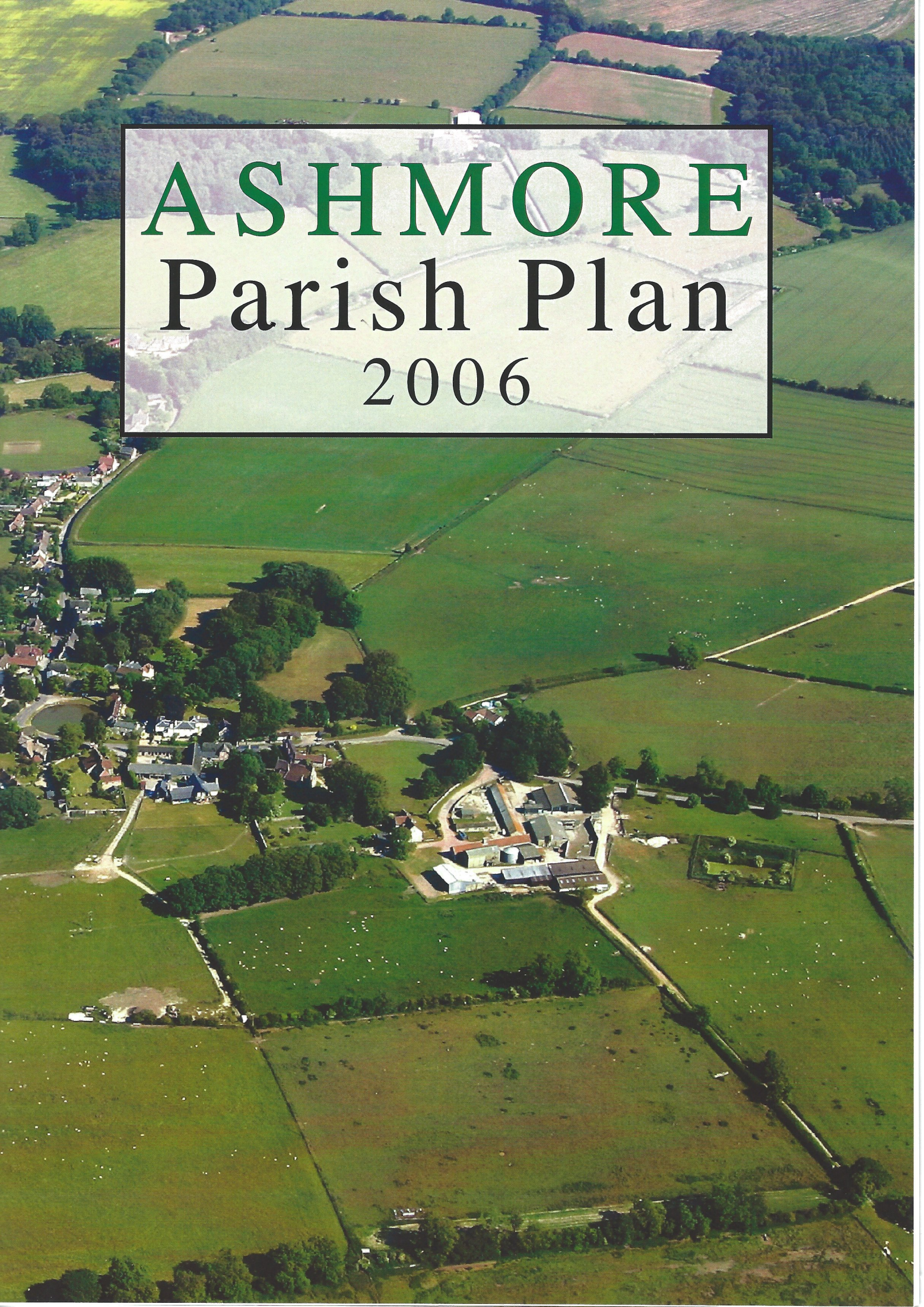

ASHMORE
Parish Plan
2006


Higher Ashgrove Farm
Track
NORTH ROAD
206m
GP
South's Farm
GP
217m
211m
GP
Track
's Bottom
South's Farm
NOADE STREET
BS
Tumulus
Ashmore
War Meml
Manor Farm
PW
HIGH STREET
Track
213m
219m
PW
219m
Halfpenny Lane
GREEN LANE
Hall
Recn Gd
Hookley Copse
Track
198m
Track
Ashmore Farm
Track
Track
Turkey Plantation
Track
Track
Track
Track
Mudoak Wood
178m
Track
Track
Mudoak Farm
Morris Close
Track
Track
Stickway
156m
Well Bottom

ASHMORE Parish Plan 2006

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SECTION 1

Introduction and Plan Objectives

Introduction

Parish Plans are a Government sponsored initiative. Preparation of the Plan was carried out by a small but representative committee under the auspices of the Parish Council, following consultation with Simon Thompson of Dorset Community Action and Kevin Morris of North Dorset District Council. Its preparation was funded by a grant from the Dorset Strategic Partnership with further financial support from the Parish Council.

The Plan identifies all the relevant issues of importance to the community, incorporating issues of social, economic and environmental concern. These issues were identified through the results of a questionnaire completed by each household in Ashmore and from subsequent discussion with and presentation to, members of the community.

The Plan records the special features of Ashmore with respect to its past and the needs for the future. This sets the village in its surrounding area of outstanding natural beauty on the chalk hills of North Dorset and the particular characteristics of the village.

A copy of the Plan has been given to each household in Ashmore, to Dorset County Council, North Dorset District Council, planning authorities, Dorset Strategic Partnership, Dorset Community Action, neighbouring Parish Councils and other agencies as considered appropriate.

Plan Objectives

The Plan will be used to shape the future of Ashmore and is of relevance to:

- Residents, householders and businesses
- Designers, architects and engineers
- Planners, developers and builders
- Statutory bodies, public authorities and utility providers

An Action Plan for the future is at Section 4.

SECTION 2

The History and Environment of Ashmore

The History of Ashmore

The earliest mention of Ashmore is in the Domesday Book in 1086 where it is referred to as 'Aisemere', derived from the word for great pond or mere around which the village developed. The village covered an area of about 12 acres and there were 24 inhabitants, including 8 serfs. There are no earlier records though there is evidence of a Roman military camp and trading post and, even earlier, of a Neolithic settlement or market area. The history of the pond is uncertain and it is not known whether it was created in Roman or Saxon times. It probably started as a watering hole both for the settlers and for cattle being herded along the drove way to the markets in Sarum (Salisbury).

The earliest recorded national census was in 1891 showing 228 residents. This remained more or less constant though in 2006, when this plan was written, Ashmore only had 138 adults and 24 school age children living permanently in the village.

The Ashmore Environment

The Parish of Ashmore is located in an area of outstanding natural beauty on the chalk hills of the Cranborne Chase. One of the highest villages in the south of England and the highest in Dorset, it lies over 700 feet above sea level. It has all the features to be expected of a rural community, many of which make it unique in North Dorset and a very special place in which to live. Although a fine new church was built in 1874, the majority of the villagers were Methodist. There was no inn or hostelry, mainly in deference to the Squire's Quaker beliefs, though there was a taproom in Stag's Head Cottage. The people of Ashmore were God-fearing and fiercely independent, intensely proud of their village and community and deeply suspicious of the outside world. They seldom ventured out of the village, nor wanted to. Indeed, many of the older inhabitants died without ever seeing the sea or visiting Salisbury, only 24 miles away.

Geology and Geography

The rock on which Ashmore rests was formed during the Upper Cretacious period. Chalk dominates with an underlay of greensand which can be seen at the bottom of the steep hill leading to Ludwell. The landscape we see today was formed during the Ice Age, giving the rounded curves and the deep valleys. Man adapted to this environment and geography shaped his existence and the creation of Ashmore. The valleys were too low and wet to support farming and animal grazing and hilltops provided natural defences from predatory neighbours. Over the

centuries many hilltop settlements were abandoned – an example of which is Hambledon Hill near Child Okeford. Ashmore is a prime example of one which was never abandoned!

One of the major problems for these hilltop settlements was that of water supply. The chalk drained the water away, so to preserve water the hilltop settlers dug holes in the chalk and lined them with clay to retain the water. Ashmore has one such hole. Due to the height of the village above sea level -

some 700 feet – the relationship between evaporation and condensation was such that very little water was lost to evaporation; hence the name Dew Pond. This pond sustained a limited population which has changed little from Domesday to the present date.

It was this geology and subsequent geography which gave birth to the thriving and independent farming community of Ashmore at home in its unique environment.

The Natural Environment

Ashmore sits comfortably on Cranborne Chase which used to be an area of forest, a hunting ground for Kings and a wild place where thousands of deer roamed and wild boar thrived. Split into beats or walks, it was protected by law and overseen by rangers and their keepers. Kings and nobles who hunted the wild creatures of the forest such as stags and hare, guarded them fiercely and a poacher could lose a limb or his life if caught killing a beast.

The Chase today has been sculpted by the traditions of protecting the forest and the wild game living in it; there are still a good number of deer, both fallow and roe. The woods were also worked for their produce of firewood, hazel for hurdles and spars for thatching, as well as the hazel nut crop. Traces of the wild woods remain to this day in the flora, sentinels of ancient and mystic times and the indicators of the past – Dogs Mercury, Wood Spurge and small areas of Herb Paris. Large oaks still stand guard. Birch, hawthorn and blackthorn abound, home to hundreds of species of insect, as well as numerous species of lichen and fungi, each playing their ecological part.

In the skies above Ashmore buzzards and ravens soar in the thermal currents. In the Spring the call of lapwing and the skylark fill the air and in the Autumn the chatter of winter visitors – the Field Fare and the Red Wing – can be heard. The village boasts 3 species of owl; the Barn Owl, the Tawny or Brown Owl and the Little or French Owl, can be seen and heard calling during the day. Ashmore gardens are visited regularly by a large number of both farmland and woodland birds, thanks to the presence of mature trees in the village.
Though Ashmore has lost what once was a common species of butterfly - as elsewhere in the UK - the Pearl Bordered Frittilliary, it is still home to the Drap Looper, Argent and Sable moths – all equally important. Dormice live in the hedgerows and the woodland and a large population of hares is still evident in the fields. In sum, these represent the rich heritage this Parish Plan is designed to protect and preserve. A heritage protected by sympathetic farming and use of the landscape.

Farming

Since records began farming has been important to Ashmore. The bulk of the land, consisting of one large and 5 smaller farms, was estate owned until 1957. Then it was divided into smaller parcels of land and sold off. Holdings included South's Farm to the north of the village and parts of Gore Farm to the west. To the south and southwest are large tracts of woodland managed by the Forestry Commission.

The farms raised stock, grew corn and all had dairy to some degree. Church Farm and Glebe Farm dairy cows were brought through the village twice a day for milking, perhaps 'puddling' the pond and helping stop leakage. Today the dairy cattle have been replaced by sheep and beef herds.

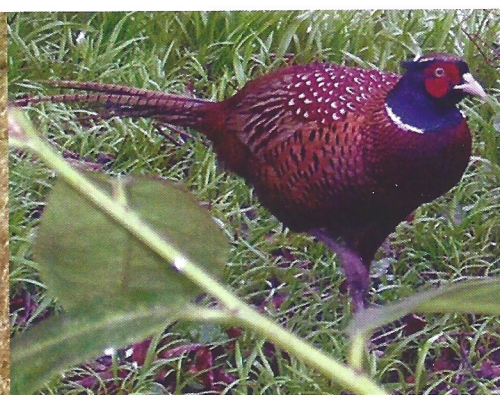
Employment

Main employment in the past was related to farming. The estate and farms employed farm workers and skilled artisans to service the needs of the agricultural community. The larger houses would have employed domestic staff and many would have been employed nutting and cutting wood for fuel. A smithy owned by Tom Coombs existed until 1947 and a shop and bakery supplied villagers' needs. In 1992 Mr and Mrs Hudson closed the shop due to declining business and the reluctance of suppliers to deliver off main routes. The post office also closed around this time.

The increased mobility provided by the car means that most inhabitants work outside the village and changing national demography is reflected in Ashmore with many retired people in residence.

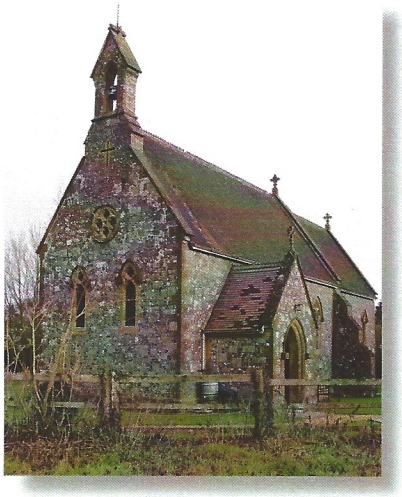
However, in keeping with the environs of Ashmore,





there is a flourishing livery business within the village, managed by Tim and Sherry Woolridge, providing a valuable service across the Cranborne Chase.

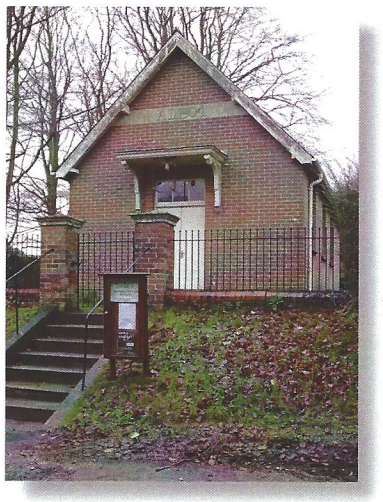
The Church



Religious worship was a strong feature of Ashmore, with the original church dedicated to St. Nicholas in 1423. It was a small stone and flint structure incorporating a wooden tower with 2 bells. It was acquired by John Eliot when he bought the estate in 1765. As a Quaker he was not allowed to own the Advowsen and the church was separated from the estate. When it was rebuilt in 1874 none of the features of the old church were preserved, though the Chancel arch, possibly dating from 1692 , is now used as the entry from the vestry into the church.

The present church of St.Nicholas cost £1400 to build and is designed to seat 160 people. In 1933, Geoffrey Howard commissioned John Skeaping, the animal sculptor, to carve hunting scenes on the corbels in the Chancel, based on Psalm 42. Carvings of St. Nicholas, St. Denis and St. Michael were also added, all in memory of Eliot Howard and his wife. In addition, a carved and painted Renedos and a redesigned Sanctuary were given by members of the Sturge family in memory of their parents, Arthur and Jesse.

Ashmore Methodist Chapel



Methodists first met in a purpose built room at Manor Farm at the invitation of Samuel Hall 1768-1844.

A hall for the Sunday School and Band of Hope was built in 1904 in Green Lane. In the late 1960's, early 70's this was taken over as the Chapel.

Education

Education records show that formal education started in 1770 when a Miss Dinah Newhook was paid 6s 4d per month to teach 10 children. It progressed from there:

- In 1815 boys left school at the age of 7 to work on the land so night school began from 7pm to 9pm.
- A purpose built school was funded by Luke Howard, the landowner, in 1842. Joseph Stainer, a local woodsman, was appointed headmaster, a post he held for 29 years. Of interest, Luke Howard is better known as the man who provided the names we use today for all the cloud formations. His story is reproduced at Annex A at the end of this brochure.
- In 1870 the Education Act required teachers to be qualified. Fortunately, Joseph's daughter gained a third class certificate and officially took over the school with her father's 'help'!
- Funding by the Howard family ended in 1903 when the school became a church school.

In deference to its Quaker founders and the non-conformist pupils in the school, the Book of Common Prayer and Catechism were not taught.