

Upton News



March 2022

The Upton News is only as good as those who contribute to it so please make this the first port of call if you have anything to communicate to the wider village community.

For those submitting news items will you please send them to me at neilthorp@btinternet.com. A few days beforehand I will send a reminder of the deadline day to all regular contributors but early submission will always be welcome. Anything received past the deadline of 28th of the month may NOT be included - if this causes a problem please contact me.

Neil Thorp

Church Services

The online services will continue on Sundays at 10.30am. Login after 10.00 to chat before if wished. Access the Churn Churches website for login details on how to join:

<https://www.churnchurches.co.uk/services-this-week/sunday-service.php>

The link for the service is published in the weekly Churn, which can be downloaded from this page: <https://www.churnchurches.co.uk/resources/>

Weekday evenings Compline at 8.00pm for 10 minutes. Access via Churn Churches website above.

If you would like to be added to our weekly mailing list to receive the Churn, please contact Elaine.

Services at St. Mary the Virgin

Please note - due to the clergy needing to take another service elsewhere in the Benefice straight after, we've moved the service to the slightly earlier time of **9.15am**. You are always welcome to enter the church even if the service has commenced!

13th March **2nd SUNDAY OF LENT**

9.15am Parish Eucharist

27th March **MOTHERING SUNDAY**

9.15am Parish Eucharist

Home Communion is available to anyone who is unable to get to church through sickness or frailty, either for a short time or on a long term basis. If you, or anyone you know, would like to receive Holy Communion at home, please contact The Revd Louise Butler on [07837 009730](tel:07837009730). Full COVID precautions will be followed.

Confirmation Group

Father Jason will be leading a confirmation group in the Spring.

Please contact Elaine in the office on office@churnchurches.co.uk if you are interested in joining. We would love to welcome you to this group!

Churn Climate Change Action Group

The purpose of the Churn Climate Change Action Group is to encourage conversation and action within the communities served by the Churn Benefice to reduce the impact of Climate Change.

Our churches and benefice office are hoping to set an example by undertaking energy surveys and working towards the national scheme of Eco Church accreditation. If you would like to get involved with the CCCA, please contact Elaine in the Office and she will put you in touch with the group. New members always welcome!

Bookings for Weddings, Baptisms etc. may be made by contacting the office via email.

You can contact the clergy & staff on:

Revd Jason St. John Nicolle

01235850267 office@churnchurches.co.uk

Revd Louise Butler

07837 009730 revlouiseb@aol.co

Elaine de Ridder

01235 850267 office@churnchurches.co.uk

The Benefice Operations Manager, Elaine de Ridder, is in the office from 9.00am - 2.30pm Monday to Friday.

LENT 2022

Lent 2022 starts with an Ash Wednesday Service on 2nd March at 10am at St Andrew's Hagbourne.

There will also be an online Ash Wednesday Compline at 8pm. For the link see "services" tab on www.churnchurches.co.uk

Lent Courses:

Caring for Creation (York Course).

A course in 5 sessions. The human race is facing its greatest challenge: global warming, leading to climate change. Many of us who care about this issue are sometimes understandably quite pessimistic about the future. That's where faith in God should make a difference. Listen to eminent speakers, discuss difficult questions, reflect on God's Word. First session on 4 March, 10.45 for 11am start at Penridge, Church Road, Blewbury.

Please register with Elaine in the Office on 01235 - 850267 or office@churnchurches.co.uk

Take the 40 Day Lent challenge!

Live Lent: Embracing Justice invites us to examine our own lives truthfully, to see the world more deeply and to pray - for the church and the world far and near - that 'justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 4.24). The adults' booklet offers a daily Bible reading, a short reflection and a prayer, as well as a practical challenge for each week of Lent. The kids' booklet provides a fun daily action to help children and their families explore how we can live well together, as well as a weekly reading and prayer. Order your booklets from the Elaine in the Office.

USPG Lent course: Living Stones, Living Hope

Our Ecumenical Lent Group will be meeting with the Rev Josie Midwinter, at Jenny Loder's house, 75 Lloyd Road, Didcot, from Friday, 4th March to Friday 1st April (except for Friday 11th March.) We will be following the **USPG Lent course: Living Stones, Living Hope** exploring contextual theology from the churches in Zambia and Korea, Liberation theology from Latin America, Celtic Spirituality from Ireland, and Dalit Theology from North India.

To book please ring Tel 01235 510199.

Why bother with Lent?

Have you ever asked yourself the question:
why should I bother with Lent?

It's a good question to ask and to answer the question, we need to look at the purpose of Lent.

At its simplest, Lent is a time of preparation leading up to Easter. This year Easter Day falls on 17th April, so the beginning of Lent falls on 2nd March. Lent is often associated with acts of fasting and self-denial, but these are secondary to its main purpose. Lent is fundamentally about preparing ourselves to celebrate Easter: Jesus's death for our sins on Good Friday and his resurrection from the dead on Easter Day.

So Lent is all about preparation. This preparation can take many different forms, but whatever form it takes, it's basically about asking ourselves one question: what really matters in our lives? It's a time to reflect honestly about our lives. What are our priorities? Where are we going? Are there changes we need to make? Where might we need to seek forgiveness?

Another way of looking at this is to think about the choices we make. Looking over our lives, where have we made good choices? Where have we made choices which we regret? What choices are we currently facing in our lives? How can we make good choices? Traditionally, Christians have spoken about “temptations”: a “temptation” is a word to describe a choice which we know or sense will not be good for us, or not good for others. Such “temptations” can have a strange power over us: we know that the choice will be a bad choice, but there’s something in us which makes us want to do it anyway!

Jesus experienced such “temptations” in his life. After Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, he spent 40 days in the wilderness thinking about the choices which lay ahead. In other words, Jesus went on retreat for 40 days, to think and pray about the priorities in his life. The 40 days of Lent are intended to provide us with the opportunity for a similar period of retreat - a time to think deeply and honestly about our priorities in life, and the choices which may lie ahead.

In short, Lent is a time for us to reflect on our lives; and I think time for reflection does us all a power of good.



- Father Jason

Parish Council News

The next Upton Parish Council meeting is on Tuesday 15th March and will be face to face in the village hall at 7.30pm. UPC is also hoping to hold the first Annual Parish Meeting for over 2 years on Tuesday 19th April, again in the village hall. Please put these dates in your diary – further information will be published nearer the time.'

On the recreation ground replacement nets and new wheels have been purchased for the large goals and just as soon as the weather allows, these will be installed.

The recent high winds have damaged the fence on the cemetery extension bordering its new hedges. UPC's aim is to keep this fence going at minimal cost until the new hedge is properly established. If anyone has fence posts they could donate to extend the life of the cemetery fence please contact peterm@uptonpc.co.uk. For example, if you had a high fence blown down the post might be re-useable if there is about 1.8m of good timber. Collection can be arranged.

COVID-19 Community Support

A reminder to all residents that the councils' Community Support Hub continues to operate for anyone who needs any assistance, either as a result of COVID-19 or just for anyone who needs signposting towards the appropriate support channel. There are multiple ways to get in touch with the Community Support Hub:

- Call: 01235 422 600 Monday to Thursday 8.30-5pm and Fridays 8.30-4.30pm
- Email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk
- Online Form: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub
- Website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/covid19

Residents can also contact:

- Citizens Advice - 0808 278 7907
- Vale Community Impact - 01235 765348

Remember that the latest figures are updated on the county council's [interactive dashboard](#) on a daily basis.

District & County Council News

Bad weather is the perfect storm for rogue traders in Oxfordshire

Residents are warned to be wary of cold callers or leaflets offering to do work on roofs after the recent storms.

Oxfordshire County Council's trading standards team believes it is a perfect opportunity for rogue traders to take advantage of residents who have a leaking roof or broken tile. Many traders will be booked up, so the advice is to be wary of traders who can arrive to start the work the following day and push for a quick agreement to use them.

People are encouraged to get recommendations for trades-people from friends and relatives. Failing that, go to those approved trader schemes that make comprehensive checks on their members.

Oxfordshire residents can check the [Buy with Confidence website](#) to find local traders who have been vetted and approved by trading standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way. I would also encourage getting three quotes from different traders before you agree to any work being done.

You should receive a contract of the total price before any work starts. Any work that increases in price mid contract is a red flag to the trading standards team.

Do not agree to offers of building work, home repairs or maintenance that come from a cold call. Do not be afraid to say no. Do not be pressured and check with others if the work is required and what is a fair price to pay. If it's out of the blue, it's not for you!

Any Oxfordshire resident who has concerns about cold calling or potential scams can contact the Citizens Advice National Consumer Service on **0800 144 8848** or by visiting its website citizensadvice.org.uk.

Vale Cabinet approves measures to make council car parks more sustainable

[You might think the headline implies solar panels, EV charging points and tree planting but actually the prices are going up- Ed]

Important measures to make parking more sustainable in the Vale of White Horse will be introduced later this year.

Council taxpayers have been subsidising district council car parks for many years, with the service typically running at a loss of about £300,000 a year. The shortfall has now risen to almost £450,000 following the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 4 February, Cabinet members agreed changes which balance the need to reduce the deficit, the council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency and the needs of local businesses.

One hour of free parking in Vale car parks will be maintained, a reduction from the current two hours each day. A new charge of £1.50 will apply for up to two hours - except for Southampton Street car park in Faringdon. Current fees across all car parks will also rise by 40p.

To improve management of the car parks and help meet demand, all new and renewed permits will be non-transferable and therefore only valid for the specific car park for which they are issued.

The changes will be widely publicised before they commence.

Further expansion of Didcot

Vale of White Horse District Council has given notice that outline planning permission is GRANTED for application No : P14/V2873/0

Outline planning application for a residential development of up to **4,254** dwellings, mixed-use local centres, primary schools, sports pitches, community and leisure facilities, special needs school, open space and extensive green infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, attenuation areas, diversions to public rights of way, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.

Site location : Land to the West of Great Western Park (Valley Park) Didcot (in the parishes of Harwell and Milton)

[No mention of any additional GP medical facilities!!! - Ed.]

Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust

Now that the majority of Government COVID-19 rules have been lifted, Upton Village Hall is fully back up and running and taking all usual party and event bookings. This includes the return of all the usual classes and group meetings such as Karate, Yoga, Gymnastics, Brownies, Dog Training, Tea Birds, Short Mat Bowls and Wine Club.

The Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust will be holding its AGM at the end of March and details will shortly be available on the hall's website
www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk



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Drop In

The village Drop In will soon be up and running again on alternate Thursdays at 3.00pm It is open to all villagers so please come along if you want to have a nice friendly chat over a cup of tea or coffee. Please email me at richmondbinov@gmail.com if you're interested and to find out the venue for the meetings. *Richard Burrow*

Astons Online

March's Zoom online meeting will be 10:30 - 11:15 on Tuesday 15 March 2022. We'll talk about dealing with a computer failure, including recovering your digital material. These rare events are disruptive and upsetting unless you have a contingency plan of some sort. Book your place at theastonsonline@gmail.com.

Free and friendly help for computer users every Tuesday morning from 10:00 to 12:00. We provide help remotely using telephone, Quick Assist, 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.

Upton Wine Club – February meeting

South African Cool Climate Wines

Wednesday 16th February was the sixth meeting of the season for the Upton Wine Club. This month we were excited to see the return of Andy and Ross from the wine distributor Hallgarten, who have supported the club on several occasions and provide wines both to up-market restaurants and retailers such as Strictly Wine. The theme this month was South African wines that had coastal influences in their production - the cooler climate, often with the influence of sea breezes, create unique conditions resulting in some exceptional wines.

The first wine of the evening was a Sauvignon Blanc from the Lomond Wines estate, situated on the Western Cape, where there are up to 18 different soil types producing some really good, complex single variety wines. If your go-to Sauv Blanc is New Zealand then this will make you sit up and realise there is much more to try! Full of zesty citrus notes but with some depth from a touch of passion fruit and a hint of blackcurrant.

Next was a Chenin Blanc from Mulderbosch Vineyards in Stellenbosch, a well-known wine region in South Africa. This wine is made from a blend of fermentations, part in oak barrels and the remainder in stainless steel tanks. The result is a vibrant fresh wine with aromas of pear, apricot and a touch of cinnamon spice. A really lovely wine that would go down well with food or on its own.

Moving on we tried a Grenache Blanc - not a common grape - from the Western Cape region of Bredekloof. This showed beautiful balance with notes of anise, lime and green apple. The focus in making these wines is on sustainable farming, with very little intervention in the making of the wine. The producer ages the wine for 10 months on its "lees" (the yeast used in the fermentation process), creating an amazing complexity.

Our next white came from the Elgin Valley, surrounded by mountains, which created an amazing microclimate to grow this wine, made mainly from Sauvignon Blanc but with added Riesling and Chenin Blanc. The wine was

called 1900 Queen Manthatisi and was from Spioenkop (incidentally, where Liverpool FC took the name of their stand - the Kop!) The cooler climate has created a wine full of ripe peach, citrus and grapefruit notes.

Our final white was a real treat. Lismore Chardonnay wine was a great example of what the Wine Club is all about. If you knew nothing about the producer Samantha O'Keefe and her wines, then spending £40+ on a bottle is not something most of us would do. Because we had over 30 people join us this evening it meant we could try some exceptional wines. Here, Sam had grown wines in conditions that allowed the grapes to be harvested 3-4 weeks later than most wines, allowing them to develop some really intense citrus aromas with hazel and butter notes that make this simply exceptional.

If you think the "only" wine to try with steak is Malbec, then think again. Our first red was an unusually deep flavoured Pinot Noir from Cape Agulhas called Phantom. A very dry, cool summer has allowed this wine to ripen slowly, creating a great flavour and one you wouldn't normally expect from this grape variety.

South Africa is famous for its Pinotage wines. The next wine, again from the Western Cape, was an amazing example of this grape. Full of cherry, wild strawberry fruit and ripe raspberries - just as you would expect from a Pinotage but with some wonderful spice and earthy notes. All the wines were very well received but this was one of the most popular.

Our final wine was again a real treat. Englishman Richard Kershaw is known for producing exceptional wines in South Africa and with a price point that is justifiably higher than what we might normally spend on a bottle. This wine was a 100% Syrah called Clonal Selection and was made from grapes taken from small parcels of wine in the Elgin Valley region. If you wanted a bottle for a special occasion or simply to just treat yourself, then this would be my recommendation!

We cannot do justice to all the wines in a write up but if you want to know more or are interested in joining the wine club, then please visit the Upton Wine Club website www.uptonwineclub.co.uk. If you want to try any of them, all the wines can be found at your local Upton wine merchant www.strictlywine.co.uk.

The next meeting is on 16th March at the village hall. Hope to see you there!

Ian Langley
Chairman

Upton Nature Garden Volunteers

Nature garden and HUGS news

Exciting news just in: the next order of plants for the nature garden is on its way (from Bampton, west of Oxford - we keep it local if we can). This time it's a bumper batch of more than 400 perennials, including honeysuckle, foxgloves, ferns, yarrow, bugloss and meadow crane's bill.

We'd really appreciate your help getting these lovelies safely stowed in the soil. You can volunteer on **Saturday March 12** and **Sunday March 11** from 10 am.

This is the last big push (can you tell I've been watching *This is going to hurt*) to get the greenery in the garden established, coupled with wildflower seed-sowing next month.

After that there's a new gate and a sign to install, and the garden will be ready to receive visitors! Obviously it'll take a while for the plants to get established, but there are already bulbs poking through and buds on the hedging plants.

Another welcome sighting earlier this month was a mistle thrush chortling in the chestnut. I'm told one of its nicknames is the 'stormcock' because it starts trying to pair up before winter is properly over. It's on the British Trust for Ornithology's red list of birds of conservation concern, so let's hope it finds the food and habitat it needs locally.

Verging on the meticulous

Cutting verges costs a lot of money and turns a potentially productive strip of land into a desert, albeit a green one.

In recognition of this, miniature roadside nature reserves have been springing up all over the country, including about a dozen across Oxfordshire. Have you spotted one? They're a great way to support pollinator populations and cut down on the bills we have to pay through our council tax.

Now our county councillor, Sally Povolotsky, is working to make it easier to arrange for verge-mowing operations to be suspended, and for local groups to manage the land in a more sustainable way. Chilton Road is a good candidate for this in our area. Turning the verge (on the left as you go up the hill) into a bank of flowers and longer grasses would be relatively straightforward and safe to do as there's no longer traffic there.

We'd need to wait until the road closure works are complete before starting work, but if there's support for the idea then at least we could kick off a discussion. If you're interested in getting involved please let me know at kieronhumph@gmail.com

Didcot U3A

Winter is almost at an end, and with Spring, lighter evenings and less restrictions coming to the fore, now is the time for any retired or semi-retired individuals to start planning their diaries for '*living, laughing and learning*'!

And what better way than to join your local u3a branch in Didcot which gathers together **on the 3rd Tuesday in the month at Didcot Civic Hall starting at 2:30 pm.**

Numerous **Interest Groups** are there offering walking, gardening, learn a language, playing the ukulele, family history, natural history, to name but a few! In addition, the monthly meetings also host a Guest Speaker with the following interesting talks scheduled over the coming months:

15 March: ***Your Eye Test is not just testing your eyes!*** - Adela Garcia

19 April: ***Passports, Assassins, Traitors and Spies*** - Martin Lloyd

17 May: ***AGM*** and speaker to be confirmed

21 June: ***Four Generations at Fairmile*** - Ian Wheeler

19 July: ***From Page to Stage*** - Jennifer Cowling.

More at <https://jennifercowling.com/freelance-talks>

16 August: ***Wilts and Bucks Canal continued*** - Martin Buckland

To learn more, why not come and join us at the **Didcot Civic Hall** Look forward to seeing you there!'

For further details and information you can contact the following:

Chair - Chairman@didcotu3a.org

Secretary - secretary@didcotu3a.org

Brian & Lynn Burscough - PR for the Didcot & District u3a