

Upton News



Vol 4 No.5 December 2011

Christmas is fast approaching and you will see in the Dates for the Diary that we have a number of festive activities in Upton - carol singing, lunches, church services. We also have a delicious Christmas Dessert recipe included. I admire all those people who are well on with their Xmas shopping, I haven't so much as thought about it. I'm sure there must be a service whereby you can give someone a list and they go out and buy everything for you! As usual we are looking for contributions for the next edition - welcome from all ages and interests. We will be combining the January & February editions of UN so it will be coming out a little later than usual. We have a few more signed up to receive UN electronically (but still need more of you to do so).

If you would like to sponsor the printing of the next edition, please get in touch, we do need your support if you want to continue receiving the colour edition, which judging by the positive feedback, has been well received.

Sarah

Inside this issue...

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Faster Broadband Latest

Representatives from the local villages met with BT on 1 December to discuss how and when broadband speeds would improve as a result of winning BT's Race to Infinity.

The overall effect will be to make 90% of lines in the Blewbury exchange area capable of speeds of 15Mbit/s or more, with the remaining 10% capable of 2 to 15 Mbit/s. This means that everyone will be able to upgrade to services delivering speeds at least three times faster than what they're getting today.

Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) will take fibre to Upton, and then use existing copper connections to reach individual properties. This will provide most of Upton with the range of faster speeds mentioned above. If you're lucky, you could get up to 40 Mbit/s initially and up to 80 Mbit/s in the not-too-distant future.

The technical work on the FTTC cabinets should be completed between the end of December and early March, with Upton probably the first to go live. As soon as your cabinet goes live, you will be able to order your new fibre-based broadband service.

For more details, see a full summary from the meeting on the web site.

Brian Rippon

Spring Line Methodist Church

December Services

4th	Blewbury	10.30	St Michael's Family service & nativity play
11th	Upton	10.30	Paul Williams
18th	Blewbury	3pm	Rev Richard Bittleston (Carol Service with St Michael's choir)
25th	Didcot	10.30	Dr David Rankin

We would like to thank the members of the community who have used Upton Chapel in the past year. This includes Upton Table Tennis Club, the VPA, the Outside Capering Crew of Morris Dancers, and the family who held their little boy's birthday party at the Chapel. If you would also like to use our church or church hall for your event, please contact Helen Weston on 850031.

Your generous donations are helping this small Methodist Congregation to continue to worship in Blewbury and Upton.

God bless you all, and a Happy Christmas from the members of the Spring Line Methodist Church.

St Mary's Services

4th Dec	9am	Sung Eucharist followed by refreshments
11th Dec	9am	Sung Eucharist
18th Dec	10am	Morning Prayer
Christmas Eve	4pm	Crib & Carol Service - with seasonal refreshments
Christmas Day	9am	Sung Eucharist
1st Jan	9am	Eucharist

Rectors Reflections

Well, it's that time of year again. Carols, mince pies, nativity plays, and so much more besides. Once more we will hear the story of the birth of Jesus, and picture Mary and Joseph, with the baby Jesus, surrounded by shepherds, and with the Wise Men kneeling in adoration.

I wonder what we really think of the familiar story of the birth of Jesus? Do we really think that Jesus was born of a Virgin - or do we think that this is simply another one of those beautiful Christmas fairy stories?

It might interest you to know that some Christians believe that there was, in fact, never anything particularly unusual about the birth of Jesus. Like the rest of us, he had a real live father (Joseph), a real live mother (Mary), and a real live pregnancy. Jesus was a human being, just like you and I. He was also so intimately connected with God that he was not only a human being - he was God as well. This is what matters - in Jesus, God showed that he loved us human beings so much that he was prepared to become one of us.

Just because Jesus was - and is - God, doesn't mean that he had to come into this world in a way which was different from the rest of us. It is true that some of the early Christians had other ideas, in part because of their ambivalence towards sexual intercourse. In such a climate, many thoughtful Christians would have assumed that sexual intercourse could not possibly have been involved in Jesus' coming on to the scene. But that was 2000 years ago, and people understand things differently nowadays.

Others Christians have felt that the evidence clearly points to there being something very unusual about the birth of Jesus - the absence of a father. The early tradition is clear that Jesus had a mum, called Mary (actually, Miriam, the Hebrew form of the name we know as Mary). But the same early tradition also suggests that Joseph was never really Jesus' dad - at best, Joseph was Jesus' step-dad. Ah well, you say, clearly the identity of Jesus' real dad was kept secret! The problem with this hypothesis is that there were lots of people around who had an interest in destroying Jesus' credibility, and they were willing to fling whatever dirt they could find - but none of them were ever able to come up with the identity of Jesus' "real" dad.

And so we come face to face with the possibility of a miracle. Jesus rising again from the dead was a miracle - the miracle of miracles. Why might his birth have not also been miraculous? Jesus was unique - a man with a uniquely intimate relationship with God. There was

never a man quite like him before; and there has never been a man quite like him since. As Jesus was and is unique, there is nothing illogical in believing that the circumstances of his birth were also unique.

At its heart, the question of the Virgin Birth is a question about ourselves, and the way we look on the world. Are we so sure of ourselves that we can say with confidence what happened to a particular Jewish woman some 2000 years ago? Fortunately God's loving action in our lives and in our world is not limited to what we might think is possible. Thank God!

Fr Jason

Christmas Greetings from Blewbury School

It's that time of year again! Here at Blewbury School we are, once again, celebrating the joys of Christmas in the traditional manner. There will be a school carol service at St Michael's Blewbury at 3.30pm on Wednesday 14th December (following the Christmas lunch on the same day, starting at 11.45). There will also be two performances of the school Nativity Play 2pm on Tuesday 6th December, 7pm on Wednesday 7th December.

Everyone is very welcome to come to the carol service and to the Nativity Play (although as seating is limited for the play, it's a good idea to check with the school in advance that seats are still available).

We look forward to seeing you - and Merry Christmas!

Father Jason

December

At the beginning of October - it looked like a severe winter was on the way, however, I see the ladybirds are still out and about. If they have not hibernated below or at ground level, it isn't going to be a hard winter. If they are in crevices about 3 ft (1m) above ground then it's going to be a mild winter, but take care not to disturb them. When should they hibernate to indicate a hard winter is a mystery, but they will be on ground level or below. The ladybird was traditionally a predictor of the harvest, according to the number of the spots on the ladybird - the harvest was going to be good or poor.



Aside from the ladybird - December is a month of superstitions. Burn a Yule log on Christmas Eve for a year of good luck. There are always problems associated with December. On occasions when the weather is mild in late December, the birds feel the need to build nests and mate and then the January wet and damp or the February frost wipes them all out. If the blackbird sings before Christmas, she will cry before Candlemas. The new moon is on Christmas Eve this year - a dark Christmas and a heavy wheatsheaf - so it should be a good growing year next year. One item to watch for is the old adage 'Christmas meadows green - Easter meadows white', implying that if it's mild at Christmas, there will be heavy frosts at Easter time.

Austin Maytham

Fundraising coffee morning

The total sum raised was £300. This has been divided between the RSPCA and Cancer Research UK charities.

Thank you to everyone who supported this event either by making cakes, donating a raffle prize, or by making a donation and also of course all those who came to the coffee morning. Your support was very much appreciated.

Feedback has been very encouraging and we hope to organise future fundraising events in the New Year.

Emily & Karen Fenn

Upton Gas Syndicate

Polite reminder to anyone wishing to join the Upton Calor Gas Syndicate in 2012 (available for Bulk Supply Tanks only) to let Lesley Shaw know ASAP please at lesley.thorpe.shaw@googlemail.com or by telephone 850308.

Anyone with another provider can join the Syndicate by giving the appropriate notice to that provider in advance of their intention to do so and subject to certain terms and conditions of Calor installation (further details available from Lesley).

Bus Timetables - 94 / 95

The 94/95 service between Didcot and Blewbury will benefit from an earlier start time and later final journey time and improved connections with X32, other bus services and trains at Didcot. The service is changing from Heyfordian to Thames Travel with effect from 12 December 2011.

Dates for your diary

Thu 1 Dec	Ladies Coven Meal, 7pm, G&D
Tue 6 Dec	Blewbury School Nativity 2pm
Wed 7 Dec	Blewbury School Nativity 7pm
Wed 7 Dec	Wine Appreciation VH 8pm
Fri 9 Dec	VPA Supper 7.30
Wed 14 Dec	Coffee Morning 10.30 Blewbury Centre
Wed 14 Dec	Jungle Book, VH 6.30pm
Wed 14 Dec	Last date for parcels
Fri 16 Dec	Have Your Say Meeting 5.30pm VH
Fri 16 Dec	Upton Home Workers Xmas Lunch G&D
Sat 17 Dec	Last date for 2nd class
Sun 18 Dec	Spring Line Carol Service Blewbury 3pm
Tue 20 Dec	Last date for 1st class
Thu 22 Dec	Carol Singing 6.30pm VH
Thu 5 Jan	Drop In 10.30 VH
Wed 11 Jan	Brass Band Course 6.30
Thu 19 Jan	Drop In 10.30 VH

VPA news

I still have roses and hardy geraniums flowering, the Ceanothus is out too, bizarre! By the time you read this, my new summerhouse will be here, and I will be sitting in the late autumn sunshine planning next year's vegetable plot and rewriting next year's show schedule. Keep the 1st Feb free for a talk on "How to win at the summer show" when Eileen and I will give away all our secrets on prizewinning entries, and the new schedule will be available.

Our Christmas social evening will be at the new Melland room in Blewbury, on Friday 9th Dec, at 7.30pm, for a baked potato supper, a glass of wine/juice and seasonal jollity. Tickets, £5 each, will be available from Blewbury Post office, Maggie in Upton, or ring me 850219. I can also arrange transport if needed!

Happy Gardening
Karen Brooks.

Recipe of the Month

Christmas Dried Fruit Compote

(serves 8)

This Delia Smith recipe is, if you like, all the Christmas pudding flavours without the pudding. It is light, fragrant and very fruity. Serve it well chilled with some lightly whipped cream or better still with cinnamon or vanilla ice cream and some macaroons.

I sampled this pudd and it is delicious with many different flavours and would be perfect after a large portion of turkey & stuffing!
Ed

4oz (110g) no soak dried apricots
4oz (110g) no soak dried figs, halved
4oz (110g) no soak prunes
4oz (110g) raisins
2 oranges
10fl oz (275ml) cold water
12 fl oz (350ml) tawny port
To serve: 2oz (50g) sliced almonds, lightly toasted

Rinse the apricots, figs and prunes under cold, running water, then place them in a large saucepan. Next scrub one of the oranges, slice it into very thin rounds, and cut each round into four. Add these, together with the raisins, to the rest of the fruit in the pan, pour in the cold water and simmer (covered) for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, squeeze the juice from the other orange and when the fruit is cooked, stir in the orange juice and the port.

Leave the compote to cool, and before serving chill in the fridge for 24 hours so all the flavours can develop.

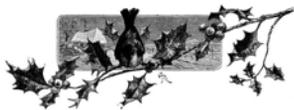
Serve sprinkled with toasted nuts.

Rosemary de Wilde



Village Carol Singing

All villagers are warmly invited to come carol



singing round Upton's streets on Thursday 22nd December. We will meet at the Village Hall at 6.30pm and finish up there again at around 8pm for a welcome glass of mulled wine and mince pies. Word sheets will be provided, but please bring torches and lanterns and let me know if you would like to play an instrument so that I can provide some music for you.

We will be collecting for a local charity, Didcot TRAIN Youth Project (Registered Charity No 1094601) which gives support to homeless and disaffected young people in Didcot, providing alternative activities to vandalism, drugs and alcohol. If you'd prefer to listen rather than sing, please get your pennies and pounds (but no missiles please!) ready for this excellent local cause. Give me a call or drop me a line if you would like to take part. The more the merrier!

Sarah Tenant-Flowers
(850488 or singscape@aol.com)

Upton Village Theatre Group



Tickets for
"Lettice and
Lovage" at The
Watermill on
Tuesday 28
February 2012
have been selling

well, but there are a few left. If all the reserved seats are taken, I am prepared to try to get extra tickets for those prepared to drive themselves. We are also negotiating for a meal before the show.

In the following week, at the Oxford Playhouse, there is the West End production of "Yes, Prime Minister". Bad timing, but let me know if you are interested. To get a group price, we need to find at least 10 people.

If there is anyone wishing to go on or come off our mailing list, please tell Celia Davies, Irene Timblich or me.

Malcolm Wright (850705)

Waste Recycling Opening Hours

Christmas Eve	8am to 3pm
Christmas Day	CLOSED
Boxing Day	CLOSED
27th - 30th December	
	8am to 5pm
New Year's Eve	8am to 3pm
New Year's Day	CLOSED
Monday 2 January onwards:	
	8am-5pm

Submissions for Upton News should be sent to the Editor, Sarah Sayers, at news@uptonvillage.co.uk or to Orchard Lodge, High Street, Upton OX11 9JE. Tel 01235 851450. Deadline for the January/February edition is **6th January**.

Upton Home Workers' Christmas Party!

Do you work from home in Upton? And are you fed up with having an office Christmas party for one? If the answer's yes, how about joining your fellow village home-workers for a Christmas lunch in the George & Dragon on Friday 16 December?

Christmas seems a good excuse for those of us fortunate enough to work in the village to have a bit of an informal get-together. Kenny tells me that the pub has a capacity of about 50, so I'd be surprised if there's not room for us all! If you'd like to come along please drop us a line by 9 December and we'll book you a place. Once we know who's coming we'll contact you about menu choices etc. We look forward to a great event!

Paul Batho & Sarah Tenant-Flowers
(851251 - pbatho@aol.com)

December Christmas parking days

Parking is free in District Council car parks as follows:

Didcot - all day Tuesday 6th, 13th & 20th; **Goring/Henley/Thame** - from midday onwards on Saturday 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th; **Wallingford** - all day Thursday 1st, 8th, 15th & 22nd.

The annual free parking tradition is provided by the District Council in December to encourage people to shop locally for their Christmas presents.

At times when free Christmas parking is available people do not have to display a parking ticket.

Upton Neighbourhood Watch

I have been updating my records and wonder whether there are any newcomers to the village who would like to be included in my updates? Alternatively you may have recently changed your email address and not notified me.

If you would like to be kept informed of local incidents and reports from the police please email at this address and I will add you in.

Meanwhile please be aware that this time of year break ins (sadly) are especially high. This year break ins to garden sheds and garages are far greater than in the past.

If you are going away for Xmas please think to ask a neighbour to twitch your curtains and leave your lights on a timer.

I also have the number for a very reliable house sitter in Upton who will pop in twice daily to do this for you for a small daily fee to give you peace of mind whilst away. Please ring me for further details.

Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year
Celia Davies (850684)

Policing Update

Warnings are given to anyone who hires a skip to watch out for theft of contents -thieves remove items of scrap metal from your skip, strip the valuable scrap metal then fly tips what is not needed.

Home security - By using plug in timer switches and eco friendly light bulbs in the house, you can convince any potential burglar that you are home. Timers on lamps are great, don't just have the hall light switched on when you're out, and have the lamps switching on in various rooms like the bedroom, lounge or kitchen, at different times. Don't limit the use of lights to evenings; it is often dark enough during a winter's afternoon. A plug in timer for the radio would make a sound as if someone was home, tune the station which has more talking than music. Plug in timers are available from most supermarkets or DIY stores.

Olympic Torch Route – a bit of advanced warning and note for the diary, the Olympic torch will be coming to Wallingford on 10 July.

Sam Parham World Record Holder

Sam has lived in Upton most of his life, moving in when he was 6 years old. He attended local Didcot schools and is now working in media events, including television and films. He is a member of the world famous 3RUN Parkour team, has achieved multiple Guinness World Records for his skills and is in the 2012 Guinness Book of World Records holding the record for the longest distance vaulted between two objects (7ft 8in or 2.35m). More information about Sam and his work can be found on www.samparham.com



Upton Wine Appreciation

Kevin Jacklin presented wines of Argentina and opened the evening with a question - 'which country drinks the most wine per head?' No not France nor Australia or even the Scots - it is the Vatican City, maybe all the left over communion wine!

He started the evening with a Torrontes, made by Michael Torino from the Calchaqui Valley, Salta, available from Majestic at £5.99 - a bargain and very nice. The Torrontes grape is the white signature grape of Argentina, producing aromatic perfumed spicy wines of which this is a good example.

The Catena Chardonnay, produced in Mendoza, with high altitude surroundings at the base of the Andes that help produce this very quaffable wine. Nicolas Catena the wine producer was voted *Decanter* Man of the Year 2009, the first



person from South America to win the crown. I personally enjoyed this wine as I quite like oak but it may not be to everyone's taste although all appeared to enjoy on the night. A little more expensive at £9.95 from the Wine Society.

The reds were equally as interesting, providing strong flavours with good prices. The Cabernet Sauvignon/ Bonarda, produced in the Famantina Valley, the grapes are organic and produced by small growers who have formed a co-operative, helping to provide much needed enterprise to the small village of Tilimuqui, who also benefit from the fair trade initiative. Price £6.99 at Waitrose.

The Las Moras Eduardo Casademont, from Mendoza Supplier Naked Wines was the most expensive on the night at £17.99, this was a great wine, absolutely gorgeous, I could have carried on all night drinking this, but alas we get thrown out at 10pm. You can apply for discount to get a third off the wine at Naked Wines, so at £11.90 it was not such a deal breaker.

Next meeting 7th December - Fiona and William Betts on Sparkling wines and Dessert wines.

Chris Traynor

Thanks to Sarah Sayers for the sponsorship and printing of this edition of Upton News.

Village Enterprise of the Month

Treat yourself this Christmas...

I started making Chocolate Truffles 4 years ago when I came upon an old family recipe from Italy and decided to "have a go". These were tested on family and friends, who always praised them and kept urging me to "put them out there". Most are laced with a hint of brandy and covered in high quality milk or dark chocolate and drizzled with a contrasting chocolate. They make terrific gifts



and are particularly enjoyable as "an after dinner treat". With my affinity to France and all things French (although I am of Italian origin), another speciality are Mendiants - a treat any time of year, but especially at Christmas time. Thin slabs of roughly cut milk, dark and white chocolate and decorated with my own secret recipe ...these really are truly delicious and, again, have been tried and tested on many. For more information and pricing please contact me at info@blisstruffles.co.uk or phone 850158.

Giulia Hannigan, Autumn Leaves

Post Office News

Christmas is a busy time in the Post Office. Please make sure your post is addressed properly and that you use the postcode. We are hoping to have the Scout Christmas post box, and they will deliver to Didcot and surrounding villages (but not Wallingford) for a small donation.

Karen & Ann

Blewbury Brass Band

Just a reminder that Blewbury's "step up to brass" 8 week music course starts on 11th January 6.30pm - 7.20pm. There is also the opportunity to stay on and play with the main band afterwards as playing improves. If there is sufficient interest, group lessons for complete beginners can be provided.

They provide good instruments and professional tuition, and all you need is enthusiasm and £50. To book or find out more please contact Jolyon Tidmarsh on 07979 031273 & otxd2@hotmail.com or www.blewburybrassband.org.uk.



Q: What goes oh oh oh?

A: Santa going backwards!