic flow

I am aware that the continuing works to provide access to the Staplegrove development are causing lengthy delays to traffic heading into Taunton via the B3227 and A358, affecting residents in my division and beyond. The issue appears to be worst when the Silk Mills roundabout and its feeder road operate with reduced lanes. Although it is a developer built scheme rather than a council one, we do have an officer that oversees the work and I have requested that the periods with reduced lanes are kept to an absolute minimum and that notice be provided of when such reductions are happening.

I also have a meeting with Bloor Homes this afternoon to discuss how best to manage this. I will do all I can to minimise disruption BUT this is going to be inconvenient for up to a further 12 months. It isn't going to be possible to work on a live road without inconvenience.

Mike Rigby

Quantock Vale Surgery

The NHS is offering an online Self-Referral process for certain conditions.

Bleeding after menopause. It is not normal to bleed, spot or have unusual discharge 12 months or longer after your last period. You can rule out womb cancer by self-referring into the Bleeding After Menopause Service.

Breast lump symptoms. If you live in Somerset and are aged over 30 with symptoms of breast cancer or breast lumps, you can use NHS 111 online to self-refer to our breast clinic without having to go to the GP first.

Somerset Chest X-ray Service. Our service allows anyone aged over 40 and registered with a participating GP in Somerset, to check if they need a chest X-ray to rule out lung cancer. You do not need to have been a smoker to check your lung health.

Somerset Bowel Service. Our service allows anyone aged between 40 to 49 and registered with a participating GP in Somerset, to check if they need a test looking for hidden blood in their poo to rule out bowel cancer.

<https://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/cancer/somerset-self-referral/>

theWI Ash Priors & Halse Women's Institute Programme 2026-27	
DATE	EVENT
2026	
APR 24	Adrian & Susan & Rogers Judy Stevenson
MAY 11	Work with early years children Joan Alcorn & Sarah Smith
JUN 5	Highways Construction in Rome Laura Foulkes
JUL 24	Medical Detection Dogs Neil Smart
AUG 13	Bridgeport in our garden Jane Sharp
SEP 8	YINCA Audrey Preece
OCT 15	Open Day Renee Roper
OCT 30	Scrubland & Wood
NOV 10	Craft making session Mary Tiller
DEC 6	Winter Fun Dee Wiggins
DEC 9 2.30pm DCE	WILLS CATHEDRAL Quentin East of Science WEST GRAFTON GROUP CAROL SCARF Hosted by Lyndal & John at home
2027	
JAN 31	ASH PRIORS LUNCH CHINESE MANDARIN 12.30 (at 3pm)
JAN/FEB	PANTRYING - TBA
FEB 9	FLOODING IN SOMERSET Bob Dearing
MAR 9	GUTHRIE TELL STORIES Cathy Boulton



Update on the Church Tower

Dear Villager, I write to update you with progress in relation to the required repairs to the tower of Holy Trinity church in our village. Every five years the church is required to have an inspection by an architect to report on its condition. Problems with the tower were first identified in the 2015 report, mainly lime mortar repairs with some stonework restoration. So, we have been aware the work needed to be done for over ten years now, and have been involved in seeking funds over that period. In 2025 we were given permission to proceed with the work and sought tenders from three builders. Our architect supported the appointment of the lowest tender, with some qualifications. Once we had a tender figure, we were able to set about seeking grants with renewed vigour. The tender was valid for 6 months and that period expired at the end of March! Not surprisingly, given current financial pressures, the figure has increased since – by 3%.



With a combination of generous donations and a number of successful grant applications we now have raised a total of over £46,000. The total bill is expected to be in the region of £52,000. The Parochial Church Council have agreed to proceed, with any shortfall being covered by the reserves in the church fabric fund, although we are continuing to seek grants to close the gap - and of course still welcome donations!

The work is currently planned to commence in late summer/early autumn, when the first thing you should see is the erection of scaffolding around the tower. Even that requires a specialist design!

Thank you for your support.

John Taylor, Churchwarden

From The Vicarage

Our villages are places of deep history, shaped by the lives, efforts, and care of those who have come before us. There is much to celebrate in what has been built over the years—a strong sense of community, neighbourliness, and shared identity that continues to enrich daily life. These are foundations we can all be proud of. At the same time, no community stands still. We are always changing, growing, and discovering new ways of living alongside one another. While the past gives us strength, the future invites us to be open—open to new ideas, new connections, and new opportunities to support one another. The ways we come together may look different from years gone by, but they can be just as meaningful and just as valuable.



Jesus stepped out from his life as a carpenter to gather friends, perform miracles, heal people, and tell everyone that they were loved by God. But not everyone liked this much change and some were determined to stop him...which they did for a while...but Jesus returned to continue His mission. Imagine how different things might have been if he had stayed at home being a carpenter.

Moving forward together means recognising that everyone has a part to play. Whether through small acts of kindness, looking out for a neighbour, or contributing time and energy to village life, each of us helps shape the kind of place we live in. By working together, we can ensure our villages remain welcoming, resilient, and full of life for generations to come. Many parts of our communities need help...our Village halls, pubs, local schools, businesses and our churches need you!

There is also a wider world beyond our village boundaries that benefits from the same spirit. When we choose generosity, understanding, and cooperation in our everyday lives, we become a positive influence far beyond what we might imagine.

Remember to take pride in all that has been, while embracing all that can be—moving forward together with confidence, care, and hope.

Helene

Waste Collection Dates

Month	Garden	Recycling	Refuse
Apr		30	30
May	3, 21	8, 14, 21, 28	21

Benefice services - May

	3 rd May	10 May	17 th May	24 th May	31 st May
Ash Priors		9.30am Communion by ext.		11.15am worship	Patronal celebration
Fitzhead		11.15am Worship for all			
Halse	11.15am Patronal celebration		11.15am Communion	? Rogation TBA	
Milverton	9.30am All age celebration of Community	9.30am Worship	9.30am Communion with Baptism	10.30am united worship @ Chapel	8am BCP Communion
Langford	11.15am		11.15am		
Budville	Communion		Worship		
Runnington		9.30am Worship		9.30am Communion	
Milverton	10.30am	10.30am	10.30am	10.30am	10.30am
Methodists	Worship	Worship	Worship	united Worship	Communion

Deer Count 2026

This year's deer count indicated that red deer numbers were down across the Quantocks. The weather for the count may have been a contributory factor in that the deer were less likely to be out in the open.

Year 2026			4-yr Average 2022 - 2025		
Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags	Total	Hinds & Followers	Prickets & Stags
355	307	48	811	609	111
A: North (all count blocks lying north of the Crowcombe to					
281	255	26	607	516	91
B: Central: (South of Crowcombe to Overstowey Road to					
55	43	12	160	133	27
C: South-East (all areas south-east of Lydeard Hill – incl.					
19	9	10	44	35	9

Roe deer numbers were relatively high. The mix of small woods, hedgerows, arable farming on the lower lying areas especially suits them. Once again, no muntjac were counted although sightings have increased at other times of the year in number as well as distribution.

Bishops Lydeard Library

There are new promotional materials in our Library to advertise BorrowBox – please read the feature below and you are welcome to come and discover more. Indeed – volunteers are intending to run a session demonstrating how to use BorrowBox soon. A poster will be put up in the library – keep an eye out and join us!

Also – if you have read a good book and want to recommend it, we are trialling some ‘Good Read’ slips to go into books, to let others know what has been enjoyable. Just a sentence or two – and completely anonymous. Would be lovely if people participated – almost like an informal book group!

Feature – BorrowBox

BorrowBox is an incredible free resource provided through LibrariesWest. Through just one App, downloaded on your device, with one log in – you can access eBooks, eAudioBooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers for free. Discover more at <https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/BorrowBox>

All you need is your library card number and pin to log in. If you need a PIN/Password reminder, then pop in the library or follow a link from the website above. Not yet a library member? No problem just register online at <https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/protected/join-the-library> You can use your new digital membership number to log on to BorrowBox and start checking out eResources straight away!

There are 14,000 eBooks to choose from and 17,000 eAudioBooks. A range of genres, including fiction (for adults & children), biographies, popular science & history, health & wellbeing, cookery and so much more.

In addition, you can access the full text of around 90 UK national, regional and local eNewspapers - on the day of publication. These include, the Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, I Newspaper, Metro, The Guardian, The Independent and The Observer, to name but a few.

Prefer a magazine? There are 1,100 titles of eMagazines, which include Amateur Gardening, BBC Science Focus, BBC Wildlife, Country Living, Cycling Weekly UK, Delicious Magazine, Digital Photographer, Elle, Empire, Good Housekeeping, Hello!, How It Works, Radio Times, Marie Claire, Men's Health, National Geographic Traveller, Simply Knitting, The Spectator, Vegan Food & Living, What Car?, Women's Health, and hundreds more to choose from. All titles are unabridged, interactive and in full colour. They are available at the same time as they appear on newsagent shelves. Each title comes with back issues to explore.

Things to do in the library

- ☼ Storytime – Mondays 11.00 - 11.30 (term-time only) – lots of stories and rhymes
- ☼ Lego club – Saturdays 10.00 - 13.00
- ☼ Printing, photocopying (small charge per sheet)
- ☼ Public computer (library members only – joining is free)
- ☼ Free wi-fi (library members only – joining is free)
- ☼ For children - a trail of pictures to track down, with a little treat for finding them all. Also colouring, Lego, Duplo and toys.

Somerset County Council News

Travel made simple with 4 new Digital Slinky buses for Taunton and Wellington

4 state of the art buses have recently arrived to provide an improved, on-demand, flexible transport service serving Taunton and Wellington.

The new Digital Slinky buses are fully accessible, and offer a handy alternative for people needing to get to the shops, work, appointments or social visits if a bus service is not easily available, or they just want to leave the car at home.



Traffic lights and bus service improvement upgrade scheduled for A38 in Taunton

Work to replace traffic lights at the end of their working life at 4 key junctions on Taunton's A38 Wellington Road starts soon. The works involves the renewal of equipment at the 4 existing signal controlled junctions along the A38 in Taunton. These are the junctions with Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton College, Castle Street, and Parkfield Rd (Musgrove A&E Access).

Visiting a farm? Stay safe.



Farm visits are a great day out, but there's a small risk of picking up infections from animals or the farm environment. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water after touching animals and before eating (hand gels and wipes aren't enough).

Only eat and drink in picnic or café areas, keep hands away from faces, and make sure children are supervised.

New investment aims to boost gully clearance and spruce up signs, lines and footpaths

Somerset Council's Executive is set to give the green light to a £5m enhanced maintenance programme featuring a huge gully clearance push and work to tackle faded road markings, broken signs and overgrown pathways.

Somerset County Council News

People urged to back County businesses and 'make the most of what's on your doorstep'

Residents in Somerset are being urged to give county businesses a boost this spring by shopping and eating locally when they can. Whether it is your local pub, café, deli, grocery or arts and craft centre, the message is – make the most of what is on your doorstep. Councillor Mike Rigby said:

"Valuing the county's unique array of shops and eateries was vital for the local economy. It's been a tough winter with some businesses affected by flooding but now, with the Easter holidays on the horizon, along with the prospect of longer, sunnier days, it's the ideal time to explore what's on offer locally."

We need our local businesses and they need us, it's about having healthy, connected communities and recognising what we have. We are lucky to have some brilliant local businesses, markets, attractions and leisure offerings across the county, and now's the ideal time to get out there and rediscover what's on your own doorstep.

It could be as simple as picking up supplies for a picnic, enjoying a pub meal or setting out for a walk along the Somerset stretch of the king Charles III Coast Path. Why not leave the car at home and take a bus – it costs just £3 for a single fare. This summer the Exmoor Explorer bus will be running again, making a trip to Porlock or the hills both easy and affordable.

Please help us spread the message in your community and encourage visitors to our fantastic county to explore our heritage, hospitality and brilliant businesses."



Useful contacts

Ash Priors WhatsApp Group: coordinator Liz Robertson 07905 489966

Benefice Rector: Revd Helene Stainer 01823 400305 / 07707 198937

Churchwarden: John Taylor (Keyholder) 01823 432925

Organist: Jill Taylor 01823 432925

Parish Meeting Chair: Richard Brooksbank 01823 430981

Parish Leads

Planning and Neighbourhood Watch Stuart Scott

Footpaths Chris Close

Roads & Drains Andrew Donovan

The Common Ian MacDonald & Neil Wood

Land and Water David Clarke

Parish Meeting Secretary: Lynn Lake ashpriorsvillagemeeting@gmail.com

PCC Secretary: Ros MacDonald 07570 956060

PCC & Village Hall Treasurer: Simon Harrison 01823 432122

Village Hall Chair: Maria de Broë-Ferguson 01823 433299

Village Hall Secretary: Ruth Evans 01823 432690

Village Hall Bookings & Keys: Jill Taylor 01823 432925

The Villager (Editor): Mark Atlay 07889 486071

The Villager (Subscriptions): Simon Harrison 01823 432122

Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator: Stuart Scott 07745 983179

Ash Priors & Halse WI President: Greer Allaway 01823 400 600

Community Police Officer: Brianna Whelan (PCSO) [brianna.whelan@avonandsomerset.police.uk]

Rural Crime: 07492 888109

Musgrove Park Hospital: 01823 333444

Post Offices: Oake 01823 461531 / Norton Fitzwarren 01823 330774 / Staplegrove 01823 325481

Report a Road issue: www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/report-a-problem-on-the-road/

Report Fly-Tipping: https://my.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/en/service/Fly_tipping