

Upton News



February 2024

Church News

Services at St. Mary the Virgin, Upton

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

Services February:

Prayer Focus

† 4th February

2nd Sunday before Lent

9.15am Lay-led service

PCC's, all in leadership

& our Benefice operations manager

† 11th February

Sunday next before Lent

9.15am Parish Eucharist

Clergy & all who preach or lead

† 14th February

Ash Wednesday

8pm Benefice Ash Wednesday service (at St Mary's Upton)

† 25th February

hospitality

2nd Sunday of Lent

9.15am Parish Eucharist

Sidesmen, those who help with

& catering. Flower arrangers

ECUMENICAL LENT GROUP 2024

Please feel welcome to join us for '**A Journey Through the Psalms**'

10:30 am to 12:00 noon on Fridays 23 Feb & 1, 8, 15 & 22 March.

Meeting at the home of Jenny Loder.

Contact Elaine in the office to book a place and for directions.

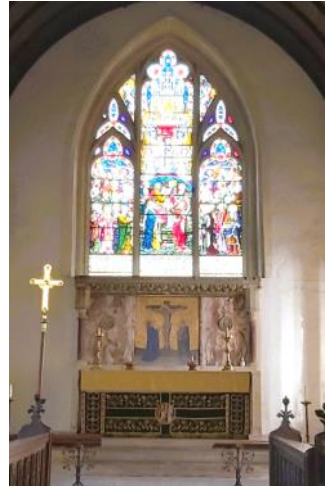
Elaine de Ridder 01235 850267

office@churnchurches.co.uk

A Lenten Possibility

I wonder if you have any plans for Lent? Lent will soon be upon us. It's official start is, of course, Ash Wednesday, and this year Ash Wednesday falls on 14th February. Down the centuries, Christians have observed the season of Lent in many different ways. Some Christians give something up for Lent, for example chocolate or alcohol. Some read a book which will help them to grow in their spiritual lives. These are only examples, there are many ways of observing Lent, to suit different contexts and different personalities.

This year, I'm going to offer something new. I'm arranging a series of visits to our church buildings which will focus on one specific question: how do our church buildings help people to pray? In what ways are they "spiritual" buildings?



It's not just about the buildings as such: it's also about their contents. All of our churches contain works of art from different centuries, and these works of art are usually there because it is hoped that they will help people to draw closer to God. We will explore how different works of art fulfil their spiritual purpose. It's a fascinating subject. Some works of art will connect with us, and others won't; some seem to bring us closer to God, while others seem to have no spiritual resonance at all. Why might this be?

The visits will take place on Tuesday afternoons, beginning on Tuesday February 20th. They start at 3pm, and finish by 4.30pm. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided. Everyone is most welcome. The churches will be visited in the following order: North Moreton (20th February); Aston Tirrold (27th February); Blewbury (5th March); Hagbourne (12th March); and Upton (19th March). Each church visit is complete in itself, so it is absolutely fine to attend only one of the sessions.

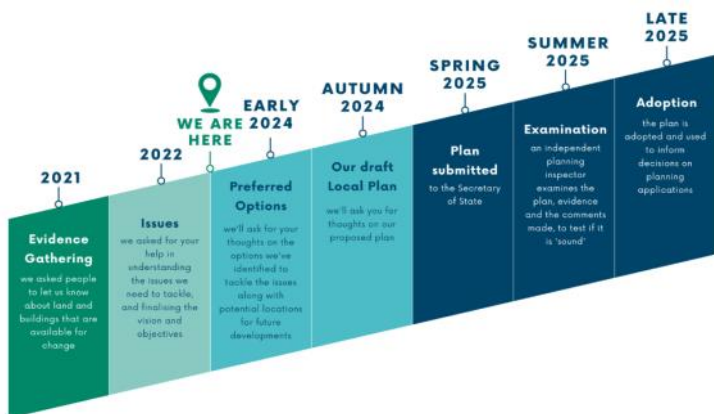
I should also add that these visits will make no assumptions at all about where people are in terms of their personal beliefs. They are intended to be of interest to anyone, but especially to anyone with an interest in art or architecture.

They offer another Lenten possibility - and if you're looking for something different this year, you might well find them of interest.

Father Jason

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

From the 10th January you will be able to comment on the 'preferred options' of the Joint Local Plan (JLP) that the Vale of White Horse District Council have been working on together with South Oxfordshire District Council. The JLP will set out the kinds of new housing and jobs needed and where they should go. It will inform planning application decisions for the districts. It will also have policies to help address the climate emergency, restore nature and meet the needs of residents, such as delivering genuinely affordable low-carbon homes with the right infrastructure to go with it. The figure below shows where we are in the process of developing the JLP.



Now we need your input again. There are two ways to read the current version of the JLP (the preferred options) and make your comments: for a detailed look at the plan go to <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/> or for a briefer look go to "JLP in a Nutshell" at <https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/>.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions for us as councillors, please do email us. As a reminder, council meetings are held in public and if you wish to address council or committee, you can contact Democratic Services ahead of time. If you need more guidance on this, please let us know!

:

www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh &
www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell

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



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Take a look at proposals and draft policies for our new Joint Local Plan to address local challenges and unlock future opportunities, including:



Climate



Housing
and jobs



Environment



Community
facilities



And more!

View the documents, find out more information on local events and complete the survey before 11.59pm on 21 February 2024:

www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLP



You can also access printed documents at your local library, the district council offices, the Beacon in Wantage, Cornerstone in Didcot, or the Great Western Park District Community Centre in Didcot.

Drop-in events:

Sandford-on-Thames: 20 Jan

Wallingford: 25 Jan

Thame: 30 Jan

Abingdon: 3 Feb

Faringdon: 6 Feb

Shippon: 24 Jan

Henley-on-Thames: 27 Jan

Wantage: 31 Jan

Crowmarsh Gifford: 5 Feb

Didcot: 10 Feb

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse
Joint Local Plan 2041



Parish Council News

This month it is nearly all about surveys.

The Vale has launched the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation, asking for the community's feedback on our proposed options and draft planning policies to help address the climate emergency, protect and restore nature, and meet the needs of our community.

As covered in the poster on the previous page, and by our district councillors, we exhort everyone to provide feedback and attend one of the drop-in events. There is also a physical copy of the plan in Didcot library.

Closer to home we are starting our own village survey as explained below.

Litter Pick

The Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean will be running again this year from Friday 15 March to Sunday 31 March. As previously, the Vale waste team will be supporting any community litter picking activities by providing litter pickers, hi-viz vests and bags as well as collecting bagged litter.

We would like Upton to take part and indications are that 17th March is a favoured date. However a volunteer is needed from the village to organise and run things on the day – any takers? Guidance will be provided. Please contact the parish clerk if willing to fill this rôle.

Upton Village Survey

Over the past few months, Upton Parish Council has reviewed how it has previously undertaken building its 5-year plan for the village – also known as its aims and objectives; it is usually based on a village survey. Whilst undertaking this review it has reflected on previous surveys and feels the best way forward is to have the survey in two parts.

Initially we are posing the following four open questions to generate qualitative feedback. This will then be used to formulate a final, quantitative, questionnaire thereby ensuring that it is based on the village's responses rather than upon the Parish Council's questions. The ultimate plan will hopefully therefore be a representative view of the villagers' wishes and needs over the next 5 years.

The more responses we receive, the more the plan will reflect the community's views, so we look forward to hearing from you all. The survey contains the four questions below and should ideally be completed on line via this link

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/M29X7FK>

Please answer these four open questions by the end of February 2024 for your input to be included in the next stage.

ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS.

1. WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS YOU LIKE ABOUT UPTON VILLAGE?

2. WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU NOT LIKE ABOUT UPTON VILLAGE?

3. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGE IN UPTON VILLAGE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

4. PLEASE ADD ANYTHING NOT MENTIONED ABOVE WHICH IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

If you do not want to use the on-line survey, email responses can be returned parish.depclerk@uptonpc.co.uk

Paper copies will also be distributed and, when completed, may be sent to the Parish Clerk at

Norton House, Chilton Road, Upton, OX11 9JL

Job Vacancy – Parish Clerk

Upton Parish Council are recruiting for a Clerk or Clerk in training.

The role is part time that can fit around your schedule other than the monthly meetings that are set a year in advance.

The role is complex and challenging with no two days the same and training for the role as well as CPD are also included.

If you are interested or would like more information please write to parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk.

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 if you're interested and to find out the venue for the meetings.

Richard Burrow

UPTON PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Winter November 23rd - March 2nd

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

Remember to include a brief description or title.

Upton's Village Hall drop-in

The drop-in will be last Friday of the month viz Friday 23rd February

The regular timing will remain at 10.00-11.30, with the occasional extension for special events.

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



- ◆ Hard and Soft Landscaping • Fencing • Garden Clearance
 - ◆ Garden and Grounds Maintenance • Hedge Planting
 - ◆ Hedge Cutting • Grass Cutting • Turfing • Power Washing
 - ◆ Winter Gritting • Licensed Waste Carrier • Insured
- Call Nick - Home: 01235 859229 Mobile: 07922 701634
[Email: ndrumlandscaping@gmail.com](mailto:ndrumlandscaping@gmail.com)

Blewbury WI

Blewbury Women's Institute meets on the 4th Wednesday of most months at 7.30pm, normally in the Vale room of Blewbury Village Hall. It is open to women of all ages from Blewbury and surrounding areas.

Our next monthly meeting is **Wednesday 28 February at 7.30** in the Vale room. We will hear about "Six warrior women of the English wars" This talk will cover the three Civil Wars of the 1640s and the position of women at the time. We will hear about the roles these warriors played in those wars, and how they helped to change the beliefs that people had about women and their capabilities. Fighting, spying? Wow!

As well as the monthly meetings with interesting speakers, we organise theatre trips, walks, outings and coffee mornings. We also run Mah Jong afternoons, Scrabble (evenings and afternoons), craft nights, local walks, a craft club and a book club. Something for everyone.

If you'd like to come along with someone else or find out more, ring our Secretary, Joy, on 01235 850543 or email blewburywi@gmail.com. No commitment - just come as a visitor - you will be made so welcome.

Didcot & District u3a

Monthly meetings at Didcot Civic Hall (on the 3rd Tuesday in the month starting at 2:30 pm)

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

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

16 April: Coaches & Coach horns, their story from the Golden Age to the Present Day - Colin Pawson

21 May: AGM. Talk from the Prostate Cancer Charity

18 June: Wildlife Wanderings - David Bailey

Following the presentations tea, coffee and biscuits are served to all new and existing members for a catchup chat - new members very welcome !

So what better way to start 2024 - we look forward to seeing you there ?!

For further Further information contact the following;

Chair: Kath Oldham; chair@didcotu3a.org

Secretary: Chris Jones; secretary@didcotu3a.org

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

Upton Village Fête

The Parochial Church Council and Upton Parish Council are looking for volunteers to help plan, organise and help run this year's Upton Village Fete.

We are looking for new ideas as well as all the classics and as much support as anyone is willing to give.

Please contact us at bens@uptonpc.co.uk to register your interest in being involved.

Benjamin Shaw
Mobile 07934 389171
Tel 01235 850308

COFFEE & KIDS!

Welcome to all bumps! babies & toddlers to our next session of Coffee & Kids on **Monday 5th February** - along with parents, grandparents and carers. We meet in the Vale Room, Blewbury Village Hall, 9.30am - 11am.

A friendly and safe place to enjoy the company of others and have some refreshment as the little ones have fun with toys, learning to play together. We finish the session with songs and action rhymes. A donation of £2 is appreciated towards our costs. Mothers' Union hosts look forward to welcoming you.

Louise - 07837 009730

Astons Online

Astons Online's February 2024 event will be in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) on Tuesday 20 February from 10:00 to 12:00. It will be our first hybrid meeting, in person and online using Zoom.

We'll talk about smartphones becoming increasingly important tools for everyday living as well as any issues visitors want to discuss. Please tell us, if you can, that you plan to be there, or join in by Zoom, what you'd like to discuss and if you'd like a one-to-one appointment.

Bruno Brunskill (On behalf of Astons Online)
theastonsonline@gmail.com 07780 958249
www.astonsonline.uk

UK Online Centre 3455623
Cyber to the Citizen initiative

Strengthening Links With Blewbury School

The term has started well here at Blewbury Primary School with lots of exciting learning opportunities planned for the term ahead. Last week, I went for a wonderful walk around Blewbury with Roger Murphy, our Community Governor. Being new to the school, it was great to get to see more of the village and to learn about some of the local history and very active clubs and societies. We are so lucky to be located in such an active village and Miss Reeder and I are very keen to ensure that the children benefit from the local area and the skills and experiences of those who live nearby. I look forward to visiting Upton and the other surrounding villages in the future.

As we continue to strengthen our curriculum, we are looking to expand our extra-curricular opportunities. We would be very interested to hear from any local clubs or societies who would be prepared to consider helping with an after-school club at the school, once a week, for at least one school term.

After-school clubs usually runs from 3:15 - 4:15pm on a weekday for a small group of children who sign up for the duration of the club. Current clubs include a gardening club in the Spring and Summer months and a range of sports groups. Other groups that may be of interest could include computing, Lego, chess, drama, local history or sustainability.

If you would be interested in having an exploratory conversation about the possibility of setting up a new club (even just as a one-off) please approach myself or Roger Murphy or send an email for my attention at

office.3248@blewbury.oxon.sch.uk.

Mr Sam Coleman
Assistant Headteacher
Blewbury School

Christmas Tree Chipping

Thanks to those that supported Ben and Steve Strange with the chipping of Christmas trees at Savages on the 7th of January. Our efforts raised £424.75 for Helen & Douglas House.

Post Office News

Firstly, I would like to say a big thank you for all your love and support whilst I get settled in to running the post office. I really do appreciate all your patience with me whilst I learn the ropes. Luckily, I still have Karen on speed dial if I need her!

We hope you are all getting settled into our new opening hours. As a reminder, our opening hours are

Monday	9am - 3pm
Tuesday	8.30am - 12pm and 2.30pm - 5pm
Wednesday	9am - 3pm
Thursday	9am - 3pm
Friday	8.30am - 12pm and 2.30pm - 5pm

We have Harry Potter and Spice Girl Special Stamps for sale as well all our usual 1st, 2nd and other stamps.

We have had a little refresh in the shop and have a new selection of winter scarves to keep you nice and cosy during this cold weather.

We look forward to seeing you in the post office soon!

Sarah, Karen and Andrew

St. Mary's Church new facilities – opening event

It's good to be able to announce that the new catering and WC facilities in the church are now operational and will be fully complete by the end of the first week of February. Many thanks to all the generous donors who have made this possible and to the patience of near neighbours who have had to put up with a few months of disruption while the works have been in progress.

We are planning a grand opening event on Saturday, 24th February, with songs performed by the BlewSing choir, interspersed with some entertaining readings and following by a plentiful supply of tea and cake! This will all start at 3:00pm, the performance will last about 40 minutes and tea will be from about 3:45.

It's all absolutely free and all are very welcome. We look forward to seeing you at Upton's latest venue!

Upton Wine Club – January Meeting

“CAN you tell the difference?”

It was a record January attendance at the Wine Club, with 38 members signing up to the monthly meeting! This time we took the unprecedented decision to let our members taste wine packaged in something other than a bottle. This follows the trend in convenient packaging, well established in the US and now taking off in the UK.

We are used to seeing cans of beer in the supermarkets and maybe over Christmas Santa put a can containing a cocktail mix in your stocking? You may have noticed a lot more wine in boxes and the odd can on the supermarket shelves as well? From a supplier perspective, cans and boxes (bag-in-box or BIB) can be produced more cheaply than bottles. As a consumer you may appreciate the convenience of taking cans to a picnic or one for the train home? From an environmental aspect, aluminium cans consume much less energy to produce than glass bottles and are easier to recycle - and weigh less, so cheaper to transport. And if you need to chill a wine quickly, it's easier when you are looking at cans rather than a bottle.

What did our members think....? Well, by no means scientific but no one was able to identify all six wines we served from cans over those from a bottle or box. Overall, red wine from a can was slightly better received - interesting as you might associate the crisp freshness a can offers with white wine.

So, if you're taking wine to a festival/picnic or just coming home on the train and fancy a quick glass of wine, a can may well be the answer!

We also had a look at the new generation of plastic glasses available - crystal clear, dishwasher-friendly, and virtually unbreakable - made from a new material called Tritan. A glass with a wide bottom and no stem is less likely to fall over on the picnic rug or get knocked over on the train!!!

Next month (21st February) we will be looking at wines from various regions of North America. Hope to see you all there and if you are new to the wine club and want to come and give it a try, please visit our website and get in touch! <https://uptonwineclub.com/>

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. 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.

During the winter 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

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:unitedcharities@outlook.com)

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

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, but 26th February) may NOT be included - if this causes a problem please contact me.

Neil Thorp, Editor