

# COMMUNITY CALL

Edition 2007/01

Newsletter

Spring 2007

## Newsletter - Fifth Issue

Welcome to Community Call - Issue 5. Please feel free to submit articles or send in letters, comments, village news.

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## Diary Dates

You will have seen the recent issue of "Diary Dates" letting you know about the events and activities in the village for 2007. Here is a summary.

- **THE CONSORT at St. John's.**  
Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup>
- **ROGATION WALK**  
Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May
- **FERRET RACING**  
Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May
- **VILLAGE FAIR**  
Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June
- **PICNIC ON THE GLEBE**  
Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September
- **EVENT (To Be Decided)**  
Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October
- **BONFIRE NIGHT**  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November
- **QUIZ NIGHT**  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November
- **FAMILY PARTY**  
Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December

Cut this out and you will have a reminder you can pin next to your calendar.

### Not a Member Yet?

Join the Ashley Green Community Association now and take a more active part in your village. Annual fee £5.00 per person - Family rates too!

Contact Membership Secretary  
01442-876965

## The Chairman Writes

Let me start with the lows experienced by the Community Association since the last newsletter so that I may end on a brighter note.

First of all an apology and explanation to all those who regularly use the main rooms in the Old School for the defective heating this winter – for initially having to suffer the racket of the fans before they ceased to function and then having to make do with miscellaneous heating appliances. Having been assured that the heaters were not obsolete it took an inordinate length of time and innumerable phone calls to acquire the necessary spare parts. Both heaters are now working efficiently again and may they long continue to do so!

Another problem that has probably been perceived most by those who live closest to the Old School has been the misbehaviour and vandalism attributed to members of the senior Youth Club on Friday evenings. Some of these misdeeds have proven to have been carried out by young people who have never been members of the AG youth club but have hung around the Green on youth club evenings. Some mischief has been carried out by youth club members but invariably it has been after Youth Club has closed and either parents have not collected their young at the appropriate time or the miscreants have delayed their return home.

Let me assure you that as problems have arisen the leaders of the Youth Club have taken action to eliminate them but they are only responsible for the members during the hours that the club is open. That is to say that after 10pm the parents are totally responsible for their children. As a result of the recent damage done to the well house the senior club was closed and all the parents were informed of the facts.

Di Burnet, who takes overall responsibility for the Youth Club, is an enthusiastic and imaginative leader who has as much empathy with all the young in her charge as many of us might hope to have with our own children. In my opinion as long as she is willing to spend her Friday evenings supervising and devising activities for the children in our community she deserves our support. Neither she nor we condone vandalism, trespassing on private property or abusive language. Surely all of us should be prepared to allow the young growing up in our Village time and space on their home territory in which they can get together, learn to deal with cultural and peer pressure and develop into responsible people with respect for communal amenities.

The white, prefabricated building within the premises of the Old School has become the domain of the Youth Club and has since the formation of the Community Association been known as the Wykes room.

In order that we do not forget that it is named after Fred Wykes who sadly died early this year a plaque will be fixed to the exterior of the building.

Now let me record some of the more joyful occasions of the past few months.

The family Christmas party in the Old School was so well attended that we intend to hold it in the Village Hall this year so that we can better accommodate all the different age groups. The clientele and management of the Golden Eagle treated the more senior members of the Village to a splendid Christmas meal.

The new kitchen in the Village Hall proved its worth when a three course meal including the traditional Scottish ingredients was served for the Taste of Burns Night and there was scarce a body that did'na dance that night!

And the pleasures to come:-

Play games on the Glebe on St. George's day, enjoy an evening of a cappella music in the Church on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 'Beat the Bounds' of our parish on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May, bring all the family to cheer on live ferrets as they race through tubes in the Village Hall on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May and then enjoy all the fun of a traditional Village Fair on the Green on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June. Dates and details were contained in the recent "Diary Dates".

I am aware that many readers of this newsletter may never have attended any of the events that we organise because they are not your 'sort of thing' If you feel ignored, excluded or even aggrieved by the Community Association please let us know your opinions or suggestions either by contacting the editor or a committee member or by putting a note in the mail box by the gate of the Old School.

In the last newsletter I stressed the need for new sources of energy to run the Community Association effectively. Now I ask that you would consider volunteering to become a member of the Council or even a member of the Executive at the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The Council only meets four times a year for a couple of hours on a Tuesday evening.

Yvonne Flanagan, our present vice chairman, has to step down just now, and unless someone cares to oust me as chairman I will serve as such for one more year so there is no danger that you will be coerced into taking on any more responsibility than you are willing to undertake! Just come to the meeting, have a drink and a nibble with us, hear how we operate and consider volunteering. See you there!

**Vivienne Withall (Chairman)**

**Village Newcomers** - we really do need *new blood with new ideas!!*

Many of you have enjoyed the events to date, so why not come along and help us plan ahead for more. Why not help with the Fair?

## FRED WYKES

The passing of Fred Wykes is a great loss not only to his family but to all who knew him.

There are probably people living in Ashley Green today who enjoy what the village has to offer in the way of facilities, community spirit, social events and activities, and they have no idea of the debt they owe to Fred Wykes.

Fred was a member of the steering committee, together with Ernest Adlington, Ron Bennett and myself, which for two years fought to acquire the Old School and set up a Community Association. But overall, it was Fred's determination, drive and enthusiasm which led us on to overcome all obstacles (and there were many) to achieve our goal.

He was the first Chairman of the new Association and served for 4 years. There was no money, the buildings were very run down and lacking in suitable facilities, but Fred set to and removed the ancient oil stoves, laid pipes for gas heating, carried out plumbing and electrical jobs, and did an enormous amount of work on what was the school canteen, installing a toilet and making it suitable for the new playgroup to move in to. That building was then named 'The Wykes Room'.

The very first group to be started was the Art Group – also a product of Fred's initiative. And then, many years later, it was he who got the Bridge Club off the ground.

His wife Liz was School Secretary at the Village School before it closed and it followed that she also played an active part in the Community Association. Sadly, she died a few years later and the Great White Cherry by the school fence was planted in her memory.

Fred was an irascible Yorkshireman who sometimes hit a sore point with us more touchy southerners, but was quickly forgiven when people realised that beneath that blunt exterior was a heart of gold.

When Fred had to go into hospital for a serious heart bypass operation, 'little' Bessie Brown offered to look after his large dog – a Doberman pinscher! and when he returned home from hospital she found herself looking after Fred as well.

Their friendship flourished and grew, and they have spent many happy years together. In the Autumn of 2006 they decided to move to Cornwall where Bessie's sons and grandchildren were well settled.

Throughout history certain people have left their mark on society. Fred Wykes has certainly left his mark on Ashley Green.

**Margaret Bowler**

## Ashley Green Village Fair - Saturday June 9th

We are already planning for the Ashley Green Village Fair but **we need support from more people.** Can YOU help?



- An adult needed to organise a **Fancy dress competition for younger children**, and lots of children, of course.
- **Tug-of-war.** We need an Organiser and **Large, Strong** men to join the team. Last year's winners are already in training. Let's pull 'em over!!
- **Ponies** - we urgently need more ponies for pony rides.
- **Fun dog show.** Lots of dogs loveable dogs needed. Do enter this great event. Call Laura or Tim Cutter on 01442 876626.

Keep a look out for posters and flyers!

If you can help in any way please call **Mary Axon on 01442 866549.**

## **THE ASHLEY GREEN WELL**

It will be twelve years in June that the restoration of the well was completed. We think we can say that it has given pleasure to villagers, children and not least walkers, who have often been spotted relaxing on the seats and eating their lunch.

The old well was deemed to be dangerous and demolished in the mid 1930's. Michael Stonhill can remember farmers carts and villagers visiting with rubbish and attempting to fill in the well which he believes to have been over 200 feet deep with tunnels running off in various directions. Finally a large slab of concrete was placed over the well which I am sure many of you will remember. And thus it stayed for many years, until an idea was formed from casual discussion in the "Golden Eagle".

This followed a talk by Nim Baker to the Community Association in 1990, entitled Memories of Ashley Green, at which he produced many fascinating old photographs of the village going back to the early 1900's.

Cyril Wheeler, who had served in the pub for many years had recently died and it was felt that a memorial to him, and other prominent villagers, would be very fitting. After an exchange of views, we hit on the idea of restoring the well with the practical help of various local craftsmen.

I foolishly volunteered to be project manager and having a friend who was an architect and who really liked restoration works, we applied for planning consent, which to CDC's credit was almost enthusiastically granted! Events moved on quite swiftly at first. Fred Wykes used his charm on the Forestry Society who helped source a substantial quantity of oak for the timber framework. Monica Dell agreed to store the timber in one of her barns, where Trevor John gave up many hours to mark out all the joints. This was an onerous exercise for which we owed Trevor a great debt of thanks. Mannings kindly agreed to help supply other timber for the sides and the roof plus many other bits and pieces.

The project stalled for some time because the erection of the main framework proved too big.

Reluctantly we hired an outside contractor to do this work. Once that decision had been made the Hollylee brothers built the brick base, and Neil Halsey laid the paving slabs. The oak framework with five inch corner posts was erected and when completed Simon Bowler was able to do the roof. If you look at the roof you will see a decorative top made from lead which was Simon's idea and gives it a neat finish. Wire was put under the eaves to stop the birds nesting inside. Jim Mackay did the boarding (cladding) and the inside of the roof, and fixed the seating.

I have not mentioned money. We raised funds in many ways. The Ashley Green Village Projects Committee had been established and generally financed the venture with money from various fetes and fund raising events. There were personal donations, a couple of grants, we also had a "buy a brick" campaign which featured at other functions, and many items were generously donated as I have mentioned before. We had to pay for most of the materials of course - after all we were getting much of the labour free, which was greatly appreciated. We also approached the Hollylee, Wheeler and Foskett families who all agreed to donate seats in memory of their loved ones for which much thanks. There is a plaque inside the roof commemorating all those who played a major part in reconstruction.

And then there was the famous Music Hall in May 1991 which raised a substantial amount of money towards material costs in the early stages (£750). The Music Hall was one of the most entertaining events ever held in the village and deserved more than the one night. The nice thing was that so many villagers were involved both in the acts and backstage. Richard Withers and Hilary Mills deserved much credit for staging the event and who could forget Michael Stonhill's Master of Ceremonies.

Finally, this reminder of the rebuilding of the well sadly contains a request to parents to make their children more aware of the efforts that went in to its existence, as some vandalism has been taking place recently which is doubly disappointing for all the above reasons.

**THE WELL BELONGS TO THE VILLAGE!** - youngsters included!

**Colin Bowler**



The Well head restored!



Celebrations at the opening!

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*Following our last issue, I received this interesting letter which I publish in its entirety - Ed.*

### **Observations on "A bit of history" in Community Call Autumn 2006**

I am Stephen James, the only child of Mrs James, the former Headmistress of the village school who featured in the above article.

I can confirm much of the veracity of the article with regard to my mother and can add a bit of further colour to some of the anecdotes that you mention.

I can confirm that my mother was indeed "rotund" but this was not due to the wartime diet! It was due to her having a thyroid condition which caused her weight to rise. In those times treatment for this condition was not as advanced as today. I have pictures of her in her younger days when she was very slender.

She certainly took all the jibes about her size in good heart and told one particular story on this theme against herself:

During her early years at Ashley Green (I would guess at this being in the mid- late 1930's) she was part of a group of teachers who were taken on a tour of Mr Herbert Morris's new car plant at Oxford. My mother recognised that mass production factories such as this were likely to have a major impact on the population's working lives and in particular that many of the children that she was educating at the village school (children attended the village school until 15 then) were likely to be working in a factory rather than in agriculture which had been the case to that date.

She therefore decided that in handcraft lessons a production line would be set up to build toy furniture.

The children were all busy at work apart from "final assembly" who were idle.

She enquired why? to be told that although they had chair arms and backs they had no seats.

My mother therefore told the class all to stop work as she said "We have a bottleneck".

She then asked in her ringing tones "We have arms and backs but no seats - who has got a padded seat?"

There was silence apart from one boy called Derrick Cheshire in final assembly who looked up at my mother and said "You're telling me sister".

My mother told this story against herself with great relish and said that it was the only occasion on which she had to excuse herself from the classroom as she was laughing so much!!

I can also confirm the truth of the story about the "German parachutist" in the Glebe Meadow.

This was a young RAF flyer called Mostyn Woodhouse who was the nephew of Rupert Somerville who lived at Old Oak Farm. The Mr Baker referred to in the article was Nimrod Baker who was, I believe, head of the village Home Guard. My mother said that he bore a grudge against her for many years about her having not told him about Mostyn's arrival which made him appear very foolish!!

I don't know whether readers are aware but there was a short film made about the village and the School in 1940. It was entitled "Ashley Green goes to School" and was made by the wartime Ministry of Information at a time when efforts were being made to show America how Britain was coping with the war. The film runs for 5 minutes and the synopsis on the British Film Institute Library is "A country schoolteacher shows how town and country children are afforded an all-embracing education amidst delightful rural surroundings, safe from bombs".

Some years ago this was shown on Channel 4 television as part of their series of short wartime films. ***If any of your readers have a video of this I would be very interested to see it!!!***

My mother enjoyed the experience of being involved with making this film but said that it was difficult having to wear the same dress for each of the days that the film took to make.

I had a wonderful childhood at Ashley Green. I lived there in the School House and attended the village school until 1957 when my mother retired and the family moved to Berkhamsted. I still live in Berkhamsted and would be interested to hear from any of your readers who may have their own recollections of those times and of my family.

Stephen James

*(The History of our village, events and personalities, seems to be a popular feature of Community Call. Do you have some stories to tell??*

*Contributions to the Editor please.*

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## Senior Citizens Christmas Dinner - 2006

Our thanks to Sue & Kim for hosting a truly enjoyable Christmas Dinner for Ashley Green Senior Citizens, and to the chef for cooking a delicious meal.

During the evening there was a free draw, providing everyone with a prize, and the event was drawn to a close with a short speech and vote of thanks given by Mick Stronnell.

A most enjoyable evening appreciated by us all.

**Roy & Evelyn Howe.**

## RANTS AND RAVES

(Comments received from villagers.)

- **Verges**

The verges all along Chesham Road, and previously on the Two Dells "slip" by the church, are particularly vulnerable to the ravages of lorries and cars drawing off the road to park, and make our village look like a mud bath - especially in the winter months.

Any useful ideas as to how we preserve the verges from lorries and cars parking off the road?

- **Sale Anyone?**

Got an old banger for sale guv?

There seems to be a never ending stream of old bangers for sale along Chesham Road, which bring many "punters" who cause dangerous obstructions at peak times and contribute to the destruction of the verges.

The police will investigate should enough people complain, but their hands seem to be tied somewhat. The council's officer responsible for such roadside trading has said that the council cannot do anything, and that it is (in theory) possible to have a line of cars for sale from Ashley Green into Chesham.

Sounds unacceptable!!

Any lawyers, or otherwise informed residents, got an idea how to solve this problem?

- **Black Bags**

Black bin bags put out on the verges well before collection day make our village look a bit of a "tip". Maybe you could try not to put them out too early?

**Do you have a bee in your bonnet about something which affects our village?**

***Get Angry!***

*Please send any Items for "Rants and Raves" to the Editor.*

## ‘A Taste of Burns’



This could be described as our ‘bling’ event of the year when we set the ticket price relatively high so that we can splash out on the catering and entertainment.

We did that night, 20<sup>th</sup> January, providing a three course meal, tots of whisky for the toasts and a live band for the dancing.

Hard core aficionados of Burns Nights could complain that we did not adhere to all the traditions associated with this celebration of the Scottish poet however we tried to include the essential elements. A true Scot, Gavin Rennie, delivered the Selkirk Grace and the Address to the Haggis with due gravitas in a brogue practically unintelligible to the southern ear. Roger Macklin honoured the ladies with a toast to which Yvonne Flanagan replied with a rather tongue in cheek admiration for the male sense of direction.

A magnificent piper played Scottish tunes to set the tone of the evening before the meal and accompanied the haggis as it was presented with great aplomb by John Axon who temporarily donned the guise of a chef.



The meal: a starter of fish pate, a main course of venison in port and Guinness and the obligatory haggis, and a dessert of cranachan was prepared by several CA members but especial thanks are due to Jamie Russell-Flint for taking on the task mashing the neeps and tatties and heating the meat and haggis to perfection while others relaxed. The dancing after the meal was enthusiastic, perhaps more general country dancing than truly Scottish.

The chaos that might have ensued had the patient caller attempted to organise genuine reels in the limited space might have broken the hearts of the cognoscenti of Scottish dancing but you could say that nearly everyone enjoyed something of a highland fling that night.

The idea for this event originated from a group, composed partly of natives from the outer reaches of our kingdom, who lingered long on the Green enjoying one another’s company after the heat of last summer’s village fair.

However it was Yvonne Flanagan, our Irish lassie, who nurtured the idea and brought it to fruition. Thank you to her and all the many other people who contributed to the success of the evening.

### **Vivienne Withall.**

*(What theme or event would you like the Community Association to organise next year? Suggestions please.)*

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## NEWS FROM ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

**WALKERS** - please come and enjoy the wonderful countryside around our Parish in company with members of St. John’s as we follow the ancient custom of walking on the footpaths around the boundary on **Rogation Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> May.**

We will depart from outside the Church at 11.00am. A member of the congregation will lead as many as are interested as far as you want to walk round the boundary which is about 5 miles long. The Sunday School leaders are planning a treasure hunt for children on a circular walk in the vicinity of the Village. A ‘ploughmans’ type lunch will be available for any walker in the Village Hall from 12.45pm for which there will be a small charge. For further details look for information in St. John’s May newsletter or contact Vivienne as above.

**AMAZING GRACE** - The first two words and the subject of the hymn that was written by the Revd John Newton when he was a curate at Olney and first sung on New Year’s day 1773. Newton was a cogent, evangelical preacher, a maverick, for whom the text of the many hymns he wrote was important.

He wrote this hymn to reveal to his congregation what God had done for him despite his wretched past: Press ganged into the navy at 19, treated as a slave by a trader when he impetuously switched ships before becoming a slave trader himself, retiring from the sea to work in the customs house in Liverpool, a city whose status and wealth grew with the slave trade.

He became a Christian minister but it was not until William Wilberforce sought him out for his technical knowledge of the slave trade that he became an ardent abolitionist and member of the group whose moral quest was to end slavery in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The recently released film, ‘Amazing Grace’ tells the story of how the transatlantic slave trade was eventually declared illegal on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1807.

The hymn, like its author, has an interesting history. Probably taken to the New World by Scottish emigrants, it was sung to many tunes during the 19<sup>th</sup> century until it was published in the USA with an optimistic adaptation of the ending to the tune composed by William Walker. It became an American ballad, a secular cry for freedom, sung by Judy Collins it became a popular hit, played by bagpipes it released emotions at memorial services for 9/11 and has become a spiritual national anthem for millions.

John Newton’s faith evolved through his experience of life and through study of the bible. Christians believe that God unconditionally offers his love, his grace, to us all however unworthy we might be. The vision of St. John’s is to enable people to encounter and grow in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If the sound of Amazing Grace sounds sweet to your ears, if you feel lost but would be found please join us in our spiritual quest for an understanding of the mystery behind and within the universe that is God so that you too might know his profound and truly amazing grace.

St. John’s belongs to the Church of England but as there is no other church in the village it welcomes anyone from whatever church background, or none, they might have. A service is held every Sunday morning at 9.30am.

## Adverts and Announcements

Advertise your enterprise or activity here.

(There is a charge for **Commercial Businesses**:

Contact us with details of what you want.

Eighth Page (approx.) - £10. Quarter page - £20)

### THE CURTIS TRUST

The Curtis Educational Foundation is a small trust set up under the will of William Curtis in the 1880's to financially assist young people under the age of 25 with educational, social or physical training. This can range from assistance with school trips, music lessons (or purchase of a musical instrument), purchase of tools for apprenticeships, help with fees or books for further education and so on.

There are now limited funds available - the average award is around £100 but this can vary according to what the grant is required for and the number of applicants in any one year.

If you would like to apply for a grant or would like further information please contact B White, Secretary of the Trust,

### VILLAGE FAIR

The Annual village Summer Fair will be held on the Green on **Saturday June 9th at 2.00pm**. Everyone welcome.

Stalls ● Sideshows ● Entertainment ● Tug of War ● Barbeque ● WI Teas - *And lots more.* Should you want to run a stall, or help in any way at all please contact:-

Mary Axon on 01442 866549

**NOTE** - Large, Powerful, men needed to join Tug 0' War team.

**gogoblin**

Gogoblin a free wish list site where you can find out what Christmas or birthday presents your friends and family would really like.

Whether you're wishing or giving, you can enjoy some best online shopping for children and teenagers.

Every time you shop on gogoblin you will be helping a children's charity. Have a look at:- [www.gogoblin.vector-dev.co.uk](http://www.gogoblin.vector-dev.co.uk)

**the Consultancy**

Event specialists, The Consultancy provided the superb decorations for our Burns Night event. From full event management to the corporate sector for conferences, parties, etc., to individual services, such as theming, decoration and activities – the Consultancy can provide it all.

Joining forces with their sister company, Top Dec, they are now able to hire out decorations, props, vases, garden furniture etc. from their new showroom in Higham Mead, Chesham.

So, whether organising a conference for hundreds or a party in your garden, the consultancy and Topdec Hire are there to help.

For more information, or to arrange a visit to their showroom, contact one of the team on:  
Telephone - 01494 771758, E-mail - [info@theeventconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:info@theeventconsultancy.co.uk)  
or visit web sites: [www.theeventconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.theeventconsultancy.co.uk) & [www.topdechire.co.uk](http://www.topdechire.co.uk)

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On Saturday May 12th, 2007 At 7.30pm  
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Tickets £7.50 (including wine & Nibbles)

Tickets and Information Call 01442 874 931 or 01442 862577

### LIVE FERRET RACING SATURDAY MAY 19TH, 2007

ASHLEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL

START 7.00 PM. FIRST RACE 7.30 PM

Adults £8 Children £4

Tickets & Information  
Call 01442 873279



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The Lettings Officer : 07979 634988 or 01442 874834

Email - [ashley.halls@btinternet.com](mailto:ashley.halls@btinternet.com)

Ashley Green & District Community Association. Registered Charity No. 292478



Join in the women-only midnight walk to raise money for the Hospice of St Francis!

Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup>

To register call 01442 869555  
or visit [www.stfrancis.org.uk](http://www.stfrancis.org.uk)



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