



Upton News

July 2026

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The month ahead

Village calendar

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	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	29	30	31	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
- ✿ Nature Garden work group

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



Village News

St Mary's Church

Service times

Date	Time	Type	Prayer focus
5 th July	9:15 am	Lay-led service	Children, Our village schools Sunday club
12 th July	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Those recently baptised Baptism visitors
26 th July	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Our worship, Musicians, organists & choirs

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.

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

The deadline for the August 2026 issue is **29th July 2026**.

Father Jason writes

I wonder if you fancy a glimpse of Heaven? Glimpses of Heaven can come upon us in so many different ways, and they are often quite unexpected. For example, we might be going for a walk on a dull or wet day, and then suddenly the sun comes out and the scene in front of us is bathed in glorious light, and we feel that we have entered a different realm. We know the experience will be temporary, but while it lasts, our hearts are full of joy. It is a glimpse of Heaven!



In early August, we will have the opportunity to experience a glimpse of Heaven in our own local area. To be precise, this experience will be available at St Andrew's Hagbourne on **Saturday 8th August**, between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. It will take the form of a special Choral Evensong featuring the music of two great British Composers: Charles Villiers Stanford (1852 -1924) and Herbert Howells (1892 - 1983). Stanford was born in Ireland but he spent

his professional life in England, where he taught at the Royal College of Music. He was a prolific composer, and had a particular gift for writing choral music. Howells had a similar gift for choral music. Both Stanford and Howells wrote organ music as well.

There is no charge to attend this Choral Evensong. It is offered as an act of worship to God, in celebration of a feast in the Church's year called the Feast of the Transfiguration. All are welcome to attend- it is an experience open to Christian and non-Christian alike. It uses traditional words and beautiful music to take us all on a journey from this world to the world beyond: to give us a glimpse of Heaven. And if you are unfamiliar with the music of Stanford and Howells, all I can say is that you are in for a treat!



Churn Benefice "Come and Sing" Choral Evensong: Saturday 8th August

Following on from Father Jason's piece above, we are inviting EVERYONE who loves to sing to join the "Come and Sing" choir.

On Saturday 8th August St Andrew's Hagbourne will host a "Come and Sing" BCP Evensong, celebrating the Transfiguration of Our Lord. It will be led by our regular visiting organ scholar, James Lord, with the support of Father Jason. There will be some beautiful music by Stanford, Howells and Rose for the Feast of Transfiguration (and some fabulous congregational hymns!) which we will distribute to the choir beforehand together with some YouTube links

The proposed timings are:

Rehearsal	3-4.30pm
Tea	4.30-5.15
Evensong	5.30
Refreshments afterwards.	

Please help spread the word! There will be no charge, but registration is needed so that we can have enough copies of the music ready. Email office@churnchurches.co.uk or phone 01235 850267.

Upton Parish Council

The Council apologises for the absence of a submission in the May edition of Upton News. Our Annual Meeting, originally scheduled for 27th May, had to be deferred because several councillors were unavailable, and the meeting could not proceed without a quorum. We rescheduled as quickly as possible to 3rd June, but by then the May publication deadline had passed. As a result, this month's submission covers two months of activity. We appreciate your patience, and this situation does illustrate why having more councillors matters, please do give consideration to whether you could commit to joining us.

Annual Meeting - June 2026

The Annual Meeting of Upton Parish Council was held on Wednesday 3rd June 2026. This is the most significant meeting in the council's year: it is the meeting at which the council elects its Chair and Vice-Chair, appoints councillors to committees and representative roles, and undertakes a range of statutory governance and financial business that cannot be discharged at an ordinary meeting.

Councillor Françoise Yates was elected unanimously as Chair of the Council for the 2026–27 municipal year, and Councillor Peter Head was elected Vice-Chair. The council also appointed members to the Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, and other representative roles, including appointments to the Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust and Nature Garden.

Governance and audit

The Annual Meeting carried a significant governance workload this year, reflecting the increasing compliance requirements placed on parish councils. Members completed the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025–26, including approval of the Annual Governance Statement and the Accounting Statements, and adopted updated Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and an Internal Financial Control Procedure. The council is grateful to the Clerk for the considerable preparation work involved, and to Councillor Talbot for his keen financial eye and work on the return.

The council's internal audit for 2025–26 was carried out by LCC, and the internal auditor's report was received and noted at the Annual Meeting. The audit found that the council has good financial arrangements in place, with sound bookkeeping, appropriate controls, and a good audit trail, and made several recommendations covering areas such as risk assessments, IT governance, website accessibility, data protection documentation, and staff appraisal. The council is working through these systematically and the external audit process is now under way as required by law. LCC has been reappointed as internal auditor for the 2026–27 financial year.

Community storage

The council has approved the placement of a storage container on the recreation ground. The need for additional secure storage has been discussed over a number of months: the village hall storeroom is at capacity, and the existing garage does not adequately protect equipment such as the marquees used for community events from the elements and pests. A dedicated storage container provides the council and the wider community with the space and flexibility that no other available option can match at comparable cost.

The council received correspondence from a number of residents on this matter ahead of the latest meeting, and is grateful to everyone who took the time to share their views. Several members of the public also attended the meeting and spoke during the open session; their presence and engagement was very much appreciated. Following that discussion, and having weighed the different points raised, residents present were supportive of meeting the need for secure storage, and the copse was recognised as the most suitable (or least harmful) available location. The container will be sited within the copse, where it is screened on multiple sides and has least visual impact on the recreation ground and surrounding area, with associated ground-works funded externally. The container will be a Parish Council asset, and storage will also be available to support all community events and activities, including Uptonogood and the Village Hall Amenities Trust.

Chapel Furlong land purchase

The purchase of the Chapel Furlong field is progressing well and we hope it will complete within the next week or two. Funds are in place and the legal process is in its final stages. Once completion occurs, signage will be erected on the land as advised by our solicitors; residents will then be able to see that the field is formally in community ownership for the first time. The working group intends to hold a session to gather villagers' views on how the land should be used and managed for the community, and further details will be shared in due course.

Ordnance Survey mapping

The council has resolved to apply to join the Ordnance Survey Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA), which will allow the lawful use of OS map extracts in council publications including Upton News. This follows a request from the Upton News editor to use OS mapping for a "Walk of the Month" feature. We are looking forward to supporting that idea once the licencing arrangements are in place. We are keen to support villagers with matters like this, and thank the editor for his research and work on the agreement and licence.

Planning matters - Wattle Cottage Farm

The council is aware from public material that the local planning authority has refused the planning application at Wattle Cottage Farm (reference P25/V2762/FUL) and has issued enforcement notices in connection with the development. The applicant has lodged an appeal against the planning decision, and enforcement action is normally paused while an appeal is live. Further details are not yet available to the council. Residents wishing to view the documents relating to the application, enforcement notices and appeal can do so via the Vale of White Horse planning register [here](#):

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the matter and will update residents as further information becomes available.

Bus shelter - graffiti removal

The council asked whether any resident would be willing to help repaint the interior of the bus shelter to remove recent graffiti. Several residents present at our June meeting kindly offered their support, and we are very grateful for that

community spirit. Without volunteer help, the council would need to engage an external contractor at public expense. We look forward to seeing the bus shelter looking spick and span!

Can you help? - recreation ground signage

The entrance sign to the village recreation ground is in need of attention following the failure of the existing posts. If you have skills in installing posts, small-scale ground-works, or similar practical tasks and would be willing to help reinstate this, the council would very much like to hear from you. As with the bus shelter, this is the sort of practical community contribution that makes a real difference and avoids unnecessary expenditure.

Please get in touch with the Clerk via [email](#).

Councillor vacancy

Upton Parish Council continues to have one councillor vacancy. The council serves a community that has real and growing ambitions - including the management of the Chapel Furlong land, ongoing planning matters, community events, and the governance workload described above. A sixth member would make a significant difference.

We are particularly keen to hear from residents who are willing to engage with issues in depth: to read papers, research options, and bring well-prepared documented proposals to the table. Parish council work is rewarding and does not require any specialist background - only a willingness to give some time and thought to the village. If you are interested, or simply want to find out more, please contact the Clerk.

Next meeting

The next full meeting of Upton Parish Council will be held on **Wednesday 29th July 2026** at 7:00 pm in the small meeting room at Upton Village Hall. Members of the public are welcome to attend. Agendas are published on the Parish Council noticeboard and the Upton village website in advance of each meeting. As always, the Council would like to invite comments from all villagers on any matter with which they have concern. These should be sent by [email](#) to the Parish Clerk. The Minutes of previous Parish Council meetings can be found [here](#).

WANTED: Upton Village Hall Trustees

We are looking for volunteer trustees to join the team of villagers who manage and support our Village Hall. We need new members to help with varied roles from upkeep and maintenance, managing bookings and events, the management of the hall's website and communications and to bring new ideas for the future of the hall. The trustee role involves attending quarterly meetings.



Upton Village Hall was built by members of the village in 1966, expanded in 2010 and completely refurbished in 2015. Its future relies on a volunteer committee of trustees to keep it running for the community.

If you are interested and would like to know more please get in touch with Liz, Andy or Nicky via our trustee [email](mailto:trustees@uptonvillagehall.co.uk) (trustees@uptonvillagehall.co.uk)

Upton Full Fibre

Some good news and and some bad news. First the bad news: following correspondence with the Chief Exec, Openreach have now confirmed that they have no upcoming plans to roll-out full fibre to this area and have advised BDUK accordingly. The good news is that this means that other network operators can now apply for Project Gigabit vouchers to seek funding for fibre installation in the village. Consequently, Airband instructed their contractor to conduct a technical survey of the village, which took place on June 11th.

The contractor submitted their observations and costings to Airband who, in turn, have now submitted the voucher application for Upton. We need to wait for BDUK to process the application but at least things are moving forward. A meeting with Airband is scheduled on July 1st when we hope to obtain a further progress update. We understand that Upton would be the first location in Oxfordshire to be connected under Project Gigabit subject, of course, to BDUK approval.

Upton Fete 2026

Mark your calendars for **Saturday 5th September 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm.**

Enjoy a traditional village fete and help raise money for the village amenities, the school and the church. Enjoy the displays, show off your vintage car, watch the dog enjoy the BBQ and relax with tea and cakes whilst listening to the musicians.

We also need helpers to run a stall, park cars, entertain the crowds, or help put gazebos up and down. If you can help, please contact the Fete Committee via the Upton Help Group on WhatsApp, the Village Social Facebook page or drop a note through my door (Kathryn Fletcher, Sine Nomine - opposite the church).

Upton Neighbourhood Watch

Villagers have been vigilant, sharing and reporting door-step callers (MacQueen's milk and the Fish Man) and noisy scooters. Stuart keeps us updated on posts from Thames Valley Police, including using AI safely, on-line shopping scams and anti-social behaviour (ASB) awareness.

Details of our next meeting, with our local PCSO (Tom Walcott-Smith) in attendance, will be published next month.

Upton Wine Club

Saturday 13th June brought something rarely seen in recent years (but much more common over the past few weeks!) – lovely weather on a Wine Club evening! The sunshine provided the perfect backdrop as we celebrated the end of another fantastic Upton Wine Club season ... our 21st year no less and like a fine wine, as the club gets a little older, our celebrations become even better!

More than 50 members and friends gathered in the village hall for an evening filled with good food, great company and, naturally, a generous amount of wine. We kicked things off with a refreshing summer aperitif: white port and tonic, served with plenty of ice, fresh mint and a cinnamon stick. For those who had never tried it before, it proved a revelation – Portugal's answer to the gin and tonic, and arguably much kinder on the head the following morning!

The committee, assisted by several willing volunteers, laid on a wonderful spread featuring meats, salads, cheeses and biscuits, followed by a delicious Eton Mess. All of this was accompanied by a steady flow of red and white wines, rounded off with a superb dessert wine. Nobody went home hungry, thirsty, or in any danger of wasting away over the summer.

In a break from recent tradition, we swapped our usual raffle for a game of bingo. Many of us hadn't played since childhood, although some quickly rediscovered an unexpectedly competitive streak. The hall eventually echoed with calls of "House!" as members battled for a collection of excellent prizes, including wine-tasting books, bottles of fine wine and a top prize of a set of Riedel wine

glasses and decanter. It seems that village bingo can be every bit as tense as a penalty shootout!

Evenings like this remind us what a wonderful place Upton is to live. The Wine Club has always been about much more than wine; it's about friendship, laughter and bringing people together. We are fortunate to have such a warm and welcoming community.

The Wine Club now takes a well-earned summer break (giving everyone a chance to recover their livers and replenish their wine racks), but we'll be back on 16th September to begin a new season. We look forward to welcoming back familiar faces and, hopefully, a few new members keen to join the fun. After all, every great friendship starts with a shared glass of wine!

Cheers, and have a wonderful summer! 🍷 ☀️

Christian Aid Week

Below are the final accounts, boosted by some late but well-filled envelopes and a few gardeners still interested in tomatoes.

It is, in one sense a disappointing amount, but nevertheless a worthwhile result for everybody's efforts in adverse circumstances. I shall shortly be sending a cheque to Christian Aid. If anyone needs silver and copper coins could they please let me know.

Many thanks to all who contributed and helped with the Tea Party



	2026	2025
<i>At the Tea Party:</i>		
Plants	100.00	79.00
Teas	161.26	199.27
Raffle	87.00	94.00
Envelopes	229.00 (11)	226.00
Advance plant sales	15.80	210.74
Sub-total	593.06	809.01
<i>Post tea party</i>		
Envelopes	140.00 (6)	16.00
Plants	36.00	33.00
Donations	0.00	12.30
Sub-total	769.06	870.31
Rounded up	30.94	29.69
Grand total	800.00	900.00

Late summer fun at Upton Village Fete

Saturday September 5th 2026, 12-4pm

Bring the family to Upton village fete for an afternoon of fun and games. Entry by programme £1/person.

Support village facilities like the kids' playground, St Mary's, Church & local good causes including the Island Donkey Sanctuary

- ♥ Play games, win a prize!
- ♥ Stroll round the traditional stalls – jams, tombola, books, jigsaws, plants etc – for a bargain
- ♥ Enter the dog show – cute pooch or pedigree, dog and owner, there's a class for everyone#
- ♥ Sample the amazing villager-baked cakes and teas
- ♥ Enjoy the talented performers in the main arena – gymnasts, ukelele group and more
- ♥ Explore the classic cars and show your own*
- ♥ Fill up on BBQ with Bob the Butcher's burgers, or snaffle a baked potato & chilli. GF and Veggie options.
- ♥ Kids can burn off steam on our famous playground
- ♥ Relax under the trees in the Nature Garden

#Dog show entries £2.50 CASH per entry, on the day.

*Classic car display free entry on the day. Display parking is on flat grass.

Uptonogood? 2026

Well, what a day it was! Thank you to the 80+ strong team of Uptonians and fellow MTB enthusiasts that helped pull off a memorable day, not just for the village but also for the 625 riders we had registered on the eve of the event. These ranged from 11 months to 80 years old and is a testament to the welcome visitors feel here in Upton.

The weather was kind, the music was fabulous, and the Café, BBQ, and Bar were flat out keeping our guests fed and watered all day. As a result, we appear to have raised a record sum of ~£19,000 this year. A tremendous sum that all volunteers can feel proud of.



This will now be distributed across the organisations that contributed to such a great day and marshal nominations, with the balance staying right here in Upton under the diligent eye of the Parish Council. Full details of where the funds are distributed will appear on our website in due course.

A final thank you to all those that contributed either by helping or participating and to our sponsors: Mountain Mania, Thomas Merrifield, 1st Class Logistics, Wise Owl, Drain Technology, Strictly Wine, and Didcot Plant. As organisers, Mike Tibbetts and I (Bob Lott) know we simply could not do it without you all.



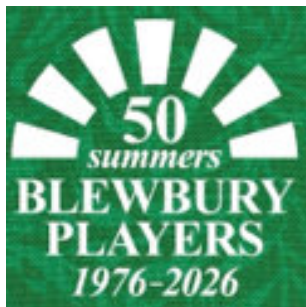


Uptonogood? 2026: the aftermath ...

Local News

Blewbury Players

Please see the [online box office](#) for all events or use the QR codes below. Please do come along and enjoy our celebratory year!



The Wind in the Willows

Our summer production will run from **15th -18th July 2026**, at Orchard Dene Garden Theatre, Blewbury. Our online box office opens 5th June. Tickets: Adult £17. Child £9 (QR code opposite).



Come and enjoy the exploits and adventures of Toad and his friends Ratty, Mole and Badger. Will his friends be able to steer the motor-car-obsessed Toad away from his reckless behaviour? Can they help him mount a courageous mission to reclaim Toad Hall from the weasels? Alan Bennett's adaptation is a satirical tale of nature, fun, friendship and loyalty. It's an adventure which appeals to young and old alike, and Blewbury's open air garden theatre is the ideal setting.

Director Ed White chose this play because "*it feels like Blewbury's story*". He reflects that the noises, sounds and images, described in the book by Kenneth Grahame, all feel like they could be in this village. He also observes that "*The script is wonderfully adapted by Bennett, the characters are immediately recognisable from the book, and we are going to have a lot of fun meeting them and creating their world. When the cast read the script the characters popped off the page. It's going to be joyous!*" There are lots of worlds to be created by a large cast of talented actors of all ages; the river bank, the Wild Wood, the open road, Toad Hall and many more. AND we have live musicians and the original songs from the National Theatre production. It's all going to be a marvellous way of celebrating our 50th anniversary. Do join us...

Fifty Years of Blewbury Players: Exhibition, Orchard Dene Garden, 15th - 18th July.

If you have props, costumes, pieces of scenery, which were produced for any of the many shows (including old time music halls and operas) produced over the last fifty years, we would love to borrow them. We would also love to include memories from any of the shows. We would particularly like to hear from people involved not just on stage, but also as part of the many areas involved in the productions, such as: backstage, construction, costume and make-up, working in the box office, the bar or the car-parking. The list is endless! Any comments we receive will be included, anonymously in the exhibition. Please email Jo if you can help

Drama in an Oxfordshire Village: Fifty Years of the Blewbury Players. Publication date: 14th July 2026. Price: £25

Perfect for Blewbury locals, past cast and crew, theatre-lovers, and anyone who loves the charm (and chaos) of village life. Funny, factual and brilliantly researched, this book takes you behind the scenes—from post-war Blewbury and the buzzing drama years of the 60s and 70s to the moment the Players was born. See how a local group became a true community cornerstone and earned a reputation far beyond the village.

You can order via our [website](#) or using the QR code overleaf. Explore 300 pages packed with 270 images and reviews of 62 major Blewbury Players productions.

A Christmas Carol – Winter 2026.

This will be held at St Michael's church, Blewbury **25th - 28th November**. We are delighted announce that Jo Laugharne will be directing this production. We are looking for an ensemble cast and are inviting those interested to join mixed age group workshop auditions on 12th and 13th September. There will be a handful of ensemble roles for children school year 6 and above. The rehearsals will be mainly at weekends starting 3rd October. There will be some group singing at auditions but singing roles are optional. Please [email](#) us to book your audition.

Blewbury School Report



Father Jason joining in with soaking Mr Coleman!

This year's Blewbury School Summer Fete was a great success, with a fantastic turnout from pupils, families and members of the local community. Blessed with lovely sunny weather, everyone enjoyed an afternoon full of fun and entertainment.

Highlights of the day included the ever-popular BBQ, an impressive Taekwondo demonstration, and the chance to soak Mr Coleman in the splat-the-teacher attraction, which proved to be a favourite with the children.

A huge thank you goes to the PTA for all their hard work in organising such a wonderful event, and to everyone in the community for their continued support. The fete was a brilliant example of the community coming together and making lasting memories.

Blewbury Post Office

As we move into July and the start of the summer holidays, we'd like to thank everyone for their continued support of Blewbury Village Store and Post Office. We hope you're enjoying the warmer weather and making the most of everything our lovely village has to offer.

Our usual opening hours remain:

Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri:	9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Weds:	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Sat/Sun:	closed

From Monday 20th July, the Post Office will be open:

Mon to Fri:	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
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These hours will remain in place throughout the summer holiday period. We appreciate your understanding and encourage customers to plan their visits accordingly.

In the Shop, our range of crystals continues to grow and has been attracting lots of interest. Whether you're looking for a unique gift, a beautiful decorative piece, or simply something a little different, there's plenty to choose from.

We're also continuing to stock our lovely handmade crochet items, including cardigans, baby clothes, blankets and stuffed toys. Each piece is lovingly crafted and makes a thoughtful gift for a new arrival, birthday or special occasion. Alongside these, you'll find our usual selection of everyday essentials, fresh free-range eggs, local honey, sweet treats, gifts and floral wreaths.

Thank you again for supporting your local Post Office and village shop. Your support helps us continue providing these important services to the community, and we're very grateful for it. We look forward to seeing you soon and wish everyone a wonderful summer!

Blewbury WI

Blewbury WI's next monthly meeting is **Wednesday 22nd July** at 7:30 pm in the main hall of Blewbury Village hall. We are looking forward to Jeff Evans telling us about "*The questionable history of the TV Quiz Show*". The quiz show is perhaps one of television's most successful creations but where did it all begin? Which shows have been the most successful? And who, along the way, have been the winners, losers and – perhaps most intriguingly – the cheaters? Jeff's talk covers the whole colourful history of the TV quiz show from its earliest days in the 1930's to today, showing how the format developed, celebrating the good, the bad and the ugly, and unearthing some very dodgy dealing along the way.

For all matters to do with Blewbury WI please ring Joy on 850543 or contact us by [email](#).

Astons Online

Astons Online CIC provides tech support for people who want to be digitally confident on the Internet, with smartphone apps or online services like health and banking. Astons Online CIC events and support are free of charge and open to everyone. We're available for one-to-one sessions on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 am and 12:00 noon using Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp or telephone. Please book a 30 minute appointment by [email](#) or by phone (07780 958249).

Our next Tech help café meeting will be held in Aston Upthorpe Village Hall (OX119EQ) on **Tuesday 21st July from 10:00 am to 12 noon** for problems with devices, email, internet and online services (booking details above).

Didcot based charity *Getting Oxfordshire Online* would love to have your unwanted laptops, tablets and smartphones to distribute to others who are not able to have their own. Demand in the county is greater than supply so any used devices would be welcome. Contact us by email or phone as above.

United Charities

We are a local charity which supports people of all ages living in Upton, the Astons and Blewbury, with funding available to give a helping hand to those struggling financially.



As the summer holiday approaches, families with school age children in particular may find it hard to provide essentials for their children. We can provide one off payments, help pay for unexpected expenses, the weekly food shop, or other day-to-day living costs.

If you, or someone you know needs help, please do get in touch. You can pick up a short application from the porch of St Mary's Church, or make a request by [email](#). We can help you fill in the form and please don't be reluctant to ask for help: all applications are totally confidential.

Jackie's Care

Are you looking for trustworthy, one-to-one care tailored to your needs? At Jackie's Care, I am proud to provide high-quality care services, at highly competitive rates, 7 days a week. I can offer the following Services:

- Personalized Care Plans: Tailored to meet your individual needs.
- Shopping Assistance: Help with errands and groceries.
- Medication Administration: Ensuring your health is a top priority.
- Appointments Support: Assistance with scheduling and attending appointments.
- Companionship: A caring presence to brighten your day.
- Administrative Work: Support with paperwork and managing daily tasks.
- Overnight Care: Comprehensive support through the night.

Please contact me by phone (07712455093) or email (jackiefideria@yahoo.com)

Vale News

VoWHDC News

Local councillor's report

There was no submission this month from our local councillors (one of whom is on maternity leave).

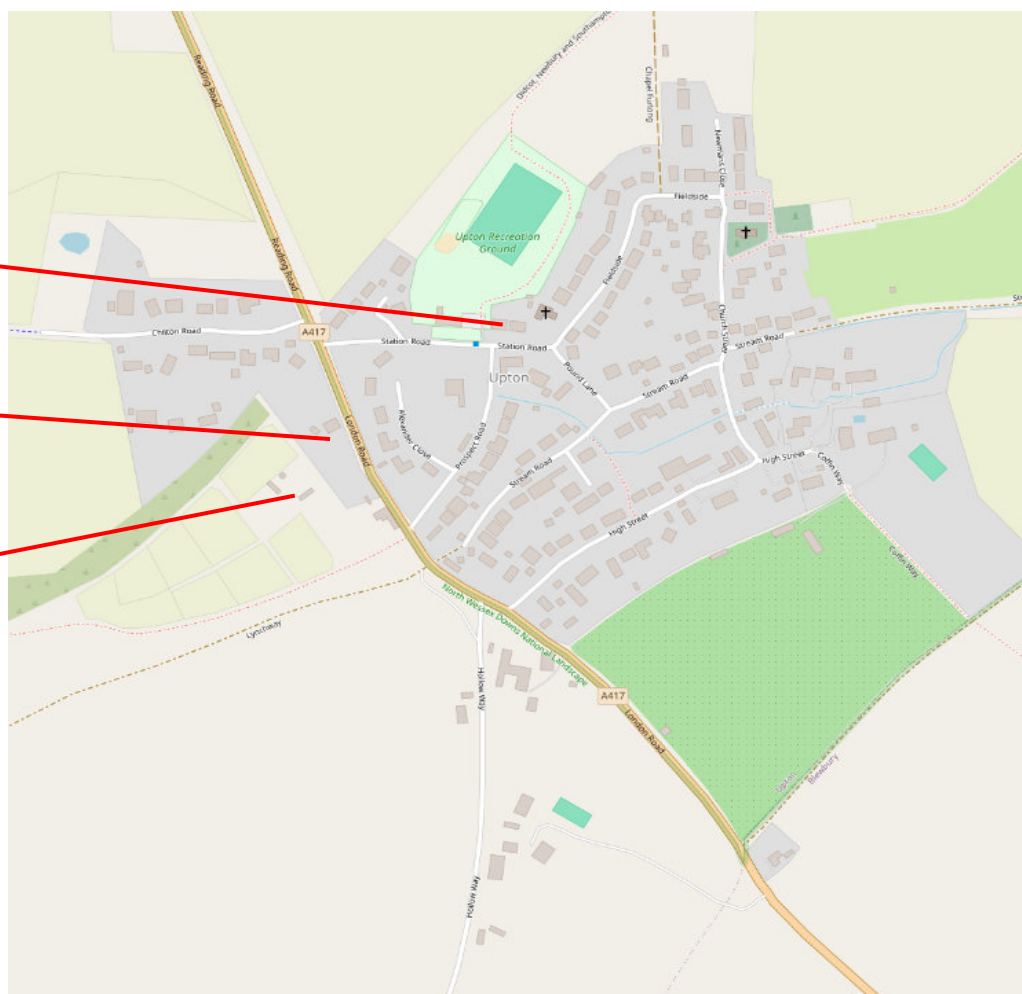
Current planning applications

The map below shows the location of all planning applications within the parish of Upton that are *Under Consultation* or *Under Consideration* and were registered between 1st January 2022 and 29th June 2026.

[P26/V1693/HH](#)

[P26/V0730/FUL](#)

[VE24/201](#)



Annual waste survey

Residents across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are being encouraged to share their views on how rubbish, recycling and street cleaning services are run in their area, via an annual survey. Whether you think things are working well or could be improved, your feedback will play a vital role in shaping the future of waste and street cleaning services across both districts.

Last year, more than 2,100 people took part in the 2025 survey, with more than 81 percent of respondents indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the waste collection service. As a result of the feedback, staff received extra training to help ensure bins are returned correctly after emptying, further checks were put in place around litter bin emptying and measures put in place to ensure street cleaning standards across the area. There has also been increased communication on which items go in which bin, especially around food waste.

A new survey has now launched for 2026 giving residents another opportunity to have their say on everything from household waste and recycling collections to street cleaning and local waste reduction initiatives.

Take part in the [2026 Waste and Street Cleaning Survey](#) now! The survey is open until **10th July 2026**.



A CHAPEL IN THE HEART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE
Hill Farm, Church Lane, Steventon, OX13 6SW
www.ridgewayfuneralservice.co.uk
info@ridgewayfunerals.co.uk
01235 355269

Olly Glover (MP)



As summer approaches, I have been busy pushing central Government for further support for businesses and have continued local visits across the constituency.

I was pleased to host Alistair Carmichael MP, who chairs the cross-party Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee, and Charlie Maynard MP, Member of Parliament for Witney, on a tour of Ed and David Clayton's farm in West Hendred. We spent the afternoon with farmers and representatives from both the National Farmers' Union and the Country Land and Business Association, listening to concerns about rising fuel and fertiliser costs and sustainable farming. Despite global instability, the Government does not yet have a long-term strategy to support farming, make supply chains fairer, and ultimately ensure people in the UK have access to enough affordable food. We will continue to push the Government to recognise the importance of investing in British food production and to support those who provide the food we consume.

In addition, I questioned the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on what support is available for local high streets, such as Broadway in Didcot, which are struggling amid overwhelming operating costs. The Minister claimed that delivering a '*fast-growing economy*' is the solution, but many small and independent businesses have yet to benefit from this. I also led a backbench Westminster Hall debate on government support for high streets and raised a wide range of concerns on behalf of local businesses and town councils. You can find the debate [here](#).

It was a pleasure to visit Stanford in the Vale pre-school, where I met with staff and children and discussed SEND support, transport services, and other local challenges. I also participated in the Kingsgrove ground-breaking ceremony, marking the start of construction on the community hub, which will become a valuable venue for the new estate. I visited Clifton Hampden Primary School after they contacted me about long-standing repairs needed to their roof, which have prevented children from using one of the classrooms. I will continue to facilitate discussions between Oxfordshire County Council and the school to ensure repairs are completed promptly and effectively. Finally, senior staff at Harwell Campus gave me a tour of their new CO:LABS facility, which will provide local jobs in innovative scientific research.

At Prime Minister's Questions, I expressed both my own frustration and that of many constituents regarding widespread dissatisfaction with the political system. In his response, Keir Starmer said he has full confidence in First Past the Post to provide stable government, but cross-party momentum is building in favour of a more proportional voting system, where the number of votes a party receives more closely reflects the number of seats it holds. I will continue to make the case for a fairer voting system for elections to Westminster and local councils when the Representation of the People Bill returns to the House of Commons.

Other matters I will be working on in the coming weeks include debating improvements to the Railways Bill, visiting more local schools and businesses, and responding to individuals across the constituency in need of help and support.

As always, if there is anything you feel I can help you with please do not hesitate to contact me and my team either by [email](#), or by leaving a voice message at 0207 219 7657.

Didcot u3a

If you have recently retired or are semi-retired, live in Didcot or the surrounding area and are looking for new interests whilst making new friendships, then please consider joining the Didcot & District U3A to "Learn, Laugh, Live"!

With over 30 Interest Groups, you could learn a new language, delve into your family history, enjoy walking with friends, learn to play an instrument, and many more: full details can be found [here](#)!

New members are always warmly welcomed to join (first visit is 'free to see') and chat over tea and biscuits at the monthly meetings held on the third Tuesday of every month in the Didcot Civic Hall, starting at 2:30 pm.

Meetings for the coming months will include;

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 21 Jul | <i>A is for Arsenic</i>
Speaker: Dr Kathryn Harkup
A light-hearted journey through the poisons used in Agatha Christie novels. |
| 18 Aug | <i>The Flanders and Swann story</i>
Speakers: James Mitchell and James Williams |
| 15 Sep | <i>Wild Homes?</i>
Speaker: David Baily |
| 20 Oct | <i>Sing with Mandy</i>
Speaker: Amanda Shora |

For more information about the nationwide self-help teaching and learning organisation that is u3a please contact us [here](#). We look forward to seeing you soon!

News from Afar

OCC Councillor's annual report



I returned from half-term break to a flurry of roadworks in and around Harwell and have spent a good deal of time trying to get clearer information. I apologise if some of my other queries have slipped down the list as a result.

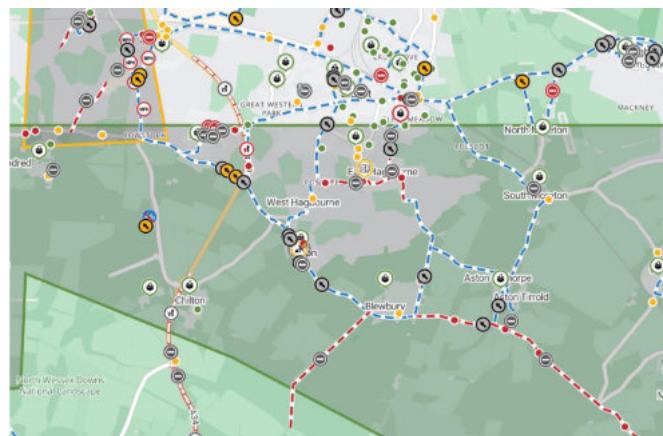
I'm pleased that progress is being made on several issues that residents have been raising for some time. However, the concentration of all this work has understandably led to frustration, particularly where scheduling seems to overlap. From discussions with officers, that frustration is largely shared. While the council has limited control over utilities works, and multiple utilities projects have leapt in front of planned works, there is a recognition that we need better co-ordination where possible.

Over the past week, I have met with a senior officer to review overlapping works in both Blewbury and Harwell, and liaised with the relevant cabinet member to discuss safety and remedial measures in Harwell and Upton. I really hope that these conversations will help to ensure that local concerns are reflected in how works are managed and mitigated on the ground.

The new cabinet has been announced, and one of the changes is the separation of responsibility for road maintenance and network management; this should allow for more granular oversight of highways. I am using this opportunity to highlight to colleagues the areas where improvements are needed across both functions.

Following the reshuffle, I have taken on responsibility for Adult Social Care and have therefore spent much of the past fortnight in briefings. The portfolio includes Adult Social Care, carers' services, mental health and homelessness. While I am still getting fully up to speed, I want to be open that the council is facing the need to make significant savings, amounting to tens of millions of pounds, over the next three years. This is due to a combination of reduced funding and increasing demand. Adult Social Care has a budget of £330 million, the vast majority of which is committed to statutory (obligatory) services. This leaves very limited flexibility, with savings needing to be found in areas where we are providing discretionary services. Cabinet is entering a period of detailed consideration of council-wide savings, and I will be advocating as strongly as I can for those who rely on Adult Social Care services.

Transport update



There is a huge amount going on over the summer; to give you an idea of how complicated the plans are, this is a screenshot of the active applications in the area over the next three months:

I will do my utmost to keep people informed via Facebook, as many of these change on a weekly basis as permits are altered or traffic management plans are adapted.

Resident's queries

Recent queries I've raised on behalf of residents and Parish Councils are given below:

Description	Status	Outcome
Blewbury road safety	In progress	Funding for a puffin crossing at Savages is now scheduled for Oct - Dec 2026
Harwell roadworks	In progress	As a result of several concerns raised re: works in and around Harwell, the Network Management team is undergoing a reconfiguration that should improve planning in the future; however, I'm still in regular contact as the continued disruption is causing understandable frustration.
Road safety issues on A417	In progress	Crossing confirmed at the Winnaway, with other speeding measures to be included as part of the works. Latest update: scheduled to start July-September, but given other concurrent works this may be too disruptive.
Coffin Way cycle-path	In progress	Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton – relevant officer on leave. Latest update: team looking to reopen conversations with landowner; with countryside access, but have offered a walk-around
Hagbourne Hill improvements	Awaiting response	Stagnated due to problems with funding and utilities; I am chasing regularly
Upton-W.Hagbourne one-way route	Ongoing	Query as to whether the road from W.Hagbourne to Upton could be southbound only, with Upton-W.Hagbourne diverted via roundabout.

Thames Valley Police Commissioner

Last month, in collaboration with Thames Valley Police, I launched a new Vehicle Crime Strategy which aims to cut crime - particularly theft of, and theft from, vehicles.

Having your vehicle stolen, or something stolen from it, isn't a trivial crime – it can result in substantial financial loss, emotional stress and, depending on where the theft took place, security and community safety concerns.

Whilst we have seen a reduction in vehicle crime across Thames Valley, with almost 2,000 fewer incidents of theft from or theft of a motor vehicle in 2025 compared with 2024, there is more to do.

We launched the plan at the latest of a series of free tool marking events. Tradespeople are significantly more likely to experience vehicle crime because their tools are seen as high-reward, low-risk targets for thieves. According to statistics from Wickes, 4 in 10 tradespeople have experienced tool theft across the UK.

Tool marking is one of the simplest ways tradespeople can protect themselves from tool theft. Since March, my office has distributed over 500 SelectaDNA tool marking kits to electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other traders across the Thames Valley, increasing the number of tools marked, making them less desirable to thieves and protecting more tradespeople's tools and livelihoods.

There is more information about future vehicle marking sessions and how to get hold of a kit directly if you can't attend one of the sessions on my [website](#).



Wild Oxfordshire

Nature-Friendly Summer Activities for Kids

As summer kicks off, it's the perfect time for all ages to get outdoors and help out your local wildlife (even on those not-so-sunny days).

1. Make a mammal footprint tunnel



A mammal tunnel (courtesy: Gardener's World)

What you'll need:

- Sand or flour
- Ruler
- A small, shallow tray
- Wet cat food (meat not fish)

- 1. Fill your tray**
Fill the tray with lots of flour or sand and use the ruler to smooth the surface
- 2. Check the trap**
Lightly press your finger into the flour or sand – it should leave an indent. If it doesn't, smooth over and try again.
- 3. Add bait (optional)**
Place a dish with pet food in the middle of the tray.
- 4. Place the tunnel outside**
Put the tunnel in a quiet, sheltered spot such as along a hedge or wall. Leave it out for up to a week, checking the tray daily for tracks.
- 5. Identify the footprints**
Take photos of the prints with a ruler for scale. Use ID guides to identify your guests.

2. Make seed bombs

Re-wilding in the palm of your hand! What you'll need:

- 1 cup natural powdered clay
- 1 cup peat-free compost
- 1–2 packets of native wildflower seeds (pollinator-friendly is best)
- water (a little at a time) for mixing
- cardboard for drying

1. Mix the Dry Ingredients

In a bowl, mix the powdered clay, compost and seeds

2. Add Water Slowly

Add a little water at a time and mix with your hands until the mixture sticks together. It should not be too wet or crumbly.

3. Roll Into Balls

Roll the mixture into small balls.

4. Dry Them Out

Place the seed bombs on a tray or cardboard and leave them to dry for 24–48 hours in a warm place.

5. Throw and grow!

Once dry, the seed bombs are ready to be tossed into bare soil areas in gardens or school grounds. Try and plant before rain is forecast or water them lightly and watch as pollinator habitats increase on your grounds.

3. Go Fungi spotting

Neither animal nor plant, fungi play a vital role in keeping our local habitats healthy. They help break down old leaves, wood, and other natural materials, turning them into rich soil that supports new life. Some species of fungi even form relationships with plant roots through the root-like mycelium. These mycorrhizal networks (the “Wood-Wide Web”) help plants absorb water and nutrients while providing the fungi carbohydrate – a win-win!

You can find fungi almost anywhere: on logs, in soil, under trees, even on walls and woodchips! They are best found in woodlands, around fallen trees or logs, on leafy ground and tree stumps and in damp, shady spots after rain.



Chicken of the Woods (Ann Berkeley)

What you'll need:

- A notebook or spotting sheet
- Fungi ID app (like iNaturalist or Shroomify UK)
- A magnifying glass (optional)
- Gloves

Safety tips!

- Never pick or eat mushrooms.
- Take photos, not samples
- Wash your hands afterwards.
- Stick to public footpaths and avoid damaging habitats.

The most common fungi in the UK this summer are:

Waxcaps – Known for their shiny caps, Waxcaps can be red, violet, yellow, green, or pink. They are commonly found in grasslands, meadows, and urban lawns and parks.

Parasol mushrooms – Tall fungi with a wide, round cap, a brown-to-black scaly top, white gills, and a white or off-white stem. Often found in woods, meadows, and fields.

Puffballs – Round fungi with a stem, no cap, and no gills. They release clouds of spores when touched. Puffballs are often found in open meadows, fields, and well fertilised lawns, as well as forest undergrowth. They never grow on logs or trees,

Wild 
Oxfordshire

only on the ground.

Chicken of the Woods – Easy to spot thanks to its bright sulphur-yellow colour. It forms thick, soft, fan shaped shelves and grows high up on the trunks of mature trees such as oak.

Elf Cups – Cup shaped and bright red, scarlet elf cups grow on decaying sticks and branches in damp spots and leaf litter.

Gardening tips for July

1. Nectar is wildlife's friend.

You can help attract bees, butterflies, and other nectar-loving insects to your patch by planting nectar-rich plants. Add climbers that may also produce berries and hips, such as Honeysuckle and Dog Rose. And go a step further and attract moths with night-scented plants like Evening Primrose and Night-Scented Stock.

2. Cut back on the cutting back!



Rose hips (Rhiannon Young)

After a beautiful bloom, avoid deadheading roses this time of year. This way, some will develop hips (the fruit of the species of rose plant), which will feed birds and small mammals come winter.

3. Big butterfly count

Here's one for your diary: July marks the Big Butterfly Count. Don't just take part, give our fluttering friends a helping hand by leaving an area of grass to grow long until the end of summer. Species such as the Meadow Brown will use these patches to breed.

After hours Chess

One of our readers kindly offered to send in a monthly bridge hand, so we thought we would also include a chess puzzle for the non-card player. The puzzles are from lichess.org website and are set at an ELO level of around 1000 (improving club player).

White just played Rg1. Black to check-mate in 3 moves (solution below).



Solution to chess puzzle

Black plays ... Qg3+. White plays 1. Bxg3 then ... Phxg3 2. Kh1 Rxh3# is checkmate. White's Queen sacrifice pays dividends!

Bridge

Blewbury Bridge Club has had a regular column for years in the Blewbury village newsletter, but we recently realised that's useless for any members who live elsewhere! We've always had players from Upton too. If anyone's interested, we play on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Tuesdays at 7:30 pm are face-to-face in the Vale Room of Blewbury village hall, while Thursdays at 7:00 pm are online. The website we use is called RealBridge and each week's link should be on the club's website. Incidentally, it'll help if your computer has a camera so that you can chat to the other players.

If you're curious, give us a try! All players welcome, of all standards.

This month's hand

Game all Dealer West	♠ 4 ♥ A98765 ♦ QJ6 ♣ A92	
♠ K8732 ♥ J3 ♦ 3 ♣ K10875		♠ QJ5 ♥ K1042 ♦ K104 ♣ J64
	♠ A1096 ♥ Q ♦ A98752 ♣ Q3	

Auctions at different tables

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
P	1♥	P	2♦	P	1♥	P	1♠	P	1♥	P	2♦
P	2♥	P	2♠	P	2♥	P	2NT	P	2♥	P	2♠
P	3♦	P	3♥	P	3♥	P	4♥	P	3♦	P	5♦
P	4♥	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	6♦	P	P
P				P	P			P			

Here's an interesting recent hand, with three auctions from different tables. Which do you hate the least?

1. 4♥ (after exploring diamonds)

At least North-South considered the best game of 5D. The first five bids look sensible, but what should South say after that? I'd have chosen 4D,

because it best describes your hand. I don't care that I'm going past 3NT, because partner's turned down plenty of chances to bid no-trumps and you certainly don't have the clubs stopped. Also, bidding 3S would mean repeating spades and suggesting five of them (6-5 shape, perhaps.) On reflection 4D strongly suggests your exact hand! You'd have supported partner if you'd held a second heart. You've bypassed 3NT to rebid diamonds and you've also mentioned spades. That sounds a lot like 6 diamonds, 4 spades, 1 heart and hence 2 clubs, which is what you have.

2. 4♥ x

Oh dear .. this is clearly a less successful auction. North has already shown a six-card heart suit by re-bidding them (assuming that they're not trying to avoid reversing), so I think it's clear to pass 2NT. Partner has your singleton covered, because he's bid it. Your hearts are long, but straggly. Staggering up to 4H in this unconvincing fashion is inviting the opponents to double you and collect 500, which is what happened.

3. 6♦

If you were declarer, you'd faint. However, the contract made, thanks to beautiful cardplay and a lead wrapped up by Santa Claus. West led a small club, won by declarer's queen. Oh dear. It's the unbid suit, yes, but it's still questionable to underlead unsupported kings or queens against a slam. Declarer now started cross-ruffing, trumping three hearts in hand and a spade on table. The key clue was that West kept discarding black cards instead of over-ruffing, suggesting that East held the missing high trumps. Dummy's long hearts had now been established... but unfortunately there was no way of enjoying them.

Declarer kept ruffing. Another spade was trumped in dummy, then a fifth heart in hand. East discarded his last black card, leaving himself with nothing but three trumps. A fourth round of spades was ruffed with dummy's last trump (the queen) and over-ruffed by the king. East returned the trump four and declarer finessed the nine, knowing where the ten was.

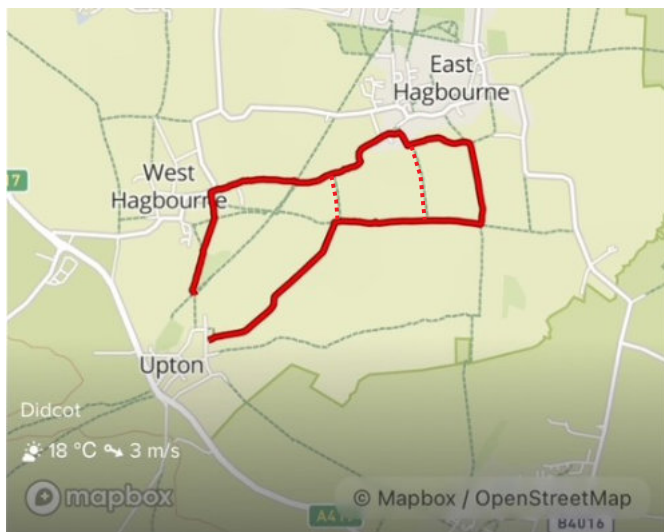
Result: two clubs, the major-suit aces and eight trump tricks. Slam made. That should have been a bidding catastrophe, but North-South generously forgave each other!

Walk of the Month

Many of you will have wandered around the footpath network that surrounds Upton. However, you may have been unaware that there are approximately (!) 1886 different routes that leave along one of the 8 paths out of Upton and return along a different path, without visiting the same path junction twice and without leaving the area defined by the surrounding villages (The Hagbournes, Chilton and Blewbury). Allowing for route reversals, that makes a total of 3772 walking routes around Upton.

Of course, many of the routes are only slightly different but it is possible that there are combinations of footpaths that you have not walked along before. Each month, we will publish one of the routes at random, along with a brief description. Until the Parish Council obtains the Ordnance Survey PGSA licence (see Parish Council report), we will have to use open source maps. However, we will plot each month's route on a 1:25 000 OS map as soon as we are able.

Route description



Length: 4.8 km (3 miles)
Elevation change: +/- 11 m
Time: 60 - 75 mins

The route starts at the end of Chapel Furlong. Walk under the railway arch and through a narrow gap in the hedge, then follow a wide, grassy track between the copse (R) and fence (L). After around 500m, pass through a kissing gate and then take the RH fork some 10m after the gate. Follow this track for ca. 250m and continue across two gravel

tracks (the second being Moor Lane) to join a footpath between two houses which leads onto Main Street, West Hagbourne. Turn right and walk along Foxglove Lane towards East Hagbourne, passing under the old railway line again after around 750m. Follow Foxglove Lane for another 200m passing a footpath on the right which forms the first short-cut (if required - shown as a dashed red line) and follow a narrower track which enters the churchyard of St Peter's, East Hagbourne. Walk around the back of the church (to the right) and leave the churchyard by turning right onto a wide track. After ca. 50m, the track bends to the left and becomes a gravelled path which runs eastwards, parallel to Hakka's brook. The main route continues along the gravel track towards the electricity poles some 300m away; to take the second short-cut, turn right (south) at this point. Once at the electricity poles, turn right and follow the footpath through two kissing gates to emerge on Moor Lane. Turn right once more and follow Moor Lane westwards, passing two footpaths on the right which are where the short-cuts re-join the main route. About 50m after the second footpath meets Moor Lane, there is a footbridge (currently damaged - take care!) on the left-hand side. Across the bridge, pass through a kissing gate and follow the path across the field (occasionally contains grazing cows) to a second bridge (also damaged!) and kissing gate. The path continues through the field and emerges at St Mary's church, Upton, which marks the end of the walk.

Local directory

What's On

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

Useful links

Organisation	Website
Upton Village website	https://www.uptonvillage.co.uk/
Upton Village Hall	https://www.uptonvillagehall.co.uk/
Upton Wine Club	https://uptonwineclub.com/
Upton Village Social	https://www.facebook.com/groups/231071594674815

Various WhatsApp groups also exist - please ask a neighbour for details!

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.

Useful contacts

Contact	Telephone	email
Upton News Upton News Editor	n/a	uptonox1news@gmail.com
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Revd John Clarke	01235 510073	jphclarke@gmail.com
Revd Dr Mark Rhodes-Smith	01235 850267	mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk
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VoWH District Councillors Hayleigh Gascoigne	n/a	hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
Debra Dewhurst	n/a	debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
Oxfordshire County Councillor Rebekah Fletcher	n/a	rebekah.fletcher@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Member of Parliament Olly Glover	0207 219 765	olly.glover.mp@parliament.uk
Astons Online Bruno Brunskill	07780 958249	theastonsonline@gmail.com
United Charities Main contact	n/a	unitedcharities@outlook.com

And finally ...

Due to budgetary constraints, Upton News is published in electronic format only. A copy is placed on the Upton Village [website](#) each month, which you can download. We also manage a distribution list whose subscribers receive a copy directly in their email Inbox at the start of each month.

If you would like to be added to this list, then please email [me](#) and I will add your email address to our database. Thank you for your interest!