Askett News



Photo: Chris Judge

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Asketteers,

Spring is on the way. After the darkness and chill of Winter, the appearance of snowdrops, winter aconites, crocus and soon the daffodils, trumpet the excitement and expectation of a change in season. Increased daylight hours; warmer and sunnier conditions; Saturday mornings spent tinkering with broken mowers; these are just some of the high (and low) notes we can look forward to in the weeks ahead.



Photo: Ann Phipps

To the rhythmical drumbeat of village coffee mornings, we anticipate an abundant springtime melody of activities. Dog walks, pub talks, litter picks and, for those with bird boxes in their gardens, the opportunity for a spring clean ahead of the nesting season. And that, is just the start.

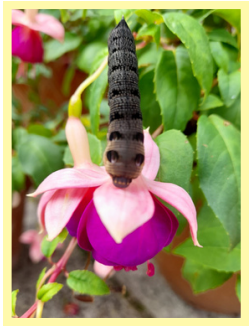


Photo: Alison Maycock

A big early-year, "thank you!" to all Askett volunteers offering time and talent. Whether it be serving delicious cake, coffee and convivial conversation, arranging perambulatory adventures, narrative performances, environmental rehabilitation (litter picking and bark chippings on paths), or any of the many other ways in which Askett society springs back into life at this time of the year, thank you. Without your help, none of this would happen; oh, apart from mower repairs, perhaps!

So, I invite you to enjoy this edition of the Askett Village newsletter, and to look forward to all that the village has to offer in the weeks ahead – read on!



Stuart Thompson

ASKETT EVENTS

Here's a round-up of recent and upcoming community activities:

Walking Club (The Wandering Asketteers)

The adventures of the Wandering Asketteers continued into the new year. Thankfully, Mother Nature was much kinder to the group. OK, neither walk was in the blazing sunshine but grateful that they were not in the pouring rain. Unfortunately we still had to battle the mud, but I am very happy to report that no one lost a shoe.

The group ventured out on 15th January and 15th February, completing two different loops. We ventured off towards the Ridgway to enjoy the lovely views through the trees. But where there was no view, there certainly were plenty of snowdrops to enjoy during our February walk.

Our next walks are scheduled Wednesday, March 26 at 1 pm and Saturday, April 26 at 9:30 am. I hope you will be able to join the fun.

Cristina Baker

Group photo in February.
Guess who is holding the snacks? >>>





<<<Rachel's secret to getting the baby to sleep.
He had a great nap the whole way around.

A very happy Bonnie >>>



Christmas giving ♫♫

There was a fantastic turnout for carols around the tree this year, made even more special by our very own Askett Choir. The collection of £556.76 was divided between the marvellous Ellesborough Silver Band and our chosen charity, **debra**, which exists to support people living with epidermolysis bullosa, a life-changing skin condition.



Photos: Alan Strawn



Askett Talk

On 2nd February, **Jes Holmes** gave an informative and entertaining talk about his two-month expedition that covered four countries and over fifty healthcare sites in East Africa, looking at ways of improving access to medicines. Thanks to Jes and to Charles Ansell for hosting the appreciative audience in the Stable Bar.



We now have an Events Leaflet with all dates for 2025, so if you didn't find one on your doormat please contact ewapalmer@hotmail.com. Spring activities include:

The Village Pudding Party - **change of date!**

The Village Pudding Party at the Pav's (Chris and Jacque Pavlosky at Askett House) has been moved forward to **Sunday, March 16th at 7:00pm**. The original date, April 6th, is now cancelled.

How it works:
As in years past, all participants bring a pudding to pass and we spend an indulgent evening gorging ourselves on glorious desserts. Coffee and tea will be available, please feel free to bring your own wine.
Pop over for a panoply of puds with pals!



Previous Pudding Party!

Feast Day of St Dunstan

To celebrate the Feast Day of St Dunstan, Duncan Bull would like to share something very special with the village.
Venue: the Stable Bar, The Three Crowns.
Time: Sunday 18th May at 7.30pm



FROM THE EVENT ARCHIVES

Five years ago in March we went into the first Covid lockdown. In May of that year what should have been a street party to remember the 75th anniversary of VE day became tea on the verge when we all set up our tables outside and enjoyed cream teas, socially distanced with some elegant dressing up as demonstrated by Ken and Mary outside Penn Cottage and 'the old Maycocks' at Beech Cottage.





Photos and reminiscence: Alan Strawn

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD ACTIVITY

Our delegates have completed their Bronze award volunteering section.
In the worst of weather Bea and Sadie have spent three months enhancing our environment by Litter picking. This has the additional advantage of helping to protect wildlife. It is a tribute to the girls that at such a young age they are so environmentally aware. **Well done Bea & Sadie!**
To date Askett Society have assisted the achievement of four Bronze and two Silver awards.

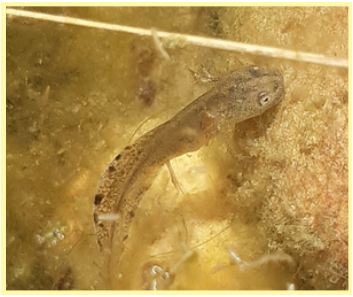
Stuart Shearman

SPRING WATCH

Newts



Great crested newt at base of house at night



Juvenile newt

If you have a pond in your garden then the next few weeks will see a lot of activity if it is used by amphibians. Our 9 year old wildlife pond has a healthy population of newts, both Smooth and Great Crested. They are returning to the water now from their overwintering hideaways under logs, stones and any sheltered crevice that suits them in order to prepare for the breeding season.



Great crested newt on path at night

The best time to see them at this time of year is at nightime, so get out the torch and see what you can spot. They seem to linger near the surface of the pond but bright light sends them diving for cover. A few years ago we saw a procession of Great Crested newts making their way around the base of the house wall on their way back to the pond. They are rather black and warty compared to Smooth newts, somewhat larger and the males grow crests in the breeding season.

The eggs are laid individually and wrapped in a leaf under the surface of the water. After about 16 weeks the metamorphosed juveniles emerge from the pond. Great crested newts are protected by law and it is illegal to disturb or handle them without a licence, so photographing them can be tricky. Later in the year they can be spotted as they swim up to the surface of the water for air, but you have to be patient! In the Autumn they leave the pond to go back to their hideaways, although it seems as though a few stay in the water overwinter. Curiously, we have never seen a Common frog in our pond, maybe because of the number of newts that we have, though we know there are frogs in the village.

Alan Strawn

Birds

For those with a nesting box, it's time for a clear out, be quick as nesting season is imminent! All nesting debris should be removed as this helps to prevent the build-up of parasites and diseases that can harm birds. Don't be tempted to spray the box with chemicals but you can use scalding water.

If you don't have a box and are interested, we may be able to source a few more so please contact Stuart Thompson. We will arrange a survey to make sure it's a suitable site. Here's hoping for lots of Askett chicks!

Rachel Crookes



Photo: Ann Phipps



Photo: Rachel Crookes

INTERVIEW WITH AN ASKETT SUPER-SNAPPER

*One of our villagers has delighted us with her eye-catching images over the past year or so. Supremely modest and insistent that she in no way a 'pro', **Josephine Graham** nevertheless kindly agreed to an interview to discuss her passion for photography.*





Q: What kind of camera are you using for these amazing pics?
A: It's the iPhone 14 Pro Max which has a 48 MegaPixel sensor. I'm actually thinking about upgrading soon!
Q: What tips can you share, please?
A: Well there are a few technical tips:

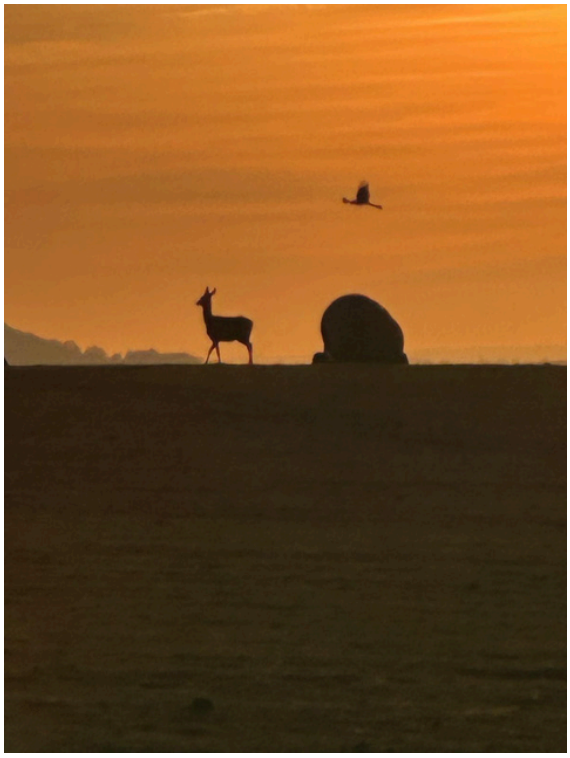
> I always use Live photo setting, which cleverly records the 1.5 seconds before and after you take the photo. You can then go back and choose the best frame.
> I sometimes adjust exposure by tapping on the screen and then moving the slider that pops up. This gives me a choice of lighting level.
> I also take plenty of shots, maybe up to ten, to give me lots of choice. Or I take video which can then be converted to a still photo.
>I sometimes edit a photo after it has been taken. The iPhone gives a few edit options, for example I use Saturation which enriches the colour.



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> But really, I'd say it's mostly about the art of photography: Choosing the right subject and 'framing' it well through the lens is really important. Some people just have a good eye for that. You also have to be in the right place at the right time.

Q: What's your favourite time of day?
A: I like both sunset and sunrise. If the forecast is good, I'll set my alarm extra early. You have to put the time in. I recently spent an hour hiding behind a bush on the rifle range, waiting for the right moment!

Q: Wow that sounds cold...
A: Well I get such joy from my photography - and we in Askett are so incredibly lucky to live where we do 😊.

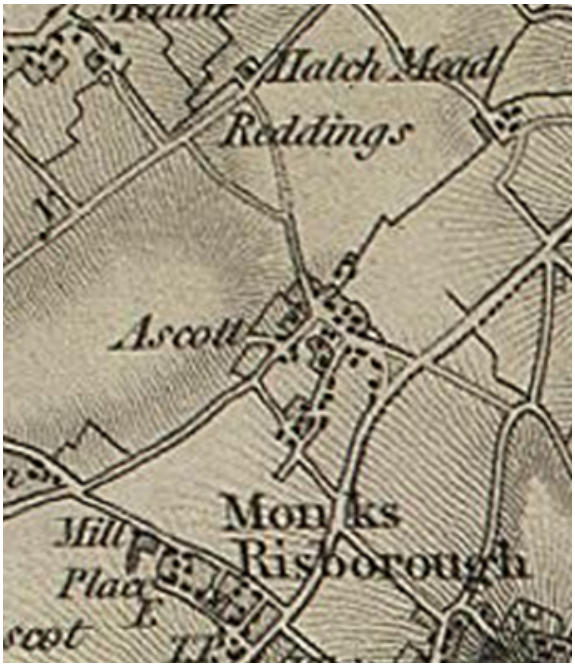




MAPPING OUR HISTORY

Dave Maycock *compares old maps to illustrate how Askett's highways and byways have - and have not - changed over the centuries.*

As residents of Askett we are all familiar with the sinuously snaking nature of the roads in our lovely hamlet. From the Aylesbury Road roundabout you can only see as far as the Three Crowns. When you pass the pub the curve of the road does not immediately reveal the way out of "town" until you come level with Three Ways Cottage where the carriageway rises to disappear over the crest of the railway bridge. The same is true of Crowbrook Road and Askett Lane. Each one slowly and reluctantly reveals its charms to the traveler as one rounds each twist and turn.



But let's go back to the crest of the railway bridge. From the apex of the bridge "Askett Village Lane" as it has become known in recent years, stretches away in a dead straight road worthy of the Roman road builders to its junction with the Lower Icknield way. Why? Why does it not wobble and weave as country lanes are wont to do?

One of the amazing features of our little hamlet is that it has managed to retain its original layout pretty much intact since Willaim the Conqueror passed by on his way to Berkhamsted in 1066. This early map shows that the road to the Lower Icknield Way snaked away across the fields, split in two and met the B4009 near what is now Hatch mead Farm, and opposite the old nursery site.

This was true until the coming of the Enclosure Acts in the 1830s. These were Acts of Parliament that redistributed land and ended traditional rights to common land.

How did enclosure work?
·Landowners and tenant farmers proposed enclosure to increase rental income and improve farms
·Common land, waste land, and open fields were fenced and deeded to one or more owners
·New roads were added and fields were redesigned
·Small landholdings were consolidated into larger farms

It's the third point that we are interested in here, new roads.

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Commissioners were appointed to redistribute parcels of land and decide where roads should run and which footpaths would be allowed to remain or not.

On the 8th March 1831 the commissioners met at the George Inn, Aylesbury, and agreed that there should be a new road – The Ascot Road – "leading from the Three Crowns Public House in the village of Ascot in a Northwestward direction and over the village green ..... to the Lower Icknield Way".

The same Act also laid out Ham Road, now Crowbrook Road, Ascot Green Road, now Askett Lane, and Princes Risborough Road, which now bears the more picturesque name of Letterbox Lane.

But what of the old road to the Lower Icknield Way, known locally as Grubbin Lane?

Well, on 22 August 1833, at a Special Sessions held at the Three Crowns pub, several roads and footpaths were decreed to be "unnecessary" and were to be "stopped up and inclosed[sic] and sold and disposed of". One of these roads was the old track out of Askett, starting outside what is now Vale Cottage, and leading to Hatchmead Farm.

And so, a lovely, meandering country lane was lost.



The 1831 enclosure map. The outline of Grubbin Lane can just be seen to the right of the new Ascot Road.

As a footnote, when we moved into Beech Cottage in 2006 the road through our hamlet had no name. The residents were proud of the fact that their address was simply the "name of their cottage/house, Askett". In recent years, somehow, Big Brother has arbitrarily decided that it is "Askett Village Lane". In my personal opinion, if it's going to be anything it should be "Askett Road" as agreed by the Enclosure Commissioners nearly 200 years ago. What do you think?

Dave Maycock

YESTERYEAR'S ASKETT CRIMEWATCH

While rummaging in the British Newspaper Archive, I have been startled at the range of Askett-related crimes reported and, in some cases, the severity of the punishment!

Bucks Gazette - Saturday 17 February 1838

Elizabeth Allen, wife of John Allen, was charged with stealing a quantity of bacon, the property of William Baker, of Stoke Mandeville.

Prosecutor stated that about nine o'clock on the morning of Saturday, the 3d inst., he missed about 10 pounds of bacon; he went on the road towards Askett, where he saw Allen, another young man (who proved to be Mooney), and three women; he procured a constable from Princes Risborough and searched Elizabeth Allen, and found in a basket in her possession, a piece of bacon, which he knew to be his property. Witness produced another piece of bacon, from which it had been cut, and they corresponded exactly.

Mr. Silbury, constable of Princes Risborough produced the bacon, which he took from prisoner; it was in a basket under her arm; she refused to be searched, and struck him several times on the face.

Prisoner stated in her defence, that she found the bacon in a check cloth on the road by the side of a hedge; the basket and piece of pork was her property.

Saturday 19 October 1850

Bucks Herald—Uxbridge Advertiser—Windsor and Eton Journal.

MORE TARPAULIN ROBBERIES.

Stephen Langstone, carrier, was charged with having on or about the month of August last, at Askett in the parish of Monks Risborough, feloniously stolen two tarpaulins, value two pounds, the property of the Eastern Union Railway Company.

Messrs. Powell and Wells conducted the case for the prosecution; Mr. Mills appeared for the prisoner.

This case, which was similar to several tried on the previous day, was sought to be supported by a repetition of the evidence given in those cases.

Verdict—Not Guilty.

The said *Stephen Langstone* was also charged with having on the 10th day of September last, at Askett in the parish aforesaid, feloniously stolen one tarpaulin, value two pounds, the property of the Eastern Counties Railway Company.

The Jury found the prisoner Guilty.

Sentence—Seven years' transportation.

FEBRUARY 10, 1849.

STEALING BEANS.

Abel Redrup, keeper of a beer-shop, at Askett in Monks Risborough, was charged with stealing 12 bushels of beans, valued at about 4s. a bushel, from the barn of Mr. Chichley, farmer, at Risborough.

APRIL 14TH, 1877.

ASKETT.

STEVENS v. KIRBY.—At the Wycombe County Court this case was heard. The parties to this action live at Askett, near Risborough. Plaintiff, who was represented by Mr. Rawson, claimed £1 7. 9d. for beer, bread, cheese, and tea supplied to defendant and his workmen during hay-making. Defendant disputed the amount of beer charged. There were 108 pints, and the hay-making only lasted two days. It was impossible for them to have had that quantity—they would all have been drunk. The plaintiff gave the names of the men employed on the various occasions. There were more days than two. There was, he said, also a lot of ginger-beer and tea included in the bill. The defendant had a lot of children at the hay-making, who made a sort of merry-making of it. His Honour gave judgment for the plaintiff for £1 7s.; to be paid in a fortnight.

THE BUCKS HERALD, FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 1932.

PRINCES RISBOROUGH PETTY SESSIONS.

ASKETT MAN SENT TO PRISON.

William Plater, of "Goodview," Askett, pleaded guilty to stealing a wheelbarrow, a garden roller, two garden forks, one sieve, one hose pipe and one garden syringe, the property of Mrs. O. M. Hayward, of Whiteleaf High School, on March 22nd.

Plater was sent to prison for three months, with hard labour.

Phil Crookes

SPEED CALMING EQUIPMENT

As many of you will remember from the village survey, we are looking to replace the old speed warning sign with a Moveable Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS). This upgrade will deliver a number of advantages to our efforts to monitor and manage vehicle speeds through Askett, most significantly our ability to move the equipment between different locations around the village - a warning sign that remains in one place loses its impact over time. In addition the MVAS will flash actual speeds with a warning to slow down rather than simply a reminder of the speed limit. It will also keep a record of traffic volume and speeds throughout the day which will help the speed watch team schedule their sessions for maximum benefit.

So some serious benefits.

The cost of the MVAS is such however that we need to access Buckinghamshire funds in order to purchase. And this has proven to be a tortuous process. A lot of people need to give their approval before we can obtain the grant funding. Fortunately we have been able to get the active support of the Community Support officer as we have successfully navigated the bureaucracy and have now reached the position of having our funding request submitted.

We now wait upon the Council's decision.

Fingers crossed.
Cheers
Ken

Photo: Alison Maycock





Photo: Richard Bushnell

SOCIETY MATTERS

The Committee met recently and would like to highlight some key discussion points:

Policies: We recently created some policies for GDPR, Health & Safety, Equality and Safeguarding. Society members can read these ON OUR WEBSITE HERE.

Communication: We discussed the importance of communication and concluded that our various channels are a sign of a flourishing community! We thought it helpful to clarify what to expect of each channel:

> The village email (thank you Duncan) is our channel for communicating Society matters.
> The website (thank you Donal) is our library of photos, key documents and info.
(Access to the emails and the main website content requires a paid-up subscription!)
> WhatsApp is for everyday chat, requests for help, urgent matters such as loose horses and power cuts! It is not for official Society matters.
> The leaflet is our annual calendar of events.
> This newsletter aims to inform, entertain and reinforce our sense of community.

The Bulletin Board has been updated with recent recommendations for local services.
TAKE A LOOK HERE

Please flag if you are aware of anyone who cannot receive emails or visit our website so we can ensure we include them through other means.

The Committee: If anyone is interested in joining the Committee, please contact Stuart Thompson (Askett Farm)

That's all, folks!
Thanks to all contributors to this Newsletter. Feel free to send me ideas or content for the next: see you in the Summer edition. ***Phil Crookes*** *(Corner Cottage / 07803 496541)*