

# Upton News



Vol 4 No.39 December 2015

Just in time to wish our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year...

If you haven't done so already, please complete the online questionnaire to support the

application for an 'Outreach' Post Office in Upton at

[www.uptonvillage.co.uk/outreach](http://www.uptonvillage.co.uk/outreach)

Please continue to send your material to [news@uptonvillage.co.uk](mailto:news@uptonvillage.co.uk)

*Brian Rippon*

## Opening of Hagbourne Hill

Hagbourne Hill from Chilton Village to Chilton Road has reopened to traffic as of 22 December 2015.

Work on the roundabout on the A417 continues with a signed diversion for drivers (as detailed in the diagram below).

Work on a section of Hagbourne Hill were completed on 22 December 2015. The section from Chilton Village through to Upton Village will be open to all traffic.

The work has involved lowering the crest of the hill, diverting utilities, improving the drainage along the road, reshaping the embankments in order to improve the visibility for the road users and traffic calming measures have been added along Chilton Road. The first phase of the project has been completed earlier than anticipated.

Work is still continuing to construct a roundabout on A417 which requires a closure to the northern section of Hagbourne Hill between Chilton Road and the A417. Drivers using Hagbourne Hill will be required to follow a short diversion as shown.



### PHASE 2 - Hagbourne Hill Closure Plans

Planned Duration:  
March 2016 to August 2016

# Parish Council News

The Parish Council met on 17th November. Apologies were received from County Cllr Stewart Lilly and District Cllr Janet Shelley, and also Mrs Kathryn Fletcher who had expressed her intention to resign from the Parish Council; this means there will be a casual vacancy to be filled and a notice will shortly be posted to this effect.

District Cllr Reg Waite attended and brought us up to date on recent happenings in the Vale, including the withdrawal of the planning application to build 14 houses close to the Horse & Harrow pub, much to the relief of all those present. He advised that the Vale's Local Plan would be inspected in February 2016 and would hopefully receive approval which would give the Vale more influence over local planning matters.

Cllr Waite was pleased to announce there would be free parking in local areas prior to Christmas, including Abingdon and Wantage (also Didcot on Tuesdays, not in his area!). He mentioned the recent prosecution of a cab driver for refusing to take a guide dog in his cab and requested residents to report any such breaches so they could take suitable action.

Public Forum: an 11 year old resident requested the PC to increase its efforts to have a pedestrian crossing installed on the A417 which she explained is currently very difficult to cross to get to the school bus in Station

Road. Dr Lott explained that the PC's efforts had so far been frustrated because such crossings were not permitted on trunk roads BUT he was aware of one that had been installed in West Hendred so perhaps it would now be possible. However, the siting of such a crossing was further complicated by the proximity of the 30mph entry to the village, which would not allow drivers enough time to slow down for a crossing. He promised to bring up the matter at the next meeting of the Council's Highways department in early December. The members of the public then left and the meeting resumed.

The PC was pleased to note that Biffa had recently contacted them and confirmed they would take more care when collecting rubbish from Stream Road and endeavour not to encroach onto grass verges or hit the concrete bags protecting the edge of the stream. Residents are requested to advise the Clerk if they see any occurrences that go against this promise.

Responses to the Parish Plan questionnaire were now being analysed and the Plan would be presented to the village in due course, possibly at the Annual Parish Meeting in April, if not before.

The possibility of an outreach Post Office for four hours a week at the Village Hall was discussed and it was agreed to gather responses to see if this facility would receive enough popularity to enable the Post Office

Ltd to approve the investment. So please let us have your opinions by responding to the short survey already on the Upton website!

A letter had recently been received from the Office of Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, requesting parishes to consider whether to celebrate Her Majesty's 90th birthday in June 2016. Please let us have any ideas you might have. Blewbury PC is considering having a "Songs of Praise" in St Michaels Church.

Planning Matters: The application for Owlscore Manor Farm is still under consideration by the Vale Planning Department but it is noted that the Conservation Officer has also recommended refusal on various grounds, notably the height of the proposed new dwellings.

### ***Proposed Outreach Post Office for Upton?***

Blewbury Post Office is considering the viability of running an outreach post office at Upton Village Hall for four hours once a week and is seeking your views on this.

We need to know whether you would use such a service, and if so, how often, as Post Office Limited will not sanction the expenditure unless they feel it is worth their while. The previous post office facility was closed through lack of demand so we need to prove the case for a new facility.

If you have not already do no, please complete the short questionnaire at [www.uptonvillage.co.uk/outreach](http://www.uptonvillage.co.uk/outreach)

**We need your support to convince Post Office Limited.**

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### ***The United Charities of Blewbury, Upton and Aston Upthorpe***

The Charity has always been blessed by the fact that in 1738 and 1838 parcels of land were given to them to enable the building of the two Almshouses for people in need at the time. They stand as a testament to, and bear the names of, those whose kindness and generosity allow us to continue nearly 300 hundred years further on. Both these houses have only a single bedroom and so we are restricted as to whom we can offer them to when they become available.

So the Trustees of the Charity are appealing, in the original tradition of its conception, for the chance to build a home for a family within the area of Blewbury, Upton and Aston Upthorpe. We believe that there is a case for assisting young families with strong connections to the Parish therefore we are appealing for the gift of a small parcel of land on which we can apply for permission to build such a home.

With the forethought of previous generations of Parishioners we have been able to ensure the funds are available to build such a house and we hope that our desires are shared by others.

For further details, in confidence, or any questions please contact the clerk, Alison Palethorpe, 01235 851609, Hollytree Cottage, South Street, Blewbury.

## ***Karate Club***

Upton Karate club had many students grade for their different coloured belts in December and all were successful.

In 2016 the club will have more grading for black belt which will be great for the club.

We have beginner classes starting on Sunday 24th and 31st January at 11.30am. Age 4 to adult, all abilities and fitness levels. The first two lessons are free...families welcome.

Please contact John Hogan, 07548-784929 or 01536 746182.

[johnhogan67@icloud.com](mailto:johnhogan67@icloud.com)

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## ***1st Upton & Blewbury Rainbows***

The Rainbows ended the term by having a Christmas party and they also did some entertainment for the parents. The girls drew a picture about Christmas and described what it meant to them, they also sang and took part in a Christingle. They raised £20 for the Children's Society by filling Smartie tubes with money.

On 19th December some of the Rainbows are going on a trip to the Cornerstone in Didcot to see The Snow Dragon show.

The new term starts on Friday 15th January.

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## ***UVHAT 50 Club***

UVHAT 50 Club Winners for November were:

£25	No 91	Dave Warren
£20	No 126	Mike Collins
£15	No 33	Mrs O'Donoghue
£10	No 3	Carol Jones

The Xmas Draw will take place on Friday 18 December (as the last Friday in the month is Xmas Day!).

It will be Double Up Prizes for Xmas— £50, £40, £30 and £20.

Thank you to everyone for their support, good luck and merry Christmas.  
*Lesley*

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## ***2nd Upton & Blewbury Brownies***

On 1st December Brownies performed their Christmas entertainment The Last Christmas tree to the parents which they all enjoyed. We also had our annual Christingle and the girls raised £40 for the children's society by collecting money in Smartie tubes and then decorating them.

Term ended with a Christmas party where the girls enjoyed dancing and playing party games.

The new term starts on Tuesday 12th January 2016.

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Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to [news@uptonvillage.co.uk](mailto:news@uptonvillage.co.uk).

Deadline for the February edition is **Saturday 23rd January**.

## Drop In

### Dates for your diary

Drop-in sessions will take place in the Village Hall on the following Thursday mornings from 10.30am to 12.00 noon.

January 7th and 21st  
February 4th and 18th  
March 3rd, 17th and 31st

Come along for as many cups of tea/ coffee and biscuits as you like - all for 70p. Bring your friends and help to keep the Drop-in viable. Our numbers are falling and it's a question of 'use it or lose it'.

*Yvonne Collins*

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### ***Short Mat Bowls***

Upton Short Mat Bowls Group continues to bowl every Wednesday at the Upton Village Hall except the third Wednesday each month when the Village Wine Cub have the booking.

New members very welcome. Beginners can borrow woods, just need flat soled shoes or bowl in socks/stockings, first two weeks no charge. If you like it enough and wish to play regularly the normal mat fee is £3 per two hour session, we start at 7.45 pm. Beginners can continue to borrow woods until they find the best size and weight wood suits them.

Contact Tony Durbin, email [atdurbin@btinternet.com](mailto:atdurbin@btinternet.com) or telephone 01235 850035. Players are welcome from surrounding villages and Didcot.

## Village Clubs & Organisations

### **Blewbury WI**

Karen Brooks 850219  
[karencbrooks@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:fiona.coomer@gmail.com) 511809

### **Karate**

John Hogan  
[johnhogan67@icloud.com](mailto: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](mailto:tea-birdswi@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Theatre Club**

Malcolm Wright 850705

### **Upton Oil Syndicate**

Colin Batchelor 01491 672444

### **Upton Village Hall**

[www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk](http://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.

# Nottingham Knockers

*I am indebted to Jacqui Reid for highlighting this issue and to Thames Valley Police for the background...*

There have been reports of 'Nottingham Knockers' operating in the village in the past weeks.

## Who are they?

Young lads who go door to door, selling household products.

Often they have some form of ID which they display, but this is bogus. They may also hand over a card saying they are deaf/dumb/just out of prison/in the process of being reformed and working towards a better life.

The bag of household products is supplied by the man who employs them. Traditionally they came from Nottingham - hence the name, but now, they are recruited from anywhere.



## How does it work?

The lads are supplied with the full bag and charged a minimal sum for the contents. They can keep whatever they make above this amount.

Usually they are deposited in an area from a Transit Van and given a list of streets to work. An hour or so later they are picked up and dropped off in another location. They often work from 9am to 9pm.

They will knock on a door, offering cleaning items, they know to be rubbish, which the householder also knows to be rubbish. That is part of the scam. Many people will purchase items, and/or pay them something just to go away.

The price for whatever has been purchased usually comes to a note - usually £10. The householder disappears to get this - when the note is handed over, the lad examines the condition and how long it took the person to get it. If it is crumpled, they accept it and move on. If it is crisp flat and new - they are much more interested and may engage the person in more conversation, to obtain details about them. As they leave they will smell the note. If it is slightly musty - this is an indication that there is more in the property. Those addresses are noted. The addresses of elderly/vulnerable/gullible people are all noted.

These are handed to the employer and there is a small amount of cash handed over for each one. The addresses are then sold in prisons and pubs. If there is a later break-in, the employer expects a further cut of the proceeds. The lists are purchased by all sorts of people including tarmacers, tree workers, roofers, dodgy builders etc.

Once on a list, your address could be sold on and on, hence the repeat

nature of these persistent callers.

In almost every case of a stop check, the lads have long strings of convictions for burglary. They use the skills learnt during their criminal activity to identify possible targets.

N.B. If any salesperson comes to your door, we'd suggest you ask to see their Pedlar's certificate - these are only issued by the police to individuals under very strict conditions.

Please call 101 if you see these individuals in your area.

If they knock on your door, put your door chain on and politely say 'no thank you'.

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### ***St Mary's Services***

Thursday 24 December\* 4.00pm

CHRISTMAS EVE CRIB SERVICE.

A delightful start to Christmas, suitable for all ages. Children might like to come dressed as figures from the Nativity story.

Friday 25 December 9.00am

CHRISTMAS DAY - SUNG EUCHARIST

Sunday 27 December 10.30am

ALL AGE SERVICE

Sunday 3 January\* 9.00am

Sung Eucharist

Sunday 10 January 9.00am

Sung Eucharist

Sunday 17 January 9.00am

Sung Eucharist

Sunday 24 January\* 10.30am

CHRISTINGLE - ALL AGE SERVICE – collection will go to the Children's Society

Sunday 31 January 9.00am

Candlemas Sung Eucharist

\*Light refreshments will be served after the service.

Please see the porch notice for details of weekday services.

May we wish all parishioners a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year.

*Clare*

# Cricket on the Hearth

Here's a riddle - how long does it take for a one-off to become a tradition? I don't know the answer, but I'm rather hoping that because we have now twice had a dramatic reading of a Christmas story we are near to establishing it as an annual event.

Four years ago, I was sitting in St Michael's Church in Blewbury enjoying a spirited reading of "The Wind in the Willows", when it occurred to me that Upton had the talent to do something similar. In the past we had intermittent entertainments on a theme, a selection of readings and often music brilliantly devised by Peter Gardiner, and of course made all the better by home-produced food. In the mists of antiquity we had even had a revue or two, and even a selection of one-act plays. But the time and energy required to repeat such occasions seem no longer to be available; surely reading a story to a sympathetic audience was worth a try.

The first choice was obvious - an abridged adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, to be produced around the pantomime season. Despite the willingness and energy of the Burrows, we failed to produce even a cast in the first year, and abandoned it. In 2014, it happened, and although we knew we were under-rehearsed, and although it exhausted Hatty and Richard and their family, it was an undoubted success. We were inundated by requests from at least two villagers

for the date of the next performance.

I set about finding a suitable story. Thanks to the world wide web, I was able to research a huge number of possibilities. I wanted to keep to the Christmas period still, so that limited the subject matter. Many I rejected because they were patently religious, and I was looking for a broader base; some I abandoned because I didn't think we had enough readers who could manage the accents; some I felt too serious, others not serious enough. Eventually, I returned to the collection of stories usually titled the "Christmas Books". There I found "The Cricket on the Hearth", apparently more popular than "A Christmas Carol" when it first appeared, and with all the sentiment and humour and suspense expected of Dickens. It had been made into at least two films, but I did not trace a stage adaptation, so that I had to do myself. The original was 80 pages long, and I abridged about 3 pages a night - do the division! But a script was produced, which, much more by luck than talent, could be read aloud in about 90 minutes.

Casting and Rehearsals started in good time, but were plagued from the start. The only time all of the readers were present together was on the night of the performance! Three of the cast were on crutches on the night, one after an accident, one after an operation, one because she always is. Three original cast



had to drop out through illness - one returned to take a smaller part. One role was eventually played by our third volunteer; another took over a part without ever being able to attend a rehearsal.

So it could have been chaos. And yet, thanks to the quality and talent and dedication of all involved, and thanks to an audience who willingly suspended disbelief and allowed themselves to be entertained, it worked. We made over £200 for the Friends of St Mary's, the readers delighted in performing, and everyone who spoke to me enthused over the whole project. Granted, those who didn't like it probably kept quiet!

There are three more tales in the Dickens collection, and I'm reading at the moment a newly published book which the reviewer says is good for all children aged 9 to 90. So perhaps we shall be back in 2016 - and will our story-telling then be one of Upton's Christmas traditions?

*Malcolm Wright*

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## **Friends of St Mary's**

Lanterns lined the path from the gate of St Mary's on 12 December to make a festive entrance to the second annual Carols and Christmas Readings event and by 4 o'clock nearly 60 people filled the church.

Hearty singing of well-known carols must have raised the roof an inch or two - fortunately it seemed to settle back intact! And carols were interspersed with some well-chosen

readings on Christmassy themes delivered with style and panache by Simon and Hilary Powell, Malcolm Wright, Edward and Emily Betts, Paul Batho, and John and Jess Haworth. Congratulations to Jess for being both the creator and master of ceremonies and to Jessie and helpers for producing about 100 mince pies and some very fine mulled wine, which proved to be an excellent balm after the singing!

So we look forward to 2016 and some dates for future events. On Good Friday (25 March) we will be organising a walk, probably starting at East Ilsey and heading back across the downs to finish with tea and hot cross buns in St Mary's. Then in June we hope to have a well-known speaker to entertain us - date to be finalised, and in the meantime if anyone has suggestions for a possible presenter, please contact Paul on 851251. We'll have another event in the village hall on Saturday, 8 October - maybe another quiz, though there's talk of a Bake Off - keep the date free!

On the practical front, the contributions of Friends have met the cost of some essential electrical safety works in the church recently, now all successfully completed. And we are working on a project to improve the vestry with some much-needed catering facilities. More of this later, as well as an update on the longer-term proposals for installing a toilet in the church.

In the meantime, we wish all Friends of St Mary's and indeed all Uptonians, a very happy Christmas.

## *Notes from the Allotment*

So still no significant frost, despite it being nearly the middle of December, and lots of plants still flowering happily in the garden, including roses, lobelia and a stray clematis. But the sprouts still taste delicious, and we are trying them in a variety of ways apart from a quick boil, such as sliced and fried with flaked almonds, or cooked with walnuts. Sprouts also have another benefit, being chockfull of vitamin C (four times as much as an orange!), and are reputed to be particularly beneficial at protecting us against colon cancer. So don't just eat them on Christmas Day!

One last thing before I leave this most useful member of the brassica family, which is that if you want tight little buttons, don't use manure on the ground just before planting, make sure you do it some months before.

There are some fascinating new vegetables on offer in this month's Gardener's World Magazine that I have never heard of but aim to try next year; such as Achocha 'Giant Bolivian' which tastes like roasted green peppers, doesn't need a greenhouse and sends out hundreds of fruits; another interesting oddity is Chilli 'Rocoto', known as the Tree Chilli, which is perennial and apparently very fruitful when grown in a cold greenhouse - sounds irresistible. Buy them from Real Seeds.

I finally cleared the runner bean foliage today; I've learned more about the nitrogen containing nodules in their roots, which is that you need to replant the area with a new crop fairly soon to gain the benefit before the nitrogen leaches away.

I was pleased to see that two small clumps of rhubarb that I moved earlier in the year are still alive and have sprouted a little leaf, as has the main clump; I may cover one or both of them later on to force them for an early crop.

Another overdue job done today, pruning the gooseberry bushes; much easier to do when there are no leaves on them - cut away all inward facing stems and buds to make it easier to crop the fruit, which usually grows on the underside of the branches. Also remove any spindly little branches or ones that are crossing others, which helps to allow air to circulate and prevent diseases spreading.

I also gathered up all my tools and stacked them tidily in a bin; I haven't got round to sharpening them yet...another day!

*Angela Hoy*  
([angela.hoy@sky.com](mailto:angela.hoy@sky.com))

## VILLAGE PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

We concluded our 2015 programme with our Xmas Social - a very enjoyable evening was had by all, with lovely pizzas provided by The Blueberry - really delicious, plus lots of fun and games.

As you may already be aware, the VPA is not holding monthly meetings during 2016, but we have planned garden visits instead. The Programme of Outings and Events will be in the February Blewbury Bulletin and The Upton News. To enable you to make a note in your 2016 diary, the Garden Visits are listed below.

Saturday 16th April

Batsford Arboretum, Gloucestershire

Saturday 4th June

Hidcote Manor Garden & Kiftsgate Court Gardens,  
Gloucestershire

Sunday 4th September

Loseley Park, Surrey

Full details will be given two months before the date of each outing in the Blewbury Bulletin, Upton News and Blewbury Post Office to enable you to book your tickets one month in advance of the event.

Another important date is SATURDAY 9th JULY 2016 which is the day of the ANNUAL SUMMER SHOW.

There are many new residents in the villages who may be reluctant to take part in the Show - PLEASE DO! The Show has a long standing tradition and fosters pride and friendly competition. The Schedule is being re-designed and being made more user friendly. It will be available at the Blewbury Post Office and by e-mail ([vpa.in.bl.up@gmail.com](mailto:vpa.in.bl.up@gmail.com)) in early Spring.

Finally, the VPA Committee thank you for your support in 2015 and we are hoping it will continue in 2016. On behalf of the VPA Committee - HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.

**DID YOU KNOW:** John Evelyn, the influential gardener and garden writer of the mid-seventeenth century, leased his house, Sayes Court in Deptford, to Peter the Great of Russia for three months in 1698. He was horrified to discover the state of repair into which his garden had fallen when he returned. Peter the Great apparently enjoyed being transported in a wheelbarrow, in and around, through and over, Evelyn's immaculately laid-out plots!!

Happy Gardening

Eileen

## ***Upton Wine Appreciation Club***

December's meeting of the Upton Wine Appreciation Club had a (dinner) party atmosphere as members and their guests enjoyed eight fine wines from the Wine Society along with carefully chosen edibles. With each wine selected to accompany a different dinner party course, we started with a delicate (En Rama, Una Palma) Fino Sherry before enjoying a vintage dated English sparkling wine. From these benchmark aperitifs, we progressed to sample an Alsace Riesling and single-vineyard Soave, before pouring a reserva Rioja and ten-year-old Bordeaux Medoc. Wonderful wines all, but many members seemed to think that they were eclipsed by the Sauternes and twenty-year-old Tawny Port that rounded off the evening.

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 to 2016, our meetings continue on the third Wednesday of each month. Subject to final confirmation, we intend to enjoy:

- 20 January: Supermarket Sweep, looking for the best value wines available within a few miles of Upton.
- 17 February: Wines of Australia presented by Mike Collins, the club's first Chairman.
- 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, Chairman*

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## ***Oxfordshire Wheels 2 Work***

Oxfordshire Wheels 2 Work is an Abingdon based social enterprise that provides scooters and motorcycles to people to enable them to continue to work or attend education or training. The scheme will provide taxed, insured and fully serviced and maintained vehicles to people aged 16-19 living in the South and Vale districts of Oxfordshire for as little as £26 per week. Applicants below the age of 18 must have the consent of a parent or guardian.

For more details contact 01235 797474 or email [admin@oxfordshirewheels2work.co.uk](mailto:admin@oxfordshirewheels2work.co.uk)