

Upton News



Vol 5 No.53

December 2020

To All Our Readers we wish you a



Covid Help Available

The United Charities of Blewbury, Aston Upthorpe and Upton (UCAB) has been allocated money from the District Council to support people who have been negatively affected by the COVID pandemic and are, for example, in need of support for food and other basic essentials. If you would like to follow this up, there are applications forms in Blewbury Post Office. We are more than willing to help with filling these in if required or if you would simply like to message me as a next step that's absolutely okay too.

email: carolwalker21@btinternet.com or telephone 07773001385.

All requests are dealt with in absolute confidence.

Carol

Christian Aid Week

Of course you missed the House to House Collection this year, but Christian Aid have just announced that nearly £4 million was raised digitally. Thank you to those who contributed by buying plants or sending money direct.

Elisabeth and Malcolm Wright

St. Mary's Memories Christmas Tree



Make a memory of a loved one and hang it on the tree in the Church porch from December 13th to the 24th using the card provided.

If you would like to make a donation to Church funds please leave your gift in the box in the church which will be open all day on Sundays and Wednesdays.

For more information please contact Clare on 850486

Church Services

Online church services will continue on Sundays at 10.30am, login or connect from 10.00am to chat before the service. Please see the website for the service access codes and full details of how to join each week.

During weekdays Fr Jason is writing a short reflection and prayer. If you would like to receive this, please contact the office. Tel: 01235 850267 or office@churnchurches.co.uk

Carol Service by Candlelight

The Carol Service will now be held on 6th December at 6.00pm in St Michael's Church Blewbury. To ensure there is social distancing in the church, you must notify the Benefice Office if you wish to attend and avoid the disappointment of being turned away at the door. Face coverings must be worn. Contact: office@churnchurches.co.uk, 850267 or the Administrators mobile 07434 686044.

Christmas Pram Service

The Christmas Pram Service will be held on Wednesday 9th December at 12.30pm in St. Michael's Church Blewbury

There will be a short service to include the nativity story, a Christmas activity, prayer and music for all pre-school children. Bring a RUG to mark your safe space and your own lunch or order 'Happy Meal' lunch boxes from Revd Louise 078387 009 930. Adults, please wear a face covering.

St Mary's Christmas Services

You will appreciate that services for this Christmas will not be as normal but we aim to retain some awe and wonder.

The Nativity Play on December 24th at 4.30pm will take place outside in the grounds of the church, where provision will be in place to safe distance family 'Bubbles'

The story will be presented in a different way through Gabriel, the wise men and shepherds, and the church porch will be turned into the stable.

Warm drinks and light refreshment will be served throughout as we will not be allowed to socialize at the end.

Christmas Morning 9.00am, it is not yet known how many we will be allowed to have inside the building. We have in the past been able to welcome many visitors and we would still hope to do so.

It would help to know in advance the numbers to expect so we would appreciate your getting in touch to book into the service as soon as you are able. Thank you

Jessie 850206, Paul 851251, Clare 850486

Parish Council

Parish Plan Questionnaire

Upton Parish Council undertook a survey at the start of November as the preliminary part of the Parish Plan which it aims to launch in April 2021. Of the 173 houses in the Village, a total of 109 replies were received (106 by the advertised deadline of 18 November and a further 3 received by 24 November). The Parish Council is delighted by the overall response rate and thanks everyone for taking the time and trouble to respond.

Of the total replies received, 101 were returned via the on-line survey attached to the e-copy of Upton News but of the 70 printed copies sent out with the Upton News only 8 were returned.

The data from the Survey was qualitative in nature with no leading questions:

What do you like about Upton?

What do you dislike about Upton?

What would you suggest to improve Upton?

Responses have been compiled and a full list is available on request from the Clerk. Please note that all responses are anonymous

The questions included in Part 2 The Upton Parish Plan Questionnaire (link attached and the hard copy for those who receive it) are derived from the data raised by the Survey and will enable the UPC to form a plan to progress villagers concerns in a meaningful way.

Please kindly click on the link to the Questionnaire and help us by spending a few minutes to complete it and return it by 18th December 2020.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JH976KQ>

This will help the Parish Council to determine the priority of future plans and 'lobbying' on behalf of the Village.

Chilton Road

The Parish Council would like to clarify that Chilton Road has not been permanently closed. The current situation is that the County Council have closed the road temporarily to assess the effect that it has on traffic movements in the area with a view to possibly closing it permanently sometime next year in order to make it safer for cyclists to use as part of National Cycleway 544.

Upton Parish Council understand that in the next few months the County Council will publish their proposed plan for permanent closure which we are led to believe will include a pedestrian crossing across the A417, something that was requested in our Parish Plan of 2015.

The Parish Council intend in the meantime to hold a local consultation before deciding what action it will take in backing or opposing the plan or

asking for modifications. Preliminary investigation has already taken place in the form of the Survey last month and more information will be gained from the Upton Parish Plan Questionnaire included in this month's edition of Upton News.

The final part of the closure consultation will be a public consultation to which everyone will be invited to submit their thoughts and opinions direct to the Oxfordshire County Council, the result of this consultation will decide whether the road is re-opened or permanently closed.

Ben Shaw

Chairman Upton Parish Council

District Council

Hello! We hope that you and your families are still staying safe and well, as we emerge from the second national COVID-19 lockdown. For many reasons, this winter period has been extra tough on many residents and businesses, so we would like to remind everyone that the council's support services are available for anybody who needs help. More details are provided below, but the key message to anybody who is unsure if they need help, or if they're unsure if the councils can help, is if in doubt, get in touch.

As we approach the end of 2020, we'd like to thank the residents of Upton for your ongoing support for each other and the wider community throughout the pandemic. It's great to hear that the village WhatsApp group is still going strong as a way for neighbours to help each other, and we would like to commend the hard work of the United Charities of the Ancient Parish of Upton (See Page 1) and of course the Upton Parish Council in serving and supporting the parish. We would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone in Upton a very happy Christmas; we hope that you and your families are able to enjoy the festive season and get some much needed rest and relaxation at the end of a very challenging year. With the hope of a vaccine in 2021, we wish you a bright and promising new year.

COVID-19 Community Support Hub

The councils' Community Hub, which has been up and running since the first lockdown in March, is on hand to answer calls and emails from people struggling to access support and essentials during the lockdown and have nobody else to turn to. The Community Hub can put people who need help getting essentials in contact with community groups and volunteers providing doorstep support in their neighbourhoods. The councils also have some practical support available for eligible people facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

To contact the Community Support Team:

call: 01235 422 600 Monday to Thursday 8.30-5pm and Fridays 8.30-4.30pm

email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

or fill in an online form at: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub

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

Supermarket Vouchers for Individuals and Families.

If you come across someone or a family struggling to afford food or other essential supplies, please put them in touch with Citizens Advice or Wantage Independent Advice Centre. They will look to provide them with a package of advice and support to help them in the longer term, and for those who meet the eligibility criteria in urgent need, they may be able to provide a supermarket voucher to help in the immediate short term.

- Citizens Advice - 0300 3309042 (South and Vale)
- Wantage Independent Advice Centre - 01235 765348 (Vale)

Self-isolation grants available for those who can't work.

Support grants of £500 are available for people on lower incomes who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Track and Trace, and as a result can't work and have lost income. We are managing the application process for the grants. Further information about it is on our website [here](#).

Business Support.

The councils also provide a local support service for businesses in the districts worried about the impact the lockdown will have on their operations, providing helpful guidance and pointing them in the direction of the support that is available - see svbs.co.uk.

Objections to Proposed Planning System Reforms.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have written separate letters to Robert Jenrick objecting to many of the Government's proposed reforms to the current planning system. The Government's proposed changes were outlined in the [Planning for the Future white paper](#). You can read our full response here: [Vale letter](#)

Tree Planting Guide

As suggested by the Vale's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, the council's Specialist Planning team have created a handy [Tree Planting Guide for Community Groups](#). This can be found on the following dedicated webpage, alongside useful advice on Tree Protection Orders: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/wildlife-trees-and-landscape/trees/>

As always, we will keep you updated on council matters and the council's response to COVID-19 through these newsletter articles, as well as on 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

Rector's Note



It's Different This Year

I wonder if you have started to think about your plans for Christmas yet? I'm writing this piece in mid-November, and at the time of writing I think none of us quite know what the next month will bring. The current lockdown is due to end in early December, but what comes next? A return to the "rule of 6"? Will there be new restrictions? No one knows. But one thing we can all agree upon is that Christmas will be different this year.

Sometimes we can assume that "different" means worse, but this isn't necessarily so. Yes, Christmas will be "different", but "different" doesn't necessarily mean worse. It simply means different.

I wonder what's most important to you about Christmas? I was chatting to someone this morning and asked them what was most important to them. They replied that what mattered to them was time with family. They were particularly looking forward to time with their daughter, who was currently away at University.

Time spent with family is really important for many people, especially at Christmas time. There are other things which can be important, such as putting up the decorations, and enjoying seasonal food. And of course there's Christmas music, too. As you might or might not know, music plays a huge part in my life. One of my Christmas traditions is to start the season off by listening to Handel's Messiah. I have already started singing Christmas carols, and soon I shall be playing some of my Christmas CDs!

And for many people, Christmas is also about Carol Services and perhaps going to a Crib Service or to Midnight Mass. Here in our churches, we are planning to hold a variety of special Christmas services, some of which will be online and some of which will take place either in the churches themselves or outside. Do check our website for the latest details (always good to check, as we always comply with the latest Government regulations, and these can change!).

So, yes, Christmas will be different this year. But it will still be Christmas. It will be an opportunity to celebrate, once again, the birth of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see the light of God's love shining out in the darkness of sorrows and our fears. In Jesus, we have hope for the present, and for the year ahead.

Father Jason

 <p style="text-align: center;">Foot Care</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Mobile Foot Clinic for Upton</p> <p>Treatment provided in your own home for Routine Foot and Nail Care Toenail Trimming Corn and Callous Removal Diabetic Foot Care Contact Jill Allen DipFh MCFHP MAFHP Foot Health Practitioner 07767763441 or 01235 815917</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Gary Cuddon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9 Harwood Road East Hagbourne Painter and Decorator Providing a High Quality Service Free Quotations Fully Insured Tel. 01235 510680 or 07827752904</p> 
<p style="text-align: center;">Scotlands Ash Garage</p> <p>Main Street West Hagbourne Oxford's award winning local Independent Garage MOTs from 6.00am by appointment Vehicle Servicing and Repairs Tyres, Clutches and Exhausts Paint and Bodywork TerraClean Service Free Courtesy Car Tel. 01235 850707 enquiries@scotlandsashgarage.co.uk</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Savages</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Family Nursery, Florist, Gift and Farm Shop</p> <p>Visit Savages to discover fresh quality fruit and veg, home grown plants, flowers, giftware and foods The Nurseries, London Road, Blewbury 01235 850352 shop@savagesblewbury.co.uk</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LJD Bell Plumbing & Heating Services</p> <p>All Domestic Plumbing and Heating Work Undertaken</p> <p>A1 High Efficiency Boilers Fitted Gas Appliances Fitted and Serviced (Inc LPG) Landlord Gas Safety Check and Certificates Aga/Rayburn Servicing Fully Insured Water Safe Approved Operative CIPHE Registered Plumber</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mobile 07555100848 ljd-bell-plumbing-heating@outlook.com</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">N Drum</p> <p>Landscaping, Fencing and Maintenance Garden and Grounds Maintenance Hedge Planting and Cutting Grass Cutting and Turfing Power Washing and Winter Gritting Licensed Waste Carrier Fully Insured Tel. 01235 859229 or 07922701634 n drumlandscaping@gmail.com</p> 

Theatre Group

Seasonal greetings and good wishes to everybody in the Group, and a Better New Year. If the vaccines become available in good time, perhaps we can resume business. I've missed our outings. I haven't dared to go anywhere, but if you are bolder than I am, there are some excellent programmes from The Watermill, the Playhouse and the Newbury Corn Exchange still being advertised.

Malcolm Wright

Astons On Line

Free and friendly help for computer users is available every Tuesday morning from 10:00am to 12:00noon. We provide help remotely using telephone, Facetime, Skype, Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp or whatever is best for you. Book a 30 minute appointment by emailing theastonsonline@gmail.com or, if this is not possible, by phoning 07780 958249.

Join in an online meeting 10:30am - 11:15am on Tuesday 8th December to exchange good ideas about Christmas online including carol services, pantomime, Zoom Christmas lunch, shopping and seasonal scams. Book a place using the email address above.

Please see www.astonsonline.uk for more information.

Bruno

Vale of White Horse Active Communities

With restrictions lowering from the 2nd December, we are able to restart a limited amount of activities again. As Government guidelines can change quickly again, we advise you to keep a look out on our [website](#) for up to date information on our activities. We are committed in ensuring all our activities adhere to the Government guidelines at the time and make sure all participants feel safe to enjoy the activity.



Could you volunteer to lead activities such as a Health walk, Nordic walk, Buggy walk or a Running Group? With free training provided, we can help set up a session near you and help bring the local community together. Please contact us for more information.

We have updated our online sessions list from local instructors so please visit our

website for links. We have ensured our Health Walks have safety measures in place so that you can feel safe and enjoy the walk, including a maximum number of walkers.

Please visit our [walk page on the Walking For Health Website](#) for up to date information on the walks.

We have created a online advent calendar to give you ideas to be more active before Christmas. Each day opens up a new window to find a mixture of activities, including active sessions and relaxation or mindfulness activities. [Click here to access the Advent Calendar](#)

Garage Wanted

Wanted to rent, a secure dry garage in Upton for the storage of a classic car. Please contact Neil Thorpe 01235 850756

HUGS

More trees, thanks!

It's National Tree Week, so it's very fitting that there'll be 400 new trees planted across the 3 villages following our 'More trees, please' campaign.

Thanks very much if you've found space for one tree (or a whole bunch). And if you were already at full capaci-tree, don't worry, the Woodland Trust has agreed to supply Upton with 400 native trees to plant our own 'tiny forest'.

The plan is to use a method pioneered in Japan in the 1970s, and successfully deployed in the last couple of years in the Netherlands and Witney! It involves putting in trees very densely - as many as 600 on a tennis court-sized space. Competition encourages the trees to grow much faster than usual in the first 3 to 4 years, achieving higher than usual levels of soil enrichment, and quickly becoming home to large numbers of birds and invertebrates. (Search for the 'Tiny Forest Zaanstad' report from Wageningen University if you want to see the species lists!)

The trees arrive in March, and will need lots of mulch to get them started. The young woody growth on hedges and trees makes one of the best mulches, so if you're pruning or clipping over the winter please don't brown bin it - let me know and I'll take it away.

Citizen science: Owl project

We've launched a new project to study the owl population in the three villages. Lu Barton, our local owl expert, is working with us to help map and support our owl population. Together we'll be listening for owls, putting up nest boxes, installing nest webcams and working to improve local habitat for owls.

Lu has already been looking into where our local owls are around the 3 villages. Do help her by emailing her (Lusowls@btinternet.com) to tell her if you've seen or heard owls near you.

Lu has already been hosting fascinating Facebook live sessions about each of our local owl species - tawny, little and barn owls. She's joined in the sessions by her own gorgeous owls and she tells us more about each type of owl and what we can do in our gardens and on our land to support them better. If you missed any 'owlcasts' you can watch again on our Facebook page. Here's a short link to find it: shorturl.at/cmHRU

Joining HUGS

It's free to join - just drop an email to hugsustainability@gmail.com You'll get advance notice of events and you'll get a say in what activities HUGS focuses on in 2021.

Kieron

Village Produce Association

You still have time to enter our Banksian Medal Competition the deadline is December 12th. Details are available at Blewbury Post Office, from Maggie in Upton on 850126 or send me an email to VPA.IN.BL.UP@GMAIL.COM and I will send them to you.

Don't forget we have had to cancel our Christmas Social this year.

I can't believe we've almost reached the end of 2020 and what a year. A wet, wet spring and a hot, hot summer, with windy storms in between. I won't mention the stressful months caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reviewing 2020: As the VPA has been unable to do anything during the past year because of the pandemic, I have offered some ramblings about my Didcot allotments. My allotment sites have been kept open throughout the year by the Town Council, whilst conforming to the various coronavirus rules. These plots are my 'green gym'. I don't know how far I walked each day during the summer carrying two 2-gallon watering cans backwards and forwards from the water trough to keep the plants alive! At the end of the season most of what I planted survived. Surprisingly the main crop potatoes (Cara) were superb and I'm now enjoying lovely baked jacket potatoes with plenty of butter. The main disaster was the sweetcorn - I don't know why - I kept them watered and weed-free, they produced cobs but dried out and died for no apparent reason. I'm waiting to see what is going to happen to the Brussels sprouts - they don't look too good at the moment as they seem to have blown and look like mini-mini cabbages.

Well enough about the allotments - they have now been put to bed until the spring.

The hens did really well this year, despite the hot summer. Their inner run is enclosed with a recycled roof from my old conservatory roof and keeps surprisingly cool in the summer and warm in the winter. It also gives them a dry run in the wet weather. I did have to take Holly (she's nearly 7 years old!) to the vet recently, she had lost feathers around her face. She was given a complete overhaul and guess what - the vet decided it was her hormones, given her age! However, since then all the hens (Shallot, Pumpkin and Bortlotti) have received lots of tonics for their feathers, bones and general health. They all look in fine form and are still laying well. They've also had lots of treats including cold water melon in the hot weather!!

On behalf of the Committee Members of the VPA may I take this opportunity to wish everyone in Upton an enjoyable, safe and happy Christmas and New Year together with best wishes for 2021.

Did You Know? Battersea Park in London was once the site of a giant asparagus field, with over 260 acres set aside for its cultivation.

Happy Gardening, keep well and safe.

Eileen

Churn Churches Climate Action Group

The decisions being made now about how to reboot after coronavirus will shape our economy, society and climate for decades to come. This we believe is a crucial moment in the fight against climate change, which is affecting lives everywhere and pushing some people further into poverty. A new local action group has been formed to campaign and coordinate a programme of activities designed to address environmental issues and the problem of climate change. It is called the Churn Churches Climate Action Group (CCCA). It includes people associated with the six Anglican churches in the Churn Benefice, along with others living in the Churn area who have a range of religious affiliations.

Sign the Climate Coalition's Declaration

This group is starting by encouraging as many people as possible to sign the Climate Coalition's declaration, which calls on the UK government to lead the world in delivering a healthier, greener, fairer recovery by limiting warming to 1.5°C. If you are interested in signing this, you can view it at theclimatecoalition.org/declaration

The Future of our Food

CCCA is working together with other local groups who are concerned to address environmental issues and will be holding its first public event very soon - probably in December. The Future of our Food will focus on the issue of UK Food Standards. The reason for choosing this topic for the first CCCA public event is because as part of the Brexit Transition process the government is having to negotiate new trade deals outside the EU. Such deals are being brokered with countries such as the USA, which have very different food standards and animal welfare requirements to those followed in EU countries.

The outcome of such deals will determine where our food comes from for years to come, and the lower standards that may be imposed on us. This will impact upon the environment, consumers, and also our farmers, who in order to compete may come under pressure to lower the food standards that they currently apply.

We will be holding an on-line discussion event involving Jeff Powell, a local Hagbourne farmer and a representative from Sustain, the national alliance for better farming that campaigns for food and agricultural policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals. The date of this event will be announced very soon. To register interest in CCCA and/or be sent the log-in details for its first event please email penny@brassell.org.uk

Penny

Blewbury School News

Blewbury School has had a busy and enjoyable month in November with lots of productive collaborative learning going on throughout the school. There were some special events to commemorate Remembrance Day with some striking poems and a Poppy Pavement which we were able to share with the local village community.

There were also some special activities to mark International Kindness Day 2020. The children made special posters and went around the school collecting evidence, which showed ways in which we as a school community find creative ways to be kind to each other. Well done - keep this up!

We are now busy planning ahead for Christmas and the children are going to share Christmas presentations in creative ways, despite the current restrictions. The younger children are going to perform a play that will be videoed, so that it can be seen by a wider audience of parents and community members.

We have also been liaising closely with the new Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members and as a result are now starting some exciting work across the school on developing the reading environment. Children will be helping us design book corners in each classroom. The children and staff have also been sharing information about their favourite books and stories.

There has been an amazing amount of wonderful creative work going on across the school; Klimt Class are making some fantastic Egyptian artefacts, Banksy Class have been performing Romeo and Juliet, having debates, and learning a dance from West Side Story. In Da Vinci class the children are learning about staying healthy. In Goldsworthy Class the children have been reading 'To market! To market!' and have set up a shop to practice using money and giving change.

We are also now holding remote parent meetings for prospective parents, who are considering sending their children to our school. We are always happy to welcome families to come in to meet us and see what our school can offer.

An important letter will have gone out to all parents by the time you read this article with significant news about our plans for 2021, including some new leadership structures. If you are a member of the village community and would like to see that then you will be able to find it on the school website at www.blewbury.oxon.sch.uk

Lisa Howson – Consultant Headteacher

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to

kameki39@btinternet.com

Deadline for the January edition is

Sunday 27th December

Faber's Fables 2

"Tis the season to be jolly" trilled the singers on the commercial.

"Oh no it's not!" Val shouted at the TV, as she picked up the remote. How could she ever enjoy Christmas again? Once more the picture of the dimmed hospital ward and hushed voices flashed into her mind. She was expected to make a decision no mother should ever have to make. Her own son.

Everything about the season was now loathsome: the snow and ice that had caused the collision, the tree and decorations that John had loved putting up, the family meals - though they were just two, the present-giving, the sheer pleasure of each other's company. What had she to celebrate, what had she to live for?

Her therapist had suggested she moved from the flat that held so many memories - happy ones, mostly, but every room, every piece of furniture reminded her of her loss. As a complete change of scene, she had moved from town to country, a village hundreds of miles away. Already she was regretting the decision. The house sale was delayed so she moved in November, not July. The removal van was delayed and she had to spend the first night at the local pub. The telephone wasn't connected in time, she had had to ask a neighbour for the name of someone to fix the boiler, the garden was dank and unkempt.

She had hardly ventured outside in the six weeks since she had arrived. Partly the weather, but mostly because she didn't want people to notice the stranger in their midst and ask her questions she didn't want to answer. She *had* passed the church and exchanged greetings with a woman carrying armfuls of evergreens; she *had* dared to go into the shop when she forgot the milk on her grocery order. She remembered the welcome she had received at the pub on that first night - but she hadn't been back. She was alone, and friendless, and utterly miserable. She would have another cup of tea and go to bed.

The phone rang. At this time of night? Should she bother? Might as well.

"Hallo?"

"Oh, hallo. This is Jan. Do you remember me? I'm the one you asked about a heating engineer. I realised you are on your own like me, so I wondered if you would like to come round for supper tomorrow? About seven?"

The doorbell rang and there was a little tapping on the glass. "Um, I'd better see who's there - er yes, thank you."

She opened the door tentatively. There was nobody there, but a box had been left in the porch. It was Christmas-wrapped and bore a square label reading "With the Compliments of St Mark's and Your Community Shop". As she bent down to pick it up, she noticed a leaflet on the mat. "The Queen's Head invites all our friends to festive Drinks and Nibbles ON THE HOUSE on Friday at 8 pm"

Further down the lane she heard voices, and saw the glimmer of several lanterns. The Carollers were on their way. She caught the words: "Comfort and Joy, Gla-ad Ti-idings of Co-omfort and Joy."

My thanks to Malcolm Wright for providing this Fable to complete our Christmas newsletter.