



# Upton News

## February 2025

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# The month ahead

## Village calendar

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	1	2

### Village Hall

- Parish Council
- Village Fete
- Uptonogood
- Wine club
- Brownies
- Community coffee morning
- Upton Christmas Readers
- Dance & Fitness
- Karate
- Dog training
- Kinetic gymnastics
- Tea Birds WI

### St Mary's Church

- ▲ Parish Eucharist
- △ Lay-led service
- ▲ Other service

### Waste collection

- Black bin
- Green bin + Brown bin
- Green bin + Brown bin + extra garden waste

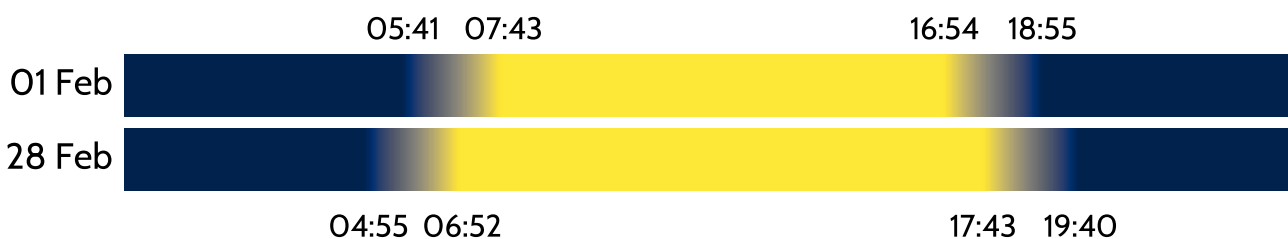
### Other

- Weekend/public holiday
- Clocks change
- Upton News deadline

For details of events at the Village Hall please see [here](#):

For details of services at St Mary's Church, please see [here](#):

## Sunrise, sunset & twilight



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# Village News

## St Mary's Church

### Service times

Date	Time	Type	Prayer focus
2 <sup>nd</sup> February	9:15 am	Lay-led service	Churchwardens, Church fabric & churchyards Church cleaners
9 <sup>th</sup> February	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	PCCs, All in leadership, Benefice Operations Manager
23 <sup>rd</sup> February	3:00 pm	Thanksgiving service for those who died recently in Upton	

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The online services continue every Sunday at 10.30am. Login after 10.00 am to chat beforehand or to check your technology. Please click [here](#) to access log-in details on the Churn Churches website.

### Father Jason writes ...

...I wonder if you have been curious about the origin of Valentine's Day? Why is it observed on 14<sup>th</sup> February? Who was Valentine?

The short answer is that in the early days of the Christian Church, back in the Second and Third Centuries AD, there were several times when Christians were persecuted for their faith. How were Christians to respond to these times of persecution? Some simply kept their heads down, waiting for the persecution to go away. Others were determined to make a stand for their beliefs, even if this meant they would be imprisoned or even executed. The names of the Christian martyrs were often treasured by their local communities, and several are still



remembered today. Among them was an Italian Christian who lived back in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, by the name of Valentine. We know very little about his life, except that he was martyred for his Christian faith, and that the Church remembered his martyrdom every year on 14<sup>th</sup> February. Hence the 14<sup>th</sup> February is known as St Valentine's Day.

And why is it connected with cards and flowers, and all the "Be My Valentine" stuff? No one quite knows. It might be connected with a Medieval belief that birds were supposed to find their mates on this day. It might also be connected with a pre-Christian religious festival from Roman times, known as Lupercalia.

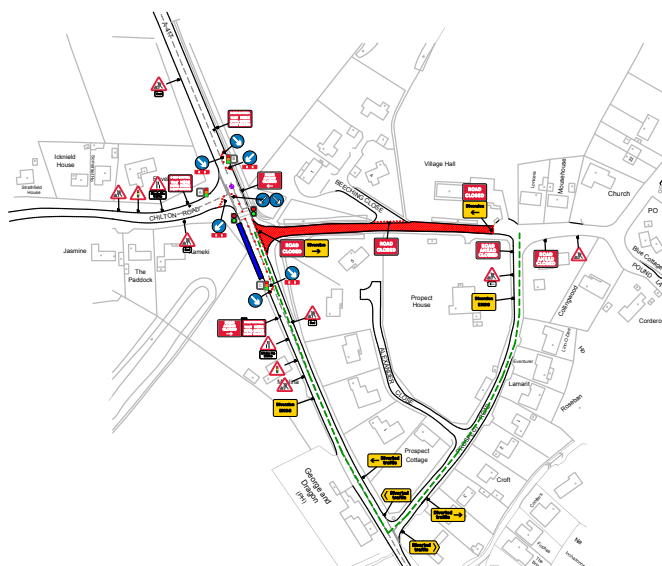
For whatever reason, the observance of St. Valentine's Day clearly serves a need in our society. Perhaps it is because it reminds us of the importance of love. As human beings, we all need to feel loved. Valentine's Day is an opportunity for us to express our appreciation of those who show us love.

Of course human love has its imperfections and its failings, and we are not always particularly loving towards one another, even within families. For Christians, perfect love is found in God, and it is revealed through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Therefore, love plays a central role in Christian teaching. In the words of an early Christian called John, *“let us love one another, because love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God”*. So St Valentine’s Day can remind us that love is truly at the heart of our existence, because God Himself is love.

## Upton Parish Council

As advanced warning, the Council would like to remind residents that the gates to the Recreation Ground will be locked at all times from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 except when the Village Hall and/or the Recreation Ground are on hire. To ensure safety for all, the padlock will have a Universal Key such that should any of the emergency services have to be called they will be able to gain access at any time. As previously mentioned, this is a fund-raising exercise which we trust will be supported by the village.

A request has been received from Airband Community Internet Ltd for a temporary road closure to apply to a length of Station Road, whilst essential splicing works are carried out in the access chamber, requiring a heavy lifter. A Temporary Notice is being made by Oxfordshire County Council to implement the restriction and will operate on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 between 09:30 and 15:30 hrs. Please note that Notices for urgent works can last up to 5 consecutive days only. A copy of the drawing showing the extent of the closure and also the alternative routes for traffic is shown below.



### Note to contributors

Contributions to Upton News are always very welcome. Please include your name, address and contact details (email and/or phone number) in case clarification is needed: we will not be able to publish your contribution without these details. The editor reserves the right to place, edit, shorten or omit contributions as required.

Please send your contributions by email to [uptonox11news@gmail.com](mailto:uptonox11news@gmail.com)

The deadline for the March 2025 issue is **26<sup>th</sup> February 2025**.

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The Council has been asked to complete a Village Emergency Plan and would like to ask if there are any qualified First Aiders in the village who would be happy to have their name included in the plan and be a port of call should there ever be an incident needing such services. If you have a current First Aid Certificate and would be prepared to be involved with the plan please could you [email](#) the clerk

Finally, many villagers will have been saddened by the passing of Jessie West. The Parish Council would like to extend sincere condolences to her family but also offer a posthumous thank you for the important part Jessie played in village life by keeping the bus service running in the village. Jessie, as a bus user herself, made personal representation at the appropriate meetings to ensure buses continued to stop in Upton, and many others have benefited from her work. If anyone would like to step forward to take over this important element of Upton life please do get in touch with the clerk.

As always, the Council would like to invite comments from all villagers on any matter with which they have concern. These should be sent to [parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk](mailto:parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk)

## Upton Wine Club



This month we were delighted to invite Martin from local wine retailer, Grape Minds to talk to our members about the effects of age on wine. With a Diploma in wine, he was able to provide some great background into the economics of aged wine

and the influence it has on the taste. Over the course of the evening, we tried wine that was over 30 years old and some as young as just 2, which was fantastic and allowed us all to sample wine that we probably wouldn't go out and buy without trying first!

The ageing process significantly influences the flavour profile of wine. As wine matures, its flavours become more complex and nuanced. Young wines often exhibit vibrant, fruity, and floral notes, while aged wines develop deeper, more integrated flavours. Over time, tannins in red wines soften, leading to a smoother mouth-feel and a more balanced taste. Additionally, secondary and tertiary aromas, such as earthy, nutty, or spicy notes, emerge, adding layers of complexity. The acidity in white wines may mellow, resulting in a richer, rounder palate. However, not all wines benefit from long-term ageing; some are best enjoyed young to appreciate their fresh, lively characteristics. Some wines, for example Rioja, have quality restrictions that mean it must have a minimum number of years in oak barrels before it can be released. We tried a Gran Reserva Rioja this month, which means it must have had a minimum of 5 years in an oak barrel before being released for sale.

Next month we will be taking members through some of the stories behind wine, that have caused producers, sellers and wine intermediaries to do some unscrupulous things in the hope it will make them a bit more money! It really is amazing (and at times humorous) what people will do! If you want to come along and join in the fun, please see our [website](#) for details. The meeting will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm – we hope to see you there!

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## Warm Welcomes & Fond Farewells

We would like to welcome Sunny and Sarah to the village. They moved into Old Stream Cottage, Stream Road, just before Christmas.

On a sadder note, two well-known villagers passed away recently: Derek Whitmell and Jessie West. We would like to pass on our condolences to both families.

Jessie's funeral service will be held at St Michael's Church, Blewbury at 12pm (noon) on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February. Burial at St Mary's, Upton will follow the service with a further gathering at the Village Hall after that. All are welcome to attend any or each part of the proceedings.

The service of remembrance for Derek will be held in St Michael's Church, Blewbury on 10<sup>th</sup> February at 2:30pm. Afterwards in Upton Village Hall; all are welcome.

If arriving by car for either of these funerals, please park at Blewbury Village Hall or on Berry Lane. There is a small car park for those who are less able to walk at the Benefice Office, Church End, Blewbury OX11 9QH. Please note there is no parking on Church Road in Blewbury.

## Local News Blewbury WI

Blewbury WI's next main meeting is on Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup> in the Vale room of the Village Hall. The talk, which promises to be very interesting, is "*A Day in an English Courtroom*" with Graham Loxton-Best.

We hope to gain some insights into the workings of a court room and have some traditions explained with, hopefully, some amusing but true anecdotes. We have heard on the grape vine that Graham was a former Court Usher and we are hoping it will be an insight into 'behind the scenes' - who's who and their functions. A revelation for anybody who has never been in court.

Walks, coffee mornings, theatre outings, pub lunches, Book club, Craft club, Scrabble, Rummikub and Mah Jong - plenty to do should you so wish! Do as much or as little as you like, there's never a dull moment. The WI is more than just an ordinary "club": we're a happy band of ladies who support each other at all times.

If you'd like to come along with someone else or find out more, ring our Secretary, Joy, on 850543 or by [email](#). Come as a visitor - you will be made so welcome! If you join part way during a year you will only pay 'pro-rata' for the remainder of the year.

### Christmas Tree Chipping

Stephen and Ben Strange would like to thank all those who made a donation for their Christmas trees to be chipped on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025. We raised a total of £348.63 which will go to Helen and Douglas House.

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## Blewbury Players

😊 Blewbury Players have an exciting year ahead. Don't miss out! Why not come along and join in? You could join the singing and shouting in the pantomime audience or audition for our summer production... something for everyone 😊

Our next production is *A Monster Calls*. This the play version of the bestselling classic novel by Patrick Ness. It is a powerful story about love, loss and hope and the power of story telling. Our director, Sabina Netherclift, explains ... *"Thirteen year old Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell seriously ill. But tonight is different. Tonight when he wakes, there's a monster at his window. It's elemental, a force of nature, and it wants something from Conor: it wants the truth"*.

Performances will be 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at Orchard Dene Garden Theatre, Blewbury.

We are holding initial auditions on 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The Ensemble will create the world of the play and will include Conor, Mum, Dad, Grandma, The Monster, school students, and the characters of the stories the Monster tells. The Ensemble will also at times create the inner world of Conor's heart and head. We are looking to audition actors from 13 years, with no upper age limit. A rough guide to the playing age of the characters (not necessarily the age of the actors) is as follows:

- Conor and teenage characters playing age 13,
- Grandma: 60 and above
- Mum & Dad: mid 30s to mid 50s
- Miss Godfrey: mid 20s-50s
- Ensemble (5-7 people) and Monster: 13 upwards

Please [email](#) us if you are interested in taking part on or off stage. Do please let us know if you would like to audition but are not available on that weekend. There is more information about the auditions, production and rehearsals on our [website](#)

And please don't forget that February 1<sup>st</sup> is the last chance to see our pantomime Puss in Boots - see our website for further details.

## Blewbury School Report

In December, pupils from Blewbury School took part in a hands-on project to help create Quaker Wood, a new woodland area in the village. The pupils each planted a tree, contributing to a sustainable future for their local community.



Jai, a student from Banksy Class, shared his experience: *"We went to plant a tree each to create Quaker Wood. We dug a T-shape in the ground with a shovel, then got a root and carefully put it in. We put a post there to help it grow and a cover, so the deer don't get it and wrote our names on it. I helped Mateo plant his tree. It was good that we got to have a go at hammering the post in ourselves. The mud was a bit slippery, but it was fun."*

The event, organised by Sustainable Blewbury, saw pupils learning about the importance of trees while also taking part in the planting process. Volunteers, including many parents, helped ensure the day ran smoothly and safely.

Thank you to Sustainable Blewbury and to all the parent volunteers who made the day a success. This new woodland will not only provide a habitat for wildlife but also be a lasting reminder of the students' contribution to a greener future.

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## Astons Online

Astons Online promotes digital confidence in using the Internet, with smartphone apps or online services. Astons Online events and support are free of charge and open to everyone. Our next Zoom webinar will be held at 10:00 am on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February. We will be talking about the future after Windows 10 which Microsoft will cease to support in October 2025. Come & ask your questions at this free & friendly meeting. See [here](#) for details, click [here](#) to join the meeting or [email us](#) to find out more.

We're available for Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp or telephone one-to-one sessions on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm (noon). The next in-person one-to-one session in Astons Village Hall (OX11 9EQ) is on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March from 10:00 am to 12 pm.

## United Charities

At United Charities, we offer support to people of all ages living in Blewbury, the Astons and Upton, who may be struggling financially. If you need help with the weekly food shop, clothing, equipment, energy bills or other living costs, we can provide one off payments to help you, or someone you know is in need.

There is a short application form to complete which can be picked up from St Mary's Church porch, or requested by [email](#). 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.

Last year we received a steady flow of requests for financial help from local people and as we enter 2025 there is, unfortunately, no sign of economic improvement on the horizon. This may mean we will not be able to help as many individuals as we would like, unless we can generate more funds. If anyone out there in the community feels able to help by donating any amount, small or large, we would be extremely grateful. You can do this through our [Just Giving page](#)

Thank you very much in advance, and if you have any questions, please do get in touch with us by [email](#).

## Vale News

### VoWHDC News

*"Hello" from Hayleigh and Debra*



Happy New Year! We hope you had a restful and joyous festive period and are looking forward to whatever 2025 brings for you.

There were quite a few updates from national government just before Christmas that will affect our council and our area.

- the Secretary of State approved the HIF1 road. The aim is that the impact will be positive and ease congestion around Didcot and the surrounding area, improving air quality and increasing active travel options. We know this will be welcome news in our parishes. There is more information [here](#). The project includes: widening of the A4130, the Didcot Science bridge (crossing the railway), a new river crossing between Appleford and Culham and the Clifton Hampden bypass.
- When local authorities make planning decisions, they refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This gives planning officers the guidance they need, alongside the local policies in our local plan, to either approve or refuse applications. On 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, the government issued updates to the NPPF. Whilst there are further parts to come, the intention of the new government's NPPF is clear, to build more and faster. The Local Government Association has summarised the changes [here](#).

- The government issued a devolution white paper on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. What does this mean? It outlines Labour’s plans to reorganise local government structures across the country, essentially abolishing District Councils in favour of larger unitary authorities, strategic authorities and elected mayors. Although, the paper is named ‘Devolution’, it removes a layer of local government that sits more closely with our local areas and means that decisions will be made more remotely. We do not yet know what this will mean for the VoWH, but we intend to cooperate with the government and our neighbouring councils to seek the best deal possible. You can read the VoWHDC leader’s letter to the Oxfordshire County Council leader [here](#).

At the VoWHDC meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>, Hayleigh raised the difficulty in getting appointments to see a GP in Didcot and the surrounding villages, due to the growth in housing numbers and the absence of the promised GP surgery on Great Western Park and asked for an update of the status, future plans and a projected

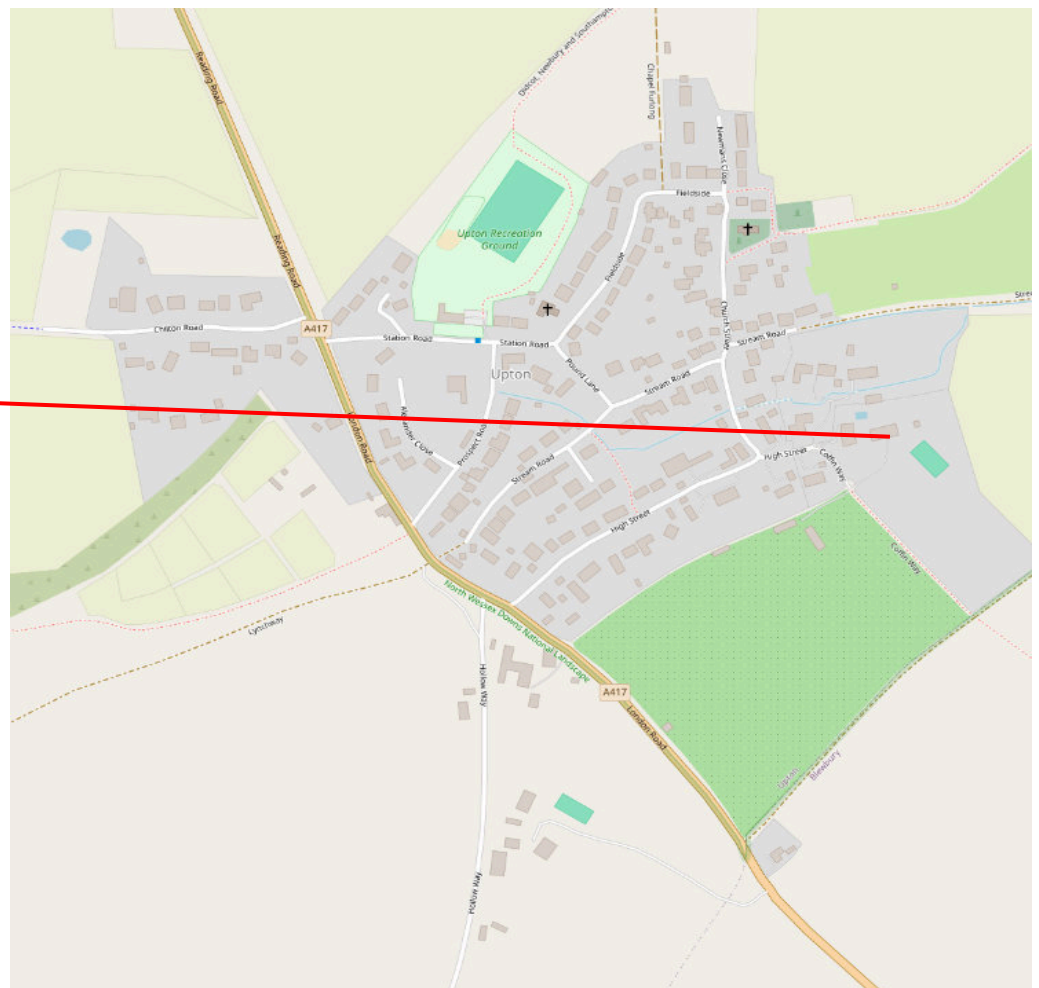
timeline for their delivery. The summary response was that the developer (Taylor Wimpey) needs to submit a planning application, which should receive a decision by mid-2025. In parallel, legal due diligence work needs to be completed to transfer the site from Taylor Wimpey to the council. After site transfer, further legal work is required to complete the various lease and funding agreements. No timescale was provided for this work. [Editor: don’t hold your breath ...]

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions for us as councillors, please do email us (email addresses [here](#) and [here](#)). We also post regular updates on our Facebook pages [here](#) and [here](#).

### Current planning applications

The map below shows the location of all planning applications within the parish of Upton that are *Current* and were registered between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Details of each application can be obtained by following the hyperlinks on the right-hand side of the map

[P24/V1119/FUL](#)



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## Olly Glover, MP

Before parliament ended, I was able to address ministers about important matters. These included ways in which local communities can benefit from clean energy schemes, the need for improvements in services provided by coroners following the sudden deaths of those with epilepsy, and the need to address electoral reform. Some responses were more helpful than others!

I was able to speak in debates about the problems faced by those with disabilities, shared concerns raised by poor estate management, and championed the BBC (which I am sure many of us watched and listened to over Christmas).

The Transport Select committee meet to hold the Department of Transport to account. Two key areas discussed have been rail services and infrastructure, and the backlog of driving tests, which so many constituents have aired concerns about.

Flooding remains a significant concern. I chaired a meeting with Thames Water and the local councils to facilitate working together. I will continue to provide updates about this vital piece of work as we need to see real improvements.

My team provides support for all our constituents. Please contact me if I can help, or if you would like me to attend a local event or meet with a local organisation. My parliamentary email address is [olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk). If you use social media, you can follow me for more regular updates on [Facebook](#) and [Bluesky](#).

I look forward to meeting as many as of you as possible in 2025.

## Didcot u3a

For all newly retired or semi-retired individuals, what better way to start the New Year than to find a new interest or expand an existing interest and join one of the groups of like-minded individuals including learning a language, photography, gardening. Full details of all 30 plus groups can be found [here](#).

More information can be obtained by attending the Monthly Meetings held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month in the Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN starting at 2:30pm, whilst making new friends over tea and biscuits followed by a interesting talk by a visiting Speaker.

Upcoming topics include:

- 18 Feb The History of Didcot  
Speaker: David Taylor (Didcot & District Archaeology & History Society)
- 18 Mar The Shrunken Garden  
Speaker: Timothy Walker (ex Horti Praefectus, University of Oxford Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum)
- 15 Apr Women and the Victorian Army  
Speaker: Dan Allen
- 20 May AGM

More joining information can be found by contacting us [here](#).

What better way to start 2025 - we look forward to seeing you soon!

# Thames Valley Police Commissioner

Rural crime - specifically defined as things like the theft of farm machinery, equipment, damage to crops and offences such as hare coursing - can have a huge impact on farming businesses, not to mention the real issues of safety for individuals. Thankfully rural crime is falling locally. Across Thames Valley it is down 24% over the last 12 months and in southern Oxfordshire it's down 33% but that's not by accident.

Last year I secured additional funding from the Home Office for work focused specifically in Oxfordshire. Thames Valley Police have teamed up with local District Councils, forming a Rural Crime Partnership and delivering the following:

- Using undercover cameras and off-road bikes, officers can now better monitor remote areas and track down offenders who think they can't be reached.
- Farmers have received free security reviews and DNA marking kits for their equipment, making it much harder for thieves to get away and easier to return stolen items if something happens.

- Rural Crime Advisor: A dedicated advisor was recruited, to be out in the community, offering helpful advice, meeting with local farmers and businesses, and keeping rural industries safer.
- Tackling Fly-Tipping: New surveillance tools are helping councils catch and prosecute those who dump waste, keeping rural areas cleaner and more beautiful.

More officers have been recruited to the Rural Crime Taskforce, making it one of the largest, and certainly one of the most effective, in the country. They recognise that many of these offences are part of organised crime. The taskforce are identifying and focusing on the most dangerous and prolific offenders. In fact they have been so successful that whilst there has been a reduction in crime here, other police areas have seen an increase as criminals operate elsewhere. None of us are safe, unless we're all safe; so we've now established a South East Partnership Against Rural Crime - joining together neighbouring police forces so that we can target criminals all the way from the farms they target to the ports where they try to export stolen goods.

With these measures, our rural areas are becoming safer places thanks to the hard work and dedication of Thames Valley Police officers.



**Matthew Barber**

Your voice in  
Thames Valley

**Matthew Barber is Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, working with the police to help drive down crime locally.**

**STAY IN TOUCH**  
[matthewbarber.co.uk](http://matthewbarber.co.uk)

@matthewbarberpcc   

@matthew\_barber 

Promoted by Matthew Barber on his own behalf, of Waterloo House, 58-60 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 6HJ.

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# Local directory

## What's On ....

Venue	Telephone	Website
<b>Didcot</b>		
Cornerstone	01235 515144	<a href="https://www.cornerstone-arts.org/whats-on">https://www.cornerstone-arts.org/whats-on</a>
Cineworld	0871 2002000	<a href="https://www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas/didcot/">https://www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas/didcot/</a>
<b>Wallingford</b>		
Corn Exchange	01491 825000	<a href="https://www.cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/">https://www.cornexchange.org.uk/whats-on/</a>
<b>Wantage</b>		
The Beacon	01235 763456	<a href="https://www.beaconwantage.co.uk/whats-on/">https://www.beaconwantage.co.uk/whats-on/</a>
<b>Abingdon</b>		
The Abbey Cinema	01235 616000	<a href="https://theabbey.ac/web">https://theabbey.ac/web</a>

## Service centre

If you are an Upton Village resident and have a skill or trade that other residents might find useful, please contact the editor with a short summary of your skill/trade and your contact details. We will include these in the next edition of Upton News, free of charge.

Listings will initially be restricted to Upton Village residents but if there are any skills or trades not covered, then we may include entries from residents of nearby villages.

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# Useful contacts

Contact	Telephone	email
<b>Upton News</b> Upton News Editor	n/a	<a href="mailto:uptonox1news@gmail.com">uptonox1news@gmail.com</a>
<b>Churn Benefice</b> Father Jason St. John Nicolle Revd Louise Butler Revd John Clarke Revd Dr Mark Rhodes-Smith Elaine de Ridder	01235 850267 07837 009730 01235 510073 01235 850267 01235 850267	<a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:revlouiseb@aol.com">revlouiseb@aol.com</a> <a href="mailto:jphclarke@gmail.com">jphclarke@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk">mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:office@churnchurches.co.uk">office@churnchurches.co.uk</a>
<b>Parish Council</b> Chair Clerk	n/a n/a	<a href="mailto:bens@uptonpc.co.uk">bens@uptonpc.co.uk</a> <a href="mailto:parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk">parish.clerk@uptonvillage.co.uk</a>
<b>VoWH District Councillors</b> Hayleigh Gascoine Debra Dewhurst	n/a n/a	<a href="mailto:hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk">hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk">debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Oxfordshire County Councillor</b> Sally Povolotsky	n/a	<a href="mailto:sally.povolotsky@oxfordshire.gov.uk">sally.povolotsky@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Member of Parliament</b> Olly Glover	n/a	<a href="mailto:olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk">olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk</a>
<b>Afternoon Drop In</b> Richard Burrow	n/a	<a href="mailto:richmondbinov@gmail.com">richmondbinov@gmail.com</a>
<b>Astons Online</b> Bruno Brunskill	07780 958249	<a href="mailto:theastonsonline@gmail.com">theastonsonline@gmail.com</a>
<b>United Charities</b> Main contact	n/a	<a href="mailto:unitedcharities@outlook.com">unitedcharities@outlook.com</a>
<b>Blewbury WI</b> Joy	01235 850543	<a href="mailto:blewburywi@gmail.com">blewburywi@gmail.com</a>
<b>Didcot U3A</b> Chair Secretary	n/a n/a	<a href="mailto:chair@didcotu3a.org">chair@didcotu3a.org</a> <a href="mailto:secretary@didcotu3a.org">secretary@didcotu3a.org</a>
<b>First Steps Baby Bank</b> Chair	n/a	<a href="mailto:contact@firststepsbabybank.co.uk">contact@firststepsbabybank.co.uk</a>