

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, it's a beautiful spring morning; I can feel the warmth of the sun coming through the study window, resting on my back, reminding me of the love of God. There are signs of spring everywhere in the garden, trees in blossom and splashes of colour from daffodils brightening up the landscape, all pointing to the resurrection of what is going on in nature after the long winter months.

As Easter approaches, we see other signs of the resurrection of returning to some everyday life we once took for granted, in the road map out of the restrictions placed upon us over this last year, being lifted. I feel there is a sigh of relief for many of us. Within the benefice, we have been praying and talking about when it would be the right time to start returning to our buildings for worship. I will write to church members in due course about these dates. Our worship for Easter will all be online by Zoom, and you are warmly welcomed to join us. Email me at grandunionbenefice@gmail.com if you would like an invitation.

Easter is central to the Christian faith. It was when God raised Jesus, which is the most incredible miracle there has ever been. If it weren't for this one event, we would not have heard of Jesus; this one moment in time has changed the course of many lives throughout the last two thousand years and continues to do so today.

This last year has brought many changes to the way we live, and many conversations that I am having at the moment are about how so many of us don't want to go back to how life was. We have an excellent opportunity to emerge from this last year as new people with a new purpose for life. Change is complex and can be terrifying; it's easier to stick with the familiar, but we are all called to be disciples of the living God, a Pilgrim God always on the move.

On the first Easter morning, we are told that the eyewitness had a range of emotions from being perplexed, terrified, amazed, startled, frightened to disbelieving. We all share these emotions on our earthly journey from time to time. Our living resurrected Lord's challenge is to put all our trust in Him and share the Gospel with everyone we meet. When we walk with Jesus like the first disciples, our lives will be changed forever, in the most beautiful, exciting way. If you are a regular church member or would like to know more about the Christian faith and transform your life, I look forward to sharing fellowship with you soon.

He is not here but has risen. (Luke 24 verse 5)

I would like to wish you all a Happy and peaceful Easter.

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.

VILLAGE NEWS



STOKE BRUERNE

Stoke Bruerne C of E Primary – 15 March 2021

We have now been back in school for a week. We have really missed seeing all of the children and to have them all back in school is wonderful and has enabled us all to return to a sense of normality, albeit under slightly different circumstances.

It has, of course, been lovely to still see some of the children across our Federation at our hubs at Gayton and Whittlebury, which were open for children of keyworkers. Staff across the four schools worked across the two school sites and have been admirable in their approach to many changes over the months. Teachers were still able to connect with children at home via remote learning and pupils rose to many challenges set by the teachers! Technology has really been invaluable; it has kept us all in touch and working with one another.

Staff are constantly working hard behind the scenes in school to keep a safe environment for all; infection control is of paramount importance. Following Government guidance, we are re-introducing physical education, which will be wonderful for the children and their personal and social development. A broad and balanced curriculum is planned which will focus on academic attainment and pupil well-being, support plans are being created where needed.

We thank our wonderful parents for the home learning support and for all the messages of kindness we have received. It is so good to get back into school!



Canal and River Trust

The Canal and River Trust would love to hear what you think about a possible next phase of improvements at Stoke Bruerne. We are putting together a bid for external funding with a range of partners and would really value your thoughts on what how you would like to see the site develop. Simply fill out the quick questionnaire on-line and we will do the rest!

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/StokeBruerne>. Jannette Warrener, Destinations and Attractions Manager, East Midlands mobile: 07825 843073, email: jannette.warrener@canalrivertrust.org.uk



Canal & River Trust, The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, NG24 1FB

Sign up for the Canal & River Trust e-newsletter. Become a fan on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter and Instagram.



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.

You need choose smile.amazon.co.uk and choose Shutlanger village hall to make a donation.

Sign up for Easyfundraising, then search for retailers, then the site redirects you to the retailer's website.

Neither of these sites cost you anything to use but the hall gets a donation.

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

Shutlanger Village Hall

Management Committee

Parish Council

The Parish Council met on 11 March using Zoom and we were pleased to be joined by two interested members of the public. Our agenda for this meeting was business as usual. We are monitoring the drains in the village, some of which have been blocked again by silt from the heavy rain we had earlier this year. Please let the clerk know if you see blocked drains and we can pass the message to (West) Northamptonshire Highways. Villagers' needs for support during the pandemic continue to be well served by the work of the foodbank and the Parish Council agreed that it can step back at this time from its previous active involvement. We want to improve access at the Main Road end of the alley running from Twitch Hill and

are proposing to replace one or more of the metal bollards at the junction with a gate that wheelchair and pram users can pass through easily.

Our playing field is being much enjoyed by our residents and people coming from further afield. At present there are legal restrictions on outdoor meetings and we do ask that people observe these when using the playing field. Also, please do not bring dogs anywhere onto the playing field as it must be a safe area for our children. To cope with how much use there now is, we are looking at putting a harder surface at the main entrance and the entrance to the play area as these have become mudbaths over the winter. The tree planting scheme is now complete and we will seed the wild flower meadow at the far end of the field soon.

With restrictions continuing, many of us are enjoying walking around our lovely countryside and using the public footpaths we are lucky to have from the village. If you do go for a walk, please don't go off the footpath onto private land. The public footpaths are well signposted and anything that isn't signposted, however tempting it looks, is not open to the public.

We are looking for residents willing to help us ready the draft Parish Plan for final approval by the Parish Council. The Parish Plan is heavily based on residents' responses, which so many of you gave us last year. The Plan informs the Council's work in developing the village and also in our relations with West Northamptonshire Council, for example in planning proposals that might not suit the character of the village, and in attracting grants and other funding to supplement the precept and that allow us to do much more to improve the village. If you would like to help us finalise the Plan, please contact John Scott, the clerk.

We are also looking at the issue of gas supply to the village. Many of us now use calor gas, oil, or electricity to heat our homes in the absence of a natural gas supply. Longer term it may not be possible to use any fossil fuel for domestic heating and we are interested in whether a gas pipeline could be extended to the village at a manageable cost, a pipeline that would allow us to use natural gas and eventually hydrogen to heat our homes. If you are interested in contributing to the discussion, please let the clerk know.

We set the budget at the last meeting and our reduced precept can be seen on the West Northamptonshire Council's tax bill for 2021-22 that has gone to all households.

Postal Votes for the Elections in May

All seats on West Northamptonshire Council, town councils and parish councils are up for election in May. At the moment it isn't clear what restrictions against COVID-19 will still be in place. Please register for a postal vote if you want to be sure of having your voice heard. You can register with South Northamptonshire Council for a postal vote online (search for 'ways to vote' on SNC's website) or by phone. If you do want to stand for a seat on Shutlanger Parish Council, please let the clerk know. Finally, we hope you can join us for the annual village meeting on 13 May; we have put a letter through everyone's door with more details on this.

Shutlanger Parish Council



BLISWORTH

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 to the church, please ask Helen Halson, halsonhelen@gmail.com for a form. The church receives 100% of your donation and any Gift Aid is paid more quickly than by other means of giving.

If you want more information please contact Jon Murray, jongmurray@btinternet.com or 07460 617817.

Thanks, Jon

Phil Cahill

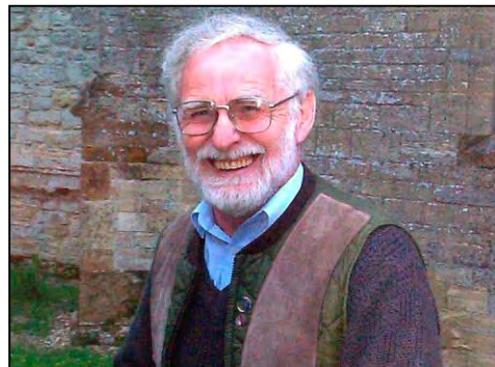
The Cahill family has been overwhelmed by the many expressions of sympathy and kindness following the loss of Phil. Thank you, all of you.

Phil arrived in Blisworth in 1969 when he was appointed head of art at what is now the Duston school. He joined the Blisworth Art Group, the Heritage Society and as a bellringer helped to raise money to rehang the Blisworth bells, adding a sixth bell in honour of George Freeston. He loved ringing in the various benefice churches until being diagnosed with Parkinsons, when he was unable to continue.

He enjoyed living in Blisworth and delighted in painting the Northamptonshire countryside and traditional canal ware. He designed the Blisworth tapestry and loved working with the artists and stitchers to bring it to fruition.

Sadly, Phil spent most of 2020 in a care home where he was taken following the evacuation of the hospital ward he happened to be in when the pandemic struck. He succumbed to the virus and passed away on 4 January.

Jenny



Open the Book

A few members of the OTB team have made a video- recording on Zoom of the Easter story, taken from the Lion Storyteller Bible for children.

For several years now the team has been going into schools within the benefice on a regular basis to read and act out Bible stories, followed by a very brief chat and a prayer. This has been greatly appreciated by staff and children who listen so attentively.

Due to Covid we have not been into the schools for about a year now, but we made a video of the Christmas story which Richard, our Rector, used for an assembly, and he hopes to do the same with the Easter story.

We hope and pray that it won't be too long before we are invited in person into the schools again.
Angela Cheesbrough



ALDERTON

Church Cleaning Rota Churchyard Rota

April
to 4 April
4-18 April
19 April – 1 May

Daryl Halsey & Julie Taylor
Doris Knights (Graham)
Martyn Mann
Dick & Carol Weston



Happy 60th Wedding Anniversary

On 1 April, long term residents of Alderton, Don and Doreen Allen will have been married for 60 years. They got married in St Mary the Virgin Church in Edlesborough, near Dunstable and we have heard that they returned to Grafton just after they were married. They had bought a new double bed, but, we understand, had not anticipated what a problem it would be to get the bed upstairs via a spiral staircase; they therefore had to spend their first night of wedded bliss on a mattress on the floor downstairs. They are firm favourites in the village and are always willing to help with whatever needs doing.

Happy diamond wedding anniversary, Don and Doreen!

St Margaret's Church

We are more than grateful to all who have volunteered to be on the church cleaning rota and also the churchyard rota. Even though the church is not currently open, it's important that the inside is kept clean in order to avoid a massive job when we do finally open the doors, and it's lovely to see the churchyard looking neat and tidy. Lots of people walk through the churchyard and I am sure appreciate it looking nice. Thanks also to Anna for compiling the rotas.

Day of Reflection

A number of ribbons have been attached to the porch gates of the church to mark the traumas of the past year and to remember those people who have suffered and died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Easter

We decided this year because the church is closed and it has been a limited and difficult year for everyone, to include all the village in the Easter traditions as far as we have been able to. Please accept our warmest wishes for a very happy Easter and let us all look forward to a better year. Linda and Margaret



A Breakfast to Celebrate the Summer Solstice

We are hoping, Government restrictions allowing, to hold a breakfast in the churchyard on the morning of Sunday 20 June. It's also fathers' day. More details in due course. This will be fairly early so will not interfere with family commitments and everybody is welcome to come along, and we are hoping that Richard will be able to be with us briefly prior to taking a service elsewhere in the benefice.

Stall for the Knight

We are planning to hold another of our little market stalls at the top of Church Lane on Saturday 24 April from 10.00 a m until 12.30 p m. There will be the usual array of interesting things to buy, and also cakes, biscuits, jams and pickles. Do come along and help us to boost funds in order to be able to mount our knight on his own tomb chest.

Local Pilgrimage



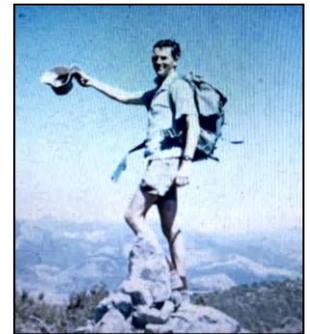
My name is Lulu Pelly and I love living in Alderton with my husband, Richard, and three black Labradors Tessa, Pansy and Liffey.

Since early January, I have been slipping and sliding, plodding and sometimes pacing the footpaths around Alderton. On Monday 29 March, I shall aim to complete the last mile of my challenge - that is a total of 481, which is the length of the Camino de Santiago from the Pyrenees in France, heading west across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela. My older brother, Michael, died from Covid 19 on 2 April 2020. His wife and daughter, asked me to join them in a challenge to walk the Camino in his memory and to help each of us to process our grief. In reality, I have walked around Alderton, Grafton Regis, Shutlanger, Showsley, Stoke Bruerne and Blisworth, and sometimes ventured into the wilds of Paulerspury, Pury End, Whittlebury, Cosgrove and Yardley Gobion, and occasionally walked to work in Towcester. Although I have lived in the area for 30 years, I am still finding new views and footpaths to explore which is so exciting! We are so fortunate to live in such a great part of the country.

My sister-in-law, who lives in Birmingham, has discovered new footpaths through the city and my niece has explored her area around Cirencester. We follow an app which logs our progress; it's called Conqueror and you can choose your walk anywhere in the world, setting your own challenge! Of course, your choice of completing the challenge is individual; you might choose to climb the stairs, cycle, run - you choose your preferred method. Perhaps it's not quite the same as walking the Camino with the little chapels and coffee stops on the way. It is, however, a relief not to be carrying an 8-10 kg rucksack on your back and not having to find somewhere to stay each night. I walked half of the Camino in 2009 as a thank you to God for my ordination, and told myself that I would go back to complete the whole wayah well!

My brother, Michael, was a retired school teacher; he was a great walker, thinking nothing of a 20-25 mile walk at the weekends and or cycling for 60 miles plus. He also owned a narrow boat and butty for 20 years, which he and his wife used to take school children on canal holidays - children who had no experience of the countryside and little opportunity to go on holiday. Walking by the canal helps me remember him and the good things he did.

Has the pilgrimage helped us? Grief is a process and we have heard it said many times that everyone grieves in their own way. We have all found the discipline of getting out rewarding in lots of ways. It has given us time to think about Michael, to smile at memories, to pray for others and to escape from emails and computer screens or negative news. The blessings have been immense. It might be a tiny thing like seeing a butterfly in February, a kingfisher by the canal, a brace of woodcock gracefully flying at dusk, roe deer out feeding on the stubble or a chance meeting or conversation with someone en route. There is always something delightful to enjoy on every outing.



With the permission of my sister-in-law and niece, I have taken the opportunity to raise funds for the Towcester foodbank and my Just Giving page is: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/luluschallenge>

Many of you support the foodbank as donors and as volunteers so I know what you do. We cannot thank you enough for all that you give so generously! The last year has been challenging for everyone and that goes for the foodbank too, as we had to move from our premises at St. John Ambulance Hall in Towcester to the Community Hub, using a delivery system, in a Covid safe environment, returning to the hall and face to face collection and now back to a combination of delivery and collection. 80% of our volunteers had to shield last March, but many more came forward to take up their work. It is, like most good things, a team effort.

Thank you for 'listening'! Lulu Pelly

(P.S. There is one downside which is the litter, but that is for another challenge and it is great to see the work recently done on Pury Road by the gatekeeper at Pury Hill Business Park).

Alfred Jones, RIP

We were sorry to hear of the death on 23 February 2021 at the age of 91 of Alfred Jones, who lived in Alderton for most of his life. Whilst doing some research, the following article, which appeared in the Northampton Mercury on 3 May 1946 came to light, and his widow has given permission for us to print it:

The Only Lad

Alfred is in the sad position of being the only "lad of the village." He is 16, and there is no one else near his age.

"People will not settle here until there is a school," said Mrs. Jones. "The children have to go to Paulerspury, two miles away, and that means they have to cross the Watling Street. The people in Alderton are nearly all old people. Young people go away as they grow up."

Mrs. Jones does not think the village can become a real community until electricity, gas, and water are laid on, and the place is brightened. Not enough people live there at the moment she says, and no one else will come until things improve.

The new housing scheme would mean in the main, moving old people into new homes, which some would not need for long. Many of the cottages have been condemned but they are still occupied.

In the sunlight of a spring morning Alderton, when I visited it (writes our reporter), was a "postcard" village of thatched, grey-walled cottages, dotted about with lilac in thickly-planted gardens, and old overgrown gates in hedges. What it would be like on a wet winter's evening is another matter.'



GRAFTON REGIS

Grafton Regis Monthly Update for the Village Hall and Church

I was thinking what have we done in the village this month, but then it occurred to me that members of the committees for the hall and church have not stopped working all through the pandemic.

We have been applying for grants for both buildings; the village hall is classified as a small business and has benefited from the grants available, and the church has also benefited from grants. However, in this case they have to be spent on improving facilities at the building and cannot be used to cover the annual running costs. The upside is that the grants do give us the opportunity to carry out further improvements at the church.

Now the snowdrops are over the primroses, violets, celandines and daffodils are all in bloom. The downside is that the weeds and grass are springing back into life so it is time to step up a gear and get back into the gardening, tidying up, splitting plants, sowing seeds, mowing the grass. However, after all the months shut up in our houses, we will be pleased to be outdoors enjoying the better weather.

Jean Glanville



MILTON MALSOR

Holy Cross, Church

Renovation works to the exterior of Holy Cross, Milton Malsor are now complete after months of work, revealing once again the tower and spire. Topped off in all its glory is the weather vane, fully restored and with its new gold leaf. The spire has been fully cleaned, repointed and over 50% of the crockets are new and carved onsite. The local starlings are loving their new individual perches! All in all, over 130 new pieces of stone have been cut or curved and installed all over the tower, along with a great deal of renovation works having been completed throughout the church. It has been a once in a lifetime project, ensuring the building is fit for future generations - all thanks to the incredible generosity of the late Miss Alexander and her bequest. We are truly grateful and incredibly blessed.



The works continue and now move to inside where there is a distinct lack of an organ at the moment! It is being stripped and is currently undergoing a full restoration, taking several months.

We are told that even on a small organ of this size, there will be upwards of 500 pipes contained within its frame. It is fascinating to talk to the craftsman who have dedicated a lifetime to this kind work.

And lastly, we look to the future. Our audio system is being enhanced into a complete audiovisual system, including the capability to live stream via cameras, and to project words and film onto a new concealed dropdown screen. All of which will assist greatly in our vision to engage with God's people across the community even more.

Peter Heffron

GENERAL NEWS

Community Larder

Do you want to help the environment and save food from waste? Do you like a bargain? Would you like to be involved in a community driven project? Then look no further....COME AND JOIN OUR COMMUNITY LARDER!



During lockdown, our Community Larder network has distributed approximately 33,000 food boxes to South Northants households that have needed support due to isolation, health or for economic reasons. This has saved over 233 tonnes of food being sent to waste.

Now that the roadmap is underway for emerging from the pandemic, our vision is to continue to reduce food waste and make a positive impact on the environment. We also want to continue to support people in our communities with affordable food, available to all.

Our larders, located in Towcester and Roade, offer membership to EVERYONE and operate at least once per week from each location. Full details of the sessions can be found on our website www.towfood.org.uk.

How do we differ from the Community Fridge and the Foodbank?

The Towcester Community Fridge will remain FREE to everyone, with short-dated food surplus being rescued from local supermarkets and businesses and distributed during regular drop-in sessions. The amount and type of food varies from day to day with each session operating until all the perishable food is distributed.

A foodbank provides emergency food to people in crisis. Non-perishable, in-date food is donated by the public at a range of places, such as schools, churches, and businesses, as well as supermarket collection points. It is then sorted into emergency food parcels to be given to people in crisis, along with support and advice.

The Towcester Community Larder is a membership programme that provides access to surplus groceries (store cupboard items and fruit and vegetables) at heavily subsidised rates. To secure a consistent supply, we subscribe to SOFEA, an

organisation that works closely with FareShare to distribute surplus food from supermarkets and businesses. They are a non-profit organisation run by volunteers. Membership is open to EVERYONE.

Please see <https://www.towfood.org.uk/larder> for details of how to sign up!

Experienced Carer Required

I am looking for carer support for my 96 year old father on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday morning from 9.30 a m until 11.30 a m.

The job would involve getting him up in the morning and helping with his personal care, (washing and dressing), and also preparing his breakfast. The candidate should have had experience of caring for the elderly, together with first aid training. I live in Alderton so a car owner would be necessary and references would also be appreciated.

Please give me a call to discuss further if you are interested on 01327 811827.

Jackie Grundon

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.



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SNIPPETS:

Loyalty is hard to find. Trust is easy to lose. Actions speak louder than words. Look out for the people who look out for you; loyalty is everything.

It's not what we have in life, but who we have in our life that matters.

Every day is a new beginning; treat it that way. Stay away from what might have been and move on. Don't let negative words or actions of others affect your smile. Decide that today is going to be a good day.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF GRASS is 24 April

thanks to Jackie Grundon for proof reading

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.