

Upton News



Vol 5 No.46 May 2020

I have been surprised that I have not received a request from anyone who was getting a printed copy asking me to send them an email copy either on a temporary or permanent arrangement. I hope that in the end most of you who had been receiving a printed copy of the Upton News eventually received last month's edition in some form or another. We will be back delivering to you again as soon as possible but in the meantime if you would like an email copy please contact me.

An advantage of not having to stick strictly to the limit of 8 or 12 pages for the printed version does make compilation of the newsletter much easier and allows for the inclusion of items we would not normally be able to fit in so please send me anything that you think would be of interest to your fellow parishioners. This month you will see on Page 10 there is an interesting note on the Red Kites that we can see and admire so effortlessly drifting around the sky above our village.

Amidst all the gloom of the virus problem it is good for us to look for the positives and this year the spring flowers and the blossom have never looked better. They have, of course been helped by the incredible fine and warm weather that we have been enjoying (until the last two days) which have allowed the blooms to last longer than in the normal April weather. The sunshine has also helped raise our spirits to cope with the lockdown, can you imagine how much worse it would be if we were all stuck indoors watching the rain come down day after day instead of being able to sit out in the garden basking in the sunshine.

To many, another plus as a result of the lockdown is the reduction in traffic particularly at weekends. My thoughts are with all those whose livelihoods are being badly affected by not being able to drive around but it has been a positive to see so many families out walking and cycling and enjoying the countryside particularly during the last three weekends. Not only has it been safe to use the Chilton Road part of the local cycleway but whole families including young children have been out cycling along the A417.

A further positive of the lockdown is the way so many people are finding ways to use the latest technology to communicate. You will see below how the churchgoers in this parish are coping with their church being closed, how so many people are finding they are coping by working at home, how teachers are learning new skills to be able to teach our stay-at-home children and how so many more people are being able to see one another on a screen whilst having a meeting or just a chat. Hopefully this could change some working patterns in the future and result in a reduction in the number of car journeys which will be a benefit to our road network and in a small way to our planet. Lets look for the positives at this difficult time.

Editor Tel 850135 or kameki39@btinternet.com

Parish Council

The next Parish Council meeting is on Thursday 21st May at 7.30pm and will be held via an e-conference system. The agenda will be issued in due course and will be posted on the noticeboard and the village web site. Any parishioners wishing to join the meeting and contribute under the 'Open Forum', should contact the Clerk at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting, in order to receive joining details.

Both the Annual Parish and Annual General meetings are cancelled. All meetings will be held via e-conferencing until further notice.

Due to the circumstances we all find ourselves in, larger projects (play areas, car park extension) will not be discussed in any great detail right now. The council is looking at how to maintain the rec and other areas, whether that is with the help of volunteers, engaging a contractor, or a mixture of both.

Your Parish Council continues to operate with two councillor vacancies. This alone means that any work takes time. The current situation obviously does not help. Thankfully, your four councillors and Clerk are able to continue in their roles, keeping the council up and running.

The Parish Council sincerely hopes that you and yours are well and would like to extend its appreciation to the super work that the community group are doing for the community.

A councillor vacancy notice has been issued and is on the noticeboard and the web site. If you think you can help with the work of the Parish Council, please in the first email the Clerk on parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk or call on 07968772935. We would love to hear from you.

Liz

Clerk to Upton Parish Council

District Council

Hello! It's hard to believe we have already been in lockdown for over a month now. Although this continues to be a tough and unprecedented situation for everyone, it has been wonderful to see how all the residents in our communities have been looking out for one another and keeping spirits up. On the local Facebook groups it has been great to see neighbours donating plants and surplus supplies to one another, sharing tips on which small local businesses to buy from, and Chilton has even been doing weekly fancy dress when they put their bins out! Meanwhile, the fantastic volunteer support groups have been continuing to help people with food shopping, medicine delivery and other essential tasks. The council has had encouraging reports from these voluntary and community groups that they are feeling confident and able to provide ongoing support to the people that need it, and that they generally have plenty of volunteers to sustain their operations. Well done and thank you to all the hard-working volunteers in our local groups: Blewbury Good Neighbours, Harwell Helpers, Chilton Mutual Aid,

Great Western Park Community Support and the Upton Village WhatsApp group.

Community Support Update

If you or someone you know has been identified as extremely vulnerable by the NHS and have nobody around to help with day to day tasks like shopping, please call 01865 897820 or email shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk. Anyone in this situation that is not considered high risk can call 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk. These support lines are open 8.30am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturday and Sundays.

The Community Support Team at the Vale have also been working incredibly hard to respond to requests for help and match these up with local volunteer groups and support services. They have reported the following encouraging stats:

They have now referred over 452 residents to our network of volunteers across South Oxfordshire and the Vale since the Community Support service began less than a month ago.

They have also called over 537 residents on the shielded list to check if they needed additional or ongoing support.

Food remains the main area people require support. Last week we provided 37 food parcels to residents of both districts that had nobody else to turn to and where we weren't able to immediately refer them to a volunteer group.

This takes the total number of food parcels to 67 since launching the service, which has helped to feed 74 Adults and 22 children.

Waste Collections

The Vale of White Horse District Council has re-opened its paid-for bulky waste collection service for large household items. This service was temporarily stopped to allow the council's waste contractor, Biffa, to prioritise the important kerbside household collections while members of their waste collection crews were off sick or self-isolating. Biffa has now built up sufficient resilience in its workforce and can now provide the paid-for service again. The situation is being regularly monitored and residents should be aware that if staffing levels fall the service may need to be suspended again.

With household waste recycling centres still closed, there are clearly fewer places to dispose of unwanted items that do not fit into kerbside collections. However, the councils have issued a warning to anybody tempted to fly-tip - this includes leaving rubbish next to litter bins - they will investigate and prosecute anyone found to be responsible.

To book a collection please visit <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/your-recycling-and-waste-collections/bulky-household>.

Biffa has now built up sufficient resilience in its workforce to also enable the District Council to reopen its paid-for garden waste service to new

customers. For more details see the garden waste pages: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/recycling-rubbish-and-waste/garden-waste>

Council Tax

Where possible, you should continue to pay your bills as normal. Residents who are currently not being paid, and are struggling to pay their council tax bill, are encouraged to apply for Council Tax Reduction - their account will then be put on hold for 30 days while their application is processed: whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ctrs

Business Support

Businesses in the Vale of White Horse that are yet to submit their details for grant support in response to COVID-19 are being urged to do so as soon as possible via the form on the website: whitehorsedc.gov.uk/businessrates

Council Matters

Meetings: The government has temporarily removed the legal requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person during the coronavirus pandemic. Council officers and cabinet members at the Vale are currently investigating a suitable method of holding online meetings for members of the public and press to also attend whilst maintaining transparency, accessibility and accountability.

Planning: Leader of the Vale, Cllr Emily Smith has recently written to the Secretary of State for the Ministry for Housing and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP, to outline a number of concerns around the government's stance on targets for determining planning applications and the 5 Year Land Supply during the pandemic. You can [read Emily's letter here](#) and [the response from the Ministry here](#).

Parks: The district council has kept its parks open to allow people to do their daily exercise. Most residents are using our parks responsibly, however there are few who still aren't sticking to the government's social distancing restrictions. We've used a temporary, harmless chalk-based paint to spray some reminder messages on the footpaths near our park entrances.

The Motherkind Café

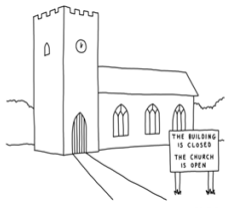
We can only imagine how challenging it must be to be in lockdown with young children or new-born babies right now. If you're in this position and would like to chat with some friendly faces who share what you're going through, search Facebook for [The Motherkind Cafe](#)

Take care, stay safe, stay home!

We will endeavour to keep you updated on the council's response to the Coronavirus COVID-19 through future newsletters and our dedicated councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne & Sarah Medley](#). Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any issues or concerns - our email addresses are hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and sarah.medley@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Sarah and Hayleigh

Church Notices



Upton Parish Church is part of the Churn Benefice. During the current lockdown our buildings must remain closed but the Church continues to be alive and active.

You can contact the Benefice clergy: -

Jason 01235 850267 office@churnchurches.co.uk

Louise 07837 009730 revlouiseb@aol.com

John 01235 512987 jphclarke@gmail.com

The Benefice Administrator, Dawn Saunders, is working from home with full access to Benefice emails during her normal office hours and can be contacted on the office email address office@churnchurches.co.uk

Provisional bookings for weddings, baptisms etc. may be made online by contacting the office via email.

The Churn newsletter and readings along with information about Benefice activities for the current week will be distributed by email. Please contact Dawn if you would like to receive them.

Online Services

Our regular worship continues online - Sunday mornings at 10.30am, login or connect from 10.00am to chat before the service and get ready. You can join in using a computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone or landline.

A short evening prayer service is also held on weekdays at 8.00pm.

Please see the Benefice website www.churnchurches.co.uk or the Churn, if you receive it, for the service access codes or telephone number to call and full details of how to join each week.

Ascension Day - Online Benefice Service

On Thursday 21st May at 8.00pm there will be an online Ascension Day Service, see the website or the Churn, if you receive it, for the service access code and details of how to join.

Short Daily Reflection and Prayer

During weekdays Fr Jason is writing a short reflection and prayer, if you would like to receive it please contact Dawn

Children's Worship Online

Rev'd Louise is organising occasional online children's worship. The next one 'Growing with Jesus' is on Wednesday 6th May at 4.00pm. Children are encouraged to show a growing plant, or perhaps the plan of a secret garden. Please contact Louise if you would like further information or would like to join the group.

CYGnet Youth Group

All young people of secondary school age are welcome to join the CYGnet Youth Group who are now meeting online usually on the 3rd Sunday of the month from 6.30pm to 8.00pm. For more information please contact Leslie - 07709 602923.

Mother's Union

The Churn Mothers' Union is working to raise funds for AFIA - a programme that offers holidays away for families who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford them. To raise the money, the MU is doing a 'sponsored card' event. MU members will make and send 100 cards in May to people who are helping out during the crisis or have been affected.

Could you sponsor us for 5 or 10p per card (£5 or £10 total)? Cash can be given in a sealed envelope, or cheque to "The Churn MU" and delivered to Revd Louise Butler, Penridge, Church Road, Blewbury, OX11 9PY. Bank transfers can also be made, please contact Louise for account details.

Christian Aid Week (11th to 18th May)

For obvious reasons, there will be no house to house collection this year. Anyone wishing to make a donation, though - and the needs of those that Christian Aid seeks to support are still there while our minds are focused on the pandemic - is asked to go via the website, because there is nobody in the office to deal with post.

Elisabeth and Malcolm Wright

Blewbury Post Office

The Post Office is open Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday mornings, 9.00am to 11.30am, the post is collected at that time. The refit has been delayed, it may happen in May or June, who knows?

We are experiencing high volumes of returns, we don't have enough space to store them until collection time, so we are limiting the number we can take. We have Kitty's eggs on sale, when closed, they will be on my doorstep, (Tadcombe, Besselslea) £1.50 for 6! Emergency gas/electric/phone top ups, cash etc, please ring my mobile 07825154842

Karen (Maggie and Carl in splendid isolation!)

Astons Online

Free IT advice for computer users is available every Tuesday morning from 10:00am to 12:00 noon. Advice is provided remotely using telephone, Facetime, Skype, Zoom, Teams or WhatsApp. Book a 30 minute appointment by emailing theastonsonline@gmail.com or, if this is not possible, by phoning 07780 958249.

We help users feel confident, effective and safe communicating with friends and family. Our advice deals with all types of computer, user and security issues by being friendly, informal and avoiding IT jargon. See www.astonsonline.uk for more information.

Rector's Note



The Gift of Friendship

Do you enjoy reading? One of the books which I'm reading at the moment is a biography of Aelred of Rievaulx. Who was Aelred of Rievaulx, you may well ask? Aelred was a monk who lived in the north of England in the 12th century; he's called Aelred of Rievaulx because he spent much of his life at the monastery of Rievaulx in North Yorkshire. The ruins of the abbey church survive to

this day, and they make an impressive sight.

Aelred was a deeply spiritual man, who wrote on many topics. We know quite a lot about him from his own writings and from a biography written by Walter Daniel, who was one of Aelred's friends.

One of the books which Aelred wrote was on the topic of Spiritual Friendship. People still read this book today - not bad for a book written over 800 years ago! Why is it still read? I think in part because people are rediscovering the importance of friendship, especially between adults. Modern society can find it difficult to accept that two adults can have a deeply affectionate but entirely non-sexual relationship. Pre-modern society was less constrained in its thinking about the nature of relationships between adults. And Aelred, as a monk, had years of experience reflecting on what it meant for adults to live together in the same community, day in and day out.

I think any time of crisis, in our own lives or in the lives of our communities, reminds us once again of the importance of friendship – friendship given, and friendship received. When everything is going fine, we can often be too busy to nurture our friendships. We know that we really ought to go and meet up with so and so, but somehow it never quite happens, especially if they live in another part of the country. We drop a card at Christmas or send an email, which is of course so much better than doing nothing, but find it so hard simply to spend time with our friends. Life is busy and we can't do everything.

I wonder who we would name as our friends? Not acquaintances, not people we happen to know, but our friends. I wonder how we might nurture these friendships? Is there something we could do today to give or receive the gift of true friendship?

Fr Jason

Citizen's Advice

We are still here to help in these difficult times but in order to reduce the chances of spreading the virus we are no longer offering face to face appointments. You are still able to talk to our advisors by phone 0300 330 9042 Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm.

For general advice please visit our website citizensadvice.org.uk

Village Produce Association

First, on behalf of the Committee, we hope everyone is well and avoiding Covid-19. Secondly, we would like to **Thank everyone**, everywhere, for keeping the country running which enables the rest of us to seek medical help and keep shopping at the supermarkets. **Thank you** to those who are emptying our bins regularly and those teachers helping workers' children to go to school while their parents work to save lives and the Police who protect us daily. **Thank you** to every other person that we don't really hear about who is working behind the scenes to keep us all safe.

In the last bulletin we hadn't decided about the Summer Show scheduled for July, but the decision has now been made to postpone the Show until next year. We did consider holding an autumn show but felt that everyone would have too many other things to worry about rather than a show. So the Schedule printed for this year will be used for the Summer Show on the 3rd July 2021.

Life on the allotment has been a bit traumatic. I have had a bad back for ten years and just over three weeks ago I set it off again and was unable to get treatment at the chiropractor. I began with loads of pain killers from the doctor but now just take them occasionally if it gets really painful. Unfortunately, at the moment, I can't bend but can manage to do things by standing up straight. I managed to plant my early potatoes by digging a trench with a special hoe and dropping the potatoes in place without trying to damage the shoots, then covering them with soil. Hopefully I'll be able to do the late spuds in a couple of weeks the proper way! All the seedlings are doing well in the greenhouse including broad beans, peas, sweetcorn, beetroot, borlotti beans - all will need hardening off and then planting out, hopefully my back will be well enough to get them in the ground in a couple of weeks.

The hens are doing well and have been treated to a new permanent dust bath instead of digging in the actual run. They now have a bright blue children's plastic sand pit which I've put in a shelter. They're definitely enjoying it and usually there's two at a time sharing it, although Borlotti seems to enjoy sun bathing in it on her own. At least they will now have a dry dust bath all year round. They didn't like the very windy weather we had recently as it ruffled their feathers but despite the mixed weather they have been laying well.

DID YOU KNOW? *If your potatoes happen to have caught the sunlight and turned green, you can still derive benefit from them by boiling them up and using the water, when cooled, as an effective insect repellent for spraying on plants..*

Happy Gardening and Keep Well

Eileen

Theatre Group

The production of “A Bunch of Amateurs” which we were hoping to see on 18th June has not yet been cancelled, but the Playhouse has told me that it may not go ahead. I will of course return all cheques and money already paid if it is cancelled. If anyone would rather not go anyway, do let me know.

Malcolm Wright 850705

Oil Syndicate

If you are in need of oil and want to be included in the May order, please let me have your individual instruction - i.e. X litres. If you want the tank filled to the top make a guess and add on a bit extra. Requests to be included need to be in by Saturday 9th May (at the latest) as the order will be placed on Monday 11th May. Please remind me if you are running very low and need to be treated as urgent.

As a guide for budgeting, the current price from Boilerjuice is 19.20 ppl (plus VAT and fees) for 1000 litres. Please note this may change (up or down) by the time we get to our order date. Remember the price is the same irrespective of the amount you require but the minimum order is 500 litres.

I am happy to take an instruction along the lines of X litres if the price is less than Y pence a litre, Z litres if its more than Y pence. The oil will probably be delivered before the end of May but will depend on the current workload of suppliers. Next delivery after May is scheduled for August 2020.

Colin—Tel 07776 188719

Karate

Despite the closure of the Village Hall all the Karate classes based in Upton are continuing online with students training 2-3 times a week. Thank goodness for the latest technology which is keeping both students and parents happy. For more information please contact me on 07548784929

John Hogan

A34 Closures

Please note parts of the A34 will be closed between 9.00pm and 6.00am on the following nights .

Monday 4th May for two nights - closure of the southbound carriageway from the A420 Botley Interchange to the A4130 Milton Interchange.

Monday 11th May for two nights - closure of the northbound carriageway from the A423 Hinksey Hill junction to the A44 Peartree Interchange.

Monday 18th May for four nights - closure of the southbound carriageway from the A4130 Milton Interchange to the M4 (Chieveley).

Thursday 21st May for one night - closure of the northbound carriageway from the A4185 Chilton Interchange to the A4130 Milton Interchange.

Saturday 1st June for two nights - closure of the northbound carriageway from the M4 Chieveley Interchange to the A4185 Chilton junction.

Red Kites

Almost every time you now look up into the skies over our village you will see the majestic sight of Red Kites gracefully soaring around with no more than just the occasional dip of a wing but in Victorian times they were almost wiped out in this country as they were considered to be vermin. Those that weren't shot or poisoned by gamekeepers supposedly protecting young game birds were often victims of egg collectors or taxidermist. In 1871 they were extinct in England and Scotland with just a few pairs surviving in remote parts of Wales. By the mid-20th century they were down to just a few pairs and inter-breeding was causing birds to be weak and easy victims of disease.

In 1989 conservationist began the long road back in this part of the country by introducing pairs from Spain and Sweden to a site in the Chilterns. The project was an immediate success and a decade later young birds were being taken to other sites across the country. The first birds appeared in this area in the late 1990s and now they are so common that it is not unusual to see as many as eight at a time, some soaring so gracefully that they ascend with the help of thermals to be just specks high in the sky. It is now estimated that there are about 2000 breeding pairs across the country.

Both birds build the nest high in a tree, 12-20m above the ground. It is constructed of dead twigs and often lined with dead grass and sheep's wool. The female lays a clutch of 2-3 eggs at 3-day intervals in April. She incubates, mainly alone, for 31-32 days per egg (38 days for a clutch of 3) with the male providing her with food during this time and food for both her and the chicks for the first two weeks after hatching. Thereafter both male and female bring food to the nest for the young birds to feed themselves. The youngsters leave the nest after about 7 weeks and you can hear them, resting on the ground or in trees, making their screeching call for their parents to bring more food but after a further 3-4 more weeks the parents will abandon them to look after themselves. Those individuals that reach maturity can expect to live an average of 10 years. The oldest known wild Red Kite was 26 years old.

Red Kites supposedly live almost entirely on dead animals and a few hundred years back were welcome for keeping the streets clean of dead rats and other animals, however, in hard times they are known to take living sitting birds and their youngsters and it was this that brought them into conflict with the gamekeepers. Their big problem at the present time is the illegal use of poisons left out for rats, foxes and crows where the kites seek out the dead bodies and succumb to secondary poisoning.

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to

kameki39@btinternet.com

Deadline for the June edition is

Tuesday 26th May