Upton News





HAPPY NEW YEAR



Church Services

Online 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

January Pram Service

The January Pram Service will be held on Wednesday 6th January at 12.30pm in St. Michael's Church Blewbury.

A short service celebrating Epiphany with 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 must wear a face mask.

Crib Service

Thank you to all who supported the Crib Service helping to make it special. Although we were blest with a fine clear evening I appreciate it was a big ask inviting you to sit or stand out in the cold. You gallantly entered into the spirit of the occasion so thank you again and from St Mary's we wish everyone every blessing for 2021

Jessie and Paul

Parish Council

The Parish Council has met twice recently in late November and early December, the second meeting being a continuation of the first. There is much to discuss - particularly around the recently issued village-wide questionnaire, the new toddler play area, the decommissioning of the old toddler play area, the continued maintenance of the recreation ground, and not least of all, the budget for the next financial year.

Update on Chilton Road Temporary Closure

The Upton Parish Council has received the following notification from the County Council; we fully intend to push for all residents to have their views heard and will keep residents updated with any further information and create opportunities such as working groups to ensure all views can be expressed in a constructive environment.

I am writing to update you on the Chilton Road Scheme we are

Dear Stakeholder,

undertaking with Sustrans. Chilton Road is a missing link is an otherwise traffic-free or low-traffic cycle route from Didcot to Harwell Campus and is part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 544. Following feasibility investigations, undertaken thanks to the Department for Transport funding awarded to Sustrans (the Charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle), Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are proposing to transform Chilton Road into a safe walking, cycling and wheeling environment by re-routing vehicular traffic, from Chilton Road, on to London Road (A417) and Hagbourne Hill. Whilst the scheme has been progressing and in line with the UK Government's guidance, we have 'fast-tracked' the closure of Chilton Road to vehicular traffic on a temporary basis. The funding was to provide greater space for people to walk, wheel and cycle in line with Covid-19 restrictions. The closure has been in place since 19th August 2020 and has been delivered by a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO). The TTRO will remain in place for 18 months. OCC will be undertaking a formal consultation in the New Year to allow for the safe use of Chilton Road for walking, cycling and wheeling with a permanent closure for vehicles. As part of the consultation we will also include the creation of a Toucan crossing on the London Road. The formal consultation will provide an opportunity for residents, stakeholders and the wider public to express their views on the scheme. At present, we are expecting the consultation to start in the middle of January 2021 and I will send you an email directly with the link to consultation to ensure that you do not miss it.

Rebecca Crowe Transport Planner - South and Vale

New Toddler Play Area

The new toddler play area is being commissioned, together with remedial work to the adventure play area and the pump track, and all with the same contractor. The endeavour is to have a new play area in place before the old play area is decommissioned.

Urgent Request for Volunteers

The maintenance of the recreation ground and other areas in the village is a concern. Volunteers to date have done a sterling job in keeping these areas in good order. However, we need new volunteers to come forward to help and take over this work. Without new volunteers, outside contractors will need to be engaged, which will take a considerable portion of the Parish Council funds and will result in tax increases to maintain what we do now. If you'd like to help, please contact the Clerk (parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk).

Results of the Upton Parish Plan Questionnaire

109 villagers responded to the Upton Parish Plan Survey which gave Upton Parish Council the opportunity to group the responses into questions that formed the Upton Parish Plan Questionnaire.

The Questionnaire has now also received 109 responses however 4 were received after the deadline of the 18.12.2020.

Despite this all views have been taken into consideration. The UPC thanks all correspondents for their contribution.

The Parish Council has taken the decision to form some exploratory working groups in the New Year, on any questions that either had a clear majority in favour of taking action or were in a 5% margin of deadlock. These working groups are as follows:

Speed reduction in the village and on the A417 through the village to 20MPH.

Additional Parking at the Village Hall.

Benches and Picnic Tables in the Recreation Ground.

Community Groups in Particular Family/Children's Group.

Outside Gym Equipment.

A Village Community Shop/Post Office.

Parish Council Communication and Website Group.

Volunteer Working Group e.g. Locking Recreation Ground gates and Grass Cutting.

Better Signage and CCTV in the Recreation Ground.

Fencing in the Recreation Ground.

Sustrans Cycle Route to Blewbury.

Chilton Road Closure.

Anyone with an interest in any of these groups is invited to email the Chairman of the Parish Council on bens@uptonpc.co.uk with their name,

address and telephone contact details with the subject heading of the working groups they wish to be involved in as soon as possible.

Due to Covid restrictions it is most likely that meetings will be held online and if people are unable to join they will be invited to join via telephone.

Full data from the Upton Parish Plan Questionnaire is available from the Clerk upon reasonable request.

Next Council Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting is on Thursday 14th January and will be held via an e-conference system, as will all meetings for the foreseeable future. If you would like to join the meeting please contact the Clerk for joining details.

The Parish Council hopes the good people of Upton had a very Happy Christmas, and wishes you all a peaceful New Year and a hopeful 2021.

Ben Shaw Chairman

District Council

Hello and Happy New Year! We hope that everyone in Upton has enjoyed a good Christmas break.

COVID-19 Community Support Hub

The Councils' Community Support Hub is on hand to answer calls and emails from people struggling to access support and essentials during the lockdown and who 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 communityhub communityhub</

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

Christmas Waste Guide and Quiz

The council has a new page on the website helping people deal with their waste over the Christmas and New Year period - including information on changes to collection days, what to do with extra waste, Christmas trees and some videos on how to reduce waste by reusing and recycling items. There is also a Christmas-themed recycling quiz which tests your knowledge on what to do with festive junk and Christmas leftovers. We can help you deal with

all the extra waste at this time of year by helping you to put the right things in the right bin. See more at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/christmaswaste

Reporting Rough Sleeping

During office hours, please call the housing needs team on 01235 422 452 to report your concern as to the well-being of someone who is rough sleeping. This is a direct line to a Housing Needs Officer. If the person is in immediate danger, call an ambulance or the police on 999. Don't put yourself in danger or approach someone acting strangely, even to help. Outside office hours, please report to the non-profit homelessness organisation Streetlink which is funded by the Government. You can report someone rough sleeping via its website www.streetlink.org.uk or by calling 0300 5000 914. Streetlink is the national scheme for reporting rough sleeping and connects rough sleepers to local support services. Please be aware that these reports will be dealt with next working day. To contact the Out of Hours Officer, please call 01235 422 410.

Fly-tipping

A man from Fyfield Wick near Abingdon has been ordered to pay more than £1,000 after Vale of White Horse District Council successfully prosecuted him for fly-tipping. The crime was caught on camera after the council placed CCTV cameras in the area in Harwell, following a number of cases of fly-tipping at that spot. On 12th November 2019, on private land on Grove Road, Harwell a tipper truck was caught on camera dumping a load of hardcore and soil on land without permission. For more information on fly-tipping and how to report it please see our webpage

As always, in 2021 we will continue to 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.

Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne and Sarah Medley.

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 19th January to talk about what we enjoyed doing online during 2020 and new things you would like to try in 2021. Book a place using the email address above.

Please see www.astonsonline.uk for more information.

Bruno

Rector's Note



On the Road to Damascus

Have you ever heard the phrase "a Damascus Road experience"? It's a phrase that's sometimes used to describe a time when someone has had a dramatic change of mind on an important issue. Something has happened which has led them to see things in a totally new light.

The phrase refers to one of the best-known stories in the New Testament. Saul of Tarsus was travelling to Damascus, intent on arresting the Christians in the city. As he approached the city, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him, and he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" This event became a turning point in Saul's life: he no longer persecuted Christians but became a Christian himself. He became known as Paul, and as Paul, became one of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever known. The event on the Damascus Road is sometimes referred to as the Conversion of St. Paul, and it's celebrated every year on 25th January.

January is often a time of new beginnings, when we think about how we might change our own lives for the better. Such New Year resolutions are often things that we hope will make a small, but significant, difference. Perhaps we are resolving to take more exercise or learn a new skill.

But are we willing to make a major change in our lives? Major change requires insight, courage and will-power. It's not always easy to see where we need to make a major change in our lives - this is where we will need insight. And any major change will take us away from familiar ways and patterns of behaviour - this will take courage. And it will take hard work. Major change takes effort and commitment. Perhaps this is where most attempts at major change fail: we simply don't have sufficient will-power to the make the change happen.

So, we spend most of our lives struggling with those small changes which are of course all for the good, but hardly life changing.

Might this year be the year when we are open to the possibility of a different sort of change? Might this year be the time when God is calling us to make a fundamental change in our lives? Might this year be the year when we have our Damascus Road experience?

With every blessing for 2021.

Father Jason

Foot Care

A Mobile Foot Clinic for Upton 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



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Christmas Trees

Re-cycle your Christmas trees at Savages in Blewbury on Sunday 10th January between 10.00am and 12noon only. Steve and Ben Strange will wood chip your tree in return for donations in aid of Helen House Hospice. Your support will be greatly appreciated.

Jane Strange

Village Produce Association

Well, on the 12th December, despite Blewbury Village Hall refurbishment not being complete, we managed to hold the Banksian Medal Competition outside the hall under a VPA gazebo. Thank you to Andrew for helping me put it up - I hadn't got a clue which pole went where! We had nine entrants and all of them deserved to win. Well done to Rosie and Mathew Phillips (the youngest entrants) for taking part. The most unusual entrant was Tony Sibley's whose table decoration displayed his skill as a woodturner and included wooden Christmas trees, snowmen and bells. And, congratulations to our entrant, 90 years young, who was placed 2nd by the judges - which proves you are never too old!!

The judges, Joanna Fielden and Alex, had great difficulty in choosing a winner as so much thought and work had gone into all the wreaths and table decorations. The final decision was:

1st place - Kornelia Hearman. (winner of the Banksian Medal)

2nd place - Helen Bennett

3rd place - Graeme Gettings

Highly Commended - Rose and Mathew Phillips

(Pictures of the first 3 appear in the online version on Page 13.)

The judges asked the Committee to pass on congratulations to all the entrants for their beautiful entries, so, Congratulations to you all!

It is hoped that when we have the Summer Show in 2021, all the entrants in this competition will take part and put entries into the floral art section.

Well, we've now been locked into the Covid-19 Tier-4 and goodness knows how long it will be before we have freedom again. Let's hope the vaccine which is now being given out will do its job and it can be distributed to everyone as soon as possible.

Despite the restrictions, the VPA will be preparing for the Summer Show, to be held in July 2021.

In the meantime, maybe we can hold another competition at the beginning of April - how about "An Easter Bonnet with Spring Flowers."

There'll be an update on the allotments next month. Just to let you know, the hens are surviving the mixed weather we're having and still laying well.

Did You Know "It is said that marigolds, particularly the Mexican variety 'tagetes minuta' will control Ground Ivy, Horsetail and Ground Elder. It may be disconcerting to the visitor to see a dense crop of marigolds blazing in some unsuitable part of the garden, but if this remedy works as effectively as turnips against couch grass, who cares?

Happy Gardening - Keep well and safe.

A Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year from all the Committee Members of the VPA.

Eileen

Wine Club - Virtual December Meet!

We are getting used to a "new normal," and whilst it can never replace what we all hope will be back soon, it is better than the alternative! And so it was this December, when the Upton Wine Club hosted their second virtual meet. December has traditionally been the month where our wine club goes to town and pulls out all stops for a really festive food and wine pairing evening. This year, our village showed (again) what tremendous spirit we have, with some wonderful home made sausage rolls and mince pies, accompanying cheese and chorizo, with some Christmas crackers, again home made!

We were joined by Katie Jones from her home in the South of France, who presented a selection of her wines, along with a wonderful story of how she moved to a small community, who fell in....and then out of love with her but through adversity has found an amazing way of life, which may not be for everyone but most of us would want to sample, if only for a few weeks of the year!

Between Katie, and then supported by Frankie, we explored a number of wines, all grown on vines at least 60+ years old, which goes against the ethos of the community around her, who prefer to pick grapes on younger, more abundant fruiting vines. This was a voyage of quality over quantity, with a market for both, although personally, I know which ones I will be buying!

Our first wine was called On the QT Bin 25. This was made from 100% Cariganan Gris grape, a difficult grape to grow and for that reason is hardly harvest anywhere else in the world. It was a tremendously smooth grape, herbaceous and one to try with soft cheeses or even a few mussels!

The whites were finished off with Blanc "A Different Direction" and Macabeau. Both were rated very high by our members and worth a try.

We moved on to the reds. The first of which was called Hairy Grenache, so called after the hair on the leaves. The wine however, was beautifully smooth and if you are still making use of the BBQ this winter, one to try with some of those sausages!

Next up was her Fitou. Full of dark red fruits, herbs and just a touch of liquorice - simply delicious. This was followed by a Domaine Jones Syrah and those that liked the previous wine, loved this one! Made from a very small batch of wine grown each year, this was more intense but with similar liquorice and deep red berry flavours. Our last Red was called "La Gare Old Vine Carignan", branded after the new office Katie works, a converted railway station. A great red to finish, full bodied and full of that jammy fruit flavour, making it a wonderful Xmas tasting wine.

Our final wine was a sweet Muscat, which has become a favourite of many a member. Wonderfully smooth and perfect with a bit of blue cheese, should you have any room left after Christmas dinner!

It was a great to share a drink and have a virtual chat with some fellow wine enthusiast. It really helped add a little bit more Christmas Spirit to what has been a very very mixed year! Let's hope for a more uplifting 2021!

lan

Hugs

We were slightly hampered by Covid in our first few months - the perishing pandemic prevented us from holding meetings or getting plans for a refill pop-up off the ground. But, we still managed to launch a nature trail (free on www.hugsustainability.org), run a campaign to plant 1,000 trees (400 planted so far!) and focus on helping the local owl population. Members also wrote to our MP, David Johnston, to invite him to take part in a discussion about the private member's bill on tackling the climate emergency (www.ceebill.uk). He declined.

We had a workshop on mitigating global emissions using the en-roads simulator - pretty whizzy stuff developed by MIT. You can have a go yourself at www.climateinteractive.org/tools/en-roads/ And we contributed ideas to the various Parish Councils for improving green spaces, supporting nature's recovery and becoming more sustainable. Hopefully more on these once we've seen the PC's response to the village questionnaire.

Chilton Road Bird Survey

Have you heard the birds along Chilton Road? It's quite a little chorus following the closure and will be even better as the weather gets warmer. We've started monitoring bird species on the new quiet stretch to see if anything changes. There were 10 species logged on the first pass in December. (You can see what they were on the iRecord system at www.brc.ac.uk/irecord - search for "Chilton Road survey". You can also join the team of volunteers who are carrying out the fortnightly update.)

Ideally we'd also have comparison data from before the road was closed. Unfortunately we don't have this, but we're working with the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) to interpret the data we're now collecting.

While on the subject of cycle-friendly routes, did you know that there's now an almost continuous track from Upton to Wantage along the 544 Cycle Route and Icknield Greenway? This is part of ongoing improvements to cycle routes across Oxfordshire.

On Boiling Frogs

Thanks to experiments by Friedrich Goltz in 1869 (and probably numerous predecessors), we know there's no truth in the idea that a frog will sit happily in a saucepan that is gradually heated up until it becomes an exfrog. But it's an image that's been used a fair bit when describing apathy towards mitigating climate change. The analogy works well: incremental change doesn't seem to require urgent response. And then, suddenly, when the danger becomes clear, it's too late. At the point of realisation, you'd expect a fast and decisive reaction. (Frog exits pot; governments ban CFCs to prevent further damage to ozone layer.) So, what's different about climate change? Why are we so reluctant to take the necessary action to prevent global warming increasing by 1.5 degrees Centigrade?

The most obvious reasons are that governments want to protect their economies, and that as individuals we're not willing or able to brook the cost

or inconvenience of doing without the products that create the emissions. It's not uncommon to feel powerless when in front of such a big problem. And after all, "the Chinese are building new coal-fired power stations so it makes no difference what I do".

The main issue with doing nothing is that the problem gets worse. And if we divest ourselves of responsibility we're being dishonest into the bargain: we're the ones busy buying affordable goods manufactured in China, so we're driving demand for that energy.

Facing up to the problem is going to involve changes, sacrifices and some creativity. One writer likens it to medieval cathedral building*. The people who start the job won't be around to see it finished. But they know they're contributing to something much more important that will endure.

*(Read the full article at https://cutt.ly/xh6aXfL)
Kieron

Photography Competition

I'm toying with the idea of organising an Upton photography competition sometime in the coming year. As a precursor to this I would like to get the ball rolling, and see what the interest is, by using the Upton Facebook site to display pictures on the theme - Upton and Surrounding Area. If you are interested then check out the details on the Facebook site.

Rob Traynor

Upton Village Hall in 2021

As with all aspects of our daily lives the UVHAT trustees are hopeful that during 2021 use of the village hall will return to some kind of normalcy.

The COVID-19 Government guidelines for village halls continues to change with respect to the new tiering system alongside additional guidelines which also need to be followed depending on the type of activity the hall is going to be used for. Suffice to say that if an area is deemed Tier 4 then village halls are required to close.

However if you have any queries about whether you can use the hall or not in the other Tiers then please do email us at

bookings@uptonvillagehall.co.uk. The calendar on the village hall website (www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk) is also being kept up to date as much as possible if you want to check which classes or clubs may be running at any given time. With some community centres and other halls in the area closing for good we have been receiving more enquiries for the future and therefore new activities and classes will hopefully become available in 2021 as well as a return of the usual ones.

Please also remember that the UVHAT trustees decided to make the hall free of charge for any non-commercial meetings or gatherings for residents of Upton until at least 1 April 2021.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.

Jacqui Reid

Nature Notes

With short days and long nights January doesn't seem like the right time to hit the nature trail, but with little to do in the garden and the need to get some exercise put on the right clothing and footwear and make the most of the cold sunny days. On a sunny day at this time of year the clear visibility allows you to enjoy the wonderful views we have from the hills surrounding our village and at the same time seeing the plentiful wildlife that live on our doorsteps. Even it is one of those dreary days your day is bound to be lifted by the sound of robins and blackbirds, the birds most likely to be singing loud and long at this time of year.

In the winter months our birdlife is particularly plentiful with the ranks of our permanent friends swollen by the migrants who have come down from northern countries to enjoy the warmer climate and the plentiful supply of berries. An added advantage of getting out at this time of year is that spotting those birds is made so much easier by the lack of leaves on the trees.

Most of us are familiar with the song thrush that uses stones to break up snail shells but at this time of year you might easily mistake them for our two most common migrants the redwing and the fieldfare. The redwing is Britain's smallest thrush just a bit smaller than the song thrush. They share the same speckled breast but are distinguishable by the rusty red underside of their wings. The fieldfares are bigger, more the size of our mistle thrush, they have the same speckled breast but have a grey head, long black tail and rich brown body plumage. Both redwings and fieldfares are sociable birds and can be seen together in flocks as they descend in noisy fashion to devoir the hawthorn berries. Every year there is a sizeably flock that work the hawthorn bushes along the railway cutting towards Chilton.

If you have an interest in birds then why not sign up to The Big Garden Birdwatch that this year takes place between 29th and 31st January, to register and for more information go to the RSPB website at rspb.org.uk Spend a quiet hour sitting in the warmth of your own home whilst counting the different species of bird that visit your garden whilst at the same time providing useful information that can be used to see which birds are gaining in numbers and which are falling below critical levels. The 9 most popular birds nationwide in order of numbers counted are House Sparrow, Starling, Blue Tit, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Great Tit, Robin, Long Tailed Tit and Chaffinch, see how that list compares to your garden.

Countryman

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to kameki39@btinternet.com

Deadline for the February edition is

Wednesday 27th January

Pictures from the VPA presentation of the Banksian Medal



1st Place Kornelie Hearman



2nd Place Helen Bennett



3rd Place Graeme Gettings

Very Late Stop Press—Bus Services

Bus passengers are set to benefit as services across the county are to be improved and maintained in the New Year thanks to Oxfordshire County Council working with local bus operators and major employers.

Bus operators have also taken a number of measures to promote safe travel, by implementing social distancing measures on board, restricting capacity and enhancing cleaning regimes, particularly of key touchpoints.

Locally, Service X32 will be extended to operate between Wantage, Harwell Campus, Didcot, Milton Park, Oxford and John Radcliffe Hospital, providing a new direct link between south Oxfordshire and the hospital. Service 94 to/from Blewbury will be revised to also serve Chilton and Harwell Campus, and a new Saturday service will be introduced.

For further local details see Thames Travel changes in and around Didcot