



Upton News

August 2026

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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	29	30
●	● ● ●		●	● ●		
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

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
2 nd August	9:15 am	Lay-led service	Weddings, God's blessing on new and existing marriages
9 th August	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	Churchwardens, fabric & churchyards; Church cleaners
23 rd August	9:15 am	Parish Eucharist	PCC, All in leadership, Our operations Manager

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

... will return in September.

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 August 2026**.

Upton Parish Council

There was no report for Upton Parish Council submitted this month. There is no PCC meeting planned for August 2026, so the next PCC report will appear in the October 2026 edition of Upton News.

Upton Full Fibre

Unfortunately, there has been no communication from Airband since they submitted their application to BDUK in June. We continue to keep in contact with Oxfordshire County Council to move this project forward.

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

Things have been relatively quiet in the village recently but one or two suspicious characters have been noticed and challenged.

The next meeting will be held on **1st October** at St Mary's church and we will be joined by our local PCSO (Tom Walcott-Smith). This meeting will be an opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, get advice on home security and hear updates on local policing and village crimes.

Upton Wine Club

The Wine Club is taking 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!



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.

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)

Fond farewells

Roy Locke

Roy Albert Locke, aged 75, passed away peacefully on 21st June 2026 after a long illness, at the Oxford Manor Nursing Home, Didcot.

He was born on 5th April 1951 at the County Hospital, Salisbury but moved to Upton with his mother (May), father (Bert) and brother (Bob) in 1964. After leaving school he worked at Esso in Milton, before becoming an HGV driver, retiring at the age of 70.

Driving HGVs was a work he loved and enjoyed. From cranes and working out the angle of the dangle, to delivering frozen cuts of meat to butchers throughout southern England, at silly o'clock of the day, while the rest of us slept.

Before and during his retirement he took up the mantle left by his father, of ensuring the grounds of St Mary's were cared for. Annually its grounds and other gardens in the village and general area would resound to the beat of Roy's mechanicals, as he dealt with wayward hedges and lawns.

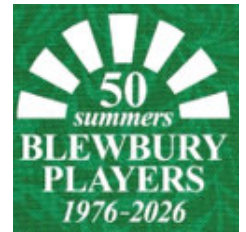
Over the years Roy became known by all in the village, remembered for being the man with a mower, always ready for a chat and ready to put the world to right. Whether it was over the St Mary's boundary fence or in the gardens of the former George and Dragon.

The village has given up another character who will be sadly missed. Roy was cremated on Wednesday the 8th July 2026, with his ashes being interred privately.

Local News

Blewbury Players

The Wind in the Willows



What a summer! *The Wind in the Willows* sold out for all performances within two weeks of our box office opening! We played to full houses with almost 1200 people of all ages enjoying the exploits and adventures of Toad and his friends. Thanks for the numerous wonderful messages we received following our performances. We will be sharing official production photographs on our [website](#) very soon

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

Our book *Drama in an Oxfordshire Village – Fifty Years of the Blewbury Players*, directs the reader behind the scenes, from post-war Blewbury to the birth of the Players in 1976, covering the impact of the Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell (UKAEA) and the growth of neighbouring Didcot and the village, which has played a significant part in the Players'

success. With 300 pages, it documents every production throughout the year and features 270 photographs. It catalogues the ups and downs of staging plays come rain or shine, sometimes with animals and children, with no understudies or prompting, while navigating the chaos, politics and egos of a small community. Books can be purchased at Savages, London Road, Blewbury, OX11 9HB or for mail order please see our website (link above).

A Christmas Carol – Winter 2026.

St Michael's Church are kindly welcoming us to perform a production of *A Christmas Carol* between **25th and 28th November 2026**. It will be directed by Jo Laugharne, who directed such a memorable production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in St Michael's in 2017.

Workshop auditions will be held on 12th and 13th September. *Who are we looking for?* An ensemble cast. Inviting those interested to join group workshop auditions. *What age?* There will be a handful of ensemble roles for children school year 6 and above. *When are rehearsals?* Mainly at weekends starting 3rd October. *Will there be singing?* Yes, there will be some group singing at auditions. Singing roles are optional. *How do I book an audition?* Please [email](#) us to book your audition

Blewbury School Report

Governor review of the school year

We've reached the end of a busy year which has reflected our core school values of *Nurture, Grow and Flourish*.

The school and governors have focused on different values throughout the year reflecting on our core values. These were demonstrated throughout the school and in regular assemblies led by Father Jason.

We started the year with *generosity*. It was a joy for us to see our new starters settle into our Outstanding Reception Class and to welcome their parents to coffee mornings. Next was *courage* and we were pleased to see such a well attended school Remembrance service in St Michaels. *Justice* was followed by *service* and then in the last term of the year by *friendship*.

It has been a pleasure for us to see our Year 6 pupils grow throughout their journey here at the school and we send them on their way to their chosen secondary schools with love, as confident young people who are a credit to this school, their families and our wider community. In their reflections in the Year 6 Leavers Service all mentioned their friends - and the fun they had at their recent residential!

We are looking forward to being joined by our new pupils into the Reception Class in September. We wish all of our pupils, their families and our hard working staff a peaceful and restful summer break.

Blewbury Post Office

As we move through August and enjoy the height 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 making the most of the sunshine and everything our wonderful village has to offer.

From Friday 17th July, the Post Office will be open:

Mon to Fri: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

These hours will remain in place throughout the summer holiday period. We appreciate your understanding and encourage customers to plan their visits accordingly.

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, and gifts.

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 goes from strength to strength. Having recently celebrated our 60th birthday party in mid-June, in August we look forward to yet another sociable afternoon. **Wednesday 26th August 3:00 - 5:00 pm** will be our summer party in the Village Hall and will be a '*bring and share*' lunch. We are celebrating the Henley Regatta, so we are hoping to see some of the ladies come along dressed to the nines!

On offer at Blewbury WI are monthly meetings, playing informal games of Scrabble, Mah Jong and Rummikub. A book club, a monthly craft get together plus a monthly coffee morning. Occasional outings, theatre trips and walks. Such varied activities and a super supportive network.

For all matters to do with Blewbury WI, or to find out more, 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).

There are no Astons Online events planned for August but we hope to re-start our programme in September.

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

As many of you will know, I gave birth to my baby girl in mid December, a little earlier than expected and have been on maternity leave since. I have recently returned to my role as a ward councillor, representing Blewbury, Harwell, Chilton, Upton, Valley Park and Great Western Park.



Heatwave

You don't need me to tell you that recent heatwaves have been challenging, and at the most recent Vale council meeting, I asked a question to find out how we are supporting affected residents, whether signposting to cool spaces, or providing funding to community spaces to become more resilient. Climate models tell us that weather events like those we've seen in recent weeks are here to stay, so I'm keen that as a council, we are doing what we can to prepare for that, and protect people from the effects, where we can. Head to the Vale website, to the council meeting minutes to find the full question and answer.

Planning Regulations

Last week, I attended a briefing from the Vale Planning Officers about the new planning regulations. From October 2026, new government legislation will mean significant changes to the National Scheme of Delegation. As a council, we are still working through the details of the changes we will have to make. In broad terms, it will mean that fewer decisions are made by councillors and more by officers. To be clear, the officers already make a large proportion of the decisions around planning, using both national and local policies. Today, ward councillors, such as myself, have the power to "call in" a planning application, so that councillors can review the evidence and make the decision. The new rules from the government, will mean these powers will be taken away and planning applications that can be decided by the

planning committee will need to meet certain criteria – they must be "major" applications, and pass "gateway tests". More guidance will come out as we approach the deadline, and training will be offered to Town and Parish councillors.

Trouble with missed bins?

I've received a few emails about missed bin collections these past few weeks, so I'll use this as a reminder to everyone that if your bin is missed, you should report it missed by 6pm the following day. You can do this by filling in this [form](#) or by emailing [Biffa](#) or by calling 01235 422123. Then, Biffa should return within a couple of days to collect it. If they do not, then Vale Council can follow that up with Biffa, as they are not completing their obligation. But note that, unless it is reported as missed, we can't chase Biffa for it. Additionally, please remember to put them out by 6:00 am on Bin Day!

Local Government Reorganisation

What is it? In Oxfordshire, we have a two tier system – District councils and councillors deal with certain matters (like planning and bins) whilst the County deals with others (like social care and roads). The government would like to get rid of this, and have everyone under a Unitary system with just one council. Whilst this would be easier from the residents' perspective, only needing to contact one council – the question is how to set up the new councils? What should the geography be? Virtually hot off the press as I write this is the Secretary of State's decision on Local Government Reorganisation. Announced on the last day of Parliament, before the summer recess, at virtually the last moment, Steve Reed has said that our area will have three unitary councils. These will be Greater Oxford, Ridgeway and Northern Oxfordshire. The decision is surprising to me, as across Oxfordshire, this was the proposal with the least support – it was proposed by just one of our 6 councils, Oxford City Council. You can read more on their [website](#).

The new councils are expected to come into force on 1st April 2028, a day known as vesting day. Before then, the existing councils will operate as normal, performing the usual duties. There are expected to be elections for this council in May 2027, and the councillors elected at that point will be the ones making decisions about how the new

council will operate. I will continue to share updates on this matter, but as always let me know any questions you have.

I recognise that there have been issues with the Council's Land Charge system, but the new system should be up and running now, though it will take time to clear the backlog in the system.

Contact details

You can follow me and the Vale of White Horse District Council on Facebook [here](#) and [here](#). The best way to get a direct response is to [email](#) me and my ward colleague, Cllr [Debra Dewhurst](#).

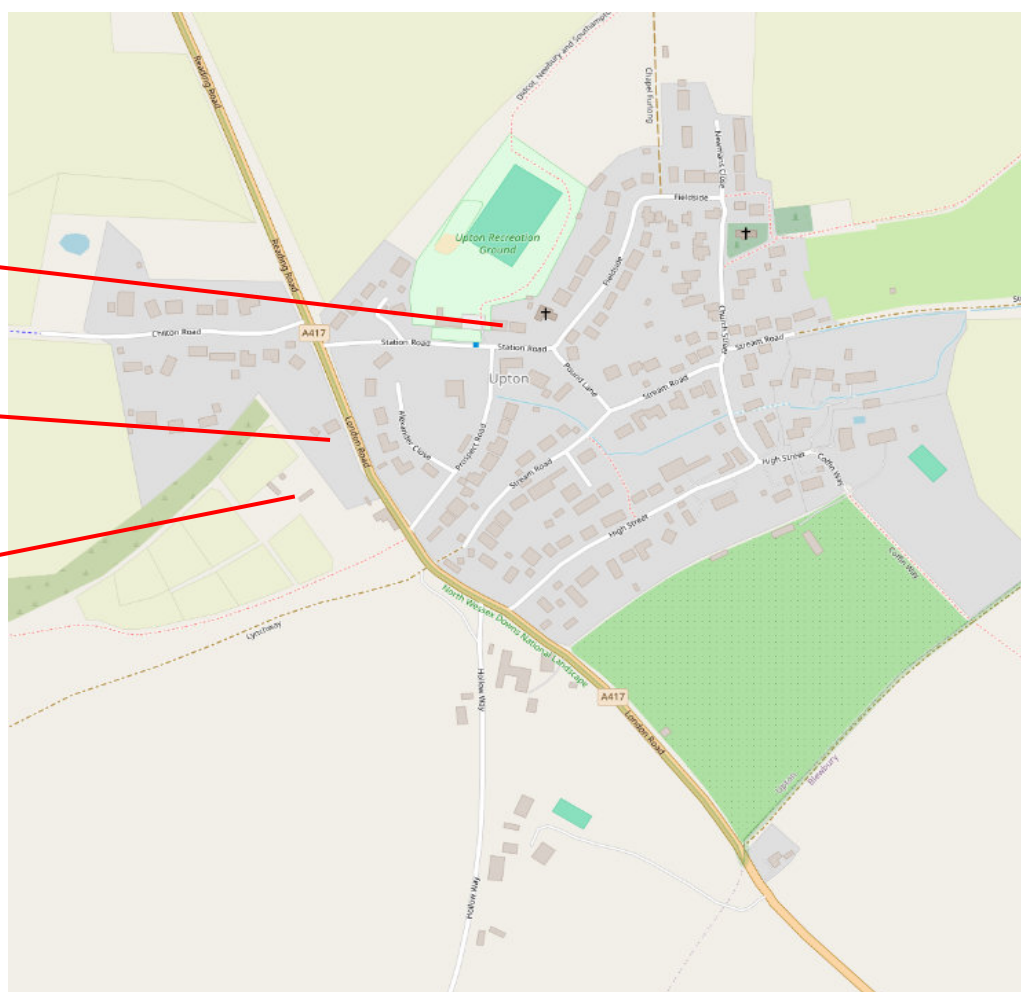
Current planning applications

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 31st July 2026.

[P26/V1693/HH](#)

[P26/V0730/FUL](#)

[VE24/201](#)



Olly Glover (MP)



... will return next month.

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.

A promotional poster for 'Re-Biked'. At the top left is a circular logo with a recycling symbol and the text 'Re-Biked' and 'National Free Bike Repair Centre'. The main image shows several bicycles parked in a row. Overlaid on this is the text 'RE-BIKED' in large green letters, followed by 'WHO ARE WE?' in blue. Below this is a green banner with the quote '“Because Great Bikes Deserve Another Ride”'. The text continues: 'At Re-Biked, our goal is to be as sustainable as possible by up-doing preowned bikes to sell onto adults, kids or families to get them back out cycling! Our shop is conveniently based at Chilton Garden Centre which is accessible by car, bus, walking or bike!'. There are four bullet points with circular icons: 'Based at Chilton Garden Centre', 'Open Friday, Saturday & Sunday', 'We have a wide variety of bike brands', and 'We offer servicing!'. At the bottom, there is a photo of three people riding bicycles. The footer contains the Re-Biked logo, the website 'www.re-biked.co.uk', and the location 'Chilton Garden Centre, OX11 0QN'.

Didcot u3a

If you have recently retired or are semi-retired, live in Didcot or the surrounding area and are keen to remain active in body and soul, then the Didcot and District U3A (motto, 'Learn, Laugh, Live !') could be just what you've been looking for ?!

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;

- 18 Aug *The Flanders and Swann story*
Speakers: James Mitchell and James Williams
The two artists first collaborated in 1939 and are both considered great British wits. They are best known for their comedic songs concerning animals.
- 15 Sep *Wild Homes*
Speaker: David Bailey
a talk by popular photographer David Bailey. His talk is expected to be very well received as his previous presentations have been.
- 20 oct *Sing with Mandy*
Speaker: Amanda Shora
Sing with Mandy who offers a brief history of folk music (but beware- you will be invited to sing along!).

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 hope everyone is coping with the recent hot weather. Please take care of older relatives, young children and other vulnerable neighbours, and if you see someone who may be homeless and in need of support, contact the Vale of White Horse Housing Team on 01235 422420. Advice on staying cool at home is available [here](#).

In my role as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, I have now joined the Health and Wellbeing Board. This month we approved Oxfordshire's new All-Age Autism Strategy, developed in partnership with autistic people, and we are committed to embedding it across the Oxfordshire Way, so if you have lived experience of autism, please do get in touch.

We also had a full council meeting in June, at which (unusually!), almost every motion was unanimously approved cross-party. These included reviewing the county's role in Disabled Facilities Grants, increasing investment in climate action, and taking steps to enforce the ban on pavement parking, whilst respecting local needs.

I was also delighted to attend a celebration of our Supported Internships and Connect to Work programmes, which help people with disabilities and long-term health conditions gain skills, confidence and work experience. It was inspiring to see residents taking steps towards greater independence, alongside the local employers who make these opportunities possible. It was a truly

joyous event; everyone deserves an opportunity to find fulfilling, meaningful employment, and it was amazing to celebrate the determination and resilience on display.

At a really difficult time in local government, when we are having to make difficult choices about funding, it's incredibly heartening to also celebrate the things that are great about Oxfordshire

Transport update

There is a huge amount going on over the summer and I've been disappointed by continued overlapping and disruptive works; where possible, I am trying to get things scheduled more sensibly, but the reality is sadly that many of the works (e.g.: SGN and Thames Water in Harwell) are either things the council can't say no to, or that logically need to be prioritised – such as getting gas pipes replaced before resurfacing.

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. Below I've listed the most urgent:

Harwell Link Road

There will be two-way traffic lights 13th July – 17th August while Thames Water put in a new water connection. They will work in 200m sections, starting at the Southern end of the link road. The order says they should remove traffic signals when not needed, so I'm hoping there will be some common sense around evenings and weekends.

Please continue to report any highway defects on [FixMyStreet](#).



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

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
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. I will be meeting the Director to discuss this
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 walkaround: I've suggested dates in July.
Hagbourne Hill improvements	Awaiting response	Stagnated due to problems with funding and utilities; I am chasing regularly, and have asked for a better interim solution as part of the forward planning works.
A427 safety	Awaiting response	Query re installing deer signs
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.

OCC news

Traffic filters

Traffic filters are replacing the Oxford City centre congestion charge. From **Monday 14th September** the traffic filters trial will replace the congestion charge, and car drivers will no longer have the option to pay the £5 congestion charge. For most people, their congestion charge permit will automatically become a traffic filters permit. They will not need to reapply.

Summer Reading Challenge

This year's Summer Reading Challenge runs from 4th July to 5th September. As part of the National Year of Reading, Oxfordshire's libraries are encouraging families to make reading part of their summer adventures. Children can sign up at their library, set their reading goals, and enjoy rewards along the way.

Folklore exhibition: Timeless Tales

The Oxfordshire Museum's summer exhibition, *Timeless Tales – Oxfordshire's folkloric myths and traditions*, opens on 18th July and runs throughout the summer, until 6th September.

This enchanting exhibition brings local legends, mysterious customs and age-old tales to life, with amazing artefacts and immersive installations to explore.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Did you know that 60% of items that go into the non-recyclable waste (general waste) bin at our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) can be recycled? To help us recycle even more we are asking people to separate recyclable items in their waste either before they go, which will speed up their visit or when they are on site. For this wave of our 'sort your waste' messages we are focusing on items that regularly end up in the non-recycling bin.

Thames Valley Police Commissioner

Back in April I wrote about the benefits of making school properly phone free during the school day. Now I am giving £255,000 taken from criminals to help schools make it happen.

More than 60% of schools in Thames Valley simply ask that pupils just have to keep them out of sight, and we know it does not work. This approach leads to disruption, confiscation and distraction. I announced the new funding for headteachers at an event at Aureus School in Didcot. Schools can decide how to use the cash on options including secure storage such as lockable pouches, lockers or boxes, that still allow students access to their phones when travelling to and from school. The money to support the project is being taken from criminals, through the seizure of stolen goods and forfeiture orders by the courts.

Smartphones have clear benefits, but we're also increasingly aware of the potential harms they can cause. Schools and the police see firsthand the safeguarding issues brought about by mobile phone use such as online bullying, peer pressure and exposure to harmful content as well as vulnerability to exploitation. Schools like Aureus, that have already introduced lockable phone pouches have seen huge improvements in discipline and academic performance.

I have also just published my annual report that highlights some of the work over the last year to improve neighbourhood policing, support victims and cut crime.

Some of the key updates over the last 12 months include:

- 6.2% reduction in neighbourhood crime
- 800 young people received interventions through Op Deter Youth
- Overall vehicle theft offences have reduced by 9% with theft from vehicle offences falling by 17%
- Further 12% reduction in knife crime
- 9% reduction in shoplifting offences with over 900 new sign-ups to DISC (retail crime reporting platform)
- Year-on-year reduction in rural crime by 34%
- Over 350 active Community Speedwatch schemes have observed and recorded over 146,000 speeding vehicles since 2020
- 95.4% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds, up from 92.6% last year



Wild Oxfordshire

Making Room for Nature: Micro-Habitats in Urban Areas



You may think nature only thrives in big reserves. But it also squeezes into the cracks and corners of our urban environments. So, whether that's a garden, a balcony, a windowsill, or just the wall of your home, there's always room for a splash of green amongst the urban landscapes.

Mini habitats - what's in the name?

In ecology, a "microhabitat" is a small area with its own unique environment that differs from the surrounding habitat. But you may know them by a different name such as: mini ponds, bee hotels, and even bird boxes. Each creates a quiet refuge for the creatures sharing our built landscape (just remember that bird feeders in warmer months increase the risk of disease in birds). These small sanctuaries carry real ecological weight.

Never underestimate the power of cumulative effect: each species, no matter how small, has a part to play in all ecosystems. The key benefits of micro habitats include:

- Attracting insects that play a role in pollination.
- Storing moisture and regulating temperature
- Breaking down organic matter

Walls

Urban walls can host a surprising range of ecological functions. Living walls are particularly beneficial to local wildlife. These vertical green sites, formed of flowering climbers and wall mounted planters, can attract bees, hoverflies and other pollinators.

Micro planters and crevice habitats, which are small pockets of soil, stacked tiles, logs with holes, stone crevices or even swift bricks attached or built into walls, create nesting and overwintering sites for solitary bees and beetles.

Water

Water sources such as ponds or streams with natural features are ideal, but rare in highly urban areas. But artificial water sources such as birdbaths or rainwater pools/ponds can still support amphibians, insects, birds, and mammals while contributing to local microclimate regulation.

For example, a recent study in the *Journal of Urban Ecology* found that urbanised aquatic microhabitats, such as water-filled tree holes and other small standing waters in cities, create "*unique but inconspicuous*" breeding habitats for a range of insects.

Gardens

Gardens are probably the first green space that comes to mind when discussing microhabitats. And that's because even small spaces can support many microhabitats due to the varying environments and features which can be created within them. Gardens are a mosaic of interconnected micro-ecosystems within one space.

But when discussing our urban environments, rewilding towns and cities might sound like something left to greater powers, such as your local council, but in fact, urbanisation doesn't need to mean a loss of biodiversity.

You don't need a large rural garden to support nature – urban gardens are becoming ever increasingly vital passages in our increasingly fragmented country.

These small patches of green can become a wildlife sanctuary surprisingly easily: try growing as many different types of plants as you can, including native species, and provide natural food sources. And importantly, let nature do its work!

Sometimes, the best thing you can do is simply step back and leave a corner (or two!) undisturbed. For example, fallen or stacked logs and retaining piles of leaves and wood chip can serve as habitat for insects, fungi, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals.

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. Please see our [website](#) for further details

Alternatively, there is a very sociable session every Wednesday afternoon throughout the year in East Hanney Memorial Hall starting at 2:00 pm. Around twenty eight people come along to play relaxed duplicate bridge. The number that attend is growing year on year as we also run bridge lessons for beginners and improvers at the same time in the other room. As the courses progress the students are welcomed to join in with the main session.

Bridge can be addictive! Some of our players join with Blewbury Club and play competitive duplicate bridge online on a Thursday evening. If you would like to find out more about learning bridge or playing on either Wednesday or Thursday, please [email](#) the Wantage Bridge Club. We would be delighted to hear from you.

		♠ 1098	N
Bd 21, Dlr N		♥ A43	
3♠-3 N		♦ 872	
W		♣ AJ32	E
♠ Q75			♠ 632
♥ KQJ92			♥ 65
♦ AK64			♦ Q53
♣ 6			♣ K10985
	♠ AKJ4		
	♥ 1087		
	♦ J109		
	♣ Q74		
S			

W	N	E	S
P	P	P	P
1♥	P	1NT*	P
2♦	P	2♥	P
P	2♠	P	P
3♥	P	P	3♠
P	P	P	

This month's hand

Hand 1: North bid 2S on a three-card suit, but was it a psyche? This sparked lively discussion afterwards, but no. That's not a psyche. It's just a disaster. The bid failed because both hands were (as flat as ...) pancakes, the finesses and vulnerability were all unfavourable and most importantly South raised to 3S in competition.

What's a psyche, then? Answer: a deceptive bid, made dishonestly to mislead opponents.

Incidentally, you'll get in serious trouble if you have a secret understanding with partner so that he knows what's going on in such situations. Psyches are part of the game, but undisclosed agreements are illegal. Anyway, this wasn't that kind of situation. North bid 2S because he wanted to play in 2S. East had denied spades by replying 1NT to 1H, while West had shown nine red cards by bidding 1H 2D. South must have spades on that auction and indeed he did... but that doesn't mean you should bid them directly. Double is the normal reopening action, if anything. That will reach the same 2S without sending partner the wrong signals and pushing the auction overboard to 3S.

Bd 47, Dlr S 4♠X-3 W	♠ Q75	N
	♥ K653	
W	♦ AQ4	
	♣ AJ5	E
♠ A109642		♠ K83
♥ QJ		♥ 10942
♦ 8		♦ 953
♣ Q632		♣ 1098
	♠ J	W N E S
	♥ A87	2♠ X 3NT P
	♦ KJ10762	P X 4♠ P
	♣ K74	P X P P
S		

Hand 2 is more like a psyche. Given West's weak jump overcall, East expects the opponents to be making a slam (they can't, as it happens, and a surprising number of North-Souths failed in 3NT-2. Whoops ...). Anyway, East's 3NT was an attempt to muddy the waters. This contract might not even manage two tricks, but you're planning to run to 4S if (when) doubled.

Unambiguous psyches might include, say, opening on a Yarborough in third seat after two passes, because there's clearly a 20-count sitting on your left. Or overcalling 1NT on a bad hand with a long suit to which you'll flee if doubled. (Nico Gardener called this the "*comic no-trump*" and invented a convention to cope with it).

Anyway, returning to Hand 1. Putting aside all discussion of psyches and reopening doubles, there are subtler reasons why it might be unwise for North to reopen the auction.

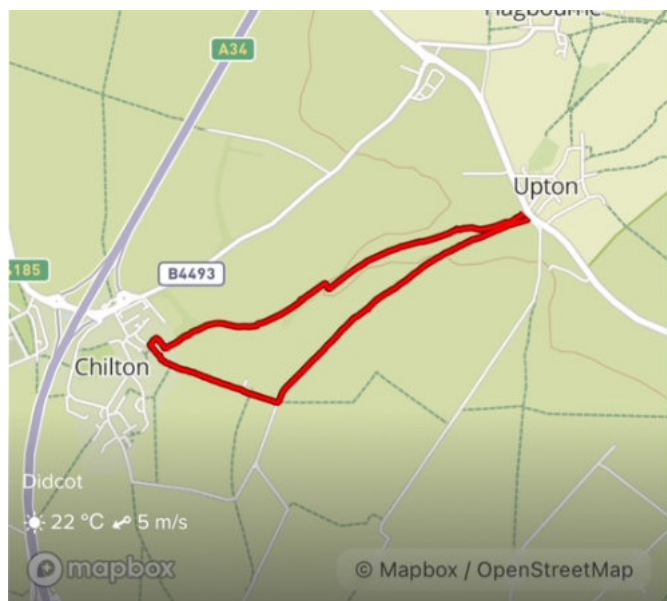
1. There's a general principle. Don't let the opponents play in their fit at the two level. If they're trying to do so, you can assume that partner has some useful values and so it's safe-ish to bid on weak hands. Here, though, that didn't apply. North-South had three hearts each, because responder hadn't actually promised heart support. The bid was weak and said "*I prefer 2H to 2D*", that's all.
2. Have you checked East-West's bidding system? Strong no-trumpers (15-17) often play a 1NT response as forcing, which creates problems if 1NT is opener's planned rebid. A common solution to this is to rebid a three-card minor. Thus, against such a system, the nine red cards you're expecting in opener's hand might in fact be only eight!

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:	4.9 km (3 miles)
Elevation change:	+/- 35 m
Time:	60 - 75 mins

The route starts by The George - please take care when crossing the A417 from the village as cars often hare around the blind bend just to the east of the pub. The walk follows the first part of the Uptongood? cycle route (for those of you who are familiar with this) and navigation is relatively straightforward. There is a gravel track just to the east of the pub overflow car park (Lynch Way) - please do not confuse this with the footpath between the pub and overflow car park or with the metalled road (Hollow Way) a little further to the east. We did the last of these on a bike ride once and got rather lost in Chilton.

Walk along Lynch Way and after a few hundred metres, the track slopes upwards for another few hundred metres and then levels off. Continue along the track for ca. 1 km and then turn right along the Dene Hollow track that leads into Chilton. Follow this track into Dene Hollow, where it dips and then rises as it crosses a small watercourse. Just before the top of the rise, take the private road on the right and then cross the stile on the right, about 50m after the turn.

Continue around the edge of the field and pass through a gate (it was hanging off its hinges the last time we went past) to join the footpath. If it has been really wet, then the footpath could be submerged a little further on but there is a drier, "unofficial" path through the copse on the left that avoids this. The path does a short dog-leg to the left when it meets the old Didcot-Newbury cutting. Follow the top of the cutting to an old railway bridge on the right and cross the bridge. Do take a few moments to look over the parapet into the cutting - it's an impressive drop! The path turns left after crossing the bridge and continues to follow the cutting (now on the left), over a stile and through a delightful rill. At the bottom of the rill is a second stile on the left. Cross this stile and follow the path back to The George, where you might enjoy some well-earned refreshment. Please note that horses sometimes escape from the paddock on the left-hand side and you might encounter them on the path. These are usually fairly well-behaved but it can be a little tricky to pass them with a dog!

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

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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!