

Upton News



Vol 4 No.40 March 2016

BUS UPDATE

We have more time, so let's use it to save our buses!

The Downland Transport Action Group have just heard from a Thames Travel representative that, while the County Council voted to cut bus subsidies, our buses will continue until at least 20th July, as the timing for deciding on contracts has been moved back. This gives us more time to work with Thames Travel to save our buses.

The best way we can do this is to **use the buses and to encourage others to use them**. If you have a bus concession card please also consider occasionally paying the fare instead of using your card, as that will increase revenue ... and the key to showing that our services can be maintained at a high level is showing that they can be commercially viable.

The Downland Transport Action Group includes representatives from the seven parishes on the route (Blewbury, Upton, East and West Hagbourne, North and South Moreton, Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe). We are in contact with our county councillors, Oxfordshire County Council's manager of fleet services, and the finance and commercial director of Thames Transport, all of whom are being encouraging of our efforts. We hope to have another meeting with Thames Travel as soon as possible.

We are starting to survey the parishes to find out not only who is using the buses, but also to find out what people want from our buses and what would encourage further use. For example, are there timetable improvements that would increase your use of the service? If you are asked to complete a survey form, please do so - we need up-to-date, solid evidence to support our case .

Please pass this information on to your neighbours.

We will attempt to keep you informed, and remember... **if we want to keep our buses for all in the community, we must use them**. Even if you are not a regular bus user, please consider using the service occasionally as a way of helping to maintain the service for all.

*Jo Lakeland and Eric Eisenhandler,
Co-chairs, Sustainable Blewbury*

Please complete the questionnaire which accompanies *Upton News* and return it as soon as possible.

Notes from the Allotment

We must have had a severe frost up at the Allotments in early February, because when I visited recently I discovered my remaining celery and chard plants had been completely decimated! I hadn't realised they were not that hardy. However, the celery plants were not very successful as I had neglected to bind them up to promote blanching and ended up with hundreds of short green stems with very little edible parts, at least not to me, although the slugs loved them.... But still ok to flavour soup!

The weed killer in the raspberry patch seems to have worked; I must now give it a little (careful) dig over and then give it a mulch of manure or compost; also cut down the autumn fruiting ones which I have failed to do so far, before they start sprouting. I've noticed the gooseberry bushes are already in leaf!

A straw bale has appeared on my plot, a legacy of Blewbury's first beer festival where they were used for extra seating; I will use this on the strawberry patch but I have more than I need, so please feel free to take some! Plot 23A...Although of course I can also sit on it when needing a break from the hard labour that will need to be done shortly.

Gathered a few leeks yesterday, surprisingly the ground was not frozen after a hard frost the night before, as it was followed by warm sunshine, a welcome experience. Again, bins strewn around the site, it does catch the wind there, but not too much damage - a squashed onion stem or two, but they will recover.

A bit of a mystery, one of my transplanted clumps of rhubarb has been completely eaten away - I didn't think anything ate rhubarb except us hardy humans! Any thoughts? It was under cover.

I've still not got round to ordering seeds, despite all the advice pouring in through the letterbox and Internet. Too much choice! But I think this year I will concentrate on producing a decent quantity of climbing French beans rather than runners, as I still have a freezer drawer full and they really don't defrost well. I'm going to have another go at carrots and parsnips after limited success in a raised bed, and try to produce enough onions to last me more than a month!

And I'll have another go at the celery!

Angela Hoy (angela.hoy@sky.com)

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to news@uptonvillage.co.uk.

Deadline for the April edition is **Saturday 26th March.**

Upton Wine Appreciation Society

February saw one of our favourite speakers, Mike Collins (village resident and founding Chair of Upton's Wine Appreciation Club), return to present wines from Australia.

Mike explained that Australia is a significant exporter of wine worldwide, both in bulk and bottle, with the UK representing Australia's second most important market by value after the US. Having reassured us that Australia is experiencing strongest growth in the export of premium and ultra-premium bottled wines, Mike then settled to the arduous task of leading us in tasting a carefully conceived selection of whites and reds. With wine produced in every state, from an impressive selection of grape varieties, grown on different soil types and benefitting from a range of topographies, we were introduced to Eden Valley Riesling (a personal favourite for its vitality, extract and punchy lime notes) and Barossa Semillon (still too often underrated and overlooked as a pure varietal). Cool climate Tasmanian Chardonnay

was well received, before we moved on to taste four reds including an exceptional Victoria Shiraz from the Wine Society and a massive Shiraz / Mourvedre blend produced by the ever-reliable Penfolds wine company.

If you've wondered about joining us, please do contact an existing member or anyone from the committee - you're very welcome to try your first meeting as a guest, and the more the merrier.

Looking ahead, our meetings continue on the third Wednesday of each month. Subject to final confirmation, we intend to enjoy:

16 March: Popular visiting wine professional, Lee Isaacs, introducing wines from Italy.

20 April: A flying visit from winemaker, Katie Jones, from the Languedoc in France.

18 May: Your committee presenting some of their favourite food and wine matches.

Cheers!

William Betts, Chair

DIDCOT & DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be held on 15 March 2016 at 2 pm when our speaker will be Andy Robertshaw with a talk entitled 'Animals on the Western Front'

Didcot & District U3A is a democratic, self funded and self-managed organisation which exists to provide educational and leisure activities at minimal cost. It draws upon the knowledge, experience, skills and enthusiasms of its members to organise interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership.

Tel: 07804159993 Email: didcotdistrictU3A@virginmedia.com

Website: <http://u3asites.org.uk/didcot>

Rector's Reflections

What's so special about Easter?

So you're in the queue at the supermarket checkout, and the person in front of you asks: "Well, you're a Christian - what's this Easter thing all about? Why do Christians keep celebrating something that happened 2000 years ago? Why do you bother?"

I wonder how you might respond? Of course traditionally we don't tend to talk about what we believe, especially to a stranger in a supermarket! But if we felt brave enough to actually try and talk about the meaning of Easter, what might we say?

For me, Easter is about more than Jesus dying and rising again to new life. It's about God's agenda for our lives and the life of our world. It's about new beginnings. It's about God's power to bring about a fresh start in our lives, in our relationships and in our world.

It's about a life giving message which challenges the assumptions of our world.

We sometimes assume that a situation is so bad that there can't be a new start. Sometimes this is because we assume people don't or can't change for the better. Sometimes it's because we look at a situation and are overwhelmed by its seriousness and complexity.

But Easter says that there is always hope. God is bigger than the biggest problems which we face, as individuals and as a world. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. So He can certainly raise us from the dead. He can bring new life into the most desperate of situations.

Easter also says that this gift of new life is something that comes from outside of ourselves. It is a gift of God, given by God simply because He loves us. As human beings, we try our best to bring about new beginnings, using the skills and resources available to us. But we can only get so far. There are times when the effort of bringing about a new start seems beyond us. Perhaps the problem is simply too complex or we simply lack the resources. Perhaps we lack the belief that a new beginning is possible. We spend so much of our time swimming in a world of cynicism and disappointment that it becomes impossible for us to believe that things could be different.

Easter says that things can be different. God is ready and willing to intervene in our lives and our world to bring about change for the better. There is hope!

Fr Jason

Friends of St Mary's

Good Friday Walk & Tea

With Easter so early this year it's not long until our first event which will be a Good Friday (25 March) walk from East Ilsley back across the downs to Upton where weary walkers will be fortified by tea and hot cross buns in the church from around 3.30. We will start from the Crown and Horns so those wishing to fuel themselves for the trip will be able to lunch at the pub before we set off at around 1.30. Cars can be left in the pub car park and we will organise lifts back from Upton for drivers. And if that all sounds like a bit too much, people will be welcome to drop into the church for tea between 3.30 and 4.30.

It would be good to have an approximate idea of number so if you're interested please drop Paul (851251 - pjsbatho@btinternet.com), Jessie (851206 - jessie@blueshapes.com) or Gloria (850683 - gloriapr.smith@yahoo.co.uk) a line and we will make sure we have enough buns!

Our next event will be in June when we are hoping to get a guest speaker to entertain us in the village hall. Further news on this next month!

Church Services

Sunday 28th February 1030 - All Age Service "Scones of Praise"? really is this a mistake? No really..... if you enjoy singing your favourite hymns and like eating freshly baked scones then this is for you.

Sunday 6th March - Mothering Sunday - lets celebrate all mothers, both past and present. Come at a time to suit you:

9.00 Eucharist; 10.00 Refreshments served. 10.30 a short service to celebrate mothers, followed by distribution of a token of flowers.

Sunday 13th March 9.00 - Sung Eucharist

Sunday 20th March 9.00 - Sung Eucharist

Sunday 27th March 9.00 - Easter Day - Sung Eucharist.

Girl Guides

World Thinking Day is on February 22nd, the birthday of Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of Scouting and Guiding and of his wife, Olave Baden-Powell, the World Chief Guide. Celebrated since 1926, World Thinking Day is a day of international friendship, speaking out on issues that affect girls and young women, and fundraising for 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world.

If you have ever been a Rainbow, Brownie, Guide or Ranger take a few moments to think about the meaningful connections that make our lives better, whether to the people closest to us, to a place we care about, or to a Girl Guide or Girl Scout friend on the other side of the world.

If you are interested in joining us, either as a Guide or helping as a leader please get in touch. lynn.nickerson.holywell@gmail.com

2nd Upton & Blewbury Brownies

The girls have been busy this term working on their artist badge and taking part in team building activities. The Brownies also completed challenges for a Minute marathon badge and raised £130 for Dyslexia fund. On 22nd Feb we joined other units in our district to celebrate Thinking day at the civic hall Didcot.

1st Upton and Blewbury Rainbows

Two new rainbows made their promise this term. The girls completed their All about me roundabout badge and started working on their festival one. We have invited the rainbow group from Harwell to join us on the 18th March for an Easter party.

Theatre Group

I notice that there is a live screening of the Royal Opera's "*Boris Godunov*" on Monday March 21st and of the Royal Ballet's "*Giselle*" on Wednesday 6th April, both at Cineworld, Didcot, and both at 7.15pm - many other exciting productions are also being screened. There's no virtue in trying to get a group rate, but if anyone would like to go but needs or could offer a lift, I could co-ordinate cars when I'm told you have bought your ticket.

Malcolm Wright (850705)

Yoga Club

The new term starts back in the Village Hall on Monday 22nd February – it starts at 9.30 and finishes at 11am. Yoga is great for improving posture, flexibility and muscle strength. It reduces stress and anxiety and provides us with the tools to better cope with the challenges of daily life. Please contact Catherine Watsham for further information on 07786 210177.

Blewbury WI

I am really fed up with the cold wind and the rain now, I can't wait to get out into the garden, and to start getting out and about with our girls! We have some great outings and events lined up for this year, if you would like to make new friends, come and join us! Everyone welcome on the walks & talks! Just turn up! Some of our outings need booking first, contact Karen.

Wednesday 2nd March. Lyn's walk, meet at Blewbury Village hall, 9.30am

Monday 7th, Trip to Pendon museum

Tuesday 8th, Coffee at Style Acre tearooms, 10.30am

Wednesday 9th, Scrabble at Bernardines

Wednesday 23th, 7.30pm; or AGM, Vale Room 7.30pm

For more details of any of our events, the date of the next Coffee morning, Scrabble or Mah Jong (every Monday afternoon) or if you wish to join us, please ring Karen on 850219 or visit our webpage, <http://blewburywi.wordpress.com>

We send our condolences to the family of Pam Grace, who was a valued member of our WI, until she became ill.

Karate Club

Congratulations to Jacob Hunt Brough, a member of Upton karate club who achieved 2nd place in the National Junior Black Belt Championships on the 7th February 2016.

Well done Jacob.

Village Clubs & Organisations

Blewbury WI

Karen Brooks 850219
karencbrooks@gmail.com

Calor Gas Syndicate

Lesley Shaw 07739 047688

Drop In Sessions

Yvonne Collins 850989

Guides, Brownies & Rainbows

Fiona Coomer
fiona.coomer@gmail.com 511809

Karate

John Hogan
johnhogan67@icloud.com

Short Mat Bowls Club

Tony Durbin 850035

Table Tennis Club

Bob Lott 851222

Tea Birds WI

Jo Christie tea-birdswi@hotmail.co.uk

Theatre Club

Malcolm Wright 850705

Upton Oil Syndicate

Colin Batchelor 01491 672444

Upton Village Hall

www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk 887129

Village Produce Association

Eileen Bracken 510095

Wine Appreciation Society

Kevin Jacklin 851404

Do you run a village club or organisation? Please let us have your details and we will add them to the list.

Fostering with Oxfordshire County Council

In line with a national trend, the number of children coming into the care system in Oxfordshire has increased in recent years. There are currently more than 600 looked after children in the county, most of whom will at some point require a foster placement. As a result, the needs of our fostering service are continuously changing and currently we are especially keen to hear from people who can consider Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) and teenagers.

UASC

As I am sure you are aware, 2015 saw the shocking and saddening events of Europe's Refugee Crisis unfold in the British media. The influx of refugees and migrants to Europe from Syria reached staggering new levels, dominating headlines and prompting stormy political debate.

Although to date we have not seen a direct increase in the number of Syrian children seeking asylum in Oxfordshire, we have seen the number of asylum seekers arriving from other countries rise.

As a result, we are urgently trying to find more fostering families who are able to make them feel as at home as possible and who can ensure they keep good links with their heritage. This is so important because they've already had to leave a family, a home and a country.

Teenagers

We have a great need to find people who are interested in caring for teenagers. Fostering teenagers can

be a challenge but there's nothing more rewarding than using your skills to help a young person turn their life around.

To foster teenagers you may not need to be at home all the time, so you can work and foster. What is important is that you do have the time to spend with the young person on a one to one basis to give support and be there when necessary.

If you think you have the time and skills to help support our young people, please get in touch by calling the number below.

Additionally, there are many other fostering opportunities available with Oxfordshire County Council, such as:

- **Sibling groups** - who need to be placed together rather than on their own
- **Babies and toddlers** - who need to be placed with foster carers who are at home full time
- **Disabled children** - who need people with the skills and experience to care for them
- **Children with specialist fostering needs** - who are among our most vulnerable children and young people and are part of specialist fostering schemes.

What help will I get? Specialist training and support is given, carers receive an allowance and for some types of fostering additional fees.

Interested? Give us a call on 0800 783 5724 or visit:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fostering