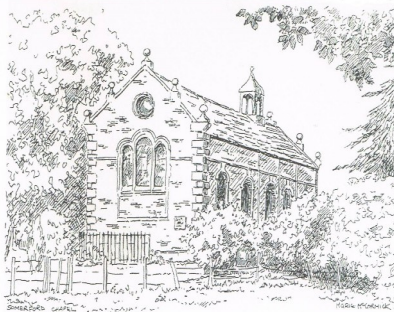
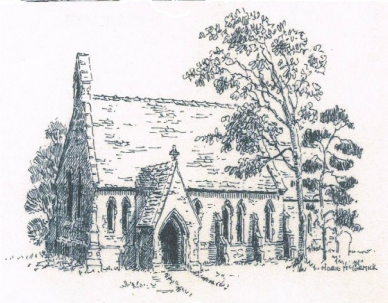


# Astbury & Smallwood Parish News

May 2026

Price £1



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**Reader – Prof Denise Morrey-Carter**

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Dear friends,

The wall behind the church alter was crumbling. I took note of the powdery deposits on the crimson carpet during the St Mary's pre-opening clean-up session and decided that this was a job for a dustpan and brush rather than Henry Hoover. A minor issue when compared to what's happened in the vestry but yet another reminder of the repair and rebuilding that our church needs. This image came to mind again over the Easter weekend as reluctantly I had to finally say goodbye to one of my prized houseplants, a beautiful Hoya. My mother had a similar plant which had produced the most amazing flowers in the last few months of her life, and it had seemed like a good choice to remember her by and pleasingly the plant had thrived for several years, becoming very large and was just about to burst into bloom.

Unfortunately there was a problem going on below the surface: the roots had recently become damaged by over watering and the plant was now on a downward spiral. My beautiful Hoya had to go. The challenge was that the roots aren't visible, making them so easy to forget, so easy to ignore until it's too late. I would have noticed a problem had it started on the leaves, as surface issues are easy to spot and easier to fix. I could almost hear the experts on 'Gardeners Question Time' advising their Radio 4 listeners that you can't have beautiful flowers and leaves without a healthy root system. Perhaps a good reminder too about what we do and how we live as a church, how all the visible bits on the outside need to grow from where our faith is rooted. If the roots are compromised then our faith can quickly wither

and become very sickly, leading to an untimely end, the same end which it seemed fate had in store for my unfortunate plant. Rooting our faith in the love which God has shown for us through Christ's death and resurrection seems like a must, but sometimes it's so easy to forget about these unseen foundations below the surface of whatever is going on in our own lives and our life together as a church.

However, this was Easter and there was still hope! Hoyas are one of those plants which can be propagated from a cutting, so I decided that rather than give up completely I would try to start again. This left me with a very difficult decision to make. Which parts of the plant should I chose to try to root and which to discard, since the fresh cuttings would only be able to support a limited number of leaves on the stem? It broke my heart to start cutting, since the plant had great sentimental value, but I knew that this was the only way of saving something which I deeply loved, I think that God feels like this sometimes too. It bought to mind a previous part of my own life, working in a different job with different friends and living in a different town when redundancy had bought all these to an abrupt end. A difficult time but new life has since grown from the parts that had survived, my family and a somewhat battered faith.

Like many parishes in the Church of England we now find ourselves in a position of being forced to make changes because our resources are no longer enough to continue operating 'as we were'. It's possible that closing St Mary's for a few months may need to be followed by further cost saving initiatives. God ultimately provides the resources of our time, energy and finances, but he leaves to us how and where we chose to spend them, the areas in our lives where we will try to grow and those where we will need to step back. These are the difficult questions we have to answer together as we face the challenge of balancing ministry, running our churches and maintaining our ancient buildings.

Getting cuttings from Hoyas to root is by no means certain but I have done all I can. I place the stems in water and I pray that God would bless them with new life and help them to grow.

Andrew Bailey

Editor – Mr W. Ball

The Old Vicarage, Reades Lane, Congleton, CW12 3LL.  
Telephone 01260 279276 Mobile 07710 234943

The Sunday services at Somerford Chapel will continue with Evensong at 2.30 pm on the first Sunday of each month (3rd May, 7th June, 5th July, 2nd August and 5th September). The Harvest Thanksgiving service will be on 27th September and the Christmas Carol Service on 12th December.

There will also be a concert in aid of MND research by Audley Male Voice Choir on Sunday 9th August at 3.00 pm.

Do put these dates in your diary, and we look forward to welcoming to the Chapel.

The concert with the Little Moreton Singers to celebrate re-opening St Mary's was a resounding success and a joyous event. Despite several members being unable to sing, the choir made a truly glorious sound and treated the audience to a wide range of music from across the centuries. Our thanks to all the singers, to Karen, Karina and Steve for a magnificent raffle and to Jane and Nick for managing the planning, the tickets and the organization. Net proceeds of £2,345 will provide an invaluable boost to meeting ever increasing running costs. Thanks to all who supported this very special evening. Rachel

Astbury & Smallwood Parish News: Thank you to all those who have renewed their subscription to *ASPN* for 2026: if you haven't as yet, please do so soon, as otherwise this will be your last issue. A normal subscription for the year remains at £10 (please collect your copy from the pile at the back of church each month) and saves you £2 over the year. If I post your copy the cost is £20, and if you have an email copy the cost is £5, both for the year. Please pass on the money to Rachel direct, cash or cheque payable to **Astbury PCC**. Or post your cheque to me and I shall pass it on to Rachel.

If you have something which you would like to contribute, an article or photo, do please send it in (preferably by email to me at

wbbtov@gmail.com so that I can simply copy and paste it). Articles printed represent the view of the contributors only and are unedited, apart from the correction of typos &c.

Astbury Ladies' Fellowship: It was a sunny day for the Fellowship AGM at the April meeting. The chairman welcomed members, telling us we had a change of speaker, as Hannah had had to go up to Scotland on business, so our speaker was Jude Johnson. Area manager for libraries in Cheshire East and manager of all the mobile libraries. She is actually 'hands on' in Alsager and Congleton. Libraries are now so much more than for just borrowing books: you can make contact with the Council, get help to apply for a blue badge, read about all the events going on in Congleton, study in a quiet area, or work on a computer. Children's groups meet – all ages – for various activities. Members asked questions and she received warm applause for her interesting talk. Anita made that ever-welcome cup of tea and we drew the raffle.

Fellowship business followed Thanks are due to our committee for their work and support during last year, Margaret Armstrong, Christine Brooks, Pamela Price, Pam Robinson and Anita Thompson. Ray Birchall has opted to stand down, and we thank Ray for her support over the years and for all the help she has given. Carole is chairman – and I do hope you enjoy the speakers on this year's programme. The subscription remains the same at £25. Visitors are welcome at any of our meetings and pay £2 each on the door. We had a good year last year, but as costs are rising we need to keep on increasing our income. Members were asked for ideas – we are running a plant stall again at the May Day (Saturday 16th May, 11.00 am till 5.00 pm), so donations of plants or cuttings would be very welcome, and help on the stall. Please contact Carole on 07484 525829. Plants need to be down at Glebe Farm by 9.30 am. Jan Hardie-Woolridge usually sends cuttings but rang to say she has been told to rest following a back injury. However, she is still hoping to be able to help. We said a prayer and have written to Janet hoping she will soon start to feel better.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 20th May at 1.30 pm in Astbury Village Hall, when our speaker will be Peter Aston of the

History Society who will tell us about the Romans in Cheshire. I look forward to seeing you there. If anyone could bring a raffle prize it would be appreciated.

Carole



Astbury Women's Institute: President Kate Naylor opened the meeting and welcomed all members new and old. *Jerusalem* was sung. Our April birthday buttonholes were then distributed. The book swap table was organized by Maureen Steele. Our competition this month was 'A School Memento', officiated once again by Jen Fagan, and was won by Catherine Pedley with her old School Journal.

This month's speaker was Geoff Scargill. The title of his talk was 'I've Only Just Left School', a reflection of Geoff's life as a student, a teacher and a head master. He told many anecdotes and stories, both funny and poignant, beginning at his primary school and ending with the school where he finished his career as a headmaster. Along the way he attended Manchester Grammar School, which was quite an achievement for a young boy from an ordinary single parent background in Northenden. He fondly remembered all the teachers who helped him along the way although he did not necessarily like all of them. He also had tales about pupils and he had us all laughing out loud with his insights of teacher pupil relationships and we all could relate and reminisce about our own childhoods. Just lovely to see so many laughing faces in the audience.

There was an even more important aspect to our evening with Geoff. Several years ago his son had a serious illness which he has recovered from, largely due to the skills of a wonderful bold surgeon, and he made a pledge then and there to raise money for research. Since then any money Geoff has received for his popular talks to groups just like ours have been donated to this surgeon and Geoff told us, very modestly, that to date, he has raised a massive £140,000 – an incredible achievement. He has a list of other topics he talks about and we will definitely be inviting him back. It was an absolutely hilarious and joyous evening which we all enjoyed. We then finished the evening off with our National Anthem assisted by Lisa Cartilage on piano. And the meeting was closed.

Our next meeting list to be held on Wednesday 6th May at 7.30 pm. All are welcome and should you wish to find any more information about Astbury WI please contact Kate Naylor on 07875 691170. We always warmly welcome new members!

Dotty Kallis

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Sartor's Quiz (Answers on page 14)

1. Paul said, 'I am a citizen of no mean city.' Which was he referring to? a. Jerusalem; b. Athens; c. Rome; d. Tarsus.
2. What was he by occupation? a. Tanner; b. Fisherman; c. Tentmaker; d. Physician
3. Where did Jesus perform his first miracle? a. Bethany; b. Cana; c. Capernaum; d. Nain
4. Who wrote The Acts of the Apostles? a. Peter; b. Paul; c. Luke; d. Mark
5. On which Greek Island did John write his Revelation? a. Patmos b. Corfu; c. Rhodes; d. Mykonos
6. When Elijah was hungry he was fed by which birds? a. doves; b. eagles; c. sparrows; d. ravens
7. Who replaced Judas as an apostle? a. Joseph of Arimathaea; b. Matthias; c. Barnabas; d. Thomas
8. 8. Which Roman emperor ordered the census requiring Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem? a. Julius Caesar; b. Tiberius; c. Caligula; d. Caesar Augustus
9. Which prophet foretold that the Messiah would be born to a virgin? a. Isaiah; b. Hosea; c. Amos; d. Jeremiah
10. Which prophet predicted that the Saviour would be born in Bethlehem? a. Ezekiel; b. Jonah; c. Joel; d. Micah

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WORDS OF WIT & WISDOM

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Ezekiel xviii.27  
O Lord, correct me, but with judgement; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Jer. x. 24. Psalm vi. 1  
Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. St. Matt. iii. 2  
Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. Psalm cxliii. 2  
If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 St. John i. 8, 9

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***Astbury & Smallwood Parish News***

**Publication & Copy Dates 2026**

Publication is on the last Sunday of the preceding month –

The June issue will be published on 31st May

Last Date for material 22nd May

The July issue will be published on 28th June

Last Date for material 19th June

The August issue will be published on 26th July

Last Date for material 17th July

The September issue will be published on 30th August

Last Date for material 21st August

The October issue will be published on 27th September

Last Date for material 18th September

The November issue will be published on 25th October

Last Date for material 16th October

The December issue will be published on 29th November

Last Date for material 20th November

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# **EGERTON ARMS HOTEL**

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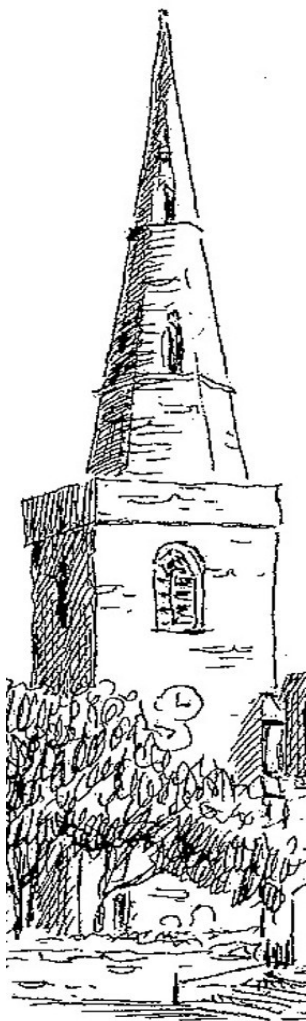
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Registered Charity No. 1178664

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ASSISTANT PRIEST		Rev Steph Morris	07703 587003
READERS		Andrew Bevington	07957 961140
		Andrew Bailey	01260 640616
		Prof Denise Morrey-Carter	01260 702512
CHURCHWARDEN		Dr Sally Drage	01260 270217
<b>SERVICES</b>	8.00 am	1st & 3rd Sundays	Holy Communion BCP
	8.00 am	2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays	Morning Prayer BCP
	11.00 am	1st & 3rd Sundays	Morning Praise CW
	11.00 am	2nd & 4th Sundays	Holy Communion CW
	11.00 am	5th Sunday	Benefice Service
	6.30 pm	1st & 3rd Sundays	Compline
	6.30 pm	2nd & 4th Sundays	Evensong BCP
Wednesday	11.30 am	every Wednesday	Holy Communion CW
	2.45 pm	every Wednesday	Community Worship

Funerals and Services of Holy Baptism & Holy Matrimony by arrangement with the Wardens

### PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

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Hon. Secretary	Mrs M. Chapman	
Hon. Asst. Secretary	Mr A. Bailey	01260 640616
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BELL RINGERS TOWER CAPTAIN		
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Head Teacher	Miss P. Blythe	01260 272528
Chairman of Governors	Mrs K. Moore	01260 290135

WEBSITES [www.astburychurch.org.uk](http://www.astburychurch.org.uk)

CHURCH KEYS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

*Astbury & Smallwood Parish News – May 2026*

Astbury Church choir meets to practise every Friday evening  
between 7.00 and 8.00 pm.

Astbury Church bellringers meet to practise every Wednesday evening  
between 7.30 and 9.30 pm.

ASTBURY ROTAS for CLEANING & BRASS – *currently suspended*

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ASTBURY ROTAS

8.00 am

11.00 am

6.30 pm

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Answers to Sartor's Quiz this month (page 9)

1 – d; 2 – c; 3 – b; 4 – c; 5 - a; 6 – d; 7 – b; 8 – d; 9 – a; 10 – d.

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FROM THE REGISTERS

*Holy Matrimony*

April	18th	Isabelle Jasmine Nash & Thomas John William Buiskool
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*Burial of the Dead*

March	31st	Malcolm Tweats	78
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## JOINT PARISHES CALENDAR FOR THE COMING WEEKS

### APRIL

#### Sun 26th EASTER III

	8.00 am	Astbury	May Parish News published
	9.30 am	Smallwood	Morning Prayer (BCP)
	11.00 am	Astbury	Morning Praise
	6.30 pm	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
Wed	29th 11.30 am	Astbury	Evensong (BCP)
			Holy Communion (CW)

### MAY

Sat 2nd 12.00 noon Astbury Holy Matrimony

#### Sun 3rd EASTER IV

	8.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (BCP)
	9.30 am	Smallwood	Holy Communion (CW)
	11.00 am	Astbury	Morning Praise(CW)
	2.30 pm	Somerford	Evensong (BCP)
	6.30 pm	Astbury	Compline
Wed	6th 11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
	7.30 pm	Astbury	Women's Institute
Sat	9th 12.00 noon	Astbury	Holy Matrimony

#### Sun 10th EASTER V

	8.00 am	Astbury	Morning Prayer (BCP)
	9.30 am	Smallwood	Morning Praise (CW)
	11.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
	6.30 pm	Astbury	Evensong (BCP)
Wed	13th 11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)

#### Thur 14th ASCENSION DAY

	7.30 pm	Smallwood	Holy Communion (CW)
Sat	16th 12.00 noon	Astbury	Holy Matrimony

#### Sun 17th THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

	8.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (BCP)
	9.30 am	Smallwood	Holy Communion (CW)
	11.00 am	Astbury	Morning Praise (CW)
	1.00 pm	Astbury	Holy Baptism
	6.30 pm	Astbury	Compline
Wed	20th 11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
	1.30 pm	Astbury	Ladies' Fellowship
Fri	22nd 6.00 pm		Copy deadline for <i>Parish News</i>

***Joint Parishes Calendar, continued***

**MAY**

<b>Sun</b>	<b>24th</b>	<b>WHIT SUNDAY</b>		
		8.00 am	Astbury	Morning Prayer (BCP)
		9.30 am	Smallwood	Morning Praise (CW)
		11.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
		6.30 pm	Astbury	Evensong (BCP)
<b>Wed</b>	<b>27th</b>	11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)

**Sun 31st TRINITY SUNDAY**

				May Parish News published
		11.00 am	Smallwood	Benefice Service
<b>Wed</b>	<b>29th</b>	11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)

**JUNE**

<b>Sat</b>	<b>6th</b>	12.00 noon	Astbury	Holy Matrimony
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**Sun 7th TRINITY I**

		8.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30 am	Smallwood	Holy Communion (CW)
		11.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
		2.30 pm	Somerford	Holy Communion (BCP)
		6.30 pm	Astbury	Compline
<b>Wed</b>	<b>10th</b>	11.30 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
		7.30 pm	Astbury	Women's Institute

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**ASTBURY & SMALLWOOD PARISH NEWS**

is also available in large-print format.

Please let Mr Ball know if you require such a copy.

Editor – Mr W. Ball

Telephone 01260 279276 email [wbbtov@gmail.com](mailto:wbbtov@gmail.com)

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St John's Church, Smallwood and All Saints' Chapel of Ease,  
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Typeset & printed at The Old Vicarage, Reades Lane, CW12 3LL  
Brother MFC-J5330DW (A4) & MFC-J5910DW (A3)

P – 5330 – 260422