

GRASS

THE NEWSLETTER AT THE ROOTS OF THE GRAND UNION BENEFICE OF BLISWORTH AND STOKE BRUERNE/ SHUTLANGER, WITH GRAFTON REGIS, ALDERTON AND MILTON MALSOR

Rector's Letter

As I sit to write this letter, I am reminded that it was during Lent last year, Mothering Sunday to be exact, when the way of life we took for granted changed. I can remember standing with Peter in Holy Cross without a congregation, thinking that it would only be for a few weeks, a month at the most. The very next week the church buildings were closed, and we started to meet for worship on Zoom from our own homes. Who would have believed that we would be worshipping on Zoom a year later? I believe like so many that live streaming our worship is going to be part of the life of the Church in the future.

On 17 February, we come to the beginning of Lent, an important time in the Christian year and own spiritual growth; it's not a season to be taken lightly. This last year brought many challenges and new ways of being for us all. Lent is a good time to stop and reflect on the good that has come through the changes we have all experienced. I have reflected quite a lot on the structure of my day and week and how I use my time and gifts. What is important and what gives me energy, and what I do because it is a habit and always have done it. Lent is a good time to spring clean our inner lives in the way we do our homes.

Our Lent course this year will be held on line; for those that have ordered Pilgrims' Journeys, I will let you know when the books have arrived, and I will be in touch with the times of the meeting. For those who would still like to order a copy of the book, please let me know as soon as possible.

Due to the present circumstances and advice from the Bishop, we have decided that our worship in the Benefice will be online for the foreseeable future. Please join us Wednesday and Sunday mornings on Zoom where you will receive a warm welcome. If you know of anyone that does not receive the weekly invitation; and they would like to join in, please ask them to send their details to grandunionbenefice@gmail.com, and I will include them on the list. If you do not have access to Zoom; and would still like to part of our worship, you can always join in on your telephone.

Sunday worship will not always be a communion service; I would like to take this opportunity to try different approaches to our online service. I am always happy to receive feedback. Thank you for your prayers and support at this difficult time.

Peace and blessings, Richard

Useful Telephone Numbers for the United Benefice of Blisworth and Stoke Bruerne with Grafton Regis, Alderton and Milton Malsor

Rector: Canon Rev'd Richard Stainer, The Rectory, 37 High Street, Blisworth NN7 3B, tel 01604 857619.

Churchwardens of Blisworth: Mrs Fiona McKenzie, tel 01604 859541 and Mrs Angela Cheesbrough, tel 01604 858059.

Churchwarden of Stoke Bruerne: Mrs Christine Frost, tel 01604 862561.

Churchwardens of Grafton Regis: Mrs Jean Glanville, tel 01908 543463 and Lord Charles Fitzroy, tel 01908 542908.

Churchwardens of Alderton: Mrs Margaret Hall-Townley, tel 01327 811307 and Mrs Linda Dards, tel 01327 811265.

Churchwardens of Milton Malsor: Mrs Jane Treharne, tel 01604 858323 and Mrs Sue Bell, tel 01327 351043.

Towcester Community Food Update

Towcester Community Larder continues to provide food boxes to anyone who is not able to source enough food either due to economic, isolation or health reasons. Thanks to the Northamptonshire Community Foundation, our food is being provided free of charge by SOFEA MK, an organisation that works closely with Fareshare to rescue and redistribute hundreds of tonnes of food surplus to reduce waste.

Towcester Community Fridge has relocated to the Towcester Town Football Supporters Club on Islington Road (to work alongside the Larder). We continue to have many visitors but we'd love to see more people. This is open to EVERYONE and our key objective is to reduce waste so please come along! We are also a referrer to the Towcester Foodbank and provide vouchers to anyone that identifies themselves to us in crisis.

We have been overwhelmed with support from local tradesmen and businesses for renovating our room at the football club. We will be recognising all our supporters in our next update along with before and after pictures. We will be moved in by mid-February and plan to have a grand opening when COVID permits.

A further development this month is that I have registered 'Towcester Community Food' (incorporating the Fridge & the Larder) with the Charity Commission (awaiting approval). Our fundraising initiatives will be revealed in the next issue of GRASS. Watch this space! In the meantime, if there are any businesses that would be interested in sponsoring us for a month's rent, or to help with our kitchen renovation we would love to hear from you. My email is katieswain1@googlemail.com.
Katie Steele

NHS Care Packages

My lovely friend, Diane Howkins, is a Body Shop consultant and has been preparing care packages including hand creams and facemasks to ICU staff in Milton Keynes and Northampton.

If you'd like to support this initiative, I will be collecting donations for this cause. To give you an idea of cost, it's approximately £5 for hand creams and £4 each for lip protector and face masks.

Please email me on katieswain1@googlemail.com. Thank you!

Katie Steele



VILLAGE NEWS

STOKE BRUERNE



Pre-Christmas Floods

Many thanks to all those who came with sandbags, mops and buckets, and from Rookery farm, to the assistance of the residents of Rookery lane on 23 and 24 December during the flooding. Terry and Betty Richardson.

Village Hall

To Stoke Bruerne Parish Council, the David Blagrove Charity Trust and businesses and locals who helped raise the money for the village hall roof, we say a big thank you. If this roof lasts as long as the original roof, it will do well. Stoke Bruerne Village Hall Management Committee.

Stoke Bruerne Museum Update

In these strange and difficult times, the Canal and River Trust is still committed to developing the site at Stoke Bruerne to make it a special place that local communities can enjoy. Tourism, heritage and hospitality have been hit hard in the last year but investment into the site is still going ahead which will result in a great offer to enjoy all year round.



Key changes in 2021:

- local stories in the museum (spread over three floors) with some new displays
- scrapping admission fees so everyone can share the experience whatever their budget
- new coffee shop with locally sourced produce
- bespoke retail offer
- 2nd hand books (do let us know if you can donate any books to us)
- new volunteering opportunities (we'd love you to join the team)



What it could look like on the ground floor

Building works started on 18 January and will run until 26 March 2021. Noise levels will be monitored with no works starting before 8.00 a m or running later than 5.00 p m. Contractors will be using the car park for vehicles but the compound will be small and the welfare facilities will be located inside the museum building.

FK Restoration are the principal contractors - any issues during this time can directed to the site team:

Site Manager – Strip and Demolition Works - Ashley Hammond
Mobile: 07929 619467, ashley@fkltd.co.uk

Site Manager – Refurbishment Works - Jason Nolan
Mobile: 07944 549350, jay@fkltd.co.uk.



SHUTLANGER

Shutlanger Village Hall

As many of you will be aware, our lovely village hall, needs repair. Income from the hall has dropped dramatically because of COVID-19, and is currently closed. Consequently, there isn't much money in the bank so the committee has started to look at different ways to raise funds.

We have a new website - www.shutlangervillagehall.org.uk. Here you will find links to our JustGiving, AmazonSmile and Easyfundraising.co.uk pages. You can leave a donation at JustGiving, whilst AmazonSmile gives a small donation each time you shop. Easyfundraising.org.uk also gives a small percentage to the village hall when you choose and buy online from over 4,000 retailers.

Please consider helping preserve this lovely old building next time you are shopping. Many thanks.

Shutlanger Village Hall Management Committee Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Village Hall Management Committee will take place on Monday 29 March at 7.00 p m via Zoom. You would be very welcome to join us for the meeting. This is your chance to be voted on to the committee and to give your input about the future of the hall. Please contact Julie Holland, julie.holland@mac.com for your Zoom link. We look forward to seeing you. Shutlanger Village Hall Management Committee

Shutlanger Parish Council

The Parish Council met over Zoom as planned on 14 January. Due to illness we did have to defer quite a lot of business to the next meeting, including a fuller review of the parish plan that we had wanted to do in January. However we were able to look at the budget for 2021-22 as we have to let South Northamptonshire Council know what precept the parish needs for that year. In the event we decided to allocate money to those purposes residents had highlighted in their responses to the parish plan. These are the purposes where we believe that a very small body such as a Parish Council can have a positive role to play. We allocated £5,000 to the village hall repairs and maintenance in line with our pledge to match donations made by residents to these needs. It does seem likely that very generous donors will together contribute £5,000 that the Parish Council will then match. We hope this will put the village hall in a good position to address critical and urgent repairs from the spring onwards.

The playing field is proving very popular with residents and people coming in from nearby communities. We decided to allocate funds towards some more seating, improving the access that is currently over muddy ground and also towards adult exercise equipment. It's likely we will be able to generate a good level of grants to the latter once the pandemic finally comes to an end. We have also made a budget allocation towards maintenance of roads and pavements in the village although at this stage we do not have a good feel as to what these might cost. It will be a case of doing what we can with what we think is affordable.

We will fund these needs by not increasing the precept in 2021-22 and instead drawing on Parish Council reserves. Our reserves are healthy enough to allow us to do this certainly next year and depending on needs for maybe one or two years after this. Our next meeting is on 11 March and, as always, all are welcome to attend over Zoom.



GRAFTON REGIS

Grafton Regis has once again attracted the attention of the press, with an article about Jean, Keith and Harry Kathy and Kathy Finnegan becoming proficient at Tae Kwon-do black belts. An article appeared in a fortnightly publication called

'Yours'.



New Historical Village Trail



When weather conditions and Covid regulations permit, do come and check out Grafton's new historical village trail. Under the auspices of our Heritage Lottery Fund grant, we have produced new information panels for each of the village notice boards, which are located at the village hall, the church, the A508 end of Church Lane and by canal bridge 57.

The panels cover Grafton's history from the medieval Woodville period through Henry VIII's residence in the village, the Shakespeare portrait, the Civil War siege of Grafton House, the FitzRoy family, Dukes of Grafton, and Grafton characters from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The extensive church tower renovations have now been completed, and the information panels are part of the heritage element of the grant, which has also enabled us to create a heritage centre in the church.
Keith Harry

Margaret Colgrove RIP

Margaret passed away on Saturday 16 January; she had lived in Grafton Regis since 1956. Margaret was a very large figure in village life, was church secretary for many years and organiser of the Spinners and Weavers group. The family thank everyone for their kind wishes and support. There will not be a funeral service but a memorial service later in the year. We hope to be able to print a fitting tribute to Margaret next month.



BLISWORTH

Churchyard Maintenance

Despite the pandemic preventing us all from getting back to church as we knew it, maintenance work never seems to stop. The latest pressing issue we have been victim to is the very wet weather, which has caused a part of the wall between the churchyard and the Old Rectory to collapse. (See photo). The wall needs to be repaired as a matter of urgency to avoid further damage to the rest of the wall, but as ever, we need to raise some funds before the work can commence.

If you are able to make any contribution to this work, please get in touch with either me or Jon Murray for details of how to donate.

Thank you in anticipation of your support which is always appreciated.
John Smith, tel 07904 152682/ Jon Murray, tel 07460 617817.



Easy Fundraising

St John the Baptist Church has enrolled with Easy Fundraising to raise funds for the church. If you want to help, at no cost to yourself, please register at easyfundraising.org.uk with St. John the Baptist Church Blisworth as your chosen charity. Each time you shop online through their website at one of the thousands of retailers in the scheme the church will benefit from a donation paid directly to its account. The church has also registered with the Diocese for the new efficient giving scheme. If you would like to make regular contributions the church, please ask Helen Halson, halsonehelen@gmail.com for a form. The church receives 100% of your donation and any Gift Aid is paid more quickly than other means of giving. If you want more information please contact Jon Murray, jongmurray@btinternet.com or 07460 617817. Jon



ALDERTON

Church Cleaning Rota

February

Margaret Hall-Townley

Update on Church

For the time being, the PCC has decided that it would prefer not to hold services in St Margaret's Church; this will be reviewed on a monthly basis and depends on the Covid situation.

We are more than grateful for Henny Cameron who has built the church's website and has agreed to update it for us. You can view it on saintmargaretschurch.co.uk. We are aware that some of the content needs updating and we are working on this gradually.

As previously agreed, the lighting up of the church will continue until Candlemas, 2 February and we are very grateful to those who sponsored this, and to Roger for installing and removing the lighting.

Fundraising for the Church

Easyfundraising is being launched in an effort to bring a much-needed boost to our church funds as the situation is quite perilous; as an example, we were unable to pay the building insurance in a lump sum this year and have managed to agree to pay it on a monthly basis. By going through the website/app to order items from thousands of retail outlets, the church will benefit from a donation from the retailer; although this might be of a small value, it will all add up. Other churches in our benefice are successfully using the scheme too.

As an example, I have been using this site to order our online Waitrose shop; each shop has meant that 50p has gone into the fund; my daughter, who is an avid Amazon shopper, has already signed up as well.

Please feel free to share the link with your friends and family - the link to St, Margaret's Church is:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stmargaretsalderton/?invite=YMCJDN&referral-campaign=c2s>

You will need to add your name, email address and create a password.

Easyfundraising is completely free to use and it won't cost users anything extra as the retailer pays the donations, not you, the shopper. What's more, you won't need to change where you shop either as all your favourite retailers are involved, including Amazon, M&S, Eden, eBay, Argos, John Lewis, Dobbies, Waitrose, Holland & Barratt, Boots and many more.

You can get the easyfundraising app from the App Store or Google Play.

Please contact me if you encounter any problems.

Brian Patton, Treasurer Alderton PCC
Moat House Church Lane Alderton NN12 7LP, tel 01327 810250/07803 268047

Jams and Pickles in Aid of the Knight

We have a good selection of jams and pickles available for sale – all proceeds to go to the knight fund. If you are interested, prices are £2 for large pots, £1.50 for small pots and there are various items in our sale box for 50p each. Please contact Margaret Hall-Townley, tel 01327 811265, email magshall-townley@hotmail.com. Most of the produce is made from locally sourced fruit and vegetables and is made with love.

GENERAL NEWS

Road Post Office

Road Post Office (tel 01604 864993) will go back to reduced hours due to COVID-19. Please keep safe in these difficult times. The new timings from 2 January 2021 are:

Monday to Friday:	9.00 a m to 2.30 p m
Saturday:	CLOSED
Sunday:	CLOSED

We thank you for your support and wish you and your families a safe new year. Sam and Lucy

Notes from a Local Farmer

A belated happy new year to everyone, which I suspect will be met with a loud groan. It is not a pleasant world at the moment, but we must remain positive and optimistic. Life on the farm goes on much the same – as usual, controlled by the seasons. The wet weather continues, as it did last year. We currently have 700 ewes on stubble turnips; this is proving very muddy for them at the moment, although they don't seem to complain. We still have 100 or so store lambs which we are fattening and which should be gone to market by the time you read this. The last of the barley and wheat has been sold for January, which has resulted in the best price of the season.

We are now starting to get ready for lambing, having scanned in December. This year, we have 562 doubles, 117 threes, 150 singles and 20 barren ewes. This is satisfactory although the only problem is that they were all served within 10 days, which means we are going to be extremely busy.

So next month, I will keep you updated on our progress.

Robert Davy

News from The Old Mail

For events and happenings in the nearby villages: Cosgrove, Potterspury and Yardley Gobion, see the newsletter, The Old Mail, is available online at various websites: www.cosgrovevillage.co.uk; www.potterspurypc.org.uk; www.yardleygobionpc.wordpress.com.

How to Contact the Police

We no longer divide our villages between officers unless they are specifically sponsored by the village. Our team cover all South Northants villages and this ensures villages are covered across all shift patterns. If they have a query for a specific officer, it's best to mark it for their attention via an email and they will pick it up when they are next on duty.

999 – For a crime or incident in progress

101 – For non-urgent incidents

03000 111 222 – Direct dial Northamptonshire police

To Report online: <https://www.northants.police.uk/ro/report/>

Email for Towcester: neighbourhoodteamsouthnorthants-towcester@northants.pnn.police.uk

Your local officers are as follows:

PCSO Peter Firth, PCSO Charlotte Morris, PCSO Nicole Degg, PCSO James Herbert, PCSO Kev Thompson (Schools Liaison Officer)

For more local NPT information, visit the local policing pages www.northants.police.uk.



The Plough Barn Shop

The Plough barn shop is now open!

It's stocked with fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, cheese, freshly baked bread, cakes, wines, spirits and lots of locally sourced items as well as all essentials and treats too. Takeaway hot drinks are also available.

It's a safe place to shop with the following guidelines in place: compulsory masks, only two shoppers at a time, hand sanitising station on entry and pre orders can be made and placed straight into the boot of your car if you prefer.

The shop will be open from 12.00 noon to 6.00 p m every Wednesday to Saturday.



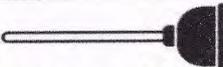
Alfred's Fruit and Vegetable Stall, Towcester

Alfred's fruit and vegetable stall is situated in the passage by Hartwells (formerly Elliots) in Towcester on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 9.00 a m until 2.00 p m for seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables.

You can order vegetable boxes or fruit and vegetable boxes at £10 and £15.

He is happy to do local deliveries – please contact him by email: Alfred.searle6600@gmail.com or on 078 949 90613 for details.



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Windows 7 has reached end of life, and it will no longer receive security updates; it is time to change.

I can upgrade it to Windows 10, but still keep the look of Windows 7; all your documents, pictures and programs will transfer as well.

Looking for a laptop? I have a number of refurbished laptops, prices starting from £150.

I repair laptops down to component level; ask for a free quote.

Contact Paul Dards on 07540 000844 or 01327 811265 or paul@dards.co.uk

PDC, Moorend, Spring Lane
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SNIPPETS:

When life knocks you down, roll over and look up at the stars.

Remember, you are not stuck at home - you are safe at home.

It is during the worst storms of your life that you will get to see the true colours of the people who say they care for you.

No one is perfect, that's why pencils have erasers.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF GRASS is 22 February 2021

If you can get any copy to us earlier than that it would be very much appreciated

Please send any copy to: Linda Dards, Moorend, Spring Lane, Alderton NN12 7LW tel 01327 811265, e-mail: linda@dards.net. **Could you please include your name & phone number with entries in case we have any problems.** If you would like to add photographs or drawings to your text these are welcome and can be supplied via email or as photos, and returned after scanning. Contributions by email are most welcome, we can accept most formats; please request a response from us on receipt – so you are sure that we have your submission. Word (any version) is preferred.



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