

Upton News



August 2023

Services at St. Mary the Virgin, Upton

You are always welcome to enter the church even if the service has commenced!

Prayer Focus

6th August

Trinity 9

9.15 Lay-led service

Churchwardens, fabric & churchyards.

Church cleaners

13th August

Trinity 10

9.15 Parish Eucharist

Families, children's outreach, family services & Mothers' Union

27th August

Trinity 12

9.15 Parish Eucharist

Clergy & all who preach or lead

Churn Benefice Mother's Union Teddy Bears Picnic

Wednesday 2nd August 12 noon - 2pm

We meet in the garden of Mrs Penny Brassell in Blewbury. We welcome all babies and children and any mums, dads, friends, grandparents and carers. Please bring a teddy bear, picnic and a rug to sit on. Soft drinks and ice-creams will be provided. We'll hope to be outside, but will find some shelter if its wet! Hosted by members of The Churn Mothers' Union. For directions please contact Benefice Office on 850267

For details of on-line services and contact information for clergy and staff please see the March copy of the Upton News (always available on the village web site) or contact Elaine on 01235 850267 or at office@churnchurches.co.uk

Council News

Update from Vale of White Horse District Councillors Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and Cllr Debra Dewhurst

Council News

Hayleigh asked Cllr Andy Crawford (Cabinet member for Finance and Property) for an update on the Great Western Park GP surgery following a confidential paper brought to cabinet on 23rd June. Cllr Crawford kindly responded:

"I recognise the provision of the new GP surgery for Great Western Park is very important to local residents and as a council we endeavour to be as open and transparent about all our activities as we are able to. I am disappointed we were not able to make the report of 23 June public due to it being subject to the finalisation of commercially sensitive transactions, involving other parties. The decision by members to consider the report in private session was based on the advice of the council's Monitoring Officer. A Communication and Engagement Plan has been prepared with input from all parties to establish a joint approach to proactive communications. This Plan has been shared with the ward councillors for Great Western Park. The plan identifies stages and methods for updates to relevant stakeholders and members of the public, which includes the publication of updates to a joint webpage created by the Vale and Integrated Care Board (<https://express.adobe.com/page/TgSquyAwwwuCb/>). This webpage contains the latest updates on the project and is continually reviewed to ensure the latest available information is made public"

Didcot Garden Party has something for everyone to enjoy this summer: bigger and better than before with a great selection of free activities for everyone to enjoy. From creative and arts activities, to sport, yoga and live music there is something to suit all ages and interests. The party will run through to the end of August. The focus for this year's party will be health, wellbeing and the environment. See the Vale of White Horse District Council website for more information.

Latest images unveiled for new council HQ: A new building that will kickstart the revitalisation of Didcot Gateway is now one step closer, with updated images of the proposed council headquarters released and a formal planning application expected soon. The building will be the first step to bring new life into this historically neglected site, providing more confidence for future business investment and making Didcot an even more attractive place to live, work and learn.

We use these monthly updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post on our councillor Facebook Pages: www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell

Please get in touch with any issues or concerns via email: hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Parish Council News – Chairman's Chatter

Whilst we have had a good amount of rain this month, I'm pleased to say that flash flooding has not been as much of an issue as it was last month. There has been a large cutting back of the greenery around the culvert that runs under the A417 by the George and Dragon and there has been agreement by OCC to include the culvert clearance to their annual list of maintenance. I can happily also confirm that we now have sandbags in the village for the houses that have already contacted me but, if anyone else needs them please let me know and we can order some more.
Bens@uptonpc.co.uk

We now have an abundance of youth football teams requesting to use the recreation ground and sadly with limited space and the potential for high usage, it has been suggested that a policy be put in place to help manage the recreation ground including a booking system. If you would be interested in putting forward suggestions for this, please email me at bens@uptonpc.co.uk

A big thanks to Grahame De Wilde for weeding the patio outside the village hall. This will be very welcome for the upcoming Village Fete.

Speed watch signs have been erected at either end of the village recently. Councillor Heneghan is leading the charge against speeding through the village after a period of monitoring the effects of the new crossing (see later note).

There has been a report from a villager of Japanese Knotweed. I have reported this to the County and District Council, but I would ask everyone to be particularly vigilant as this is highly invasive and can cause property damage. It is important to note that it is not illegal to have this weed on your property but it does come under Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 if not properly kept under control and it does require specialist licensing for removal.

If you find any whilst on walks, please use what3word to establish the location and send an email to me so this can be added to the report to the environment agency enforcement team who have previously been involved with ensuring its removal as an invasive non-native plant.
Bens@uptonpc.co.uk

A big thank you to all those involved in the Upton Coffee Morning. Sadly, I was unable to attend due to an unexpected incident with a pot-hole and my tyre but I hope to attend the next session where I will look forward to seeing everyone.

A link to the village survey will be sent out 48 hours after this month's Upton News but we will also deliver a hard copy to every property too. If anyone would like to assist with the hard copy distribution please email me bens@uptonpc.co.uk.

The survey will consist of the three questions that were established by the 2005 village plan committee and will help to establish the basis for the questionnaire that will become the focus of Upton Parish Council over the next 5 years.

The questions are as follows:

What are five things that you like about the village?
What are five things that you don't like about the village?
What are five things you would like to see in the village that we don't currently have?

Benjamin Shaw
Mobile 07934 389171
Tel 01235 850308

Speed Watch

Last year we set up a team to monitor, measure and report speeding vehicles to the police. When reported, the Police sends them a warning letter about speeding; and if caught again they may prosecute.

We teamed up with Blewbury and Harwell Speed Watch teams and tried to be out at the same time so we could catch and report the persistent speedsters. This was put on hold due the pedestrian crossing being installed which we hoped would reduce speeding.

After monitoring vehicle speeds going through the village since the installation of the crossing I have observed that cars coming from Blewbury/Reading are still speeding through the village, whereas cars from Wantage are slowing down due to the crossing.

To that effect I would like to start up the Speed Watch Group again so we can report the speedsters to the Police; you may have noticed the Speed Watch signs which were put up this week.

I have written to the people who did the training last year and would like to request if other people in the village would like to join the team. If so could you please email the Parish Clerk parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk

Recreation Ground

The swings in the recreation ground have been refurbished with new chains and new seats.

They are now back in use.



Upton Nature Garden

Thanks so much for to those who joined the working party on 1st July. We did a considerable amount of work and gave a lot of the shrubs, hedging and perennials in the woodland the pick-me-up they required. As always it was a pleasure to see regulars and be joined by first-timers (5!). I hope those who aren't too far-flung enjoyed the experience enough to repeat it on August 5 when we're having another volunteer session.



Julia N has kindly come up with suggestions for what we might try in the sunnier beds in the glade. She writes:

"In June and early July Common Knapweed, Birds Foot Trefoil and Common Agrimony were doing well on the embankment - I think all of these are native plants. Toad flax and the everlasting sweetpea were also doing well there - I think they were both introduced to Britain, but count as "wild flowers". These were all growing amongst the grass on the embankment, but might grow amongst the perennials. I wondered also about Valerian and Common Mallow - again introduced but common wild flowers."

I would welcome any comments - or other suggestions for what we might add to the scheme. The patch where the mulch pile was is now clear, so we could also add plants there. Slightly shady and dry given the proximity to the trees.

August 5 volunteer session.

Please join if you can for a maintenance session - plenty of light tasks available or heavier jobs if you fancy a workout.

All ages and abilities welcome. Cake and drinks.

We look forward to seeing you if you have any time to spare.

Kieron Humphrey

Ladies Wine & Tapas Night

Thank you to all the ladies who came to our Tapas and Wine evening on the 7th!



A special thanks to Jacqui, for her incredible culinary skills and support with planning and setting up, Duncan, for volunteering to be our superb barman, and Brian, for supplying a great selection of wines for us to enjoy and to enter into the raffle.

It was wonderful to see so many people who are relatively new to the village, as well as those who have been involved in village events for a number of years. For some, for differing reasons, this was the first opportunity they had to socialise with villagers - something I feel is incredibly important.

We were also welcomed by our very active and supportive female councillors Cllr Debra Dewhurst and Cllr Sally Povolotsky.



For a small group of 21 women, we raised a respectable profit of £350 for our charities - £225 for our Village Hall Association Trust, and £125 donated to Blewbury Preschool. The school have given us a card and passed on their thanks to the village. They rely on fundraising to keep open, and every little donation really does make a difference

to keeping this incredible facility for local families.

Photo credits to Cllr Debra Dewhurst.

Nichola Hall

UPTON VILLAGE FETE – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2023

As reported last month, the Upton fete will be taking place on Saturday, 2nd September from 12:00 to 3:00. Lots of exciting things to do including:

A fun dog show - bring your pooch (it doesn't need to be pampered!) - there are lots of prizes to be won!

Gymnastics display

Morris dancing

Blewbury Brass Band

Classic car display and parade

Teas and cakes

Pimm's bar

Barbeque

Kids' area

Ice cream

Lots of stalls including plants, preserves, books, raffle, tombola and books

Contributions welcome! Please leave books in the church porch and tombola/raffle prizes with Katie Dickens at Midway, Prospect Road (green box in the porch or call 0791 205 9430). Rosemary de Wilde will soon be asking budding bakers for cakes.

We'll need the usual help setting up on Saturday morning and dismantling later in the day. Please let Paul Batho know if you'd like to volunteer (pjsbatho@btinternet.com or 07794 239775).

Volunteers on the day are always needed and just now we are 'recruiting' in a couple of areas:

The barbecue - can you offer a stint for an hour or so? Training provided! And if anyone could loan a large gas-fired barbeque for the day, that would be great.

The Kids' Zone - there'll be lots of attractions and games for younger Uptonians, and we're looking for people to manage and supervise this area. It's a perfect role for the whole family!

Please let any of the organising committee know if you can help: Katie Dickens, Nicky Hall, Paul Batho, Jessie West, Ben Shaw, Katherine Verso, Ann Parham and Peter McLaughlin, or drop us a line on uptonfete1@outlook.com

Thank you!

Didcot & District u3a

Meeting on the **third Tuesday of every month** in the Didcot Civic Hall at 2:30 pm, this very sociable gathering encourages a whole variety of interest groups. At the monthly meetings, where tea, coffee and biscuits are served, a Guest Speaker provides a presentation on diverse topics which in the coming months include

15 August: *Sue Ryder- A Life Lived for Others* - Joanna Bogle

19 September: *A Brief History of Tattoos and their Meaning* - Janine Kilroe

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17 October: *George Orwell* - Richard Blair

21 November: *Freda Skene: Oxford writer, prison reformer* - Liz Woolley

19 December: Christmas Event: *Magic Show* with Ian Keable

Chair - chairman@didcotu3a.org

Secretary - Secretary@didcotu3a.org

Additional information can be found on the u3asites.org.Uk

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

Baby Sitting Service

Are you looking for a reliable and caring babysitter for those late-night outings or for when you just need some time for yourself?

Look no further!

I am a 17 year-old with a passion for children and experience in babysitting kids of all ages. With me, you can have peace of mind knowing that your children are in safe hands.



Astons Online

This month's Zoom online meeting will be 10:30 - 11:15 on Tuesday 8 August 2023. As usual we'll discuss issues brought to the meeting as well taking a look at AI (Artificial Intelligence) so often in the headlines. Book your place at theastonsonline@gmail.com

Astons Online's monthly event in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) will be on Tuesday 15 August from 10:00 to 12:00. Please tell us, if you can, that you're coming so we can have helpers available. See our website www.astonsonline.uk and email is theastonsonline@gmail.com

Bruno Brunskill (on behalf of Astons Online)

Blewbury Post Office news

Here are the updated opening times for Blewbury Post Office! I'm away in August, with no extra staff! Sarah should be taking over on the 12th, we'll be closed until approximately 11am, as the auditors will be there checking everything!

Our opening times for August are as follows,

Mondays 8.30 to 12 noon and 2.30 to 5pm

Tuesdays 8.30 to 12 noon and 2.30 to 5pm

Wednesdays 8.30 to 12 noon

Thursdays 9 to 12 noon

Fridays 9 to 12 noon and 2.30 to 5pm

The following days we are closed;

Wednesday 16th August closed

Friday 18th closed for the afternoon

Monday 21st, Tuesday 22nd and Thursday 23rd closed
(open Thursday 24th and Friday 25th mornings only)

Monday 28th Bank Holiday closed

Tuesday 29th closed also Friday 1st for the afternoon

Thank you for being patient!

Karen, Maggie, Andrew and Sarah

New Photographic Competition

Summer - from now until 30th September.

Three categories -

1. Upton and Surrounding Area.
2. Birds - any kind: sitting, flying, eating and from anywhere.
3. People/Person - at work, play, holiday, family, friends or stranger



Good luck and get snapping!

Entries should be in JPEG format (highest resolution you can manage) and emailed to upton.photo@outlook.com

Rob Traynor

Governors Annual Report to the Community July 2023

The 2022/23 school year has been another busy and successful year for our School and as part of our commitment to openness and transparency we wish to share with you some of the main highlights.

This school year has been challenging for all schools throughout the country as we have adjusted to the return to normality after all the disruptions experienced during the long period of the Covid pandemic. On top of that school budgets have been hit very hard by rising energy costs and inflation. In the face of such difficulties, we are hugely grateful to our headteacher and her staff for all they have done to ensure that the children have received an exciting curriculum and have continued to make good progress.

The School's core values of Love; Resilience; Appreciation and Forgiveness have been more important than ever in moving the School forward. These values along with a terrific team effort between staff, children, parents, governors and the wider community means that the School continues to grow in strength and resilience and has great aspirations for the future. It is an exciting place to be as it continues on an upward trajectory.

We are, of course, a Church of England school and our Christian ethos is at the heart of all we do. Our vision is based on the parable of the Sower: Matthew 13. Our guiding motto is Nurture, Grow, Flourish. Our School is a place for all to belong. Through love we nurture all to grow in their own unique way. We create an environment for all to flourish; to become respectful, compassionate, courageous advocates, who make a difference to our community and the world beyond.

In the Autumn term our returning pupils were joined by new ones, some coming from around the world. We are delighted with the diversity which helps us to broaden our horizons and depth of empathy and understanding.

In September our multi-academy trust, ODST, deemed that the School had made sufficient progress to have a local governing board put in place again. This new Governing Board has worked hard to recruit parents and members of the community with sufficient knowledge and skills to carry out the work of an effective board. During the year two governors Matt Cole and Maxine Evans left the board and we thank them for the hard work that they did in developing the Board and ensuring that it worked effectively. Being a governor is a voluntary activity but it does take time and commitment and we are fortunate in having governors who are so committed and give so much effort and time. This year we have been able to recruit two new governors Lesley Botchway and Vaughan Humphries and in September we will be joined by Swati Deb and Katie Dickens. At the time of writing, we still have one vacancy and are seeking someone with financial skills in particular.

How have Governors held the school to account?

The three core functions of the governing body are to

- Develop the vision of the school

- Hold leaders to account for the educational performance and performance management of the headteacher

- Ensure that funding is spent appropriately and wisely

The Governing Board has two committees: Resources and Finance and Curriculum. The Full Governing Board meets five times a year with the committees meeting in between and reporting to the full Board.

There are two documents prepared by the School and the Governing Board which guide the Governors and the School in our work together. These are the School Development Plan and the School Evaluation Form. A number of techniques are employed to ensure accountability and these include challenging the headteacher at Board meetings and conducting monitoring visits when governors are able to observe and speak to teachers and children as well as see the outcomes of their work. This enables governors to gather a range of evidence showing how objectives are being met. This year we had a particular focus on

- Safeguarding – this is a priority in all schools and will continue to be so.

- Behaviour

- Subject leadership

- English – especially reading and writing

- Art

- Music

- Design and Technology

- Improved teaching and learning through coaching and professional development

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision has once again been supported through guidance and additional support from ODST as numbers have increased. Parents of these children have thanked the School for the support being given. The School is creating a sensory room, with financial support from the PTA, in which the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) will be able to support individuals and groups. This should be ready for use in September.

Looking to the future

We have to say several goodbyes. Mrs Calvert, who has been on maternity leave, did not return to our School as she obtained a teaching post closer to where she lives. She is missed as she was a very valuable member of the teaching staff.

We also say goodbye to our Year 6 pupils. As ever, they have proved themselves to be resilient and resourceful and we wish them every success in their new schools.

In September we will welcome Sam Coleman, who will be joining us as Assistant Headteacher and SENDCO. He will be working alongside Jo Reeder as he develops his leadership skills but will also be class teaching three days a week. The governors have agreed that Miss Reeder can reduce her time to 0.8 for one year so she can have an improved work life balance.

Finally, may we thank you all for the support you give the School and the way you have worked with us to ensure that Blewbury School continues to make such good progress.

Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust (UVHAT)

Chairman's Update, July 2023

Finances

The hall finances continue to remain in a healthy state with funding for the toilet refurbishments as well as other smaller projects (tidying up the patio area, de weeding and refilling gaps with sand cement) available.

Thanks to the volunteers Chris Traynor, Brian and Giulia Rippon, Ali Lewington, Kim Gould, Debbie Paul, Victoria Griffiths, Gillian Collins and Gerogie Mason for their support and fundraising efforts during Uptonogood. The hall remains in good decorative condition with some minor painting required. The paint is available and this will be carried out by one of the committee members.

Bookings

There has been a return to party bookings as well as the long term regulars and booking for the kitchen by Style Acre for training their staff. We are pleased that the return of the Drop in Coffee Morning is starting again - first session 27th July 10:00 - 11:00

Development Projects

Work on replacing the poor guttering has begun (this will also include installing the water butt for the Nature Garden).

The working group, looking into the refurbishment of the ladies and disabled loos are now looking into local builders and a few names have been put forward. There is no urgency for this work (the toilets are functional) and any work would be best carried out during the quieter period, after the summer.

Caretaking

Cleaner still employed.

Rob Traynor
Chair, UVHAT



CAN WE HELP?

HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING

We are a local charity which supports people of all ages living in Blewbury, Aston Upthorpe and Upton, and have the funding to give a helping hand if you are struggling financially during these difficult times.

From the weekly food shop, energy bills, school expenditure such as buying uniform and paying for trips and equipment, we can provide one off payments to help you, or someone you know in need.

There is a short application form to complete which can be picked up from St Mary's Church porch, Blewbury Post Office, or requested by email to unitedcharities@outlook.com. We can help you fill in the form if needed. Please don't be reluctant to ask for help, all applications are dealt with confidentially.

United Charities of the Ancient Parish of Blewbury Registered Charity No: 203538

Drop In

A village drop-in runs on alternate Thursdays at various villagers' and ex-villagers' houses from 3-5.00. 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

Contributions for Upton News

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 (usually 28th of the month) may NOT be included - if this causes a problem please contact me.

Neil Thorp, Editor