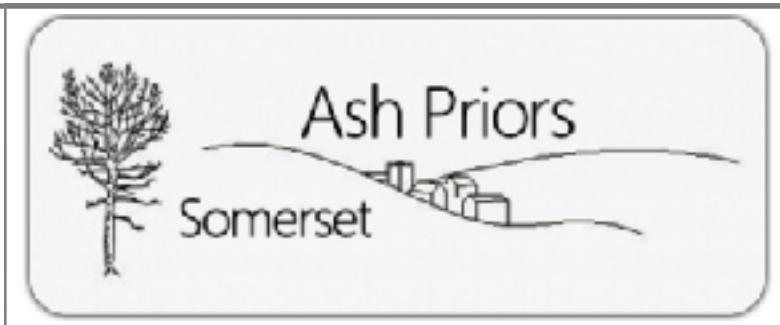




This month

- Common update
- Guided walks
- News from the Vicarage
- Harvest Festival
- ... 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
07889 486071

Editorial



Well we're round to the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness - not that I've seen much mist on dog walks yet but it is certainly darker and cooler these mornings. The head torch is charged and I've located the thermals.

The common has had its annual hair cut and Ian Macdonald shares, in this issue, a little of the background to this and why some areas were left uncut.

The Village volunteer squad (see above) were out earlier in September clearing the streams to help with water flow ready for when the rainy season begins. Our thanks to all who gave their time to help with this. Details of events are shared via the Village WhatsApp group. The next one is scheduled to be a litter pick on 7th November.

Soon be Christmas.

Mark



Ash Priors

Village dates for your diaries

Ash Priors Parish Meeting 7 pm
Wednesday 11th November

Quiz Night - Supporting Harriet's
Guides Explorer Fundraising.
17th October 7pm

Ash Priors Volunteers

10am Saturday 7th November -
litter picking

Further details via the Village
WhatsApp group closer to the
time.

Halse Players Autumn Production



Holy Trinity Church



An update on progress with the restoration and repair of the tower of Holy Trinity Church.

Hopefully by the time you are reading this, the scaffolding will already have been erected around the church tower. The remedial work should then commence in the first or second week of October, if everything goes according to plan!

Thanks to all those who have generously contributed to this project; we couldn't have done it without you.

Ironically, we are now due for our next quinquennial (5 yearly) inspection by our architect, at which point we will find out what else needs doing!

John Taylor, Churchwarden



Common News

Late summer, and on the Common it was time for the annual grass cut, which this year took place in early September. This was the first opportunity for the village to have a say on when and how the cut was managed. Somerset Council as agreed suggested a date for the cut, and I met up with Matt Peaster, the contractor for the Council, on the day to identify the areas not to be cut due to their environmental importance. We walked the Common and Matt was happy to leave the appropriate areas untouched. On this occasion the protected areas were primarily butterfly habitats, but I hope in future to seek advice on habitats that could be better managed to help other species. The Council has also contacted the Highways hedge contractor to ensure they take account of our concerns to protect certain sites around the Common.



More recently another issue to be addressed is the several incidents on the Common that have caused concern to members of our community and some dog walkers. We have clear evidence that fires continue to be lit in the heavily wooded areas, and young motor cyclists have been riding rather recklessly over the Common causing some damage. I don't think they mean any harm, to them the Common is just a field and the woods are there to be explored, and there is no indication to them that what they are doing is possibly unlawful, no signage setting out what rights the public have on privately owned common land, and what is not allowed. This means that in future if we try and stop inappropriate activities there is no reason for individuals to believe us. It seems sensible therefore that such signage should be displayed and placed on 2/3 sites around the Common to inform visitors of their rights and responsibilities, as well as what is not allowed. As an example, Wimbledon Common have large signs at the major entry points to the Common providing a welcome notice, an overview map, and the core legal frameworks for public information.

Finally, the trees within the boundary of the Common are all part of the Council's scheduled inspection programme and were inspected last winter. There were no urgent safety issues identified, but anything that requires doing will be on the Council's programme of works. This is prioritised on a risk basis. They tend not to take ash dieback trees down until they really have to. For background, trees are inspected for safety on a cycle between 1 and 5 years according to the level of public use in the area surrounding the tree. If trees pose a danger to people or properties, they will carry out emergency works within 24 hours of the report, or necessary works within 18 months, if the tree does not pose an imminent danger.

Ian Macdonald

Ash Priors Village Association Local Guided Walks and Lunch – Saturday 5th September 2026

Well, the sun continued to shine for our first local guided walk event on Saturday 5th September. It turned out to be a brilliant Community Event, which had equal priority and importance to fund raising, which really added to the event's success.

There were two walks organised, one shorter, around 4 miles, led by Gary Whittaker and a longer walk of 6 miles, led by John Buchan who gave very important guidance on the planning of how such walks should be organised and managed - thank you John.

A great attendance of over 30 people on the two walks, which started at the Village Hall and walkers were guided around footpaths and interesting aspects of the local area around Ash Priors. There was some great camaraderie from all the walkers, and it was a really fun morning.

Thank you to the New Inn for supplying copious amounts of cake, coffee and tea for the halfway mark for both walks. Walkers and others met back at the village hall for a beautifully prepared Ploughman's lunch and a beer or glass of wine which was most welcome. Thank you to Ruth Evans, Maria de Broe Ferguson, Norma Atlay and Flora Duke and a number of others who helped prepare such a sumptuous fare!

One of the main highlights of the whole event was the paintings of the local area by Flora and included lovely paintings of local dogs. These were on display in the hall and available to purchase and Flora kindly donated the proceeds from the sales to Ash Priors Village Association.

In all, the Association made over £850, of which about 50% came from a range of donations, which was a great result and very much appreciated. Thank you to everyone who took part, it was a really super event which importantly brought the community together as well as raising funds.

Thank you to all who supported both within the village and to the individuals who contributed and attended from the surrounding area.





The Route (of the longer walk)



The two groups of intrepid walkers ... and their dogs.



From The Vicarage

Here we are in the Harvest Festival season, not so much of a celebration as we might normally have, it has not been an easy season for growing anything, so this year our themes will be more reflective, prayerful, with messages of support for all who care for our lands and to share those glimmers of hope that we are now witnessing, those first drops of soft refreshing rain, those first new blades of grass have given us all hope.

It has been a really, really tough year for our farming community and our pledge, at these first signs of new hope, is to continue to care for them, support them and pray for them as winter approaches.

October is also the month when many groups focus on wellbeing and mental health. Do you have issues with your mental health sometimes (or often)? Do you know someone who faces the challenge of mental ill health? If your answer to both of these questions is “no”, then, you are a very, very fortunate person-maybe you can offer your own strength and kindness to reach out to, and empathise with, those who are less fortunate, and bring them hope.

Our Christian faith is very much about hope...our hope is in God, our Creator, ever present in difficult times and times of joy. But Christians are also susceptible to “wobbly”, unsettled times, our hope is that God is with us: at all times.

These words from a well known hymn come to mind...

‘All my hope on God is founded;

All my trust He shall renew;.....’

Wishing you a hope filled October,

Helene



	4 th October	11 th October	18 th October	25 th October
Ash Priors		9.30am Communion		11.15am Worship
Fitzhead		11.15am Worship For All		
Halse	11.15am Harvest		11.15am Communion	
Milverton	9.30am All Age The Lord's Prayer	9.30am Worship	9.30am Communion	10.30am at The Methodist Chapel
Langford Budville	11.15am Communion	6pm Pub Explorers in The Martlet	11.15am Worship	
Runnington		9.30am Worship		9.30am Communion
Milverton Methodists	10.30am Worship	10.30am Communion	10.30am Worship	10.30am United service

Harvest Festival Celebration

Holy Trinity Church held its Harvest Festival Celebration on Sunday 27th September. The service, led by our Rector Helene, reminded us of the importance of, and particularly this year the struggles involved in, farming life. Thanks go to Jill Taylor our organist for organising the choir to provide an anthem along with a variety of suitable harvest hymns. Lots of food items were brought as donations for Open Door our local homeless charity.

The team of flower arrangers organised by Liz Robertson had, as always, decorated the church beautifully in an array of Autumn colours.

Afterwards in the village hall, for the first time in quite a while, we were treated to a superb roast lunch, which had been organised by Martina and Maria; we are particularly grateful to Martina and Miles for providing the main course and cooking it – a huge undertaking. Thanks also go to all those who donated desserts. Villagers, friends and family appreciated both the food and spending time together. Thank you to everyone for their contributions, donations and help in making the day so enjoyable.



As an aside, anyone who enjoyed the beef or the chicken may be interested to know that they were both produced locally by Martina and Miles and are available to buy. Details are available at the local egg stations!

John Taylor, Churchwarden

Waste Collection Dates

Month	Food Collection	Garden Waste Collection	Recycling Collection	Rubbish Collection
Oct	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	8, 22	1, 8, 15, 22, 29	15
Nov	5, 12, 19, 26	5, 19	5, 12, 19, 26	5, 26

Bishops Lydeard Library

Bishops Lydeard library continues to be an important part of the local community. From our last quarterly library review, there continues to be good news. Our active membership is now almost 400 and this is partly due to an amazing 35% increase in new memberships. In addition, our visitor numbers were higher than this time last year and our physical loans through the library also continued to rise. Storytime and Lego club are still popular, while loans of blood pressure monitors, i-Pads and thermal imagers continue to be issued.



The Summer Reading Challenge, which this year was “Read to the Beat” proved popular and over 60 children have signed up to this. The children who have completed the challenge at Bishops Lydeard Library have been entered into the local prize draw. Three book tokens were kindly donated by the Parish Council for the prizes.

The outside of the Library has had a facelift over the Summer – with newly painted woodwork and plaster. In addition, the signage has been fixed. Please do come and admire it!

In wider news, to mark Her Majesty the Queen’s birthday, she gave a renewed commitment to supporting children’s literacy with the announcement that every Year 6, P6 and age-equivalent child across the UK will be gifted a special edition of the bestselling book ‘Impossible Creatures’ by award-winning author Katherine Rundell this Christmas. During the Autumn, the book will be distributed through schools and libraries. The Queen’s Christmas Present, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, celebrates the National Year of Reading and aims to ignite and embed a transformational love of reading.

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.

Find out more on the Libraries West website - <https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/-/library-app>

Opening hours:

Monday 10 – 4 Wednesday 10 – 4 Friday 10 – 4 Saturday 10 – 1

Volunteering - if you are interested in volunteering at Bishops Lydeard Community Library, please telephone Iain Hunter on 01823 433016 or email iain.hunter@btinternet.com

Somerset Council's Public Health team is asking people to check their family history of heart disease, as part of a new campaign to find the estimated 2,000 people in the county living with an undiagnosed inherited condition.

At the heart of the campaign is a short film in which Luke Potts (40), from Porlock, who has FH, shares his own experience of being diagnosed and what it has meant for his family. View the short film here: <https://youtu.be/IOSq73UKpo>

Somerset Council is marking Recycle Week, by publishing the annual recycling tracker. Recycle Week is the national campaign that shows people how they can recycle better, and why recycling right matters. The tracker reveals that it's been a bumper year for reuse in the county. With nearly 3,500 tonnes of materials being rescued to be used again (an increase of 26% from 2,700 tonnes last year).

Somerset Recycling Tracker 2025-26
www.somerset.gov.uk/recycling-tracker

Total recycled 144,294 tonnes

Recycling rate 55%

Total reused 3,458 tonnes

Food waste 23,044 tonnes

Energy from waste 112,036 tonnes

Landfill 1,425 tonnes

Where does your recycling go?

- 86% stays in the UK
- 54.9% stays in Somerset
- 14% goes overseas

You recycled...

- Glass: 15,575 tonnes
- Paper/card: 25,487 tonnes
- Electronics/batteries: 4,663 tonnes
- Metals: 8,651 tonnes
- Garden waste: 41,312 tonnes
- Plastics: 7,070 tonnes recycled (99.71% stays in the UK)

Somerset Council Most people in Somerset are recycling. Are you? **Somerset recycles**

Somerset County Council

Somerset Council has approved an update to the maximum fares licensed taxi drivers can charge across the county.

The changes reflect increases in operating costs and the cost of living since fares were last adjusted in May 2024. The fares are the maximum taxi firms can charge; operators can continue to offer cheaper fares if they choose to do so.

The approved changes include:

- The maximum standard fare for journeys of up to 1 mile rising from £4.60 to £5.06.
- Increases to maximum charges for additional mileage and waiting time.
- Soiling fees and holiday surcharges remaining unchanged.

The decision follows a comprehensive review of economic conditions, including a 10.69% rise in the cost of living and substantial increases in fuel, insurance and vehicle maintenance costs.

Development partner proposed to regenerate Firepool, Taunton

Somerset Council is looking at a fresh way to regenerate one of Taunton's most important brownfield sites by seeking a development partner. Firepool, a 17-acre site between Taunton Railway Station, Trenchard Way and the River Tone, is seen as a strategic gateway to the county town.



Now the Council's Executive is being asked to approve a proposal to procure a suitable development partner in a bid to bring forward long-held regeneration at Firepool and test the market for what can realistically be delivered. The existing Firepool Masterplan will remain important to any future regeneration with its principles helping to shape development. Working with a partner will bring in the expertise and investment needed while reducing the Council's risk.

Plans for the Debenhams site

The department store which closed more than five years ago and has remained empty ever since, could now be transformed into a new shopping arcade and flats. The 7,815 sq m (84,127 sq ft) former Debenhams store sits over five floors in a prominent location in Taunton's town centre.

Developers said they want to build a new shopping arcade in the ground floor, then add flats on the floors above, and install an underground car park.

Developer Chestnut Property Developments Ltd has launched a public consultation on its new plans, which include a new link to Goodland Gardens and amphitheatre style seating. It also wants to include a rooftop garden, solar panels and "biodiversity enhancements".

Return Recycle Reuse

Local for equipment label

Help your local social care and NHS services by returning equipment you no longer need

How?
Contact Medequip to request a collection
Call: 01823 211699
Email: somerset@medequip-uk.com

Exmoor National Park

New kits spell success for pine marten reintroduction on Exmoor

A pioneering conservation project has released new evidence of its success in bringing the rare and endangered pine marten back to the South West of England

Video footage gathered by the Two Moors Pine Marten Project shows a female marten with four of its offspring, known as kits, as they explore an Exmoor woodland. The film clip is the first proof that pine martens released by the project are breeding on Exmoor.

“Seeing pine martens breeding on Exmoor is a hugely encouraging milestone for nature recovery in the National Park. It shows what can be achieved through careful partnership working, long-term monitoring and the support of local communities. While this is very positive news, the population remains small and vulnerable, so continued public support and reporting of sightings will be vital as we help this native species re-establish itself.”



White-tailed eagles return to Exmoor National Park

The return of white-tailed eagles to England has taken another step forward with the release of six young birds in Exmoor National Park, the first to be reintroduced here after they disappeared due to persecution over two hundred years ago.

The releases are part of a project started in 2019 by Forestry England and the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation to restore this lost species, and the key role it plays in supporting biodiversity, to England. Since then, 45 white-tailed eagles have been released from the Isle of Wight. Several are now breeding and in 2023 the project celebrated the first white tailed eagle chick to be born in the wild in southern England since 1780.



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 Lynn Lake

The Common Ian MacDonald & Neil Wood

Land and Water David Clarke

Parish Meeting Secretary: Norma Atlay ashpriorsvillagemeeeting@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

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