

Blewbury Bulletin

Number 661 February 2024

THANKS FOR THE CHIPS!

Ben and I had a successful couple of hours chipping trees and catching up with old friends. We were blessed with dry weather and raised £424.75 for Helen & Douglas House. We would like to thank Savages and everyone that supported us. *Steve Strange*

BONAPARTE'S BOXING DAY BLITZ

The Boxing Day Walk had a great turnout, with lots of groups of all sizes, including not one but two Napoleonic armies! The Ron Freeborn Memorial Cup went to The Barbies, whose group name will be engraved on it. Congratulations to them and to the winners in all categories:

- Individual: Exploring Iceland (1st), Pot Plant (2nd), I'm Just Ken (3rd)
- Small group: Bob & June (1st), Walkers on Strike (2nd), The Traitors (3rd)
- Medium group: Shane McGowen Riverdance (1st), Toy Story (2nd), Flying Scotsman (3rd)
- Large group: Bonaparte's Blewbury Battalion (1st) [see picture], The Battle of Blewellington (2nd), The Barbies (3rd)

This event couldn't happen without our brilliant volunteers, so thank you to the judges, compere, registration team, marshals and drinks stops teams. Finally, huge thanks to all who presented skits or were simply 'here for the beer'!

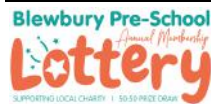
For a report on the other BVS Christmas and New Year events, see page 3.

BUSIER BUSES ON ROUTE 94

The new route 94 timetable for Blewbury, Didcot and Harwell took effect at the end of last year. In the words of one enthusiastic Bulletin reader, "we've never had so many buses!" Check out the new service on page 18.



Waterloo Winners: Janet Morgan, Glen Meadows, PJ Meadows and James Morgan celebrate the glorious victory of Bonaparte's Blewbury Battalion



BLEWBURY PRE-SCHOOL NEWS

The winning numbers for the January **Blewbury Pre-School Lottery** were as follows: 1st - 064; 2nd - 058; 3rd - 059. In January, the prize fund of £175.00 was shared (50%/30%/20%) between the three winners and £175.00 was raised for Blewbury Pre-School. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all our members for their continued support. Membership spaces are available: to be a part of the next draw, download and fill out a form from www.blewburypreschool.co.uk, also available from Blewbury Post Office or by email at lottery@blewburypreschool.co.uk

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VILLAGE HALL NEWS

Happy New Year everyone!

Some of you may have noticed that the new bike rack at the village hall has been installed, (or it will be very shortly) huge thanks to Penny, Liz and Mark for getting the funding and getting the work done. We are now allowed to have bouncy castles in the hall, but they must be booked with one of our accredited providers who have already filed the necessary paperwork with us. Please advise us of this when booking, so that we can give you the necessary information. To book, email blewburyvillagehallbookings@gmail.com or visit www.blewbury.co.uk/venues.

BLEWBURY VILLAGE SOCIETY

The BVS Christmas events were well attended as ever: this year Santa delivered over 100 presents to young Blewbarians (and some not so young)! Many people play a part in Santa's Sleigh – an event that makes Blewbury so special. Thank you to Santa, Mother Christmas, Blewbury's very own Rudolf, this year's extra-large herd of reindeer, Santa's numerous elves (responsible for his post office and other technical, safety and refreshment-based support), and the Blewbury Brass Band and Annie's singers for carols on the Playclose. And thanks to all those who came to receive a present, join in with the singing or just be part of the event. The Boxing Day Walk also had a great turnout, with lots of groups of all sizes. See page 1 for the full story. New Year's Day started with the Roger Cambray Memorial Walk to The Bell at Aldworth, attended by a hardy troop of beer-seekers (and dogs). The live folk music in the snug was thoroughly enjoyed by those who managed to squeeze in!



BVS Comedy Night – Saturday 16th March

Next up, the legendary Blewbury Comedy Night returns to the Village Hall on **Saturday 16th March**. Paddy Lenox is back to compere, bringing three top comedians to entertain us. Whether you've been before or are a newcomer, please support this acclaimed event (over 18s only). Tickets are £18 – the box office will open on Friday 2nd February at <https://bit.ly/3O7eBIG> or scan the QR code. All drinks to be purchased from the bar, but please bring your own snacks. All profits will go to the Parish Council for maintenance of the village playgrounds.



Blewbury Beer Festival – Saturday 18th May

Looking further ahead, the ever-popular Blewbury Beer Festival will take place on **Saturday 18th May**: pop the date in your diaries now!

VACANCY FOR BLEWBURY VILLAGE LENGTHMAN

Blewbury Parish Council (BPC) is looking for an enthusiastic, amenable and hard working Lengthman. Ideally this person will live in, or close to, the village of Blewbury. 'Lengthman' is an historic term meaning 'a person whose job it is to maintain a particular length of road or railway' – the job is a little different now!

Some Lengthman duties are seasonal and weather-dependent. Year-round duties include regular safety checks and minor repairs of the play area equipment; minor repairs in and around the Clubhouse; litter picking on footpaths, in the cemetery and recreational areas of the village. During warmer months, duties include strimming and mowing of footpaths, the cemetery and recreational areas of the village, and some low-level hedge-cutting. The Lengthman is responsible for locking away all equipment and tools used in the role.

Hours will vary week-to-week and month-to-month. However, over a year the number of hours would add up to approximately 450. Experience in the use of garden tools and machinery is essential. Training will be given as required, and external training will be offered where necessary. There will be a probationary period.

Please contact the Clerk (blewburypc@gmail.com) for a full job description and application form.

NEXT FOOD BANK DATES SATURDAY 3RD FEBRUARY – MONDAY 12TH FEBRUARY 2024



The Didcot Emergency Foodbank is currently helping a larger than average number of needy families each session due to very high demand. This demand will be larger than ever at this time of year and if you can help by giving even one item it will make a difference. Please do help if you are able.

The collection boxes are outside the Charity School House on these dates or at The Post Office any time. All the usual items will be welcome. Please make sure that all food is within its sell by date.

* Please note that Foodbank cannot accept alcohol, razors, medicines, or homemade preserves

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CAROL CONCERT 13TH DECEMBER 2023

The Carol Concert again fulfilled its promise of a wonderful evening of enthusiastic singing of favourite Carols with family and friends. It began with a very moving solo first verse of 'Once in Royal David's City' and when we all rose to sing the other verses, the Carol Concert had begun. After a warm welcome from Rev Louise, the choirs from Blewbury School treated us to a very active Little Drummer Boy and Starry Night; they were clearly enjoying performing as much as we all enjoyed watching and listening to them and they were thanked with a well-deserved cheer. The Recorder Quartet followed with a very jolly piece and then the newly formed Happy Voices Family Choir treated us to a Christmas Surprise. St Michael's choir sang the beautiful 'Shepherd's Farewell' which was introduced by a haunting oboe solo which added to the atmosphere of the piece. The Brass Band played a well-known piece from Moana; Elaine de Ridder told us a little about Christmas in South Africa and also added a very mysterious story which she is assured is true and we were all spellbound – I think I heard a pin drop at the back of the Church. Elphin acted a poem by Brian Bilston, 'I'm dreaming of a (statistically improbable) White Christmas', which proved to be accurate although we are promised some snow in February which was guaranteed in verse two! Richard Blackford again conducted the ad hoc orchestra with professional ease and it was marvellous.

Covid again played a part. The day started with an email saying that Neil Slater had Covid and would not be able to lead the **Brass Band** but not to fear as Alice would conduct in his place and she certainly rose to the occasion. And hot on its heels was an email saying that BlewSing could not take part as their conductor had Covid. I felt the congregation was slightly smaller possibly due to continued health concerns but this meant everybody had a seat! Many thanks to everybody who took part in any way or helped and to everybody who came along and sang to their hearts content, loudly and joyously. It heralds all the Christmas events in Blewbury.

The retiring collection was £646.55 which has been sent to the International Red Cross who do such amazing work worldwide. Thanks for supporting the Village Carol Concert and best wishes for 2024. *PM*

URGENT ACCOMMODATION / STUDIO FOR LOCAL ARTIST

Dear Blewbury Village: I am a contemporary artist working in drawing, painting, sculpture, and dance performance. Having had the privilege of studying under Oxfordshire sculptor John Buckley for a decade, I am currently residing in Ron Freeborn's house and studio in Blewbury, from where I am running drawing classes. I am thrilled to be back in Blewbury, but am now urgently seeking low-cost private living accommodation and/or an art studio with attached living space in and around Blewbury, or towards Wallingford and/or Didcot.

Accommodation Preferences: Private living space and/or studio with accommodation attached.

Preferred Location: Blewbury or towards Wallingford and/or Didcot.

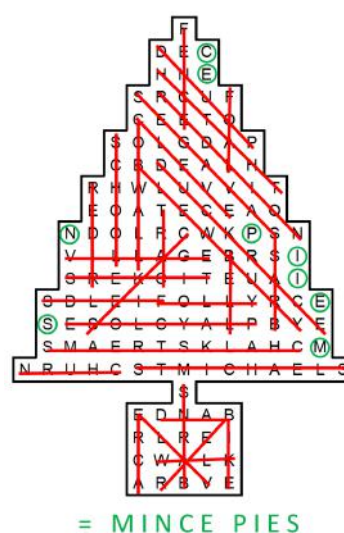
Timeline: Ideally by the end of March, but no later than the end of May.

Budget: Seeking affordable options.

If you know of any available spaces or have leads, I would be immensely grateful for your assistance. Please feel free to reach out via email at neocartouche2020@gmail.com Thank you for your support in helping me continue my artistic journey in this wonderful community. *Warm regards, Neo Cartouche*

CHRISTMAS PUZZLES: WINNERS AND SOLUTIONS

Thanks to everyone who entered the Christmas crossword and wordsearch competitions. The first correct solutions out of the hat were from Lindy Farrell (crossword) and Mike Wrottesley (wordsearch), who won £25 and a box of chocolates respectively. The solution to each puzzle is given below.



FRIENDS OF ST MICHAELS BLEWBURY

The Friends of St Michaels Blewbury was officially launched in November and since then has gained over 40 members. We would like to invite all members and anyone else who's interested in joining, to join us for afternoon tea and an informal chat about the group and future plans on Sunday February 25th at 3.30pm - 5.30pm in Blewbury church. RSVP or enquiries to fosmblewbury@gmail.com.

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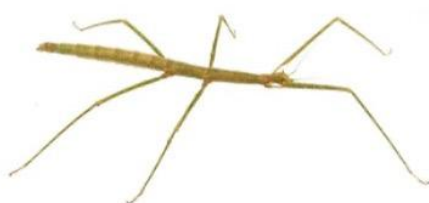


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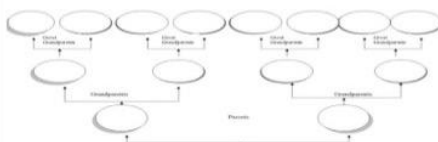
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Repair Café. Our next Repair Cafe will be in Blewbury Village Hall on Sun 25 Feb from 2 to 4 pm. You can get free repairs to many items: electronic gadgets, mechanical items including bicycles, toys and furniture, clothing and textiles, and tool sharpening. In fact, if it is broken we will have a go at fixing it! And our cafe will be serving delicious cakes. Donations towards costs welcome.

Don't forget: Talk on space-based solar power, Mon 29 Jan 8pm Melland Room

Nature Reserve. There is evidence of small birds, maybe wrens, roosting in the bug hotel around the notice board. Look for signs of bird poo! And a common orange peel fungus was seen on the path over towards the orchard area, by Glen Meadows, at a recent work morning. During this, we were working on the hedging plants to give them more space and to fill gaps, as well as manually levelling some of the paths. If you would like to help, our next volunteering sessions are Sat 10 Feb and Sat 9 Mar from 1000 to noon. Come and meet some new people and find out more about the reserve. Contact secretary@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk for more information.

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Getting involved in Sustainable Blewbury can contribute to the village and its environment. To participate, or to receive our free bi-monthly Newsletter, email us at info@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk or phone 850372.



BLEWBURY WI NEWS

Our next monthly meeting is **Wednesday 28 February at 7.30** in the Vale room. We will hear about "Six warrior women of the English wars." This talk will cover the three Civil Wars of the 1640s and the position of women at the time. These women were not meek bystanders who took no part in the conflict but actively participated in a variety of ways, challenging the orthodoxies of their day and perhaps our own preconceptions. They undertook spying missions and negotiated deals with politicians. It also touches briefly upon cross-dressing soldiers; widows seeking compensation from Parliament and political activists. Wow!

We have welcomed a number of new members recently, Blewbury WI goes from strength to strength. Just give it a try! Come as a visitor – no commitment – see if you fancy it. If you'd like to come along with someone else or find out more, ring our Secretary, Joy, on 850543 or email blewburywi@gmail.com.

Calendar of events

Monday afternoons	2.30pm	Mah Jong	Sharon
Friday 2 February	7pm	Craft evening	Karen
Tuesday 6 February	10.30am	Coffee morning	Trish
Wednesday 7 February	7pm	Evening Scrabble	Karen
Wednesday 7 February	9.30am	Lyn's Walk	Lyn
Thursday 15 February	2.30pm	Afternoon Scrabble	Jane

BELL RINGING NEWS FROM BLEWBURY TOWER

The tradition of ringing out the old and ringing in the new continued this year as we welcomed 2024.

Bell ringing is not only about ringing bells; there are also the social events. Our annual ringer's dinner on twelfth night in the village hall was one such social event, thank you to Sheila Austin and Creative Catering for a fabulous meal...so good we've already booked Sheila for next year!

Rob Nickless's Benefice Outing, which has now become an annual January event, combines both ringing and social. This year there were three guest towers in the morning (Chalgrove, Berrick Salome and Benson) followed by North Moreton. A big thank you to Jo Nickless and all her helpers for lunch in North Moreton Village Hall. Afternoon ringing continued at East Hagbourne, Blewbury and Aston Tirrold before an evening meal at The Red Lion in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. The day was enjoyed by all those who attended and several people have commented on how lovely the bells sounded in Blewbury that day.

January seems to be disappearing fast and with Easter occurring at the end of March it won't be too long before our intrepid ducks are getting ready for the annual Duck Race. More details in the next Bulletin.

S. C. Huart

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AUDITIONS

3 and 4 February

the caucasian chalk circle

Now that we have packed away the Christmas wreaths, tinsel and baubles and have waded through endless puddles, we want to remind you of warmer weather and summer evenings! Why not audition for Blewbury Players next summer production which will be The Caucasian Chalk Circle...

"A gem of a play. This is full of action, humour, music, and emotion... a wonderful story performed by a gang of actors - in a new translation".

You can find a video recording of director Erica Harley discussing her love for this play and sharing her vision for our production next summer on our website www.blewburyplayers.co.uk.

The performances will be at Orchard Dene Garden Theatre 17-20 July, 2024.

You will also find details of the adaptation that we will be using and more details about rehearsal process. **To book an audition please email us @ blewburyplayers@gmail.com or call 07795 675146.** Please don't hesitate to get in touch in the same way if you have any questions or would like to audition but can't make those dates.

We welcome new and familiar faces, first timers and veterans! Why not dip your toe into new waters in 2024!

Would you like to get involved as part of the costume team?

We are looking for people who would like get involved as part of a costume team.

We would also like to encourage anybody interested in joining the production team in non-performing roles to get in touch @ blewburyplayers@gmail.com or call 07795 675146.

BLEWSHED NEWS

DIY for beginners: We were delighted to welcome back the DIY beginners who moved on from drilling and fixing last November to 'saws and cutting'. Some have their own woodwork projects they want to get on with so now intend to join BlewShed to complete them with full workshop facilities and expert help if needed. Topic and dates of next DIY for Beginners workshops to be announced soon.

Community Projects: Servicing and repair of the first section of the cricket club's mower is almost complete and awaiting the return of its cutter from the sharpening specialists. Two more sections to go...

BlewShed products: Over the winter we have been busy expanding our product range to include bat boxes, rustic garden trays and boot pullers using recycled pallets from Savages and used horseshoes from village farrier Ian Belcher. These can be bought and ordered directly from the Shed now and will be available at Savages from March.

Meetings: Members tried their hand at wood carving, very successfully, thanks in part to a recent donation by Salli Baker of her grandfather's wood working tools, including wood carving gouges. Our next meeting will be a presentation of metal detector finds by BlewShed member and detectorist Robert Keyes. His collection of items from battles through the ages sounds especially interesting. Date: Tuesday 13th February, 7.30pm. All welcome, you don't need to be a member.

Outdoor storage space needed: with membership increasing rapidly and materials for Shed projects stocking up, we are in urgent need of somewhere to store things outdoors as the Shed indoor space is very limited. If you have, or know of, an unwanted shed, storage box or panels that could be assembled into one please let us know. You can leave a message on the website or pop in when we're open.

Opening times and membership: BlewShed opening times: Tuesday and Saturday afternoons 1.30-4.00 pm and Thursday afternoons 2.00-4pm for electronics sessions, non-dusty work and a chat.

BlewShed annual individual membership subs are £25, or £37.50 for a family, which includes expert advice from members and use of a well-equipped metal, wood and electronic workshop. BlewShed aims to help or facilitate people to learn how to do various woodwork, metalwork and other practical tasks themselves, so come along and learn some new skills, or just have cuppa and chat.

Everyone is welcome to club night meetings on the second Tuesday of the month. We look forward to seeing you.

Mike Wrottesley, BlewShed secretary <https://blewshed.home.blog/news/>

A (CLASSICAL) NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM

Flexicare, an Oxfordshire charity that provides a specialised, ad hoc sitting service for families with a disabled child, are delighted to host the Ivel Trio for a magical 'Night in the Museum' classical concert. The trio, comprising of flute, cello and piano, will perform amongst the dinosaurs in the stunning University of Oxford Museum of Natural History on Friday 15th March 2024. Doors open at 7:00pm for a prompt 7:30pm start. The performance is followed by a drinks and canapé reception, included in the ticket price of £35.00. Tickets are available from [Night at the Museum - Classical Concert in Aid of Flexicare \(ticketstripe.com\)](#) or by emailing events@flexicare.org.



News from St. Michael's

Rector - The Revd Jason St. John Nicolle
BENEFICE OFFICE - 01235 850267

You can contact the clergy & staff on: -

Father Jason St John Nicolle
01235 850267 office@churnchurches.co.uk

Revd Louise Butler
07837 009730 revlouiseb@aol.com

Revd John Clarke
01235 510073 jphclarke@gmail.com

Revd Dr Mark Rhodes-Smith
01235 850267 mark.rhodes-smith@churnchurches.co.uk

Elaine de Ridder, Operations Manager, is available Monday to Friday from 9.00-2.30 pm on 01235 850267, 07434 686044 or via email office@churnchurches.co.uk. Website www.churnchurches.co.uk

Bookings for Weddings, Baptisms and funerals may be made by contacting the office via email or on the office number.

Services at St Michael's Blewbury for February 2024

† Sunday 4th Second Sunday before Lent

8.00 am Holy Communion
10.30 am All Age service

† Sunday 11th Sunday next before Lent

10.30 am Parish Eucharist

Wednesday 14th 8.00 pm Ash Wednesday service at **St Mary's Upton**

Thursday 15th 10.00 am MU Holy Communion

† Sunday 18th First Sunday of Lent

10.30 am Taizé Service

† Sunday 25th Second Sunday of Lent

10.30 am Village Service

In addition to the services in Church, we continue to have an **online service at 10.30 am every Sunday** via the link <https://meet.goto.com/ChurnBenefice/sundayservice>. We also have **online Compline at 8pm during weekdays** via link <https://meet.goto.com/312446493>.

Everyone is invited to the mid-week communion service every Wednesday at 10am at St Andrew's Hagbourne as well as the Mothers' Union communion service on the third Thursday of the month here in Blewbury. We can also bring home communion to those who are unable to attend a service in person.

The Churn newsletter with details of services and other news is sent by email every Friday. The "Rector's Reflections" are sent out every weekday. Please contact the office if you would like to receive any of these. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Friends of St Michaels Blewbury

The Friends of St Michael's Blewbury was officially launched in November and since then has gained over 40 members. We would like to invite all members and anyone else who's interested in joining, to join us for afternoon tea and an informal chat about the group and future plans.

Afternoon Tea on Sunday February 25th at 3.30pm - 5.30pm in Blewbury church.

RSVP or enquiries to fosmblewbury@gmail.com



Recent funeral at St Michael's

9 January 2024: Brie Murray, aged 85

May she rest in peace and rise in glory

A Lenten Possibility

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

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

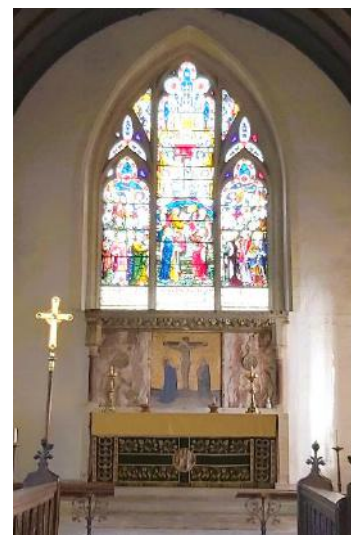
It's not just about the buildings as such: it's also about their contents. All of our churches contain works of art from different centuries, and these works of art are usually there because it is hoped that they will help people to draw closer to God. We will explore how different works of art fulfil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

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

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

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

- Father Jason



ECUMENICAL LENT GROUP 2024

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

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

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

A series of reflections on our buildings, art and how they can help focus our prayers (see Father Jason's piece above)

3 – 4.30 pm Tuesdays

20 February: North Moreton

27 February: Aston Tirrold

5 March: Blewbury

12 March: Hagbourne

19 March: Upton



Food Bank Collection

3 - 12 February 2024



The Didcot Emergency Foodbank is currently helping a larger than average number of needy families each session due to very high demand. If you can help by giving even one item it will make a difference. Drop off at the Old School House between the dates above or at the Post Office anytime.

Your generosity would very much be appreciated!

Many thanks, *St Michael's Action Group*

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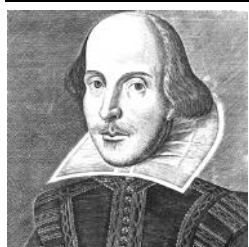
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH – CLEANING ROTA

We have so many comments in our St Michael's Visitors Book about how clean and welcoming our Church is. We have a large team who help throughout the year but would ideally like a few more willing helpers. We ask if you can spare one hour a week for two weeks in the year to help and we work in teams of two. It is not arduous and all cleaning materials are provided. We just need you and your rubber gloves. We make a rota so you know when it is your turn. We also do an Annual Spring Clean so that the Church is all ready for Easter and this year it will be on Saturday 23rd March between 10 – 12 noon and if you don't feel ready to commit to a weekly slot, perhaps you would prefer to come and join a bigger team and be delighted at the results we can achieve after a busy morning.

If you would like more details, please contact me, Pat Mattimore, on 01235 851088/07825 411676 or email bernardmat@btinternet.com. Many thanks and look forward to hearing from you.

COFFEE AND KIDS!

Welcome to all bumps, babies and toddlers to our next session of Coffee and Kids on **Monday 5th February** - along with parents, grandparents and carers. We meet in the Vale Room, Blewbury Village Hall, 9.30am - 11am. A friendly and safe place to enjoy the company of others and have some refreshment as the little ones have fun with toys, learning to play together. We finish the session with songs and action rhymes. A donation of £2 is appreciated towards our costs. Mothers' Union hosts look forward to welcoming you. Louise - 07837 009730



HAVING A BARD DAY?

So you're interested in Shakespeare? (Well, the picture obviously caught your attention...) Or maybe, ever since school, you hate him and all his works? Fair enough. What I want to know is: if you love him, would you welcome an opportunity to get to know him better? And if you hate him, would you be willing to give him one more try? I only ask because I'm kind of astonished at the number of people who turn up for my talks on the various Shakespeare plays that the Players have put on over the years, and I'm wondering whether there's an appetite for some kind of local Shakespeare group that might take things to the next level.

What is the next level? You tell me. It could be:

- Talks on Shakespeare – any aspect you like. (That would probably mean more of me to start with, but if we can get some momentum going it might also mean actual professional scholars/actors/directors who can be persuaded to do something not-too-academic for the price of a nice meal.)
- Group trips to Stratford to see shows or visit the houses where Shakespeare and his family lived
- Similar trips to London for theatres and historic Shakespearean locations
- Events focusing on current GCSE/A level set texts
- Shakespeare-themed, sack-fuelled annual dinners
- All or none of the above

If this sounds in any way your cup of tea, please call me on 851055 or email me at editor@blewbury.co.uk with (preferably) some specific thing you'd like to see or hear or do, or just a general 'might be interested'. Shakespeare, to me, is an inexhaustible mine of miracles and wonder, so it would be good to find people who might want to do some more digging! Thanks for reading. *Chris Whatmore*

STYLE ACRE NEEDS YOUR VOTE!

We have until February 2nd to get as many votes in as possible! It only takes seconds to do but it will really help us be in with a change of winning an advertising **package deal worth £40,000**, which includes:

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- One year of local on-air radio advertising on Hits/Greatest Hits Radio

Winning this would promote the impact we have on people's lives and the opportunities we can give them.

Cast your vote at <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/vote-now>. We are entry 16.

Free Repair Cafe

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BRIDGE CLUB

Happy New Year to everyone! Our Wessex League team have scored another good win and so, with one more match to play, we lie second in Division 2 of the League. February dates for Realbridge sessions will be:

Blewbury - 1st, 15th, 29th (its a Leap Year!) **Wantage** - 8th, 22nd.

We hope to have sufficient participants to run Social Bridge sessions on Feb 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd. *Michael Allen 851870*



DIDCOT AND DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

DandD U3A meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 2pm at Didcot Civic Hall. Visitors are welcome to come to one meeting as a taster before joining. On February 20th there will be a talk entitled **How to be a Gardener in the 21st Century** by **Timothy Walker**. For details

email chairman@didcotu3a.org or secretary@didcotu3a.org or visit www.u3asites.org.uk/didcot.

ROUTE MARCH: MORE TALES FROM THE ARMY BOYS' SERVICE

In the autumn of 1959 the country was in thrall with walking long distances and in the newspapers there was always somebody making a new record for walking, the most famous being Doctor Barbara Moore. On 24th November a group of us got together and decided that we would attempt to break the Birmingham to London record for under-18 year-olds, a distance of 115 miles. The team of four was made up of me, Ken Salt, Brian Windham, and Frank Wakeford. We went to the Troop Commander who gave us permission and told us to start training for the event.

On the 14th December 1959 we set off to Birmingham to start our 115 mile route march. We had a support team in the Austin Champ driven by Lt Jackson and Pete Osment. We set off from Birmingham at ten past two in the afternoon along the A41 towards Warwick. The A41 is an old Roman road and was very straight. It was raining and did not stop till we got to Warwick at about 7:20 pm. The Champ would go four miles in front and park up and wait for us to catch up and then move on again. From Warwick we headed for Banbury arriving at Banbury Cross at ten to one in the morning.

The next place we arrived at was Bicester at 4:45 in the morning. We had now been marching for over 14 hours and we had completed 53 miles of the 115 mile journey. We marched on, arriving at Aylesbury at 9:55 in the morning. We stopped there for an hour, had a rest and refreshments and then carried on to the village of Tring arriving there at mid-day. Our next stop was Watford arriving there at 4:10 in the afternoon. Watford was only 15 miles from our destination. We could now sense that we were going to set the new record. However, we were distraught when we arrived at the start of the Edgware Road and were told we had another seven miles to go. Our finishing point was to be the Marble Arch. So we pulled ourselves together and carried on and we arrived there at 8 o'clock in the evening.

The march had taken 29 hours 50 minutes at an average speed of 3.8 miles per hour. We had succeeded and for the time being we were the world record holders of the 115 mile route march for the under-18s. We held the record for six months before losing it to a group of boys in America.

We went to the Union Jack Club in the centre of London, a place where servicemen went to sleep and have a meal when in London. We all had a bath and a meal and then left at 11:45 to go back to camp. We travelled up the M1, England's first motorway, which had just opened, and arrived back at camp at 2:45 am. *Pat Warn*

FROM OUR CANADIAN CORRESPONDENT

Like most cities around the world, Vancouver comes up with some jolly seasonal fun, and this year I was able to participate in a couple of them. Neighbours of mine asked if I would like to go to a panto, something I haven't done since early 2000s when we went to see Stephen Fry in Cinderella at the Old Vic! This one was the 11th panto produced by the Theatre Replacement Company, featuring extremely good local talent and based loosely on Beauty and the Beast around East Vancouver landmarks such as the No-Flip Mattress Company and a local Japanese Bakery. Lots of silly puns, expert renditions of popular songs with different words, and all the usual panto stuff (he's behind you!). This was three days after I dislocated my shoulder so it cheered me up tremendously!

VanDusen's world famous Botanical Gardens are once again delighting us all with their 40th festive season illuminated tour, covering 15 acres and comprising more than a million twinkling lights. There are special features at each stop along the path, and photo opportunities for families and friends. There's a not-too-intrusive musical accompaniment to the lightshow, and when you've had enough there is a wide variety of watering holes where you can warm up with hot chocolate, mulled wine or cider, or cool down with ice cream!

Another Vancouver tradition since 1920 is the annual Polar Bear Swim at English Bay, and on this New Year's Day approximately 2000 hardy souls (including at least one Elvis) plunged into 8C water for a bracing dip! There were also about 10,000 people watching from the side-lines. This year was exceptionally mild but you won't catch me doing it any time soon! And Stanley Park managed to renovate its beloved Bright Nights train in time for this festive season but sold out (17,000 tickets) in under an hour! However, the illuminations and other activities were still available. This event has raised funds (over \$2.5m) for the BC Professional Fire Fighters Burn Fund since 1998.

Last but definitely not least, I gave myself a Christmas present: a visit to "Space Explorers – the infinite immersive experience", which was filmed over two years at the International Space Station by actual astronauts. I'd never tried Virtual Reality before and was completely blown away, walking through a huge empty room but feeling as though I was floating in space! Highly recommended to all space nerds!! *Angela Hoy (angelahoy23@gmail.com)*

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STRENGTHENING LINKS WITH BLEWBURY SCHOOL

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

As we continue to strengthen our curriculum, we are looking to expand our extra-curricular opportunities. We would be very interested to hear from any local clubs or societies, who would be prepared to consider helping with an after-school club at the school, once a week, for at least one school term. After-school clubs usually runs from 3:15 – 4:15pm on a weekday for a small group of children who sign up for the duration of the club. Current clubs include a gardening club in the Spring and Summer months and a range of sports groups. Other groups that may be of interest could include computing, Lego, chess, drama, local history or sustainability.

If you would be interested in having an exploratory conversation about the possibility of setting up a new club (even just as a one-off) please approach myself or Roger Murphy or send an email for my attention at: office.3248@blewbury.oxon.sch.uk. *Mr Sam Coleman, Assistant Headteacher, Blewbury School*

LETTER FROM DAVID JOHNSTON

I know it has been a difficult start to the year for some local residents with the flooding that we have seen across the constituency. I have been in contact with the Environment Agency throughout and will be meeting with them to discuss the recent flooding and our flood defences, as well as with the Council about the measures they can take to prevent flooding. Please email me if you have anything that you would like me to raise with them.

I know that of particular concern has been the flooding on the A417. I have written to the Council about this many times and have pushed them again to do the work that they had planned to do on this and other roads. I also visited local businesses like Mellor's Garage and Vale Hydrotherapy in East Challow to talk about their experiences in the recent floods, how I can help and what more needs to be done. Mellor's in particular have been losing a lot of business while the road remains flooded so do support them and others affected if you can.

If you or someone you know has had their home or business affected by flooding, which I hope you do not, there is Government support available to help people recover. This support will be provided through local councils who will announce further details on eligibility and how to apply.

Please do complete my Local Roads Survey to share your experiences and thoughts with me about the issues on our roads, currently on my website at www.david-johnston.org.uk/RoadsSurvey. The more responses we receive, the better data we have to push for change.

From now until 31 March, working parents can get an HMRC code that will entitle them from this April to the first 15 free hours of childcare for their 2-year-olds. Visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk for more information. I am very proud to be overseeing this rollout, which is the biggest ever investment in childcare, as the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing.

Men's Sheds are community workshops which are doing great work across the country to tackle loneliness amongst men. I visited one of our very own Men's Sheds in Sutton Courtenay to meet with founder Jon and talk to its users – who all said how much it has helped them. They are based in the grounds of the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay, and you can contact them at info@shedoxford.co.uk if you would like to get involved.

Speaking of the Abbey, they have recently recruited a very experienced French chef who is producing delicious food for visitors, which I was pleased to try on my visit there. Find out more at <https://theabbey.uk.com>.

As ever, if I can help with anything then do please get in touch via david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk.

BLEWBURY CALENDAR "INTERNATIONAL"!

So many of our Blewbury calendars are sent worldwide to friends and relatives who know Blewbury. It is very interesting to picture them in so many different places as well as on kitchen walls in Blewbury.


I hope that many of the dates will be filled with happy events and wish you all a very Happy and Peaceful and Healthy 2024. Thank you all. *Bernard and Pat Mattimore*



OPPORTUNITY TO TRAIN AS AN ARCH READING HELPER

ARCh volunteers work one-to-one with selected children in a primary school, close to their home or workplace, providing personalised support to boost confidence, build self-esteem and turn around negative attitudes to reading. We are looking for more people to join us in making a real difference to children's lives. All volunteers are vetted (including enhanced DBS) and receive initial and ongoing training and support as well as resources tailored to each child. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer or supporter, please email info@archoxfordshire.org.uk. Please support us – you can donate via <https://localgiving.org/donation/arch>

ROUTE 94 – NEW, IMPROVED TIMETABLE

Mondays to Fridays (except Public Holidays)														
	94	94A	94	94	94A	94	94A	94	94A	94A	94	94	94A	94
Didcot Parkway Railway Station 		0735	0840		1010	1110	1210	1310	1410	1545	1705		1820	1920
Didcot Orchard Centre		0739	0844		1014	1114	1214	1314	1414	1549	1709		1824	1924
Didcot Sandringham Road, Saxons Way		▼	0848		1018	1118	1218	1318	1418	1553	1713		1828	1928
East Hagbourne War Memorial		0745	0851		1021	1121	1221	1321	1421	1556	1716		1831	1931
Blewbury The Blueberry		▼	0858		▼	1128	▼	1328	▼	▼	1723		▼	1938
West Hagbourne Moor Lane	0645	0751	↓		1027	↓	1227	↓	1427	1602	↓		1837	↓
Harwell Campus Becquerel Avenue	▼	▼	↓		▼	↓	▼	↓	▼	▼	↓	1740	▼	↓
Upton Village Hall	0648	0754	0903	0933	1030	1133	1230	1333	1430	1605	1728	1750	1840	1943
Blewbury The Blueberry	0653	0759	▼	0938	1035	1138	1235	1338	1435	1610		1755	1845	1948
Harwell Campus Becquerel Avenue	↓	▼	0915	↓	▼	↓	▼	↓	▼	▼		↓	▼	↓
Aston Upthorpe The Chequers		0808			1044		1244		1444	1619			1854	
South Moreton The Crown		0814			1050		1250		1450	1625			1900	
North Moreton Bus Shelter	↓	0818		↓	1054	↓	1254	↓	1454	1629		↓	1904	↓
East Hagbourne War Memorial	0700	↓		0945	↓	1145	↓	1345	↓	↓		1802	↓	1955
Didcot Sandringham Road, Saxons Way	0704	↓		0948	↓	1148	↓	1348	↓	↓		1805	↓	1958
Didcot Orchard Centre	0710	0826		0954	1102	1154	1302	1354	1502	1637		1811	1912	2004
Didcot Parkway Railway Station 	0715	0831		0959	1107	1159	1307	1359	1507	1642		1816	1917	2009
Saturdays														
	94A	94	94	94A	94	94A	94	94A	94	94A	94	94A	94	
Didcot Parkway Railway Station 	0735		0910	1010	1110	1210	1310	1410	1510	1610	1710	1810	1910	
Didcot Orchard Centre	0739		0914	1014	1114	1214	1314	1414	1514	1614	1714	1814	1914	
Didcot Sandringham Road	▼		0918	1018	1118	1218	1318	1418	1518	1618	1718	1818	1918	
East Hagbourne War Memorial	0745		0921	1021	1121	1221	1321	1421	1521	1621	1721	1821	1921	
Blewbury The Blueberry	▼		0928	▼	1128	▼	1328	▼	1528	▼	1728	▼	1928	
West Hagbourne Moor Lane	0751		▼	1027	▼	1227	▼	1427	▼	1627	▼	1827	▼	
Upton Village Hall	0754		0933	1030	1133	1230	1333	1430	1533	1630	1733	1830	1933	
Blewbury The Blueberry	0759		0938	1035	1138	1235	1338	1435	1538	1635	1738	1835	1938	
Aston Upthorpe The Chequers	0808		↓	1044	↓	1244	↓	1444	↓	1644	↓	1844	↓	
South Moreton The Crown	0814			1050		1250		1450		1650		1850		
North Moreton Bus Shelter	0818		↓	1054	↓	1254	↓	1454	↓	1654	↓	1854	↓	
East Hagbourne War Memorial	↓	0845	0945	↓	1145	↓	1345	↓	1545	↓	1745	↓	1945	
Didcot Sandringham Road	↓	0849	0948	↓	1148	↓	1348	↓	1548	↓	1748	↓	1948	
Didcot Orchard Centre	0826	0855	0954	1102	1154	1302	1354	1502	1554	1702	1754	1902	1954	
Didcot Parkway Railway Station 	0831	0900	0959	1107	1159	1307	1359	1507	1559	1707	1759	1907	1959	
No service on Sundays or Public Holidays														

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

In its last full meeting of the 2023, council debated significant points of interest to the district and its future, with a motion restating the Vale's opposition to Thames Water's proposed reservoir. It also considered the upcoming consultation to the council's joint local plan and its future commitment to climate action and nature recovery.

Have your say on a new political map for Vale of White Horse District Council

The Local Government Boundary Commission wants to hear what residents and organisations think about their local area. The Commission is the independent body that draws these boundaries. It is reviewing Vale of White Horse to make sure councillors represent about the same number of electors, and that ward arrangements help the council work effectively. It wants to be sure that its proposals reflect community ties and identities. Have your say here: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/vale-white-horse>

We use these monthly updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post on our councillor Facebook Pages: www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell
Please get in touch with any issues or concerns, either via email: hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of Blewbury Parish Council's meeting: 7pm, **Wednesday 10 January 2024**, Melland Room.

Present: Lydia Inglis (chair), Jane Gibson, Andrew Calder, Anne Millman, Lee Robinson, Julia Saunders and Mark Shayler. Also present Elizabeth Cooper (clerk) and David Hollick (lengthman), and district councillor Hayleigh Gascoigne. Apologies were received from Dermot Mathias, Sheila Austin, district councillor Debra Dewhurst and county councillor Sally Povolotsky.

On the advice of the finance committee the PC has set the precept for 2024–25 at £113,000. This is a considerable increase of 32.94% on last year, equating to a tax base increase of c £3 per month (based on a Band D property). This rise is almost entirely due to the increase in our insurance premium following the Clubhouse flood. We have taken every precaution against future flooding in the refurbished Clubhouse, and will be pushing for a reduction in our insurance payments next year. The precept increase does not fully cover inflation, so there is likely to be a shortfall in the year, reducing the PC's reserves. If anyone would like further insight into how the PC's finances are employed within the village, do contact the clerk or your councillors.

Planning councillors met Vale officers recently about Blewbury's new Conservation Area Appraisal, and are delighted to report that this will be adopted as part of the local development plan in the next few months.

The hole in the skate park ramp at TFF has been repaired but the PC has been advised that the equipment is coming to the end of its useful life. The PC would like to eventually replace it with something similar, but would welcome ideas from residents and users. Please contact the clerk.

The village now has three registered defibrillators, at the Clubhouse, the Blueberry PH and the Village Hall.

Villagers can now comment on 'preferred options' for the Vale and SODC's new Joint Local Plan (JLP). The JLP will set out the kinds of new housing and jobs both councils would like to see across their areas, and where they think these should go. The JLP will inform future planning application decisions across both districts. There are also new draft policies to help address the climate emergency and restore nature. For a detailed look at the plan go to <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/>. For a briefer look go to <https://theconversation.southandvale.gov.uk/> and click on *JLP in a Nutshell*.

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) has published its draft Primary Care Strategy, which covers the future of general practice, community pharmacy, optometry and dentistry across BOB. The strategy has been developed with the support of health and care partners and local people, and aims to improve access across all relevant services. You can share your views on the draft via <https://yourvoicebob-icb.uk/engagementhq.com/primary-care-strategy>.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

All Blewbury planning applications, decisions and BPC responses, including items under consideration, can be found in the 'Parish' section of the Blewbury website (www.blewbury.co.uk/parish/planning/), updated monthly. This also has links to the Vale's planning site, with full details and plans for all applications.

Responses to the District Council:

P23/V2746/HH 33 Bridus Mead Single storey side and rear extensions. BPC has no objection.

Enquiries regarding planning in the parish may be sent to blewburypc@gmail.com

NEED TO CONTACT YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS?	
Sheila Austin 3 Ladycroft Park	Anne Millman Brook Cottage, Church End
Andrew Calder Trefagus, Chapel Lane	Lee Robinson 6 Chailey Gardens
Lydia Inglis Chapmans, Nottingham Fee	Julia Saunders Charity School House, Church Road
Jane Gibson 5 Westbrook Green	Mark Shayler 2 Eastfields
Dermot Mathias The Old Mill, Berry Lane	Elizabeth Cooper (Clerk) 07968 772935 or blewburypc@gmail.com

The next meeting of Blewbury Parish Council will be at 7pm on Wednesday 14 February 2024, in the Melland Room at the Clubhouse.

POST OFFICE NEWS

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

We hope you are all getting settled into our new opening hours. As a reminder, they are printed on the back page of every Bulletin, including this one!

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

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

We look forward to seeing you in the post office soon! Thanks so much. *Sarah, Karen and Andrew*

Autumn Leaves The dates for February 2024 Bingo Sessions in The Vale Room at Blewbury Village Hall, at 2pm are:- February 13th and 27th. The AGM will be held in the Vale Room on February 20th. For further information call Cilla Maguire (01235 851966) If anyone would like to join Autumn Leaves, please contact Cilla on the above phone number. We would welcome any new members to come and join us.

Astons Online's February 2024 event will be in Astons Village Hall (OX119EQ) on Tuesday 20 February from 10:00 to 12:00. It will be our first hybrid meeting, in person and online using Zoom. We'll talk about smartphones becoming increasingly important tools for everyday living as well as any issues visitors want to discuss. Please tell us, if you can, that you plan to be there, or join in by Zoom, what you'd like to discuss and if you'd like a one-to-one appointment. Website: www.astonsonline.uk email: theastonsonline@gmail.com

BLEWBURY FLYING SQUAD is a volunteer hospital car service for Blewbury residents. We cover appointments in hospitals, doctors' surgeries, dentists, opticians, chiropodists, physio etc. As the Flying Squad is a voluntary service which relies entirely on people's personal time and vehicle availability, we need as much notice as possible to arrange a driver. Please note that journeys to the Horton Hospital in Banbury are not available from the Flying Squad. To make a booking, telephone **07891 768197**. If the Flying Squad telephone holder is not available, you will be prompted to leave a voice message. Wait for the beep at the end of the BFS phone message then give your name and telephone number. Please speak clearly. You will be phoned back as soon as possible.

BLEWBURY POST OFFICE OPENING HOURS

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays: 9am-3pm. Tuesdays and Fridays: 8.30 am - 12 noon and 2.30 - 5 pm.

VILLAGE DIARY for February 2024				Page
Saturday	3		Auditions for <i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>	9
Sunday	4		Auditions for <i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>	9
Monday	5	9.30-11 am	Coffee & Kids!, Vale Room	13
Tuesday	13	2 pm	Autumn Leaves Bingo etc., Vale Room	20
Tuesday	13	7.30 pm	BlewShed meeting, The Shed, Recreation Ground	9
Tuesday	13	8 pm	Local History Group meeting at Robinson's, Parsonage Lane	
Wednesday	14	7 pm	Parish Council meeting, Melland Room	19
Wednesday	14	7.30 pm	Deadline for March Bulletin – Swallows, Church Road	
Tuesday	20	2 pm	Autumn Leaves AGM, Vale Room	20
Sunday	25	2-4 pm	Sustainable Blewbury Repair Café, Village Hall	7,13
Sunday	25	3.30 pm	Friends of St Michaels afternoon tea	6
Tuesday	27	2 pm	Autumn Leaves Bingo etc., Vale Room	20
Wednesday	28	7.30 pm	WI Meeting and Talk: "Six Warrior Women", Vale Room	7

HOW TO ADVERTISE IN THE BULLETIN The Bulletin welcomes advertisements from organisations and individuals based in Blewbury and immediately neighbouring villages. Space permitting, we also welcome ads from further afield if they do not duplicate existing local services, are not widely advertised elsewhere and are likely to be of interest to residents. Acceptance of advertisements does not imply endorsement of the products or services offered. Display advertisements **must** be submitted in one of three rectangular sizes:

- 60mm wide x 40mm high (cost: £2.00)
- 60mm wide x 85mm high (£4.00)
- 90mm wide x 65mm high (£6.00)

Artwork should be in black and white only. You can also send plain text for us to fit into an appropriately sized box. If you are advertising a village event you can also present it as plain editorial, i.e. not highlighted in a box, for no charge.

All advertisements should be submitted to the Editor in the first instance, either emailed to editor@blewbury.co.uk as a Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, JPEG or PDF attachment, or typed/handwritten and delivered to **Swallows, Church Road, Blewbury OX11 9PY**. If your advertisement is accepted, please note that payment **must** be received before the Bulletin goes to press. If you require repeat insertions, you will be referred to the Advertising Manager to make the arrangements.

WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS We are always happy to receive editorial contributions, which can be submitted in the same way as advertisements – see above. We ask for a maximum length of 500 words (closer to 400 if there is an accompanying photo). Anyone supplying information for publication must be responsible for its accuracy. We require name and contact details in all cases, although if requested these will not be published. The editor reserves the right to reject submissions. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Bulletin.

To see the Bulletin online visit www.blewbury.co.uk.

The Blewbury Bulletin is published at Swallows, Church Road, Blewbury, OX11 9PY. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of published information, the Editor and Officers accept no responsibility for the consequences of any errors. **Problems receiving your Bulletin? Call 01235 850337.**

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