



50p

St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch

Loving God, Loving Others, Loving the World



Parish Magazine

March 2025

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FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Dear Friends, as I write this, I am sure you are as conscious as I am that we live in strange and disturbing times. Trump's re-election in the United States is changing the way both international politics and international trade and economics has been conducted for decades. In Europe there seems to be a general understanding that it is time to increase our defence budgets. Terrorist attacks across Europe seem to occur with increasing frequency, as do violent attacks on our own streets and even in and around schools. Mass migration is a world-wide concern, with no clear answers, but many strong opinions. The stability and sense of "how things are" that we have taken for granted for most of our lives seems to be under increasing threat.



A phrase that keeps coming to mind for me has been "How should we then live?", a book and documentary series from the 1970s by a theologian called Francis Schaeffer. I've not read "How should we then live", but did read another of his books "The God who is There", which seems to deal with similar themes. Both works consider what happens to our culture and world view when we stop seeing God as connected and involved with the world he has created. In Schaeffer's view, when we see God as detached from the world and faith as our own private, subjective sphere, we do so at our peril. And it seems to me that this is very much what is going on in our contemporary culture.

Those of you who know me will know that reading is important to me. And this year, in an attempt to get to grips with the large pile of unread books in our house, I have signed up to a reading challenge. I've also had more time than usual these past few weeks to read, as I've been struggling with some on-going fatigue, cause unknown, that means I've had more time on my hands. And, during this time, my reading challenge has led me to some interesting and thought-provoking books. Books that have spoken to me in various ways and that I think give some insights into this question of "how should we then live?" [Incidentally, before you jump to false conclusions, I

should say that my reading challenge has also included some highly enjoyable chick-lit as an antidote to the heavier stuff!]

Some time ago, I picked up a second-hand copy of Melvin Bragg's book written to commemorate 400 years of the King James Bible. It described the passion of the early Bible translators, who believed that nothing was more important than that ordinary Christians should be able to read, understand and engage with God's word in their own language. They were prepared to suffer persecution, exile and even death in order to bring it about. The book is a reminder of just how much that ready access to God's word shaped the subsequent history, law and culture of the western world. And it has left me asking the question of how much the problems of our current society might be related to it no longer being widely familiar in the same way, to it no longer being a readily shared and understood benchmark that sets our values.

I went on to read a novel, now 80 years old and perhaps a bit dated, but a best-seller in its day – "The Robe", by Lloyd C Douglas, an American pastor. It's a fictional account of the centurion involved in Jesus' crucifixion, and how he came to gradually understand who Jesus was and how he can transform lives. It went on to explore how living distinctive, Christ-like lives becomes a threat to the world's standards and the courage required to continue to live consistently as his disciples.

I also read a biography of JRR Tolkien, focussing on his Christian faith – he was a very devout Roman Catholic at a time when that still put people at a considerable professional and social disadvantage. He lived out his faith, as most of us do, in a quiet and undramatic way, but which had, at its heart, a desire to love and serve and know God, and which permeated his family life, his career as an Oxford don, his friendships and the ways he unobtrusively served and helped others. It reminded me that you do not have to have a big and dramatic faith story in order to make a difference.

And I read a beautiful and moving book called "In the Shelter" by an Irish poet, theologian and Christian speaker called Pádraig Ó Tuama. Among other things, it reflects on the ambiguities, tensions and complexities that come from being a Christian. It invites us to welcome and engage with the things we don't understand, with the times that don't make sense, and with the periods where God seems distant or remote, as well as with the times

when we recognise his presence in our lives.

All of these books seemed to me to have something to say to that question –how should we then live? Those early Bible translators can inspire us to take God’s word seriously, dwell in it and allow it to be “a light to our feet and a lantern to our path”, guiding our relationship with God and sharing its truths with others. I know some people in our Flagstaff Family have been involved with a project called “Open the Book”, which takes the Bible into schools in an interactive way. I’d like to know more about that – so please come and talk to me.

Both “The Robe” and the biography of Tolkien were reminders that for most of us our faith is to be lived out in the small, unglamorous and humble everyday aspects of life, but that, even so, living distinctively as a Christian may, at times, may be costly and require courage.

And “In the Shelter” reminded me that we do not need to have all the answers in order to allow God to work in and through us, and that he is more than capable of using confused and mixed-up people in ways we do not expect.

These will be good thoughts for me to carry into Lent and explore further. All of them have something to say about how we can live, the influence we can have and the difference God can make through us in these uncertain times. I am grateful to God for the prompts to read them. Clearly, though, not everyone is a reader. You may be more of an outdoor person, or someone who is creative with art and craft, or someone where music is the way you best engage with God or you may find that TV is the medium that works best for you. As we arrive again on the threshold of Lent, you may want to consider what God is saying to you through any or several of these areas, provoking you to explore the question of “how should we then live?” and finding ways of sharing with those around us that, in Schaeffer’s words, he is “the God who is there”, not disconnected and remote from his world but intimately and passionately engaged with it and with us.

I wish you all a blessed and challenging Lent.

Judith Lewis

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT...THE JUNIOR CHOIR?

We continue our look at the many and varied things God is doing in the life of our church as Caroline tells us about the role of the junior choir and when we can get involved.

St Helen's Junior Choir was formed way back in 2008 by Andrew Chapman in his first year or so as Director of Music. Although there was a relatively strong treble line at that time, recruitment of young singers was slowing down and we were losing more trebles to pastures new at university (or other activities) than we were gaining. In order to encourage some younger singers to dip a toe in the water, the Junior Choir was set up to sing at specific services through the year with just two or three practices per service, in the hope that they might then feel comfortable joining the treble line in the full choir.

Junior Choir have sung at Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Christingle Services every year since (bar the Covid years!), ably supported and nurtured by regular trebles from the full choir.

Last year, when Andrew stepped back from his Director of Music role, Anna Haines took on the leadership of Junior Choir giving a fresh injection of enthusiasm, with her professional skills and experience ensuring a continued high-quality level of teaching whilst still ensuring lots of fun is had by all.

Sadly, there have been few singers who have progressed from Junior Choir to the full choir over the years and numbers are lower than they used to be, but we are nevertheless very grateful to each and every one of them for the way they have enhanced our worship at our special services and we still live in hope that in future Junior Choir will produce some new, much needed, trebles for us.

The Junior Choir's next outing will be for Mothering Sunday on 30th March 2025 10.30am at St Helen's, with practices being held on Saturdays 15th and 22nd March from 10.30am to 11.30am in church. If you know of any young singers (key stage 2 ish give or take a year or two) who would like to come and join us, we would be delighted to welcome them. Please speak to Caroline Essex who is covering things while Anna is on maternity leave.

Caroline Essex

A LIGHT IN THE WORLD

The next in our series highlighting the ways we live out our faith as a church, through our various ministries and the organisations we support.



Last month during our service of Holy Communion, we welcomed John Greaves, CEO of the charity Hoveraid, as our guest preacher. Over a wonderful bring and share lunch– an opportunity for excellent fellowship together– we learnt more about one of the charities which the PCC allocated a portion of our charitable giving to.

Hoveraid’s tagline is ‘Reaching The Unreachable’ and they aim to bring hope and healing to transform lives in rural Madagascar. Using hovercraft to establish connections with isolated communities and individuals, Hoveraid deliver the resources needed to provide essential healthcare and sanitation to places which would otherwise be cut off due to the lack of recognised roads in the country.

Roughly the size of the UK and Germany put together, Madagascar has a road system the size of Devon. Often hit by cyclones, 20 of its 25 million people live in the rural areas, with little or no access to clean water or medication. When the rains come, many areas are completely unreachable by car and very hard to get to by boat or plane.

In 2024 they were able to facilitate 289 major surgeries and a total of 7794 people received some form of care because of their work. We heard of projects which have rebuilt school buildings (which will last), provided essential and emergency medical care and transportation and provided health and hygiene education to help families keep themselves healthy.

If you would like to learn more about their work, head to

<https://hoveraid.org/>



ASHBY YOUTH FOR CHRIST

If you would like to sign up for regular updates either follow this link <http://eepurl.com/dvVqrj> or email helen.davis@yfc.co.uk. Alternatively you can scan the QR code. Thank you for all your prayers and support.



INVITE TO OUR AGM

This year our AGM will be held on **Wednesday 12th March, 7pm at Ashby Baptist Church**. Please do join us to celebrate all that God has done within the lives of our young people and through our regular youth work activities. There has certainly been a lot to be thankful to God for. We will also be holding plenty of space to pray for the coming year and for discernment throughout all our planning for the future. We would love it if you could join us on the night or continue to hold us in your personal prayers. Thank you.

Football

Last week, one of the lads asked me the name of the girl who was always in the middle of the tennis court. I confessed ignorance. 'Annette' he told me. I laughed. Encouraged, he shared some more rib ticklers with me. Another lad shared his experience of a football coach whose leadership style had been so disagreeable that the lad had left the club. The joke teller's enjoyment of my enjoyment of him and his jokes provided a contrast and a clue as to the reason why so any young men enjoy our Wednesday football session. How many of their seniors really enjoy them? On Wednesday evenings they are enjoyed.



Lord please help these young men to know your enjoyment of them. Show them your pleasure in them as your creations despite their sin. May they meditate on your thoughts and not their own shame. Open up their hearts to the way to life.

John 14:6 -Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life...'

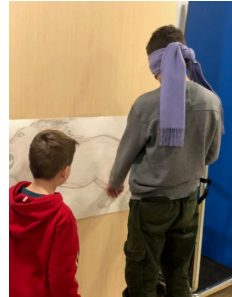
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MESSY CHURCH

At this month's Messy Church we heard the story of Daniel in the Lion's den, which gave us the excuse to explore all things angelic and leonine!!

In our prayer time, we asked God about situations which call for bravery - and then we cast such problems into the 'lion's den'. Our worship concluded with a rousing chorus which reminded us that 'our God is a great big God and He holds us in His hands!'

Don't miss the next Messy Church which will be at Viscount Beaumont's on 23rd March at 3:30PM.



Pat Stafford



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FROM THE ALBUMS



Last month, St Helen's choir were joined by members of Leicester Cathedral Choir for our service of choral evensong for Candlemas. It was a hugely enjoyable and encouraging experience for all involved.

NEW HYMN BOOKS



We now have new hymn books! Last year PCC decided to replace our old hymn books with new books- Anglican Hymns Old and New. These include both traditional hymns and a range of more contemporary ones. members of the congregation can choose to dedicate a book to the memory of a loved one or sponsor one as a gift. This would be acknowledged by putting a personalised book plate in each sponsored

book. The books cost £10 each. If you would like to sponsor a book, please would you email the parish office for more information and to state whether this is a gift or in memory of a loved one.

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OUR WORSHIP IN MARCH

	am	pm	Wednesday
1st Sunday 2nd March		3.30pm All age service 6pm Evensong– first lent service	1st Wednesday– 5th Holy Communion 10.30am In Church
2nd Sunday 9th March	10.30am Holy Communion		2nd Wednesday-12th Holy Communion 10.30am Prior Park Community centre
3rd Sunday 16th March	10.30 am Morning Worship		3rd Wednesday– 19th Morning prayer 10.30am In church
4th Sunday 23rd March	10.30 am Holy Communion	3.30pm Messy Church Viscount Beaumont’s school	4th Wednesday– 26th Holy Communion 10.30am St Helen’s In church
5th Sunday 30th March	10.30am Holy Communion for mothering Sunday		

Regular activities:

- Monday mornings - Little Fishes 9.30 - 11.30am during term time
- Mondays - Pilgrim group
- 1st Wednesday - We’re in stitches – 2 till 4pm
- Thursdays - Choir practice – 6.30 till 8.30pm
- Fridays - Heart- warming Space 2-4pm
- Saturdays - Parish Prayers – 9.30am in the Hastings chapel
- 1st Saturday - Pause for Paws– 10.15-12.15 at the tower door.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY// MARCH

REFLECTIONS FOR LENT

This Lent, the Flagstaff family will be reading the popular book 'Practicing the Way' by John Mark Comer. This will then be reflected upon in a series of Sunday evening services across the churches, beginning at St Helen's. Dates as follows, with all services starting at 6pm:

- Sunday 2nd March– St Helen's choral evensong– Apprentice to Jesus
- Sunday 9th March– Isley Walton Holy Communion– Be with Jesus?
- Sunday 16th March– St Matthew's, Worthington– Become like Him
- Sunday 23rd March– Viscount Beaumont, Coleorton– Do as He did
- Sunday 30th March– Holy Trinity, Ashby– A Rule of Life

On Ash Wednesday there will also be two services of Holy Communion with the imposition of ashes, for those who would like to receive that.

Wednesday 5th March

- 10.30am Holy Communion
- 7.30pm Holy Communion with the choir

Tuesday 25th March– 7.30pm– Heritage talk by Lesley Rowe- 'Samuel Shaw: Little Man With A Big Impact'. Tickets £4 on the door, includes light refreshments.

Advance notice– St Helen's Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held on Tuesday 1st April 2025, at 7pm

GARDENING TIPS FOR MARCH

March is the first month of Spring and gardens are alive with the colour of Spring bulbs such as Narcissus, Snowdrops and Crocuses, with Daffodils and Tulips to follow. The weather is getting warmer and the days longer so there is more time to spend in the garden. Even though it's getting warmer you have to keep an eye on the weather forecast as March is prone to sudden ground frosts that can damage less-hardy plants.

March is the time for finishing off the clearing of borders (Perennials and Ornamental Grasses) and starting off vegetable plot preparation as well as sowing seeds indoors.



Later in the month, start a regime of deadheading Spring flowering bulbs as the flowers finish. Leave the foliage to die back naturally to feed the bulb for next year. Plant summer bulbs such as Dahlias, Lilies and also Snowdrops for next year. Hydrangeas will require some attention during March. Remove the dead flower heads, cutting back the stem to the first strong, healthy pair of buds down from the faded bloom.

Now is the time to start planting Onion and Garlic Sets in the newly prepared vegetable plot. Wait until the end of the month to start growing Broad Beans. Germinate Herbs indoors or in a greenhouse – even the most delicate ones such as Basil, Dill and Coriander can be planted. Seed potatoes should be set out in trays or egg boxes in a bright, but frost-free location, so that shoots form. This is known as Chitting. The planting of early varieties can be done now but leave main crop ones until April.

Lift and divide perennials such as Hostas, Delphiniums and Lupins to ensure healthy and vigorous plants every year. General soil improvement is essential at this time of year. Ideally, we should mulch the surfaces with at least one inch of organic matter such as garden compost. This will trap moisture in the soil as well as suppress weeds.

Weeds will grow strongly this time of year so keep on top of them in your borders, vegetable plots and pots on your patios. Ensure you always get the roots and only use a hoe in very dry soil conditions as weeds can re-root if the soil is moist.

Keep providing birds with fresh water and food. Clean paths, paving, patios and steps with a pressure washer. Finally consider using vinegar, with at least 5% Acetic Acid, to kill off patio weeds and moss. It is an environmentally friendly alternative and works extremely well. Now is the time to consider cleaning and refurbishing your garden furniture. It is also a good time to be clearing out any outdoor buildings in preparation for the Spring and Summer months. If you have an outdoor pond continue to maintain it and remove any dead leaves etc.

Prepare and re-seed any bare patches on your lawn that may have appeared during Winter. It is a good idea to net and protect larger patches once seeds have been scattered as pigeons love them! As the soil warms up, slugs and snails will begin their annual banquet of fresh, new growth especially Hostas. Nematodes (you can now buy Nemaslug) are a simple, organic method of keeping them at bay and are safe for hedgehogs. You can get these treatments on-line and are more effective than any chemical treatment, which should be avoided at all costs!!!

March is a busy time in the garden and before you know it, Summer has arrived. So, make time to take in the beauty of the season and visit a garden, garden centre, take a bracing walk or simply sit in your garden and listen to the bird song.

Alan and Alison Cross



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ASHBY IN THE 1921 CENSUS

In January 2022, the 1921 Census was opened to public view, but at first the only online copy was held by “Find My Past” for which you need a subscription or you can choose to pay a fee to view a single census form. In January 2025, the 1921 Census became available on Ancestry.co.uk, for which I do have a subscription, so I have been looking to see what it reveals about Ashby a hundred years ago. The first record I came across was that for the boarders at Ashby Girls’ Grammar School.

The Hostel

The first building on the south side of Wood Street after The Hollies (now Lockton House) was a hostel for girls attending the Grammar School. This building is now divided into several flats. There were four teachers in residence:

Ida Cartwright Clarke,
Annie Mildred Fleming,
Gladys Dorothy Mobbs,
Violet Mary Peascod

The first three were in their early twenties, so quite junior, and all came from the West Midlands area. Miss Peascod was 34 and from London and, due to her seniority, probably in charge. She had previously taught at Hilderthorpe College, a small boarding school in Whitby, Yorkshire.

There were two other members of staff, Florence Margaret Leeson, aged 19, assistant matron, and Ellen Elizabeth Jardine, a housekeeper. Ellen was a 43-year-old widow from Smisby. She had two children living in the hostel with her, Elizabeth aged 8 and John aged 2. It seems that she had been married twice and John Jardine was her second husband. The Jardine family had lived in Ashby since at least 1871 and had lived in this building at the top of Wood Street since at least 1881. Ellen was working there as a housekeeper to her future father-in-law in 1911 and married his son John the following year. Obviously, she stayed on after the death of her husband (date not known) with her two children and, at some point, the house became the hostel it was in 1921.

There were eleven girls boarding in the hostel, but this was not the sum total of girls boarding at the school in that year. The hostel seems to have been overflow accommodation from the main school. The ages of the girls ranged from 12 years 10 months, (Nora Folwell from Leicester) to 17 years 5 months (Dorothy Smith, also from Leicester). The places of birth of the other girls were Newtown Linford, Hurley in Warwickshire, Wychnor in Staffordshire, Chipping Norton, Newport Pagnell and London.

In the main school building in Nottingham Road there were many more staff and girls. There we find the headmistress, Miss Charlotte Hopkirk, aged 52 from Kent. Assisting her was Edith Hopkirk, a music teacher at the school. Unusually for the period, Edith is shown as being married, although her husband is not present, and her two teenage sons are also living there. William, 19, was a medical student at Cambridge University and Colin, 18, was a "Dairying student" at the "Midland Dairy College, Kingston on Soar", (part of Nottingham University). Edith was married to Miss Charlotte Hopkirk's brother, Frank, but where was he in 1921?

My investigations did trace a Frank Hopkirk who emigrated to the USA after the First World War but I cannot be sure that he is the same man.

There were six more teachers resident in the school, one a music teacher (Edith Blyth, 55 from Kent) and a German lady, (Madelaine Querriou, 26, resident in France) who taught French. The subjects of the other teachers are not given. There were 42 boarders, the youngest being Nancy Stretton from Tamworth aged 6. Seventeen of them were aged 10 or younger. The rest were in their early to mid teens with the eldest being Christine Mary Jones aged 17 followed by Constance Marina Timms, aged 16. Their places of birth showed a wider range than those of the girls in the hostel. Two were local from Measham and Woodville whilst the furthest place of birth was Singapore and Washington USA.

The 1921 Census required that entries for all children under the age of 15 had to state whether the parents were alive or not. In the case of the girl from London, both parents were recorded as dead. Research shows that her father died in October 1914 but I can't find a death record for her mother.

Also resident in the school on Census night were four domestic servants. One of these was aged 75 and described as a retired children's nurse. Another, a local girl born in Ashby, was only 15 years of age herself. Finally there was an 88 year old aunt of Miss Hopkirk.

The 1921 Census is, of course, a very big document and this was just a brief glance but I will return to it again later in the year to see what else it can tell us about Ashby a hundred years ago.

Wendy Freer

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TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

This saying of Jesus is from the gospel of Matthew 16:24, and virtually the same words are in Luke 9:23. The context is that Jesus has just predicted his death and will soon be setting off, with his disciples, on his final journey to Jerusalem for the Passover.

‘Take up your cross’ simply means to deny yourself, but it’s not that simple. It’s a challenge. Imagine this. You’re at a party, and are sitting round a table chatting. The cake is served, it being a small Victoria Sponge, already sliced into six. All are intently looking at the cake to see which is the biggest piece.

By sheer luck, the waiter lifts the cake before you, with the largest slice nearest you. Naturally you take it, with glee lighting up your face. Top cat! And of course you deserve the biggest piece. The cake proceeds round the table with the last person getting the smallest piece.

That’s how my old self would always treat the situation. Namely to find the biggest piece for myself. It’s the primeval desire. My little dog Poppet is just the same. Food is important to her, and as much of it as possible. Then I read this saying of Jesus, about denying yourself. And now in a similar situation, my new self picks the smallest piece of cake, or I say something like, ‘No thanks, I’m fasting today.’

Obviously, the story can be dramatized in several ways to emphasize the point. Also, you immediately realise the drawback of inventing a new self – it can easily revert to the old self. Going back to the original quote, the full text is: Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me ... and then the Son of Man will reward each person according to what they have done.’

The hard part is taking up your cross, which is a reference to the ancient world. We know that no-one is crucified in Britain today, no matter how bad their crime. By contrast, the Roman Empire was a cruel, merciless power, and a lot of people in Israel were crucified during the life-time of Jesus. So, is the image of a full-size brutal wooden cross at all relevant today?

Probably not, but the meaning is clear – Jesus is not a smiley character skipping through the woods on a bright summer afternoon, with the birds singing and the breeze upon his face.

My interpretation of the quote is that it points to a direction of travel. The denying of self is not done in a day, but is based on self-examination over a period of time. Even so, the words are very challenging, as they not only ask for a change of lifestyle and choices, but also for a fundamental change of mind.

As soon as you try this new way of living, you'll come up with some resistance from your old self. Even Jesus didn't find it easy. He had to get up before dawn and spend an hour or two in prayer to realign his own intentions with those of the Father. And I need not remind you of his struggle on the Mount of Olives, a story we'll soon be covering in detail in Easter Week, also called Holy Week. At that cataclysmic moment, Jesus turned to intense prayer to be able to face what was ahead. And the disciples? They fell asleep as Jesus prayed on, and when the enemy arrived, they scattered.

As an aside, a phrase that seems to have popped up in the last 20 years is, 'I have your back.' It means you can count on me to support and protect you, especially in difficult situations, however much it may cost me. Obviously the disciples were not covering Jesus' back, and left him all alone when a multitude came to arrest him.

You'll also remember that as Jesus carried his own cross to Golgotha, he collapsed under its weight. You might have supposed that one of his disciples, keeping alongside, would have carried it for him. Not a chance. It was Simon of Cyrene who carried that cross, Cyrene being a town in Libya, about 750 miles west of Jerusalem. He was the last person to walk alongside Jesus.

What about us, today, in Ashby? We are a group of people, the living church, based at St Helen's. We want to be disciples of Jesus. We meet often to do the various activities of our faith, so that we are ready when the big challenge arrives.

Richard Vann



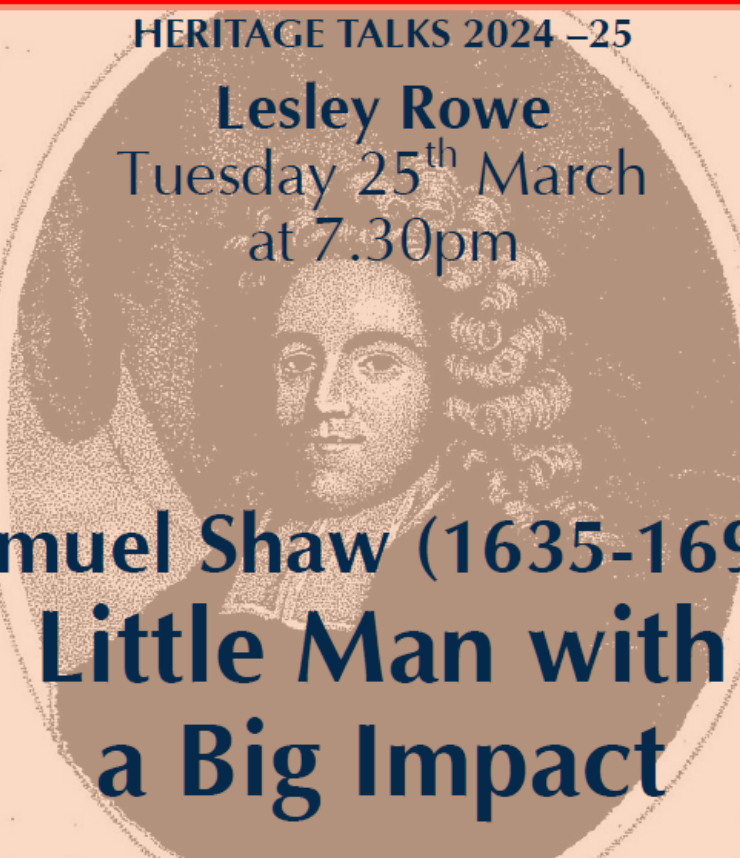
St Helen's Community Heritage Centre

4 Church Yard, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1AA

HERITAGE TALKS 2024 –25

Lesley Rowe


Tuesday 25th March
at 7.30pm



Samuel Shaw (1635-1698): Little Man with a Big Impact

We welcome back Lesley Rowe to talk about this fascinating character from our history -
How did a man ejected from the Church of England go on to become Ashby's celebrated schoolmaster?

Tickets on the door - £4 including light refreshments

 Facebook: St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch
Website: www.sthelensashby.net
Email: sthelensheritage@gmail.com


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St Helen's Church & Community Heritage Centre

On the first Saturday of every month:

Pause for Paws



Drop in on
1st Saturday of the month
between 11:30 & 13:00
at St Helen's church
(west door of the church)
Refreshments will be provided

4 Church Yard, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics, LE65 1AA



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St Helen's Church & Community Heritage Centre

Every
Friday

HEART WARMING SPACE

2 pm
to
4 pm



Tea
Cake
Chat



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