

Blewbury Bulletin

Number 662 March 2024

MARY GRAY SEIBOLD

Mary Seibold died peacefully at home surrounded by her family on 30th January 2024. Born in 1927 in Vancouver, Canada, she was just shy of her 97th birthday. Mary and our father, Ervin, moved to Blewbury in the Autumn of 1959. They adored the village and its eclectic and creative community. Mary was an accomplished violinist and teacher. She led the orchestra in many Blewbury productions. She played tennis every week until she was 79. She was a fantastic swimmer and runner and an avid gardener. She will be much missed by her family and all who knew her. Our special thanks go to all those we couldn't have managed without, particularly Natalia, Martin, Lindy, Lydia, Chris, David and Jane but also Woodlands Medical Centre, the District Nurses and the Emergency Services. *Ellwood, Juliette, Max and Ana*

BLEWBURY ART PROJECT



Readers of the Bulletin will know we have funding for a village art project, which (for various reasons, including Covid) was stalled... But we are now confident something exciting is going to happen, because David Harber is designing a beautiful armillary sphere to be installed in the Playclose.

To make this an artwork unique to Blewbury, the base will contain a time capsule created by the school, and the bands of the sphere will be engraved with words, phrases and quotes that paint a picture of what makes our village a special place to live. To do this we need your help. Please tell us what you think makes Blewbury unique – it could be words that conjure the special nature of our chalk streams and downland flora and fauna, our sense of community, our unique theatre, the authors or artists who have lived and worked here, our cob walls, our connection to the past, present and future, our pubs... or none of the above! The area for engraving is limited so please be pithy and original, and we'll choose the very best submissions to immortalise on the sphere.

Send your entries to sjane.gibson@btinternet.com by Friday 29th March – we can't wait to hear from you!

FATHER JASON HONOURED

Our rector, the Revd Jason St John Nicolle, has been made an honorary canon of Christ Church Cathedral. The award, in recognition of distinguished service to the church, was presented during a service in Oxford in January.

Fr Jason was ordained in 2004 and has spent all his time in local ministry. In 2008 he moved to the Churn benefice after his curacy in Kidlington, serving Blewbury and six other neighbouring parishes.

The awards recognise the dedication of lay and ordained people to the Diocese of Oxford and the wider church across a variety of areas of ministry and mission. This includes roles supporting theological education in the worldwide Anglican Communion, the deaf and hard of hearing in the diocese, and community organising and church growth.

Speaking on his installation as honorary canon, Fr Jason said: "It is a great honour. It comes with a great sense of responsibility. I look forward to the role. God's holy spirit does not limit itself to the work of the church. I think God is calling our church to evolve and that's exciting. The heart of my life is helping the church to cherish the best of the past together with an openness to the future and holding these two things together."



2024 DUCK RACE

The ducks, like most of us, cannot believe where the time has gone and that it's time for them to take to the water on the Playclose for the annual Duck Race on Easter Sunday, 31st March. The first of five heats will start at 12.00 noon. The first three ducks across the line in the final race will win for their owners £50, £20 and £10 respectively, and all proceeds will go to St Michael's Tower and Bell Maintenance Fund. The Bell Ringers are very appreciative of the support given to this annual event, and hope that everyone will enjoy the socialising and springtime fun. Fingers crossed for good weather although the ducks are happy in any weather!

This event is open to everyone, and racing ducks are available for £1.25 each. They are obtainable from Blewbury Post Office or contact Gill Loyd on 01235 850459 or Chris Cook on 07786 635062.

Always popular, so please be sure to buy your racers early, as they will all be sold before the race day, and don't forget to come along, bring your family and friends, and cheer for your ducks on the day. If you enjoy this sort of fun, why not meet the ringers in St Michael's one Friday night to see what else we do when we are not racing ducks? You will be most welcome.

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UPDATE FROM BLEWBURY RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT TEAM

Having spent lots of hours searching for a house to rent in Blewbury, ReST's core group has decided to spend some of our funds to support a refugee family arriving soon in Didcot. A Didcot-based group with similar aims to ReST has found a suitable house and are currently being paired up with a family by the Home Office. While it's disappointing

not to have found a house in Blewbury, ReST hopes everyone who kindly helped us raise funds will be pleased to know we're providing much-needed support to a refugee family close by.

On a separate note, pledges for a new almshouse in Blewbury have reached the magnificent total of £125,000, but we need at least £500,000 to proceed to buy a house in the village for a future family in need. To those who have pledged money – thank you so much for your patience! We will update you on our next steps as soon as we can.

DEDICATION OF BLEWBURY METHODIST CHURCH'S WAR MEMORIAL

On January 21st there was a short dedication service of the Methodist War Memorial under the new lychgate led by our local Methodist minister, Rev. Bruce Thompson. It was attended by local Methodists and Blewbury Residents, including Rev. Louise Butler and Les Faulkner, representing the Blewbury branch of the British Legion. It was particularly nice to see Dick Street at the ceremony because the list of Blewbury residents who were killed in World War I includes an ancestor of his, Private Charlie Street. *Jo Lakeland, for the Blewbury Methodists*

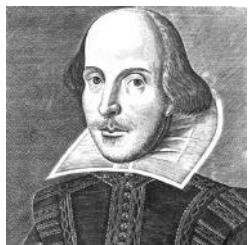


BLEWBURY VILLAGE HALL NEWS

The bike rack is now fully operational, the drainage issues have been resolved, and we have a new Facebook page. (If you set up the original one, please delete it!)

The annual meeting of the trustees will be on Wednesday 13th March 7.30pm in the Vale Room; all are welcome. We have a vacancy for a new trustee, as John Ogden is standing down. We thank him for his service and support over the years, thank you John. Please email Andrew at andrewforman@live.com for more information if you are interested in joining us.

To book the Village Hall or the Vale Room please go to www.blewbury.co.uk/venues/villagehall to see the online calendar and bookings information.



SHAKESPEARE FOR BEGINNERS!

Judging by the response to last month's article, there seems to be a real appetite for learning more about William Shakespeare. Over 30 people have now expressed interest in a rolling programme of talks, films, outings and play readings, and we kick off in March with two 'Shakespeare for beginners' sessions here in Blewbury. So if you've always been meaning to get to grips with the man, his works and the times he lived in, now's your chance! No prior knowledge needed – just enthusiasm and/or curiosity. See the flyer in this Bulletin for details.



FOOD BANK DATES SATURDAY 2nd MARCH – MONDAY 11th MARCH

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

- Foodbank cannot accept alcohol, razors, medicines, or homemade preserves

ALL DONATIONS ARE HUGELY APPRECIATED -- SINCERE THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

CASH DONATIONS HOWEVER SMALL ARE VERY WELCOME - To make a cash donation on line:-

visit <https://churchsuite.co.uk/donate/> and select Foodbank.

MANY THANKS - ST MICHAEL'S ACTION GROUP & DIDCOT FOOD BANK

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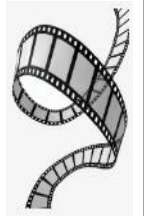
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Friends Evening - A night of Blewbury films This will be held in the Village Hall on Friday 26 April. We will show all the short films from the recent Song for Europe, which were hilarious and people said they'd like to see again, as well as films from previous revues and live and on-line shows. It's sure to be an evening of fun and nostalgia. The evening, which is free to our Friends of Blewbury Players, will include wine and gossip. Roger Colebrook, our Friends Secretary, will be contacting our Friends about tickets.



To become a Friend and get priority booking for Blewbury Players' productions, an annual entertainment and newsletters, please contact of Friends' Secretary, Roger Colebrook, at bpfriends123@gmail.com. Subscription is £15 and is renewable on 1st May 2024.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle - 17-20 July 2024. With our casting almost complete, we are now hoping to encourage some more volunteers in non-acting roles... We are particularly looking for people who are interested in sound and costumes/sewing. Please just call 01235 850537 or e-mail blewburyplayers@gmail.com for a friendly response and more information with no pressure to commit to anything outside your comfort zone!

the
caucasian
chalk
circle

Panto in 2025!! - The rumours were true ...

And for January 2025, we are planning another Blewbury pantomime - Oh yes we are!! Written and to be directed by Andy Jarvis. We'll audition in September and rehearse from November, with a break for Christmas and New Year, with performances in the last week of January. Not to be missed.

BLEWBURY VILLAGE SOCIETY

BVS Comedy Night, Saturday 16th March

The legendary Blewbury Comedy Night returns to the Village Hall on Saturday 16th March. Tickets have now sold out, but you can get on the waiting list via the box office website at <https://bit.ly/3O7eBIG>. Please email us at blewburybvs@gmail.com with any returns.



Egg Rolling, Sunday 31st March

The annual Easter Egg Rolling is back on Easter Sunday, 31st March, at 3 pm. This event is open to everyone – bring your decorated eggs to the chalk pits (head up the footpath on the village side of Tickers Folly Field and you'll find us!) Prizes for the best decorated eggs and longest rolls (see advert on page 8, designed by Elphin Lloyd-Jones).

BVS and Parish Council AGM, Wednesday 15th May

The combined BVS and Parish Council AGM will be held on Wednesday 15th May at 7 pm in the Village Hall. All are welcome to hear about the astonishing amount of activity taking place in Blewbury, and contribute to future events.

Blewbury Beer Festival, Saturday 18th May

Join us for good beer, good food and good vibes at Blewbury Village Hall on 18th May, from 2 pm, for a day filled with great beer! Enjoy a variety of local brews (and/or wine, cider, gin and soft drinks, as preferred) while supporting Blewbury Preschool and the BVS. There will also be a chance to grab some tasty food and groove to live music all afternoon and evening. We hope to see you there!

Save the date for the Summer Dance: Saturday 22nd June

The annual Summer Dance will take place on Saturday 22nd June at Ashbrook House and we are delighted to announce that McFunky will be performing again. Put the date in your diary – details in the April Bulletin.

BVS committee

The BVS committee is a team of volunteers who help to run events for the village, and we are always grateful to hear your ideas and for any offers of help. If you have an event that you would like to make happen, or if you would just like to support one of our regular calendar events, please contact us at blewburybvs@gmail.com.



NEWS FROM BLEWBURY PRE-SCHOOL

We have a wonderful, enthusiastic group of young learners at Pre-School who are really enjoying our theme this term of 'Number Rhymes and Songs' learning through a wide range of play opportunities both indoors and outdoors. As we move towards the beginning of spring, we will also be thinking about shapes in nature, World Book Day and the celebration of Easter. Our enterprising staff have developed a range of Story Sacks and a Lending Library for the parents to borrow these resources and share at home with their children to encourage a lifelong love of reading and storytelling.

Our Lottery continues to flourish and we are so grateful to all who support the work of early years' education in the village through their purchase of lottery numbers which enables us to continue to run Blewbury Pre-School. The winning numbers in the February draw were as follows: 1st - 047; 2nd - 070; 3rd - 087. The prize fund of £170.00 was shared (50%/30%/20%) between the three winners and £170.00 was raised for Pre-School.

For other fundraising initiatives this spring, we will be supporting the Blewbury Beer Festival on 18th May and look out for our Grand Summer Raffle with some fantastic prizes which will launch after Easter.

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Rewilding: does it make sense? A talk in the Clubhouse (Melland Room) on **Monday 11 March, 8pm**. Come and hear Jon Davies from Nature Positive and Blewbury resident James Morgan talk on the why, what and how of Rewilding. Topics discussed will be reversing the tide of biodiversity loss and our food security. Tickets £6 (includes a drink) from the Post Office in advance or on the door.

Blewbury Spring Clean Our big litter clean is on **Sat 16 March, 2 to 4pm**, during the week of the Great British Spring Clean. Even though Blewbury is almost litter-free, the ditches to the east of Bessels Way and west of Savages are bad. Sign-in and collect litter-pickers, high-viz jackets and strong rubbish bags from Twin Trees, Bessels Lea Road (adults only) or Ticker’s Folly (children accompanied by an adult) at 2pm. Please bring your own gloves and suitable footwear. If you can’t make this time but could do another time on the weekend, ring Jane Kinniburgh 01235 850341 or email the address below.

Nature Reserve Our next volunteering morning is **Sat 9 March, 10am to noon**. There will still be more hedging to plant. We are expecting 300 whips from Thames Water!

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If you want to know more about Sustainable Blewbury and become a supporter who receives occasional newsletters, email secretary@sustainable-blewbury.org.uk

BRIDGE CLUB

Blewbury Bridge Club's Thursday online sessions on Realbridge for the next month will be on March 14th and 28th. Wantage Bridge Club will run sessions on the 7th and 21st, which we are invited to join. We also hope to run Social Bridge sessions on all Friday evenings in March.

Michael Allen 851870

RED LION NEWS

Shenanigans at The Red Lion have been in full swing! Another Boxing Day extravaganza finished in style with our own open mic live music. A proper New Years Eve countdown, after a five-course meal. Our Burns Night supper also included the annual address to the Haggis with an eight verse recital of the Tam O’Shanter.


Our Thursday Combo fast approaches its first anniversary (52 on the trot). Alongside a line up of live music there’s a variety of themed streetfood for take in or away: Shawarma, Gurkha, Korean, Greek, Indian, Middle Eastern and Japanese - as well as burgers and pizzas.

Catch our coverage of the Guinness six nations either indoors or on our outdoor screen under canvas. Quiz nights are now monthly on the third Wednesday of every month, which for March will be the 20th. Our darts board is regularly in use as candidates limber up to take on other pubs. Our new notice board cabinet has been installed on the flank wall facing the car park and will be keeping you updated on what’s happening in the pub, as well as around the village. Also keep an eye on the London Road blackboard which is frequently updated.

The new 2024 menu now comprises a selection of fresh local produce of a pick ‘n’ mix or tapas format presented on our new Nkuku crockery. The veg section moves up the menu and includes for example baked beetroot and celeriac, caramelised cauliflower and broccoli as well as red cabbage with apples ‘n’ pears to accompany your main dish of pan-fried duck breast, ribeye steak, salmon fillet or a thick cut pork chop. Don’t miss our Red Lion Sunday Roast of Hagbourne Hill beef or Red Lion Farm pork, a popular way to avoid all the faff of cooking a roast at home! You can now relax and stay at The Red Lion too. We currently have 4 bedrooms (2 x super king and 2 x king) available on stay@theredlionblewbury.co.uk each interior dressed room has ensuite facilities and whilst the bathrooms await their forthcoming summer refit you can enjoy even lower than normal market rates.

If you enjoy getting together with friends and family or want to meet new folk, then look no further than Blewbury’s own local Red Lion Pub. Drink, eat, laugh, chat, confide and enjoy the local pub banter.

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NATURE NOTES

Kingfisher

Kingfisher: the colour giver, fire-bringer, flame-flicker, rivers quiver.

Ink-black bill, orange throat, and quick blue black-gleaming feather stream.

Neat and still it sits on the snag of a stick, until with...

Gold-flare, wing-fan, whipcrack the kingfisher – zingfisher, singfisher –

Part of a poem from *The Lost Words* by Robert Macfarlane, 2017

Walking along the Cleve to get the weekend papers, a fast, low flash of azure blue and fiery copper orange flashes across the water. It makes for an incongruous contrast to the silty desert of the Cleve, denuded of so much life. However, life there is! As this blur of colour settles and I remain statue-still, the bird lives up to its name and dives into the shallow water. Its reward, a Stickleback.

I generally see Kingfishers in Blewbury during the winter period. The species is territorial, but during the cold weather they move from their breeding areas to find more food. Numbers are also boosted by individuals migrating from the continent. They can suffer high mortality rates during the winter as lakes and ponds freeze over and many a river is in spate.

During March they start to excavate their nests in riverside banks. These can be well over a metre in depth, but only 5cm in diameter. They can lay up to seven eggs over two or three broods, so they have the potential to bounce back from winter population declines. There are thought to be around 4000 breeding pairs in the UK and each bird can live to just over four years, but more typically only two.

Kingfishers, in folklore, have always been associated with weather. There was once a brutal tradition of hanging a dead kingfisher on your door and its beak would point to the wind. Feathers were kept as a charm to ward off thunder. Aristotle believed the kingfisher to nest at sea during the 'halcyon days', a period of calm weather seven days either side of the winter solstice. Alcyone was the daughter of Aelous, the Greek god of wind, and the wife of Ceyx. Zeus, in a jealous rage, which the Greek gods seemed so prone to, whipped up a storm and killed Ceyx. Later, to atone for his rage, Zeus transformed the couple into Halcyon birds, the Kingfisher. Every year Aelous would calm the sea to allow the kingfishers to nest.

BLEWSHED NEWS

DIY for beginners: Following on from the first two DIY for beginners classes on drilling and sawing, the next module, by popular request from our DIY students, will be on simple DIY home plumbing jobs. Problems that can often be fixed quickly and quite easily without having to get outside help. The sessions are open to anyone, but priority will be given to those who have attended before. Date to be announced soon.

Community Projects: Progress with the cricket club mower has moved on rapidly; two of the cutters have been sharpened and one of the three units reassembled. Dick Street is confident he and his team of engineers will complete the job well in time for the forthcoming season.

BlewShed products: These will be available soon and ready to go on sale at the village garden produce stall and Savages in the next couple of months.

Meetings: Club night attendees enjoyed an interesting presentation of metal detector finds by BlewShed member and detectorist Robert Keyes. His collection of military relics from included musket balls and cannonballs from the English civil war and WW2 cap badges, bullets and other items from Savernake Forest. His star find was a William the Conqueror penny. Our next club night meeting will be about how to sharpen tools, and Mike Magnay will demonstrate a new system for sharpening wood plane irons. Date: Tuesday 12th March 7.30pm. All welcome, you don't need to be a member - come and have a go at sharpening your own tools. You'll get plenty of guidance.

Donation thanks: A big thank you to Jo Lakeland who recently donated her late husband Chris's set of auger bits. These will be in regular use and a nice reminder of Chris, who was a great supporter of BlewShed being established when he was Chair of Blewbury Parish Council.

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.

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/>



News from St. Michael's

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

How to contact us: -

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.

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

Services at St Michael's Blewbury for March and Easter 2024

† Sunday 3rd Third Sunday of Lent	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	All Age service
	3.00 pm	Outdoor Church for Lent: Blewbury Play Close
Saturday 9 th	3.00 pm	Outdoor Church for Lent: meet in Benefice office car park
† Sunday 10th Mothering Sunday	10.30 am	Parish Eucharist
† Sunday 17th Fifth Sunday of Lent	10.30 am	Taizé Service
Thursday 21 st	10.00 am	MU Holy Communion
† Sunday 24th Palm Sunday	10.30 am	Village Service
Monday 25 th	7.15pm	Candle-lit compline: St Michael's Blewbury
Tuesday 26 th	7.15pm	Candle-lit compline: St Michael's Blewbury
Wednesday 27 th	7.15pm	Candle-lit compline: St Michael's Blewbury
Thursday 28 th Maundy Thursday	8.00 pm	Eucharist and watch with stripping of the altar
Friday 29 th Good Friday	2 pm	An Hour at the Cross
Saturday 30 th Holy Saturday	8.00 pm	Easter Vigil
† Sunday 31st Easter Day	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	Parish Eucharist

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.

Our Lent leaflet contains more details about our Lent courses, opportunities for fellowship and our Holy Week services throughout the Benefice. Hard copies are available in church. Electronic copies can be downloaded via <https://www.churnchurches.co.uk/lent-courses.php>

Friends of St Michaels Blewbury

*** Reminder ***

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



Saint Patrick's Breastplate



I wonder: do you have any plans for 17th March? As you may or may not be aware, 17th March is **St. Patrick's Day**. St. Patrick was British by birth, and was probably born c.390AD. As a young man, he was captured by Irish pirates and enslaved. After some 6 years in Ireland as a slave, he escaped (or was freed), and returned to his family. He then trained to be a priest, and decided to go back to Ireland, but this time as a missionary. Patrick established a base at Armagh, and he seems to have focussed his missionary work in the north of Ireland. The date of his death is uncertain, but it was probably sometime in the 460s AD. Some of Patrick's writings have survived, including a short autobiography.

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

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

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

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

- *Father Jason*

† ECUMENICAL GROUP

'A Journey Through the Psalms' 10:30 am to 12noon on Fridays 23 Feb & 1, 8, 15 & 22 March.
Contact Elaine in the office to book a place and for directions to Jenny Loder's house.

† OUTDOOR CHURCH FOR LENT

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

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

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

3pm meet at the Benefice office car park, Blewbury to visit the garden at Sawyers

By kind permission of the Hooper family

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

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

10am in St. Mary's Churchyard, Upton

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

† REFLECTIONS

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

3 – 4.30 pm Tuesdays in person and/or 7-8 pm online using the link <https://meet.goto.com/621726189>

27 February: Aston Tirrold

12 March: Hagbourne

5 March: Blewbury

19 March: Upton



Food Bank Collection

2 – 11 March 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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BLEWBURY WI NEWS

Our March meeting is our Annual Meeting – please note – for Members only. We will confirm our coming year’s committee and elect the incoming President (sometimes the current President is voted in!). Also some fun and games in social time.

For those who have thought about joining, it’s darn good value at less than 93p a week! This entitles you to come free to 11 monthly meetings plus all of the other regular jollies we put on.

We are going on a canal boat trip in late April, watch this space for news on that. So, you see we are quite a busy lot. You do as much or as little as you like.

Come as a visitor in April – no commitment – see if you fancy it. If you’d like to join any of the regular events listed below contact our Secretary Joy, on 850543 or email blewburywi@gmail.com. Come along to a meeting (April onwards) or to find out more just contact Joy.

Calendar of events

Monday afternoons	2.30pm	Mah Jong	Sharon
Friday 1 March	7pm	Craft evening	Karen
Tuesday 5 March	9.35am bus	Lyn’s Walk	Lyn
Tuesday 5 March	7pm	Evening Scrabble	Joy
Wednesday 13 March	10.30am	Coffee morning	Trish
Thursday 14 March	2.30pm	Afternoon Scrabble	Graeme

LETTER FROM DAVID JOHNSTON MP

One of the most common questions I'm asked is what is life like as an MP.

In general my week is split Monday-Thursday in Parliament and Friday-Sunday back home in Didcot. At the time of writing this, the last week kicked off with a team meeting at the Department for Education, followed by my weekly meeting with the team delivering our huge expansion of childcare, with the first 15 hours of free childcare becoming available for working parents from April. Alongside various other meetings, Chilton County Primary School came for a visit to Westminster, and it was great to meet them and take their questions.

Tuesday included meeting with GARD to discuss the next steps following me echoing their call for a public inquiry of the reservoir proposal in December; attending a networking event of charities and businesses involved in our Disability Action Plan; and responding for the Government in a debate about nursery provision in the South West. Just as MPs like myself have regular surgeries with constituents, so Ministers have regular surgeries with MPs to discuss problems they're having locally in areas the Minister covers and Wednesday kicked off with one of these. After attending PMQs, I presented to Parliament my petition to reopen Grove Station, which I'm grateful to the 2127 of you for signing. I met my Parliamentary team before taking another debate - this time on special educational needs - and several other meetings.

Last week was National Apprenticeship Week and on Thursday I visited childcare apprentices and then another nursery. To and from the visits I had calls with 10 local authorities and did some paperwork. Then on Friday I began with a Q&A at Didcot Sixth Form then met with Liane and Mark from Active Future South Oxfordshire and visited apprentices at Williams Racing in Grove. I had several surgery appointments, including meeting a local sub-postmaster who contacted me after seeing the ITV drama about the Horizon scandal having recognised that what happened had also happened to her. I am pleased this Government is taking such decisive action to right this wrong. I met with Niamh Dernie from Wantage to talk about the next steps in her campaign against sexual harassment and then had the pleasure of presenting Mikayla Beames from Team Mikayla, which I am a proud patron of, with her Points of Light award from the PM. Then I rounded off the day with my weekly visit to Merv, as part of my volunteering with the Didcot Good Neighbours Scheme.

Weekends are always a combination of door knocking, emails and paperwork for both MP and Minister roles and - when I can manage it - Liverpool games!

I love the ability to make a difference in the job and the variety - as I always say to people, it's better to be busy than bored. As ever, if I can help with anything then do, please get in touch via david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk

COFFEE & KIDS!

Welcome to all bumps! babies & toddlers to our next session of Coffee & Kids on **Monday 4th March** - 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. With Mothers Day around the corner we will try our HANDS at making flower print cards!! 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

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BLEWBURY SCHOOL SPORTS REPORT

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

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

“On Feb 2nd the boys’ football team went to Oxford Academy to play on their astroturf pitches. We had qualified for this



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

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

HONEST JOHN: MORE TALES FROM THE MILITARY

As a Royal Artillery Surveyor with 50 Missile Regiment in 1960, my job was to survey the position of the Rocket launcher and the target, which could be up to 50 miles away. By calculating the co-ordinates of the launcher and the target I was able to calculate the bearing and time of flight of the missile. My skills were soon put to the test when it was decided to have the first live firing of the Honest John rocket in the UK at Larkhill’s artillery range on Salisbury plain. This firing would be attended by senior officers from the artillery regiments of the NATO countries. We had to get the launch correct because the range was only five miles long and that was the minimum flight range of the rocket. If it overshot the target it could land in the middle of Devizes, a small market town.

So on November 9th 1960 four days after Bonfire Night we had our own fireworks display. I was in the computing centre inside an armoured troop carrier called a Saracen. We were parked up in the woods with the rocket launcher heavily camouflaged about fifty yards away. The rocket was timed to be fired at 16:20 hours. I and my colleague John Parfitt independently calculated the figures on our mechanical calculators from data supplied by the surveyors on the ranges. We then issued the Bearing Picket card for the officer in charge to sign and take responsibility for what we had calculated. Poor chap, he was a young artillery officer doing his national service who had taken a basic survey course and he didn’t have a clue. He was heavily reliant on his NCOs to make sure everything ran smoothly. He quipped to me, “Warn, if it all goes pear-shaped don’t expect to go on a week-end pass. You’ll be joining me in the Tower of London.” I replied, “No problem Sir! All the figures check out and all systems are in place. Good luck.”

The firing crew accepted the Bearing Picket card and from the information on the card set the launcher to the right angle for firing and on the correct bearing. At precisely 16:20 the rocket was fired and seconds later we saw a bright flash as the dummy warhead exploded in the air about 100 feet above the target. All nuclear war heads are designed to explode above the ground.

There was an anxious wait of thirty minutes while the three survey pairs who had observed the flight with their theodolites calculated by Intersection the precise position of the burst. The results showed that the missile was bang on target. The young officer came up to me and thanked me for a job well done. *Pat Warn*

NORTH MORETON BOOK SALE

The North Moreton book sale will be held on Saturday 6th April, 10am until 3pm in the Church. As usual, thousands of books will be on sale, with all proceeds going to support the hall and church. Tea, coffee and homemade cakes will be available. Free entry and car parking.

Donations of spare books are very welcome. Email northmoretonbooksale@gmail.com or call 01235 818900, or 07908 314771 if you have books to give, and the organisers will happily collect them a few weeks before the sale.



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FROM OUR CANADIAN CORRESPONDENT

As usual, Vancouver weather has had a bit of everything this winter; torrential rain one week, a huge dump of snow the next, followed by balmy spring weather which got the bulbs all excited, only to be followed by seriously sub-zero temperatures which set them all back again.

Now in mid February, Spring looks as though it has sprung! There are tons of snowdrops and crocuses in bloom, and iris reticulata and Tete-a-Tete daffodils are coming out.

Other signs of Spring are that the local coyotes are breeding, with the accompanying warnings to keep cats in at night if you don't want them to be a meal for a hungry mother coyote and her cubs. However, this doesn't seem to bother the large flocks of Canada Geese who are currently fertilizing the cemetery grass with their droppings.

Another feature of almost-Spring is the appearance of the Vancouver Home and Garden Show at BC Place (where important sporting and music events are staged). This year Vancouver Master Gardeners invited me to talk about my favourite subject (you guessed it, composting!) on the Gardening Education Stage. My slot was immediately after our local celebrity gardener Brian Minter, who had to pause his talk while the very loudspeaker announced me as the next speaker ten minutes before the end of his talk! My audience was much smaller than his, but they were very keen! It's not quite Earls Court, but it spans four days and is well attended by the locals.

And this week I have my first gardening job of the year (a little gentle weeding and tidying), so hopefully the shoulder I dislocated in December will stand up to the strain.

In other news, Canada is introducing a scheme called Pharmacare that will enable older people to obtain free prescriptions, which at the moment cost a lot of money. However, to be eligible for this, I will have to submit a tax return, which is rather amusing at my age. As in the UK, dental care is also very expensive, and a similar scheme is hopefully being introduced, so I hope I will qualify. **Angela Hoy** (angelahoy23@gmail.com)

PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of Blewbury Parish Council's meeting: 7pm, **Wednesday 14 February 2024**, Melland Room, Blewbury Clubhouse.

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

The PC continues to be concerned by cars parking along the eastern edges of the Pound. We have agreed to plant a low hedge on the corner of South Street and London Road in order to stop cars from parking on this dangerous corner. Visitors to the Blueberry (and anyone else eroding the verges of the Pound by parking any part of their car on the grass) are reminded that this land is a village green space, and should not be used for parking.

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:

P24/V0249/PIP Adjacent to Upperton, Pilgrim's Way Permission in principle for residential development on the site. BPC objects on the basis of P1 of the NDP, which permits residential development within the built area of Blewbury. According to this policy the built area does not include agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement. The south side of Pilgrim's Way is overwhelmingly rural in character, with important views of the downland which is a key characteristic of the AONB. The houses immediately to the south and east of this small proposed plot were developed in 2015, a year before the NDP was made, when this policy did not apply.

P24/V0217/HH Collis Moor, Nottingham Fee Demolition of existing annexe. Erection of new single storey side extension. BPC has no objection.

Decisions from the District Council:

P23/V2746/HH 33 Bridus Mead Single storey side and rear extensions. Granted.

P23/V2653/HH 1 Bohams Cottages, Westbrook Street Single storey rear extension to replace existing, and alteration to parking area. Granted.

P23/V2635/FUL Land at the end of Coffin Way Construction of a single dwelling and associated external works. Refused. 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 PC meeting will be at 7pm on **Wednesday 6 March 2024**, in the Melland Room at the Clubhouse.

Autumn Leaves The dates for March 2024 Bingo Sessions in The Vale Room at Blewbury Village Hall, at 2pm are:- March 12th and 26th. For further information call Cilla Maguire (01235 851966). If anyone would like to join Autumn Leaves, please contact Cilla on the above number. We would welcome any new members to come and join us.

Astons Online's March event will be in Astons Village Hall (OX11 9EQ) on Tuesday 19 March from 10:00 to 12:00. We'll talk about the planned removal of landlines and their replacements as well as other 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. We're available for contact on Tuesday mornings between 10:00 and 12:00 and at Astons Freshers' Fair on 10 March 16:00 to 18:00 in Astons Village Hall (OX11 9EQ).

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, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays - 8.30 am - 12 noon and 2.30 - 5 pm. Wednesdays - 8.30 am - 12 noon.

VILLAGE DIARY for March 2024

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Monday	4	9.30-11am	Coffee & Kids! Vale Room	13
Wednesday	6	7 pm	Parish Council meeting, Melland Room	17
Saturday	9	10am-12pm	SB volunteering morning, Blewbury Nature Reserve	7
Monday	11	8 pm	SB Talk on Rewilding, Melland Room	7
Tuesday	12	2 pm	Autumn Leaves Bingo etc., Vale Room	18
Tuesday	12	7.30 pm	BlewShed meeting, The Shed, Recreation Ground	9
Wednesday	13	7.30 pm	Village Hall Trustees AGM, Vale Room	3
Wednesday	13	7.30 pm	Shakespeare for Beginners, Melland Room	3
Thursday	14	7.30 pm	Shakespeare for Beginners, Vale Room	3
Saturday	16	2-4 pm	Blewbury Spring Clean, Playclose & Bessels Lea	7
Saturday	16	8 pm	BVS Comedy Night	5
Wednesday	20	7.30 pm	Deadline for April Bulletin – Swallows, Church Road	
Sunday	24	10.30 am	Palm Sunday Village Service, St Michael's church	10
Tuesday	26	2 pm	Autumn Leaves Bingo etc., Vale Room	18
Sunday	31	Noon	Duck Race, Playclose	1
Sunday	31	3 pm	Egg Rolling, Chalk Pits	5,8

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 sent 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)

Please note that artwork is printed 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 over multiple months, you will be referred to the Advertising Manager to make the appropriate 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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