

# Upton News



March 2024

## Upton Photograph Competition

Last opportunity for competition entries. Closing date -

**Saturday 2nd March.**

Photographs should be emailed to -  
[upton.photo@outlook.com](mailto:upton.photo@outlook.com)

## Church News

### Services at St. Mary the Virgin, Upton

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

#### Services for March:

**3<sup>th</sup> March**

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

9.15am Lay-led service

**10<sup>th</sup> March**

Mothers' Union

*Mothering Sunday*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

**24<sup>th</sup> March**

*Palm Sunday*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

**31<sup>st</sup> March**

*Easter Day*

9.15am Parish Eucharist

#### Prayer Focus

Pastoral care & visiting

Families, family services &

All the churches in our benefice  
& our relationships together

Children, our village schools &  
Sunday clubs

## Outdoor Church for Lent

### Sunday March 3rd, 3pm Play Close, Blewbury, "Looking for Life"

We shall we looking closely for signs of life - if you can, bring a magnifying glass, camera

### Saturday March 9th, 3pm "Beauty in Nature".

3pm meet at the Benefice office car park, Blewbury to visit the garden at Sawyers  
*By kind permission of the Hooper family*

A guided tour of the spring garden and opportunity to make flower posies for Mothering Sunday back in the Benefice Centre - scissors, string or ribbon will be useful

### Good Friday March 29th, 10am "Making Easter Gardens" in Upton Churchyard.

10am in St. Mary's Churchyard, Upton

We gather items to make Easter gardens - please bring a plate, tray or bowl

## ECUMENICAL LENT GROUP 2024

Please feel welcome to join us for 'A Journey Through the Psalms' which continues 10:30 am to 12noon on Fridays 1, 8, 15 & 22 March.

Meeting at the home of Jenny Loder. Contact Elaine in the office to book a place and for directions.

### A series of reflections on our buildings, art and how they can help focus our prayers

3 - 4.30 pm Tuesdays in person and/or 7-8 pm online using the link

<https://meet.goto.com/6217261895> March: Blewbury; 12 March: Hagbourne; 19 March: Upton

## Saint Patrick's Breastplate

I wonder: do you have any plans for 17<sup>th</sup> March? As you may or may not be aware, 17<sup>th</sup> March is **St. Patrick's Day**. St. Patrick was British by birth, and was probably born c.390AD. As a young man, he was captured by Irish pirates and enslaved. After some 6 years in Ireland as a slave, he escaped (or was freed), and returned to his family. He then trained to be a priest, and decided to go back to Ireland, but this time as a missionary. Patrick established a base at Armagh, and he seems to



have focussed his missionary work in the north of Ireland. The date of his death is uncertain, but it was probably sometime in the 460s AD. Some of Patrick's writings have survived, including a short autobiography.

In subsequent centuries, Patrick's fame spread far and wide, and in due course he became regarded as the patron saint of Ireland. Lots of stories were told about him, which may or may not have any foundation in fact. For example, one story claimed that Patrick expelled all the snakes from Ireland, and another story has Patrick explaining the theology of Trinity by pointing to a shamrock.

There is a wonderful ancient Irish poem called St. Patrick's Breastplate, which is popularly attributed to St. Patrick. This poem has been turned into a hymn, which starts "I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity". If you are unfamiliar with the hymn, do look it up. It is sung to a splendid traditional Irish melody - in fact, two different Irish melodies, as two verses in the hymn are sung to a different tune.

St. Patrick's hymn is unlike any other - and whether or not it goes back to the Saint himself, the words are quite remarkable. So remarkable, in fact, that some might question whether they should be sung in church! Eric Routley, who wrote extensively on hymns, considered the hymn to be a "very primitive blending of supernatural and natural experience"; and others have written that the hymn contains "many elements of druidical incantation mingled with a war-song and a creed". I wonder what you think? Is the hymn suitable or not?

If you are curious to learn more, do come along to St Andrews's East Hagbourne at 10.30am on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March. You'll be most welcome. We're holding a special service to celebrate St Patrick and there will be the chance to sing his hymn!

*-Father Jason*

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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*

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



Consultation on the Joint Local Plan 'preferred options' is now closed. The Joint Local Plan sets out a strategy for both Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Council areas in terms of the housing (type/location), infrastructure and employment - amongst other things. Once adopted, all planning applications that are determined by our council will be following the policies within it - so it's important we get it right. Visit [southandvale.gov.uk/JLP](https://southandvale.gov.uk/JLP) to find out more. The previous plan committed both districts to delivering a large amount of housing which, for the most part, are carried through into the new plan but there are no new allocations for housing sites.

We have continued to chase answers to the questions we asked Dan Leveson (NHS Place Director for Oxfordshire, BOB ICB) regarding the planned Great Western Park Health Centre. We asked these questions in November at the public HOSC meeting. Sadly we still feel our questions have not been sufficiently answered. Here is the latest update sent by Dan and his team: <https://www.bucksoxonberks.w.nhs.uk/our-places/great-western-park-didcot-gp-services/> We are pushing for a meeting between Dan, the ICB and parish councils.

### District Council News

#### Budget

The Vale of White Horse has been able to set a balanced budget this year without a cut to services.

**Councils seek volunteers to recommend councillors' allowances:** Would you like to be involved in setting councillors' expenses and allowances that are reasonable for the work they do? By law, we are required to appoint a panel of independent people and are inviting members of the local community, the business community or voluntary organisations to apply. See the Vale website for more information.

**Game, Set and Match! £165,500 investment in new tennis courts for Abingdon:** There's great news for tennis fans - who will soon be able to play all year round thanks to a revamp of the courts in Abingdon. Work is due to begin to install four new 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) tennis courts at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre. Vale of White Horse District Council own the centre and the land surrounding it and have invested money from CIL and S106 contributions from housing developers. We're proud that the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre is of a standard that it is used for professional tennis tournaments.

*Please get in touch with any issues or concerns, via email:*  
[hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk) &  
[debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

## Parish Council News

### Litter Pick

Whilst Upton Parish Council wanted to organise a litter pick, regrettably it has been unable to do so. This is because the South & Vale District Councils are adamant that the organiser of such an event would be personally liable for the Health and Safety of the participants, not the Parish Council. In UPC's view this would be an unreasonable demand, whether they be a Councillor or a volunteer.

There is nothing to prevent an informal group getting together to pick litter, each at their own risk, but hi-viz tabards and picking sticks would have to be supplied by the individuals involved.

A concerted effort on one day will not really address the problem as it seems to be second nature to some antisocial elements to discard litter every day throughout the year. Picking therefore has also to be a continual activity and more villagers should do as Rob Traynor and others already do and take a litter bag with them from time to time, disposing of it when full in their household black waste bin whence it will be incinerated at the Ardley energy recovery facility.

### Upton Village Survey – deadline extended until March 31

So far there have been only 23 responses from the 170 or so properties in the village, whereas in previous years there has been a much bigger response. This maybe because the planned distribution of paper copies has not happened, an omission which will be remedied shortly. Just to remind everyone here is the background once more.

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 new deadline of 31st March 2024 for your input to be included in the next stage.

ALL ANSWERS ARE ANONYMOUS.

But please note this is NOT a licence for personal abuse of fellow villagers.

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](mailto:parish.depclerk@uptonpc.co.uk)

Paper copies, when completed, may be sent to the Parish Clerk at Norton House, Chilton Road, Upton, OX11 9JL or handed in at the Drop-in at the church on Good Friday.

## Play Areas Update

At the 2023 Parish Meeting it was agreed that where playground equipment could not be economically repaired it would be taken out of service permanently.

The equipment is heavily used by both villagers and visitors. As the equipment is all reaching the end of its life, this may well happen soon for some items which have temporarily been taken out of service whilst costs are investigated.

The UPC 2023/24 budget for maintenance is £7000 but outstanding work totals approx. £10,700 without the latest failure (the slide platform) shown here.



## Bus Timetable

Please be aware that the bus timetable for the 94 has changed .

The new timetable can be found on-line and should also be at the bus stop .

Jessie West

## Changes to postal voting and proxy voting

How we apply to vote by post and proxy in England is changing from 2 May 2024. Changes include:

- You can now apply online to vote by post and some types of proxy, and you'll need to prove your identity.
- You have to renew your postal vote application every 3 years.
- If you are acting as a proxy, there are now limits to how many people you can vote on behalf of.

Political Parties and Campaigners are banned from handling postal votes (except where the postal vote is their own, that of a close family member, or someone they provide regular care for).

For more information on these and other changes visit

[electoralcommission.org/waystovote](https://electoralcommission.org/waystovote) or call their helpline on 0800 328 0280.

### 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](mailto:parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk).

### Notice of Casual Vacancy

Public notice is hereby given that due to the resignation of **Councillor Graham de Wilde**

A vacancy exists in the office of Parish Councillor for Upton Parish Council.

The vacancy will be filled by election if, within fourteen working days of this notice, any ten local government electors for the said parish submit a written request to the Returning officer, Vale of White Horse District Council, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, Abingdon OX14 4SB.

In computing these fourteen days mentioned above, you disregard a Saturday or Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a bank holiday or a day appointed for Public Thanksgiving or Mourning.

If no such request is made the vacancy will be filled by Co-option by the Parish Council.  
Parish Clerk

## Nature Garden: spring working party

Over the winter we've carried out small maintenance jobs - for example coppicing a mature hazel - but otherwise the plants have been left to enjoy their dormant period. Since January, however, bulbs, butterflies and blossom have been heralding spring, so we're due a working party.

Please come if you can - it'd be great to get the patch up to scratch with a big collective effort.

When: Sunday 17 March, 10.00 am onwards  
Where: the Nature Garden at the Village Hall  
What to bring: gloves, hand tools, garden fork  
Perks: a drink and a piece of cake

Thanks,

The Nature Garden Volunteers



## Dig in and join the compost giveaway

Calling all green thumbs and garden enthusiasts! With spring just around the corner, The Vale is giving away free compost to help you to get your gardens flourishing, save money and reduce waste.

Saturday 16 March - 9am to 11am in Abingdon at White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, OX14 3PJ - available to Vale of White Horse residents only.

You can fill up to 3 bags of high-quality compost per household - just remember to bring your own bags and a spade! This offer is only available while supplies last.

Our friendly Waste and Recycling team will also be on hand to answer all your composting questions and share tips to get you started at home.



- ◆ 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)

## St. Mary's Church new facilities – Opening Ceremony

On 24<sup>th</sup> February, the BlewSing singers combined with some Upton readers for a celebration to mark the completion of the new WC and kitchen facilities in St. Mary's church.

The singers, under the direction of Mark Stanley, were on top form and their six very varied songs were much enjoyed by the sizeable audience. And who will forget Malcolm Wright's hilarious performance as Noah trying to find excuses for delays in completing the Ark? (speaking of which, we are assured that the new path around the church will be completed 'any day soon!').



Tea and cakes, served from the new kitchen, followed and at the end of the afternoon we all felt the new facilities were well and truly launched!

We're still planning some work inside the church to make the space more flexible for a variety of uses.

In the meantime the facilities are available free of charge to Upton residents, subject to prior booking through Paul Batho ([pjsbatho@btinternet.com](mailto:pjsbatho@btinternet.com)) or Jessie West ([jessie@blueshapes.com](mailto:jessie@blueshapes.com)).

The photos show the new facilities and the audience enjoying their tea.

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## Upton's Village drop-in

The next Drop-In planned for the 29th / Good Friday, will now be hosted at Upton's St Mary's Church for a special family friendly Easter event.

Refreshments and activities will be available from 10 am using the fantastic new facilities. Further details will be announced soon. Please save the date in your diary .

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)

## Post Office News

Spring has sprung in the post office and we are now getting a regular delivery of fresh kitty's eggs. You can also buy our lovely local honey. We also have a variety of sweet treats and chocolate for sale so do come and have a look.

From now on our opening hours have slightly changed and we will be closed on a Wednesday afternoon going forward. Our new opening hours are:

Monday 9am - 3pm

Tuesday 8.30am - 12pm and 2.30pm - 5pm

Wednesday 9am - 12pm

Thursday 9am - 3pm

Friday 8.30am - 12pm and 2.30pm - 5pm

We have a variety of special stamps in stock including Harry Potter, Spice girls and many more. You can also do all your banking at the post office, including cash withdrawals, cash deposits and cheque deposits.

Sarah, Karen and Andrew

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## Didcot & District u3a

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

**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](mailto:chair@didcotu3a.org)

Secretary: Chris Jones; [secretary@didcotu3a.org](mailto:secretary@didcotu3a.org)

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

## Upton Village Fête

The Parochial Church Council and Upton Parish Council are still 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](mailto:bens@uptonpc.co.uk) to register your interest in being involved.

Benjamin Shaw  
Mobile 07934 389171 Tel 01235 850308

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## Astons Online

Astons Online's March 2024 event will be in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) on Tuesday 19 March from 10:00 to 12:00. Landlines may go in 2025 so we'll discuss options.

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.

We're available for contact on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 and 12:00 as well as hosting a stand at Astons Freshers' Fayre on 10 March 16:00 to 18:00 in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ).

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 SPORTS REPORT**

One of the outstanding assets of Blewbury School is our outdoor spaces and playing fields. Pupils at the School benefit from these both for organised sports and gym activities, as well as during their own break times. At the moment lots of children enjoy playing soccer out there, and the School has some teams which play matches against other local schools. Here are some insights from pupils into how they have been getting on:

*“On Monday, the girls football team went to Harwell School to play matches against both Whitchurch and Harwell. Unfortunately, we lost both games, but only conceded 1 goal in each match, thanks to the goal keeping skills of Matilda. We showed good teamwork and had a few chances at a goal; my kick at goal unfortunately hit the cross bar.”*

*Jordana and Fearne.*

*“On the Feb 2nd the boys football team went to Oxford Academy to play on their astro turf pitches. We had qualified for this Pokemon Primary Football Cup Final by beating Whitchurch School in a home game two weeks earlier. In the Final we were to play two other teams (St.Michael’s and St.John Fisher). Our first game was against St.John Fisher and we drew 1-1 .Then we played St.Michael’s and once again we also drew 1-1. After that St.Michael’s and St.John Fisher had a game and the score was 2-0 to St. John Fisher. So we then played St. John Fisher in the actual Final . The end score was 2-1 to St.John Fisher. It was a hard game, and we came so close. We each got a medal after the Final for coming second, and we all felt happy and proud. Finally we would also like to thank SCS Oxon Ltd for sponsoring our football kit this season.”*

*Edward & Elliott.*

*As well as playing in regional competitions the School is also part of local primary school leagues for both the boys and girls team. In those we have recently played Whitchurch, Harwell, and Sutton Courtenay.*



# Upton Wine Club – February Meeting

## Wines from North America

Mention wines from North America and you could be forgiven for going straight to California. After all, over 80% of wines from this continent come from this area. To be fair, there are some exceptional wines from California. Ever since the Paris wine tasting (also known as The Judgement of Paris) happened in 1976, where the “great” wines from some of France’s finest chateau’s were sampled against those lesser known, “lesser quality” grape juices from across the pond. The blind tasting by some of the best wine critics around found Californian wines to be better and the reputation has stood the test of time!

This evening, we did sample some fine wines from California but also tried to widen our palates by searching further afield, where we found some exceptional wines. If you are seeking North American wines, you will most likely come across American Viticultural Area (AVA’s). This is a little bit like the Appellation areas we hear about in European wines. They are areas awarded by the state that define, the area, soil type and some restrictions on where grapes are grown, so a level of quality control can be given over the wine produced. Look out for this as it will give you some level of consistency on the wine you are buying. That said there are 100’s of AVA’s across America.

We had around 40 members from the village join us this month, which was great to see. To be fair there were favourite wines from across the continent but a few worth noting included a great opening wine from North Washington State, a Chenin Blanc from Kiona winery. With long hot days ripening the grape, this wine had a lovely sweetness but due to excessive heat the grapes created an acidity that is unusual in these wines. Seriously worth trying if you like your hors d’oeuvres or sea food! Equally favourable was a Pinot Noir from the Skolo Blosser estate in Dundee Hills, Oregon. Oregon has a reputation for high quality wines, with around 60% of the region’s wines coming from the Pinot grape. If you like this grape and want to move away from France or New Zealand, then this is definitely worth a try.

Last but by no means least, we finished with an ice wine from Pelee island, Canada. Vidal grapes are left on the vine whilst the temperature drops to just below -8 degrees C. They are then picked, and gently crushed to extract a very sweet juice, which is then made into an incredibly rich, sweet tasting wine. This is an expensive wine but worth every penny. Try it with some strong blue cheese or any sweet dessert!

For more information on the wines we tried or if you would like to come along to our next evening (8-10pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> March), where we will be trying wines from across the ages, please visit our website: [www.uptonwines.com](http://www.uptonwines.com)

Hope to see you there!

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.

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](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: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*