

Upton News



Vol 5 No.48 July 2020

It is good to see that the lockdown restrictions are steadily being lifted, I just hope that you all understand who you can bubble with and how many should be in your bubble. Hopefully our village hall will be back available for hire in the near future and our social activities can re-start. As for the Upton News, it is our intention that we go back to delivering paper copies of the next edition at the end of July.

My thanks to Chris Smith for his 'Memories of the Railway' (see page 9). I am very pleased to receive items of that type and if any of you can muster up something similar about the opening of the Coronation Field in 1953, the construction of the Village Hall and its opening in 1970, the blowing up of the Skew Bridge in 1968? or any village event of which you have interesting memories then please share them with us.

Other than knowing that it was the first serious outing for the new Didcot fire engine, little is recorded about the fire in 1933 that destroyed so many houses that our village could look totally different to the layout we now know. If anyone can put together an article about the disastrous event please send it along.

Editor

St Mary's Church

It's good to be able to announce that the church will reopen for private prayer from 9:00am to 5:00pm every Sunday and Wednesday, commencing from Sunday, 28th June.

The interior has been thoroughly cleaned and sanitised in accordance with government and church regulations. We have had to limit the areas open to visitors - please observe the rules displayed in the church porch.

Further announcements will be made as and when changing circumstances and regulations permit wider opening and the resumption of services.

Welcome back!

Jessie West and Paul Batho - churchwardens

Christian Aid

Thanks largely to some keen gardeners in Upton, I was able to send £260 to Christian Aid. Nothing like as much as we have managed from the house to house collections, but still a worthwhile amount. Thank you for your custom.

Malcolm Wright

Rector's Note



Making a Difference in the World

On the day I am writing this, the Church remembers Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. Samuel, with wife Henrietta, worked together as social reformers in late Victorian London. They worked tirelessly to improve the lives of the poor, especially in the East End. How did they do this? In lots of different

ways. They established evening schools for adults. They encouraged the building of decent housing. They encouraged existing charities to co-ordinate their activities. They encouraged University students from wealthy and privileged backgrounds to come and live for a while alongside the poor, to better understand the challenges faced by the poor in their everyday lives.

Samuel died in 1913, and in his memory some friends set up Barnett House in Oxford. Barnett House is now the University of Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Intervention. The work of this Department seeks to improve social policy, social intervention and social reform. Note the word "improve". Many individuals, charities and Government departments are committed to caring for the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. But what's the best way of helping others? How can we improve the effectiveness of our interventions?

Both Samuel and Henrietta were motivated by their Christian faith. Jesus instructed his followers to love God, and to love their neighbour. This is exactly what Samuel and Henrietta did - they loved God and loved their neighbour, with all their soul and heart and mind.

I wonder how we might best support the poorest and most vulnerable in our own society? Here are a couple of suggestions. The first is something fairly simple: we could donate to our local foodbanks, or if we already donate, we could see if we could be more generous in our donations. The second suggestion is that we could try and find out more about the nature and causes of poverty in the UK, and to try and understand more about the policy issues. This is a huge and complex area, but I would recommend looking at the work of two particular charities: The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and The Trussell Trust.

I wonder what Samuel and Henrietta Barnett would say to us today, as we try to tackle poverty and injustice in our own society?

Fr Jason

Parish Council

Upton Parish Council (UPC) continues to meet via e-conferencing and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 23rd July at 7.30pm. Anyone is welcome to join the meeting if you inform the Clerk at least 24 hours before the meeting starts.

As reported in the last update, UPC is keen to continue looking at how facilities can be improved in and around the recreation ground. The fence at the back of the recreation ground is in a poor state and a suitable replacement fence is under investigation. The play areas remain out of use until further notice.

On a more pressing matter, it remains distressing to see the amount of detritus that continues to be left on the recreation ground. It seems the bins get full very quickly and the recreation ground then becomes the bin. I know there are a lot of visitors from outside the village but if you take things with you to the recreation ground, then you must take them home with you. It is a fact that some villagers take bin bags to the rec as a matter of course to pick up what is left behind by the thoughtless. Any suggestions as to possible remedies gratefully received.

The village community support group continues to look after those in need at this time. Additional support for anybody is also available from the District Council on 01235 422600 or at communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk.

Please watch out for the minutes of the recent UPC meeting on the village web site.

Any suggestions, concerns, questions or queries about your Parish Council, it's work or how you can help, please contact the Clerk on parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk or 07968772935.'

Liz Cooper- Clerk to Upton Parish Council

District Council

Hello! It is still hard to believe how much things have changed in the past three months. Just as we had started to adapt to lockdown life, it seems that the Government are now easing the restrictions at pace. As we try and adapt to the "new normal", we hope that you and your families are keeping well, staying safe and taking on the changing situation at a pace which suits you. We're now likely looking ahead at a summer period without the usual village events that we all so enjoy - last year's Upton Village Fete already seems like a distant memory! However, we hope that Upton residents are still able to make the most of the sunny weather over the next few months, by spending quality time with family and friends in a socially distant way.

As the council itself is now also returning to a new kind of normal, we've decided to stop our regular coronavirus-focused updates and return to our monthly updates in the form of newsletter articles and parish council

reports. We will of course continue to keep you updated on the council's response to COVID-19 through these monthly updates, as well as on our dedicated councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne & Sarah Medley](#). As always, 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.

Community Hub

Whilst we don't know how long the UK's response to and recovery from COVID-19 will take, we do know it's likely to be some time so the Vale of White Horse District Council is making some changes to its community hub services to make sure the response is sustainable over the coming months: Lines will now be open from Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm.

Both the staff and community groups have responded positively to the challenges of this crisis to make sure our vulnerable residents receive the support they need. Amazing work is being done by the volunteer groups in our communities as well as the staff at the Vale who have done what they always do, which is pull together, be solution focussed and support each other.

To contact the Community Support Team:

call: 01235 422 600 or email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk.

Remember, for the most up-to-date coronavirus information relating to district council support and any changes to services, please take a look at the dedicated Vale webpage for updates: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid19

Volunteers' Week

1st-7th June was National Volunteers' week and this year more than ever before, we have seen the positive impact that volunteers can have on our local communities. Within days of lockdown starting, charities and voluntary groups in our districts were helping those in need. As it became clear more support was required hundreds of residents set up informal help groups in their local communities to make sure their most vulnerable and isolated neighbours were able to get help. They used the powers of social media to recruit other volunteers and to get the message out to those who needed it. They also used more traditional methods to reach people, such as telephone calls, door-knocking and posting home-made leaflets through their neighbours' doors. There's no doubt these local heroes have saved lives in their communities - they have been the backbone of the country's response to the crisis.

Black Lives Matter

The deeply saddening news from the US about George Floyd's murder, and what it represents, sends a clear message that racism still runs deep within society and our communities. For us personally, this event, and the reaction to it, has given us a chance to stop, reflect and really think about what we

can do in our roles as part of this agenda. It is our duty. We all need to stop, to listen and to educate ourselves, to play our part in shaping a fairer society.

Back in December 2019, the Vale of White Horse District Council passed a motion to update their equality policy to condemn all hate crimes and to adopt the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition of anti-Semitism, and the APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group) definition of Islamophobia. At the time, Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne gave a speech in support of the motion, using the opportunity to reflect on her personal experience of racism. The video of Hayleigh's speech is publicly available on our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/HayleighAndSarah/videos/302932501103708/>

At the Vale of White Horse District Council, we believe in equality, fairness and inclusion. Passing this motion was just a small part of a bigger picture. A recent letter from both South and Vale district council leaders highlights that we are fiercely committed to giving a voice to and representing all who suffer discrimination, persecution, hatred or injustice. The letter can be read online at <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2020/2020-06/open-letter-leaders-south-and-vale-district-councils>

Council Tax Support

There are approximately 6,000 residents in both South and Vale who have missed the latest payment on their 2020/21 council tax bill - this excludes those who currently receive council tax support.

The council is sending letters to these residents to make them aware of the outstanding payment and to encourage them to get in touch if they're experiencing financial difficulties. There's a number of options available to residents that may be struggling to pay their bill such as changes to payment arrangements, by direct debit instalments, or applying for council tax support. Residents that currently receive a reduction on their council tax (through the councils' Council Tax Reduction Scheme) will receive up to a further £150 off their 2020/21 council tax bill. We are currently writing to eligible residents to let them know.

More information on the support available to help people pay their council tax can be found on our [Vale](#) website. Above all, our message to anyone who is struggling to pay remains that they should contact our council tax team as soon as possible to discuss the support available - call 0345 302 2315 for the Vale team.

Scams Awareness Campaign, 15th-28th June

The council is helping to raise awareness of some advice and guidance to help protect residents against a high number of scams currently taking place. Oxfordshire trading standards are running a social media campaign to advise residents on how to stay alert and what to look out for to avoid being scammed, so please help to spread these messages as well. Citizens Advice has also put together an up-to-date list of scams to look out for, particularly Covid-19 related ones. You can find out more [here](#).

Air Pollution Reduced

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have announced that following lockdown the lack of traffic and the increase in walking and cycling has helped improve the local air quality across southern Oxfordshire. There has been a marked reduction in air pollution in our districts - down by nearly 60 per cent in one location.

Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne and Sarah Medley

Worship with Children



Once a month, the Churn Benefice holds online worship for children. The "Pram Service" has been remodelled to include children of primary school age. These short services are led by Revd Louise.

Our July session on the ZOOM platform with Revd Louise - will take place on Wednesday 1st July at 4.00pm.

It will be "party time" to celebrate and say thank you for all our blessings! Get ready with party hats, cakes and balloons. We meet and greet at 4.00pm, start our short service with songs, games, story and prayers at 4.10 and say our goodbyes at 4.30. Suitable for pre-school and primary age children. Revd Louise will send the link to Zoom by email. If you want to join this group, please send your contact details to Revd Louise Butler on 07837 009 730 or email revlouiseb@aol.com

Teddy Bears Picnic

The annual Teddy Pairs Picnic for families with young children, together with older brothers and sisters, is normally held at lunchtime on the first Wednesday of August. This year the date would be 5th August. At the time of writing it is not possible to say if this type of social gathering will be permissible. A notice will go out towards the end of July through email groups and the Churn website. If you would like to be notified individually, please send your contact details to Revd Louise Butler on 07837 009 730 or email revlouiseb@aol.com

Astons Online

Free IT advice for Upton computer users is available every Tuesday morning from 10:00am to 12:00noon. 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.

Cycling in the Future

Residents of all ages can look forward to a step-change in cycling infrastructure aimed at making this green form of transport safer and more attractive for a range of journeys across Oxfordshire.

A series of bold plans by Oxfordshire County Council, combined with a £2.9m two-stage Government grant, will transform residents' experience of cycling as part of a move to support active and healthy travel combined with a firm commitment to cutting carbon emissions and air pollution.

The popularity of cycling has soared since lockdown began in March. The council is determined to build on this trend and to ensure that the related reduction in air pollution (which is down by as much as 64% in some parts of the county) is sustained in the future.

The active travel fund will allow Oxfordshire to address some of the key factors that deter people from cycling and encourage more journeys by bike. Current measures include prioritising road space for bikes to improve road safety; improving signage and road markings for cycle lanes; and creating more cycle parking in all market towns and Oxford. The next stage of the funding will include more 20mph zones to improve road safety where residents want them.

The first phase of the funding is being concentrated over an eight-week period. The steps taken include:

- More purpose-built cycle parking areas, particularly in market town squares, close to rural bus stops, and at park and rides

- More priority given to cycles, from changes to traffic light timings to prioritise people travelling by bike to adapting the road network to allow more space for bikes

- An upgraded maintenance scheme for cycle paths and cycle routes, with improved signage and route markings

The County Council is also working on an exciting programme of structural improvements to support cycling and walking well beyond the active travel fund. As part of the [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#), the county is working with the district and city councils on a series of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). Didcot, Bicester and Oxford will be the first locations in the county to benefit from them.

The LCWIPs will mean a cycle network for each town, with numbered cycle routes, including links to villages and towns within easy cycling distance. They will also include measures to improve pedestrian access to the main shopping centres.

Work on the Icknield Greenway, the cycle route linking Wantage to Harwell business park, started on 26 May and is due to be completed on 16 October. The route is one of six key corridors linking Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre with Didcot, Abingdon and Wantage, and is part of the [Science Vale Cycle Network Project](#). This major scheme is designed to provide improved facilities for journeys by bike and on foot and to encourage sustainable travel across the area.

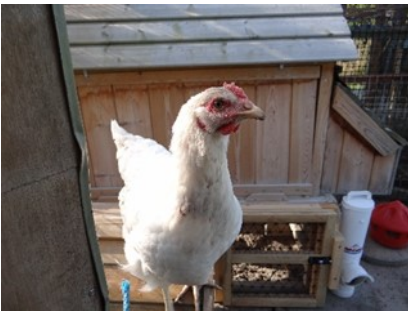
Village Produce Association

Gosh, we're halfway through 2020 and we now have the Government giving us 'Bubbles'!! How do you choose who you want to bubble with? Life is so complicated. On behalf of the VPA I hope everyone is keeping well and safe. Although I live in Didcot I do take trips to Savages in Blewbury as I love their fruit and veg. Can I say what a wonderful job they are doing with social distancing and thank you to everyone there who are working so hard to provide us with lovely fruit and veg - the large oranges have been delicious.

To update you with VPA activities. Given the lockdown, you know we have had to cancel the Summer Show scheduled for the 4th July. However, our Xmas Social at Upton Village Hall in December is still in the diary and instead of the usual quiz and games we plan to hold a skittles evening with a meal, but we will have to be guided with what happens with Covid-19 over the coming months.

Well, there's not a lot I can tell you about the VPA at the moment - so I hope you enjoy hearing about life on the allotment in Didcot.

I guess everyone's garden and/or allotment is now in pristine condition with not a weed in sight!! But, where's the rain we keep being promised? - we've had a day of rain but need plenty more. My allotment is doing quite well under the circumstances. I've picked some early broad beans and peas and had some early potatoes. There was not a huge number of potatoes on the plant but they were very tasty. I'm also picking beetroot which I love and some spinach, which, because of the hot weather is running to flower quite quickly - but the hens love them, so I'm not too bothered. I can't make out what's happening to the courgettes - they are growing well and I have some small courgettes, but they seem to have stopped growing during the past week - I think they need real rain instead of tap water. The hens are still laying well but don't like the really hot weather. They do have a lot of shady areas in their inner run and it's amazing how cool it is in there. They are digging huge dust baths in their run and sitting in them. They still enjoy their kiddies paddling pool (converted into a dust bath) and one evening I found all four of them sitting in it!



This is Pumpkin, she was 22 weeks old last September when I got her with Shallot and Borlotti. They have been given their names as they live on the allotment and it's some of the vegetables I grow. Her breed is called a Sparkly - she has a creamy coloured neck and a white body with brown 'sparkles' on her wings and chest. Pumpkin is the only hen which will allow me to stroke her and pick her up. I think it's because she was bullied - still is a little bit - and I

protected her. She is the nosiest of them all and gets into everything, including the shed to try and get to the treats

Last month I said I would let you know how I managed my 'Zoom' meeting with the Thames Ridge Scouts District Executive Committee - well it went OK and we had a productive meeting. Thames Ridge District is Didcot and Abingdon combined and includes Blewbury, Upton, Chilton and Harwell and (of course) Didcot and Abingdon. For those of you with youngsters in Scouting, if you go to thamesridgescouts.org.uk and click on the Covid-19 icon you will find lots of activities for them to do. A slight digression from gardening - but could be useful for your Scouting children/grand children who are not at school.

DID YOU KNOW? Lavender, (Lavandula), comes from the Latin Lavare, 'to wash', because its oils were often used in cleaning clothes AND to make one and a half pounds of Lavender Oil, you'll need to harvest almost a quarter of a ton of flowers..

Happy Gardening, keep safe and enjoy your 'bubbling'

Eileen

Recycling

Thousands of residents in southern Oxfordshire have found their recycling bins unemptied each week because they have put the wrong things in them.

Putting non-recyclable items in recycling can contaminate a whole truckload, which is then rejected at the recycling facility. This turns neighbours' recycling into rubbish and ultimately wastes energy and raw materials by removing these items from the recycling process.

Bin crews in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts have stepped up monitoring of recycling bins in recent months. During one week of recycling collections in the past month there were 3,801 reports of wrong items found in recycling bins in South Oxfordshire and 2,211 reports of wrong items found in recycling bins in Vale of White Horse.

To remind residents about what can (and can't) be recycled, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils have devised a new recycling quiz available here

<https://survey.southandvale.gov.uk/s/TheGreenRecyclingBinQuiz/>

My Memories of Upton Railway.

It was in 1958 that my Parents moved from living in Didcot to Upton village and we lived in the house called Dulce Domum which was connected to the village shop. I was a little under 11 years old and just about to start Senior School so moving to a new home meant new places to explore. Two places that I became very interested in were the Upton Railway Station and the adjacent Coal Yard.

The Station was manned by two people, the Station Master was Teddy Keep who was also the Signaller, the other was Harry Webb who if I remember correctly was the Porter. I used to go into the Signal Box with Teddy Keep

which I am sure was not really allowed, but he was happy as long as I did not touch anything. At this time it was all Steam Engines that pulled the trains and I still clearly remember the times when 'City of Truro' came through. This famous locomotive was the 2000th loco to be built by the Great Western Railway at the Swindon Works and was also thought to be the first to be recorded to reach a speed of 100 mph. It is now safely in preservation but may never be put in steam again.

The other area where I spent a lot of time was in the Coal yard which covered the area now occupied by Beeching Close, named after Dr Richard Beeching the man whose report resulted in the government closing the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton line and many, many others. This yard was run by the Roberts Brothers, Lionel and Cyril.

There was a rail siding located on the eastside of the coal yard next to the Recreation Ground (then known as Coronation Field) and trucks containing the coal were shunted in and left to be unloaded. There was also a large Nissen type building which was their workshop. The coal was dropped from the underside of the trucks onto a series of conveyor belts which took the coal up into an overhead hopper which was high enough for the lorries to drive under. When a coal truck was empty a heavy chain was connected and simply pulled along by one of the coal lorries to get the next truck in position to unload.

The Roberts Brothers operated a pair of old Scammell Rigid 8 lorries fitted with large open bodies complete with greedy boards. They were 8 wheelers with twin front steering axles, the drive being to the leading rear axle. They could if weather conditions were bad enough drive both rear axles with the fitting of heavy duty chains joining the two axles together, very crude by modern standards. On a cold winters morning it was not unusual to see a fire lit under the diesel tank of the lorry to help them start in cold conditions, maybe they did not have summer and winter diesel back then.

Once the lorry was loaded it was driven out of the yard towards the Station House then reversed out onto what was a fairly steep hill up to the skew bridge which carried the A417 over the railway line. Using crawler gears these heavily loaded lorries slowly moved towards the top of the hill and the bridge, probably at no more than walking pace. Once over the bridge they were away towards Chilton and their final destination of UKAEA Harwell to supply coal to run the boilers on the site where I spent the whole of my 52 year working life. Great memories of a small number of characters linked with the history of Upton.

Christopher Smith.

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to

kameki39@btinternet.com

Deadline for the August edition is

Monday 27th July