

# Upton News



December 2023

**Come to our webinar on 1st December to have your say  
on a new **Primary Care Strategy****

**Friday 1st December**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is hosting a webinar on Friday 1st December at 11.30am at which people can find out more about a new local Primary Care Strategy and how they can help shape its development.

**Who is developing the strategy?**

NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), the organisation that plans, buys and oversees health services for nearly two million people across the BOB area from a range of NHS, voluntary, charitable, community and private sector providers, is developing a Primary Care Strategy.

**What is primary care?**

The four services that make up primary care are general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry (eye health).

**Have your say**

The ICB is seeking people's views on these services and how they can be developed in the future.

People can find out more about this work and share their views via a short online survey, which will be open until 31st January 2024, on the [ICB's engagement website](#).

**Come to our webinar to have your say and find out more**

Dan Leveson, ICB Place Director for Oxfordshire, and Louise Smith, ICB Deputy Director of Primary Care, will be at the webinar **on Friday 1st December at 11.30am** to talk about the strategy, hear views and feedback, and answer any questions.

# Church News

## Services at St. Mary the Virgin, Upton

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

### Prayer Focus

#### Services for December and January:

##### † 3<sup>rd</sup> December

*Advent Sunday*

9.15am Lay-led service

Sidesmen, those who help with hospitality & catering. Flower arrangers

##### † 10<sup>th</sup> December

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

Outreach & Parish magazines

##### † 17<sup>th</sup> December

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent*

No Service today

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

##### † 24<sup>th</sup> December

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve*

4.00pm Crib Service

All the churches in our Benefice & our relationships together

##### 25<sup>th</sup> December

*Christmas*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

##### † 7<sup>th</sup> January

*Epiphany*

9.15am Lay-led service

Children, our village schools & Sunday clubs

##### † 14<sup>th</sup> January

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

Those recently baptised & baptism visitors

† 28<sup>th</sup> January

Our worship, musicians, organists & choirs

*Presentation in the Temple/Candlemas*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

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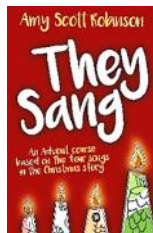
**Conversations around Christianity  
2.30pm to 3.30pm in the Benefice Centre  
Starting 26 November**



The opportunity for more “Conversations” and explorations around some themes relating to the Christmas celebrations and to see where our conversations will take us!

**Sunday afternoons 2.30-3.30pm, 26 November till 17 December.**  
Seasonal treats and coffee/tea too!

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**ECUMENICAL ADVENT GROUP**

An Advent Course  
based on the four songs of the Christmas Story:  
The songs of Zachariah, Mary, the angels & Simeon  
**10:30 to 12 noon – Fridays 1, 8 & 15 December**  
at the home of Jenny Loder. Josie Midwinter to lead,  
based on Amy Scott Robinson's “They Sang”.

Please let Elaine in the office know if you would like to take part, also so that she can put you in contact with Jenny and Josie and give you the address.

Contact via [office@churnchurches.co.uk](mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk) or 01235 850267

## Conversations at Christmas time

Christmas is very much a time for conversations- conversations with friends and family, conversations with neighbours and perhaps also with strangers, as we do our Christmas shopping or take part in communal carol singing. Sometimes these conversations will be light-hearted and full of fun, but I'm also well aware that Christmas can also have it's awkward moments. It can be a quite a stressful time, and it's easy for tempers to fray.



As I write these words, I am struck by the number of times conversations feature in the traditional Christmas readings. The accounts of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus found in the gospels, especially in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke, are fully of conversations. Some of these conversations involve a dialogue between a human being and an angel, perhaps most famously in the story of the Annunciation, found in the 1st chapter of Luke's gospel. In this story, the angel Gabriel is sent to the Virgin Mary, and he begins the conversation with the memorable words : "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you". The conversation finishes with Mary saying, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word".

I think there is something very special about a good conversation. A good conversation is the opposite of a speech or a monologue, in which one speaker gives the audience the benefit of their own particular thoughts and views. A good conversation is a dialogue, in which the parties listen to each other and learn from each other, sharing experiences and allowing the conversation to go where it will go.

I think we can learn so much from a good conversation, and this is why recently I have started hosting a series of conversations around Christianity. These conversations provide an opportunity to explore the questions and issues which might be occupying our minds. The next series starts on Sunday 26th November, and it runs for 4 weeks - you are very welcome to drop in to any one of the sessions, or come to all four! They take start at 230pm at the Benefice Centre in Blewbury, and last an hour. Seasonal refreshments will be provided - conversation often flows better with some tea and cake! There is no need to book a place, and everyone is most welcome, whatever your particular beliefs.

May this Christmas time be a rich source of blessing to you all.

*Father Jason*

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](mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk)

## CHRISTMAS READING

Village Hall 9 December 6.30 pm

Reserve the date for your annual Christmas Treat, then join us to enjoy a story full of magic and pathos and fun, adapted from the children's book by Matt Haig, "The Girl Who Saved Christmas". Schoolchildren come free, but adults will charged a £6 admission fee. That does include seasonal refreshments, though. Tickets will be available next month.

Proceeds go to The Friends of St Mary's Church.

Any questions or offers of help to  
Malcolm Wright (850705)

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## Afternoon 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](mailto:richmondbinov@gmail.com) if you're interested and to find out the venue for the meetings.

*Richard Burrow*

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## Upton-based Window Cleaning Service

Hi All,

My name is Jake and after moving to Upton a couple of years ago I am now restarting my window cleaning round in the area. If anyone needs a window cleaner or would like me to give them a



## Council News

The Parish Council has agreed the budget for the next financial year which will be published shortly. It includes a small increase in the precept but one which is considerably below the rate of inflation.

The Council would like to express its gratitude to UptoNoGood for a donation to playground maintenance costs. Without such fund raising our precept would have to be much higher or services reduced.

Last month we gave notice of the village survey. It has now been agreed that this will be in two phases starting with a very broad questionnaire, the results from which will be used to decide what detailed questions are in the second part. This ensures that phase two questions are based around what villagers want and are not influenced by some preconceived ideas (conscious or otherwise). The final outcome will form the basis of the village's five year plan.

A review of our IT systems has revealed a need to upgrade the village website software. This is not unexpected, but prompts us to thank Peter McLaughlin for maintaining the site and Mike Brown for his continued work in maintaining the calendar.

Finally thanks too to Jesse West for distributing the new bus timetables (news of which is below) to everyone in the village.

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on 18th January at 8.00 pm in the village hall.

Ben Shaw

## Bus News

**Route 94 (Didcot - Blewbury):** Following receipt of BSIP funding, this service will be improved to operate hourly over two slightly different routes

- service 94 will run between Didcot, East Hagbourne, Blewbury and Upton, roughly every two hours,
- a new 94A circular route will also serve West Hagbourne, the Astons and Moretons, again roughly two-hourly, following a similar route to the former 94S service.

This will re-introduce regular bus services for the **Astons** and **Moretons**. Chilton and Harwell Campus will no longer be served - these places are now served by route X34.

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

Hello from Hayleigh and Debra

It's November and with Halloween, Bonfire Night and Diwali over, we are naturally looking forward to other winter celebrations such as Christmas. If you are struggling this winter to pay for bills or keep your house warm, there is some information further on in this newsletter on how the council or other organisations can support you.

This month we've had discussions as a council about the future waste strategy - did you know that waste makes up half of the Vale of White Horse Council's emissions? We had training on safeguarding and being able to spot the signs in our community of when an adult or child may be in danger. If you spot something and a person is in immediate danger, then contact the emergency services on 999. You can also report any Safeguarding concerns to Oxfordshire's Safeguarding **Children** or **Adults** Boards, or contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (which Vale is part of) on one of the following numbers: Office hours (8.30am - 5pm, Monday to Thursday, 8.30am - 4pm, Friday): **0345 050 7666** Outside office hours: Emergency Duty Team: **0800 833 408**

We also had the honour of laying a wreath on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council at Harwell's Remembrance Sunday Parade, remembering all those lost in the first and second world wars and all conflicts since. We will remember them.

## Council News

**A new grant to help people stay warm and fed this winter:** will help support people in our communities who may otherwise struggle to afford essential things. Launched by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils, the grant is aimed at local voluntary and community groups, and town and parish councils, who can use it to support those most in need in the districts. Organisations can apply for grants between £2,000 to £5,000, or up to £10,000 for collaborative projects between groups of two or more organisations.



**Over £82,000 awarded to expand youth activities:** Children across Wantage, Grove and nearby neighbourhoods will soon have more exciting youth activities on offer, thanks to a funding boost for Sweatbox Community Youth Services from the Vale of White Horse District Council.

**Over £440,000 awarded to support swimming pools in South and Vale:** The award from Sport England will help ensure residents continue to have access to good swimming facilities across the two districts.

**Over £130,000 boost for Didcot Wave gym:** The centre, located in Newlands Avenue, Didcot, will benefit from new cardio and resistance gym equipment early next year. The plan is to provide state of the art equipment - with some self-powered items that will reduce the energy consumption of Didcot Wave.

*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](http://www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh) &

[www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell](http://www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell)

*Please get in touch with any issues or concerns, either via email:*

[hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk) &

[debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

## **Other Parish Council News**

### **Blewbury Amazons Girls Football Club**

Blewbury Amazons Girls Football Club will no longer be using the recreation ground for their training and matches. The girls football club has grown hugely since first starting to train at Upton and sadly the facilities at the recreation ground cannot meet their needs.

If a solution can be found to provide toilet facilities and sufficient parking, the team will be welcome back. In the meantime, we wish the girls lots of success.

The Portaloo should be removed week commencing 11th December.  
Parish Clerk

### **Nature Garden**

Nothing to report at this time of year. We've been conducting periodic maintenance - clearing grass, nettles, etc.

There have been a few late blooms, but largely everything has quietened down. After leaf drop we'll prune the fruit and hedges.

Kieron Humphrey



## Opportunities to work at the May 2024 elections – register your interest now!

VOWHDC is looking for people to work at the May 2024 Police and Crime Commissioner Election.

If you or someone you know is interested in working either of the following paid roles, please get in touch as soon as possible and please encourage your friends and family to do the same:

- Polling station staff - locations across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, Thursday 2 May (from 6am until finish - likely to be around 10.30pm)

- Postal vote staff - Abingdon, 22 April to 2 May (various shifts available)

To register your interest, simply

email [electionstaff@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:electionstaff@southandvale.gov.uk). Our Elections team will send all the information and ask you to confirm your availability for the various roles.

For more information, visit [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/electionjobs\\_](http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/electionjobs_)

Please note, we are unable to offer the roles to people that work for or are connected with a political party.

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## 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

**19 December:** Christmas Event: *Magic Show* with Ian Keable  
(Members Only ticket event)

**16 January:** Agatha Christie - Judy Dewey (to be confirmed)

**20 February:** How to be a Gardener in the 21st Century- Timothy Walker

**19 March:** Curiosities in the Cotswolds Part 1 - Alan Copeland

**Chair** - [chairman@didcotu3a.org](mailto:chairman@didcotu3a.org)

**Secretary** - [Secretary@didcotu3a.org](mailto:Secretary@didcotu3a.org)

Additional information can be found on the [u3asites.org.Uk](http://u3asites.org.Uk)

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

# UPTON PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Winter November 23<sup>rd</sup> - March 2<sup>nd</sup>

Open to all residence of Upton

Two age categories - anyone below 16 and all others 16 and above.

Themes

Upton and Surrounding Area (in winter) - Anything that shows off the area in which we live - landscapes, buildings, people, nature, sunsets, weather etc.

Animal(s) in winter - wild or domestic

All submissions should be in JPG format and emailed to

[upton.photo@outlook.com](mailto:upton.photo@outlook.com)

Remember to include a brief description or title.



Previous entry - Upton  
from above by Mike  
Weston

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## 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.



Contact me by email: [amelia.thackray@gmail.com](mailto:amelia.thackray@gmail.com) or by text: 07718 832079

# **The Caucasian Chalk Circle, 17-20 July, 2024.**

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“A gem of a play. This is full of action, humour, music, and emotion... a wonderful story performed by a gang of actors - in a new translation”. You can find a video recording of Director Erica Harley discussing her love for this play and sharing her vision for our production next summer on our website

[www.blewburyplayers.co.uk](http://www.blewburyplayers.co.uk).

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**Auditions** for The Caucasian Chalk Circle will be held on 3 & 4 February. Please e-mail

[blewburyplayers@gmail.com](mailto:blewburyplayers@gmail.com) to book an audition or ask questions, even if you are not available on that weekend.

We would also like to encourage anybody interested in joining the production team in non-performing roles to get in touch @ [blewburyplayers@gmail.com](mailto:blewburyplayers@gmail.com).

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## **Blewbury WI**

Blewbury Women's Institute generally meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm, normally in the Vale room of Blewbury Village Hall. It is open to women of all ages from Blewbury and surrounding areas.

Our December meeting is just for members, our fantastic Christmas lunch - we are all looking forward to that.

As well as the monthly meetings with interesting speakers, we organise trips to the theatre, guided walks, lunches, garden visits, coffee mornings and craft workshops. We also have weekly Mah Jong sessions, monthly Scrabble (evenings and afternoons), monthly craft nights and now run a book club.

Save the date - our next 'normal' main monthly meeting is on Wednesday January 24<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm in the Vale room. The topic will be "The history of Antique fans" more detail will be in the Upton News January Edition. Do come along. We love to have visitors, if you'd like to come along with someone else or find out more, ring our Secretary, Joy, on 850543 or email [blewburywi@gmail.com](mailto:blewburywi@gmail.com). You will be made so welcome - we all love to meet new friends, do come along.

## News from The Red Lion, Blewbury

Welcome to The Red Lion in Blewbury. Have you visited us recently?

The Red Lion has been a public house in the heart of Blewbury for almost 300 years. Retaining its nostalgic charm, it has undergone a revival makeover by Annabel Cochrane and John Hunter, breathing a new lease of life into this hidden gem in an idyllic setting for old friends, new friends, family (and dogs!) to enjoy. At last a freehouse, The Red Lion has been set free to offer a greater selection of traditional cask ales, local brews as well as keg beers and fine wines.



With a traditional public bar featuring a roaring log fire, a stylish piano bar and a restaurant and events room, there is plenty to choose from whatever your occasion. Tucked away at the end of a country lane, with its spacious, newly surfaced carpark, you'll discover one of the best pub gardens in Oxfordshire. With fabulous views across the chalk stream over the adjoining paddocks, our stretch tent allows you to enjoy the garden whatever the weather. Our covered, outdoor 'TV Lounge' is increasingly popular

for major sporting events. We have a good supply of cosy blankets for next year's Six Nations! Well behaved dogs are welcome both inside and outside the pub.

The Lionsden Kitchen is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday with menus to suit all tastes, including hot and cold bar snacks, deliciously elegant sharing platters, plus a selection of popular pub mains - all using locally sourced ingredients. Updated menus available the at

[www.theredlionblewbury.co.uk](http://www.theredlionblewbury.co.uk)

Booking is recommended for our Sunday Roasts!

### What's on at The Red Lion?

For budding musicians and veteran artists alike, we host our popular Open Mic on the last Monday of every month. Wednesday is our games and 'quizzical' night, including our recently introduced 'winner

takes all' monthly darts challenge. Our weekly Thursday Combo features live music and street food. Enjoy a worldwide variety of guest street-food vendors for eat in or take away including: Gurkha, Korean, Middle Eastern, Greek and Italian. Live music is equally eclectic, everything from solo vocalists, electric and acoustic guitar, folk, Blues Americana and more.

As the festive season fast approaches, we're taking bookings for parties of 8+ guests for a traditional Christmas dinner. We're also the perfect venue for family gatherings, parties and special events for up to 150 people. More details of what's on, including wine tastings, guest chef evenings, pop up shops and much more can be found at

[www.theredlionblewbury.co.uk](http://www.theredlionblewbury.co.uk) or follow us on Instagram [@redlionblew](https://www.instagram.com/redlionblew)

We look forward to welcoming you soon!

John and Annabel [bookings@theredlionblewbury.co.uk](mailto:bookings@theredlionblewbury.co.uk) 01235 850 403

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## Upton's Village Hall drop-in

Some of you may have noticed an error in the last edition of Upton News regarding the upcoming dates of our drop-in event. Unbeknownst to our Editor, discussions have been underway regarding a change to the existing drop-in schedule.

We wish to provide clarification that due to the availability of our organising group, we have collectively decided to shift the drop-in to the **last Friday of the month**, replacing the previous Thursday schedule. This change will apply for the remainder of this year and into 2024. The regular timing will remain at 10.00-11.30, with the occasional extension for special events.

We have a **Christmas Special** planned for **Friday, December 22nd**, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. We have exciting Christmas festivities in store, including music, festive drinks, and delicious mince pies. Please mark the date on your calendar.

**Upton's Pop-Up Bakery:** Following feedback from villagers, we have decided to trial pre-orders with the Blewbury Bread Company. You can now pre-order delectable pastries and bread from a reduced menu for collection at the monthly drop-in. The order cut-off will be the Wednesday before the drop-in. This service is being trialled by volunteers and operates without profit.





**Upton's Donations to Didcot Food Bank:** We are delighted to share that we are now accepting donations for the Didcot Food Bank at our monthly drop-in event. For those who may not have heard, Jennie and Steve, who have been part of our village for **10 years**, have recently relocated. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jennie and Steve for their kindness over the years. We welcome Rachel and Chris, who have graciously taken the role of collectors. If you are unable to attend the drop-in but still wish to contribute, Rachel and Chris continue to receive donations at their residence, Conifers on Stream Road.



*Didcot Emergency  
Food  
Bank*



Thank you for your continued support and participation in our community events.

**The Upton Drop-In Team** - Volunteering on behalf of Upton's Village Hall Amenities Trust (UVHAT)

If you have any questions or would like to help out with any of the meets, please feel free to email Nicola Hall - [events@uptonvillagehall.co.uk](mailto:events@uptonvillagehall.co.uk)

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## Astons Online

Astons Online's December round table webinar using Zoom will be 10:30 on Tuesday 5 December 2023. Book your place at [theastonsonline@gmail.com](mailto:theastonsonline@gmail.com)

Astons Online's December in-person event in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) will be on Tuesday 12 December from 10:00 to 12:00. This will be by appointment only please and not drop-in.

Bruno Brunskill (On behalf of Astons Online)  
[theastonsonline@gmail.com](mailto:theastonsonline@gmail.com) 07780 958249  
[www.astonsonline.uk](http://www.astonsonline.uk)

UK Online Centre 3455623  
Cyber to the Citizen initiative

## Blewbury School Marks Special National Events

The last few weeks have been a busy time at Blewbury School. We were delighted to welcome visiting families to our recent open days and will look forward to many new pupils joining us in 2024. If you missed out on this opportunity, introductory visits can always be booked through the School Office.

Meanwhile the whole School has been busy participating in a range of very significant national events. What follows below is an update on them from Cici and Elliott, who are two Year 6 pupils:

Across the School we have been learning about **Black History Month**. In class we read a book called 'Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt', which is a fictional story based on historical events where people trapped by the slave trade in America escaped to Canada. This year, the focus of Black History Month was 'celebrating our sisters', therefore we learnt about Rosa Parks, Floella Benjamin and Aretha Franklin. We feel that we are really lucky that racism is less common nowadays and it is important to understand equality.

For **Remembrance Day**, on the gate each morning and after lunch each day, the house captains collected donations by selling poppies. The money goes to help people who have served in the armed forces.

During our service on Thursday, Father Jason played us piece of music called 'I vow to Thee My Country' and we sang a song which our headteacher Miss Reeder had taught us, called 'Remember.' Annabel then read the poem 'In Flanders Fields' and pupils in Picasso class shared prayers. Here is one of them:



‘Dear Lord, please give us peace in this world. Help us to remember the people who fought in this country. May God bless us, the Holy Spirit enlighten us, and the Son heal us. Amen.’

All of this helped us to reflect on the past times of world wars.

This week, we are participating in **Anti-Bullying Week**, starting by joining in with it is OK to be different ‘Odd Socks Day’. We have also taken part in activities such as creating colourful socks, role-playing scenarios and writing pledges. On Monday we had an assembly on how to spread awareness about bullying and how to stop it.

We have learned that it is important to celebrate diversity because everybody is different and should be valued and respected.

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## Blewbury Post Office news

Monday 9am - 3pm

Tuesday 8.30am - 12pm – 2.30pm - 5pm

Wednesday 9am - 3pm

Thursday 9am - 3pm

Friday 8.30am - 12pm – 2.30pm - 5pm

Our last Christmas posting dates for Christmas are listed below. Please allow plenty of time for posting. If possible please post items and gifts for Christmas early, particularly for International deliveries.

|                       |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monday 18 December    | 2nd Class<br>2nd Class Signed For<br>Royal Mail Tracked 48 <sup>®**</sup>                      |
| Wednesday 20 December | 1st Class<br>1st Class Signed For<br>Royal Mail Tracked 24 <sup>®**</sup>                      |
| Thursday 21 December  | Special Delivery Guaranteed <sup>®</sup>                                                       |
| Friday 22 December    | Special Delivery Guaranteed <sup>®</sup><br>(Guaranteed Saturday delivery<br>for an extra fee) |



Our Christmas opening hours over the festive period will be:

Wednesday 20th December 9am - 3pm  
Thursday 21st December 9am - 3pm  
Friday 22nd December 8.30am - 12pm — 2.30pm - 5pm  
Saturday 23rd December CLOSED  
Sunday 24th December CLOSED  
Monday 25th December CLOSED  
Tuesday 26th December CLOSED  
Wednesday 27th December 9am - 12pm  
Thursday 28th December 9am - 12pm  
Friday 29th December 9am - 12pm  
Saturday 30th December CLOSED  
Sunday 31st December CLOSED  
Monday 1st January CLOSED  
Tuesday 2nd January 8.30am - 12pm — 2.30pm - 5pm  
Wednesday 3rd January 9am - 3pm  
Thursday 4th January 9am - 3pm  
Friday 5th January 8.30am - 12pm — 2.30pm - 5pm

Thank you very much for your business over the last few weeks. I look forward to serving you in a Busy December. On behalf of myself, Karen and Andrew we would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Thanks so much,

Sarah

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## Chipping of Christmas trees at Savages Green Grocers

We will once again be chipping Christmas trees at Savages in Blewbury.

It will take place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 10 - 12am. A Donation to Helen and Douglas house will be gratefully received.

This will be our 20<sup>th</sup> year of supporting Helen and Douglas house, with the support of Savages Green Grocers.

*But maybe not as big as this one!!*



## November Wine Club – Celebrity Wines

For some time now, members have been asking if we could take a look at wines endorsed by celebrities. It's a huge market but is it a gimmick to make a fast buck or is there actually something in it? There are well over 100 celebrity wines to choose from, we took a look at a few in our November Wine Club Meeting.

Our first wine was from one Kylie Minogue's selections, a Pink Prosecco. Like Kylie herself, this has a great following, with over 7 million bottles sold last year in the UK! Very drinkable and went down well with most members. Think fresh and frothy raspberries with pear but not too sickly!



We then moved on to Graham Norton's Sauvignon Blanc. This is a wine that was already established in 2008 by two Kiwi wine makers. One day whilst visiting London they decided to "invite" themselves on to the Graham Norton Show, with the offer of some free wine.....a few bottles later and Graham accepted their offer of endorsing the wine! This is well made and shows all the characteristics of a good New Zealand SB! With over 2 million bottles sold a year, we would tend to agree.

We left Graham and headed over to South Africa, for a Chenin Blanc called Big Easy - a reference to Earnie Els, once the worlds number one golfer. He teamed up with Louis Strydom, an infamous wine maker in South Africa to produce to exceptional wines. Mainly, some would say because Louis only signed up on the basis that Ernie stuck to his golf and he took care of the wines! The result is a lovely fresh wine full of early spring jasmine and topical peaches. Try is as something different to kick-start your dinner party this Christmas.

We next went to James Martin's Chardonnay Marsanne blend. My Favorite wine of the evening although it was not to everyone's taste! 80% Chardonnay gave the wine both floral and fruity citrus notes but with a

balance of Marsanne, you get some buttery notes. Time has been taken to allow this wine to ferment in barrels with some aging on the lees (the yeast and stems that are found with the wine during fermentation), giving it more complexity and a sophisticated taste.

You can't have a celebrity wine evening without a wine from Brad and Angelina's Miraval estate. This was a Rose, Cotes de Provence. As is well documented, their split several years ago means neither have too much to do with the wine but it still gets 89 points in Decanter. This wine is very good with savory red fruit and peppery spice, accompanied by a pounced prickly acidity - well what else would you expect!

Next we tried an organic wine by Gary Barlow. He has several in his range. This wine comes from central Castilla region and is very pleasant, displaying notes of small hedgerow fruits, herbs and dark cocoa. If you are having a meat board or tapas then this wine is well worth a try!

We moved on to a wine from Gordon Ramsay, called Intenso Rosso. Like Gordon, you would expect it to pack a punch and we were not disappointed! Made by Alberto Antonini, it comes from Tuscany and is a blend of grapes that produces a dark fruit taste with herbs and spices but a crisp acidity. Complex and really good value for money, this was well received by the members.

For our final wine we went back to Erney Els and his Major Series wines from Stellenbosch. 100% Cab Sauv, this was not a Bordeaux classic but it stood out in its own right, with aromas of warm blackberry crumble pudding and sharp ripe cherry, finished with a touch of oak.

This month also saw the sad passing of a hugely loved Wine Club member and a great supporter of our Village, Simon Powell. We raised a glass to Simon with a very kind donation by Hilary of some 1966 vintage Taylor port. Like Simon, this wine was exceptional and will never be forgotten!

We did only try a few celebrity wines over the evening but for some there was more than just a name behind the wine and with the amount of wine consumed by the younger population falling, it may well be that this is just one way of keeping wines going - it would be a shame to lose such variety! If you would like to come along and try our Wine Club then please go on to our website for more details [www.uptonwineclub.co.uk](http://www.uptonwineclub.co.uk)

Ian (Chairman)



## HELP WITH ESSENTIAL LIVING COSTS

Are you on a low income and struggling to pay for food, energy or necessary household items? We are a local charity able to support people living in Blewbury, the Astons and Upton by providing one off payments to help you, or someone you know in need.

To apply 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](mailto:unitedcharities@outlook.com). We can help you fill in the form if needed. All applications are assessed on an individual basis but, as our funds are limited, we give priority to those in receipt of benefits such as Universal Credit, Tax Credits and Pension Credit or those who have extenuating circumstances such as ill health or vulnerability. Please don't be reluctant to ask for help, all applications are dealt with confidentially.

We are pleased to report that we have continued to be able to help individuals and families in Upton, Blewbury, and the Astons over the summer months as the economy has continued to put stress on everyday living expenses. We would like to thank those of you who have helped to make this possible by generously donating to help our local people.

As we approach the winter and Christmas, things are unlikely to get any easier for those struggling financially. We are therefore reaching out again to the local community for a helping hand. Any amount of money would be appreciated and can be donated through our Just Giving page [www.justgiving.com/ucab](http://www.justgiving.com/ucab)

We thank you very much in advance and if you have any questions, please do get in touch with us by [email unitedcharities@outlook.com](mailto:email_unitedcharities@outlook.com)

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

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## Contributions for Upton News

For those submitting news items, will you please send them to me at [neilthorp@btinternet.com](mailto: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 28<sup>th</sup> of the month) may NOT be included - if this causes a problem please contact me.

*Neil Thorp, Editor*