

The Villager

June 2017 Volume 46 No 5

The community newsletter for Mapledurwell,
Up Nately, Newnham, Nately Scures & Greywell

NEWNHAM OPEN GARDENS

SUNDAY 18 JUNE 2017

1:30pm to 5:00pm

Beautiful gardens Teas and homemade cakes Plants for sale

Start at the information tent on
the village green (RG27 9AH)

£5 gives access to all
participating gardens
(under 16s free)

Newnham is 5 minutes
from junction 5 of M3

Proceeds to community projects
Registered charity no: 1142129

JUBILEE CHOIR CONCERT

Following a sell-out performance of the Mozart Requiem in November, the Jubilee Choir's next concert will be in Odiham Church on Sunday 2nd July at 7pm and will include the Vivaldi Gloria, Zadok the Priest, and an organ concerto. The choir will be joined by soloists and orchestral players, with organists Jamal Sutton and Malcolm Archer (former organist at St Paul's). Some of the proceeds from this concert will go to the stained glass window appeal for Winchfield's 12th century church. The concert will last just over an hour and tickets are £15, available from Katharine Jane in Odiham High St, Merril Evans on 01256 702249 or on the door.

Diary dates

June

- 9 Up Nately Coffee Morning, Queen's Lace
- 10 Safari Supper
- 10 Greywell Summer Party, 5pm
- 11 Mapledurwell Treasure Hunt, 4pm-6pm
- 14 Maple Tea & Cake Gathering, Manor Court
- 18 Newnham Open Gardens, 1.30pm-5pm
- 24 Basingstoke Choral Society, Summer Concert, 7.30pm

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IAN

01256 701480

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imcs@hotmail.co.uk

Villager Contact Details

Editor: Stephanie Webb - 07789 860401 - StephanieWebbVillager@gmail.com;
Distribution: Robin Howard - 07799 664454;
Mapledurwell: Lorna Cuthill 354651;
Up Nately: Liz Preece 762059;
Newnham: Sue Turner - clerk.newnham@parish.hants.gov.uk
Greywell: Henri Mogg - henriettamogg@hotmail.com;

Mapledurwell & Up Nately

Up Nately Coffee Morning

Next coffee morning will be at Queen's Lace on 9th June 10-12. Call Claire for more information 760554. On July 14th we will get together on 14th at 2 Blaegrove Cottages, thank you Sherry, call 974103.



Tea & Cake Gathering

Maple's Tea & Cake gathering will be held on Wednesday 14th June, 3 p.m., at Manor Court, Tunworth Road and hosted by Malcolm and Camilla Douglas. Please phone Camilla on 321056 if you would like to come. All welcome.

Welcome

Welcome to Peter and Debra Dardenne who have moved into the Rectory.

Mapledurwell Treasure Hunt

By popular demand, another Mapledurwell Treasure Hunt will be held on **Sunday June 11th**, starting in the Church at 4.00pm and finishing at the Gamekeepers at 6.00pm.

Teams of any size accepted, with generous prizes for successful Hunters!

Please call Jane Stevens on 464235 to register your team.

PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Applications

17/01673/CONS (9th May) and **17/01670/CLB** (2nd May) Slades Bridge, Heather Lane, Up Nately. General repairs to Slades Bridge over Basingstoke Canal. To include repointing of brickwork, replacement of missing bricks, removal of vegetation, mortaring up of cracks, repainting of patters plates, repainting of parapet handrail. (Please note the decision on this application is made by Hampshire County Council.)

Applications pending

16/03715/VLA (6th Oct) 11 Aspen House, The Hollies. Variation of Section 106 agreement to allow sale of property on open market.

Applications granted

17/00614/HSE (26th May, reg 15th March) Hillcrest, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell. Erection of side and rear extensions, front and side porches, raised roof to provide additional accommodation, replacement chimney and replacement garage with home office/store above.

17/01262/HSE (25th May, reg 31st March) The Old Orchard, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell. Installation of two new sliding patio doors and formation of a new opening on the rear elevation.

17/01154/HSE (23rd May, reg 28th March) Brook Cottage, Frog Lane, Mapledurwell. Erection of single storey rear orangery.

17/00885/HSE (18th May, 13th March) Burrough Close, Greywell Road, Andwell. Erection of a two storey rear and side extension.

UNDER ATTACK

Last week, I was dismayed to read that experts are wondering whether our ash trees can be wiped out by yet another invading species, this time it's the Asian Beetle.

Apparently this invading beetle arrived here fairly recently, lurking in wooden crates shipped from the Far East. It seeks out weakened trees, lays its eggs and its larvae feed on the upper layers of wood before moving inside. Given that our trees are already susceptible to the devastating ash dieback fungus, we could become a target!

So what about the state of our ash trees here in our parishes? Are they thriving or could we soon see this half-inch-long beetle in our woods and gardens in pursuit of any trees that are beginning to wilt?

It might be a good idea to venture out and check our trees for signs of die back and map where it is happening. The website <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback> provides information on the disease and its recorded incidences in Southern England. The disease, named Chalara, causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. Once a tree is infected the disease is usually fatal. It was first identified in Buckinghamshire in February 2012.

Local spread up to some tens of miles may be by wind. Another pathway for the disease is movement of logs or unsawn wood from infected trees. Ash trees suffering with the infection have been found widely across Europe since 1992 when large numbers of trees were reported dying in Poland. Ash is one of the last tree species to come into leaf and by mid-June all healthy ash should be in full leaf and it is from that time onwards that we should be able to identify the unhealthy ones.

Ash is the third most common tree in UK and is easily identified by smooth twigs that have distinctively black leaf buds arranged opposite each other. The ends of their branches cluster upwards with several pairs of light green leaves. It is recognised as providing tough hardwood timber and has been used for years particularly for making tools and handles. Ash coppices well, traditionally providing firewood and charcoal.

Let me know if you suspect any infestation and we can investigate further.

John Maclean
Jkmaclean1@btopenworld.com
Local Tree Warden

NEW BASINGSTOKE ART CLASS STARTS SOON

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- 2.5 hours a week.
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POLICE UPDATE

Dear Residents,

I am seeking any information concerning a criminal damage to a wheelie bin in Blackstocks Lane which was damaged between the 3rd and 8th May 2017, if anyone can assist please give me a call direct.

We have also had other incidents which I just would like to make you aware of. On May 3rd a suspicious man was seen riding a pedal cycle and looking into gardens and homes in Heather Row, described as of Eastern European appearance but he did not stop, speak to anyone or seen to call into a house?

We have across the area seen an increase in the burglary of homes, on the 28th a house in Old Basing was broken into and a similar crime in Rotherwick on May 5th. In Hook several garages were broken into on May 9th 2017.

Whilst these crimes are not in our direct area, we do need to remain vigilant and please report any suspicious incidents you may see.

The Constabulary is also looking to communities to help set what your local Police should be doing and to ensure that we are working effectively in the community, we need you to tell us what issues are affecting you the most. One of our aims is to increase confidence in the Police; as well as to make your neighbourhood a safer place to live and work. All we ask is that you spare 5 minutes to complete this survey to give us a clear understanding of the issues that matter to you. We will use these results, along with Police and partner agency data, to set our priorities for the next three months. To take part please use the below website <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6W8CRVQ>

If you can assist within any information regarding these or other incidents in our area please give me a call.

Many thanks

Andy

Andrew Reid, Local Constable

01256 389 050

Mob 07768 776 844

andrew.reid@hampshire.pnn.police.uk

MAPLEDURWELL & UP NATELY VILLAGE HALL

HIRE THE VILLAGE HALL



Contact Caretaker Jayne Norman
on 474432

or check out the website at
www.mapledurwellvillagehall.com

A date for your diary

14th October, save the date for Village Social Event in the Hall



Nesting birds

Please avoid cutting hedges during the spring and summer months to help protect birds sitting on eggs and rearing their young.

The RSPB recommend that cutting hedges and trees is avoided between March and the end of August as this is the main breeding season for nesting birds.

Up Nately Safari Supper

This popular event will take place this year on Saturday 10th June 2017. For those of you who have not participated before the idea is a series of dinner parties taking place around the village. Each course is held in a different house, therefore giving you an opportunity to meet lots of people as you move from house to house.

The event will commence at our house Linbern in Heather Lane, where everyone can enjoy some nibbles, drinks and a chat before we all move on to various houses for the next course.

We would welcome any volunteers who would be prepared to host a course (including drinks), usually for 6-8 people including yourselves.

The event is free for those hosting, however for guests there will be a small charge. Recently this money has been donated to charity.

Please contact Hazel Ivory on 01256-762648 or email hazelivory@onetel.com if you are interested in joining us, we look forward to hearing from you.

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Newnham & Nately Scures

HART DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION



Regulation 18 Consultation – April 2017

This Draft builds on last year's 'refined options' consultation and prepares for the final 'Pre-Submission' document.

Consultation is open until 5pm on Friday 9th June.

How to comment:

- **online at www.hart.gov.uk;**
- download a response form and email planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk
- post to Planning Policy, Hart DC, Harlington Way, Fleet GU51 4AE

TIMETABLE

Pre-Submission consultation	Winter 2017
Submission to the Inspector	Spring 2018
LP Examination	Spring/Summer 2018
Local Plan Adoption	Late Summer 2018

Hart Draft Local Plan page 48 of 148

'GAPS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS

'158. The principle of Gaps is well established. Their designation aims to ensure that a sense of place is maintained for both those individual communities and for those travelling through the defined Gaps.'

'Policy MG6: Gaps between Settlements

'Development in Gaps will only be supported where:

'a) it would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of settlements; and

'b) it would not compromise the integrity of the Gap either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development.

'The following Gaps have been identified....

'ix. Hook to Newnham.'

Hart's Previous Local Plan identified 'Strategic Gaps' between larger, and 'Local Gaps' between smaller, settlements, hence the 'Hook - Newnham Local Gap'.

It is very good news that Hart has retained a 'Gaps Between Settlements' policy (thought it might indicated greater long term commitment to describe them all as 'Strategic Gaps'?).

While the strength of the Policy is arguable – and relative to all the other arguments which may be put forward – it has relevance and was given considerable weight by the Inspector in dismissing the Hop Garden appeal.

It was agreed at the Parish Assembly to urge all residents, plus Ward and County Councillors, to comment on Hart's Draft Local Plan by 9th June in support of Policy MG6 in its protection of the Hook - Newnham 'Strategic?' Gap. The Gap maintains the integrity of the individual settlements and protects Newnham's rural identity. **The Consultation document is short and asks only for specific comments on individual Policies.**

'West of Hook' is not included in the site allocation for housing in this Draft of the Local Plan. But until the Plan is adopted, at best 18 months away, Hart remains vulnerable to speculative applications as below.

Owens Farm Hook 'Illustrative MasterPlan'



(Note nominal houses shown)

Hart has issued its comments on the pre-planning Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report produced by Armstrong Rigg Planning on behalf of Wilbur Developments Ltd. Comments include:

'The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should consider the impact on any adjacent designated heritage assets and their settings... including....

'Newnham Conservation Area and the grade II listed buildings within it... Also whether development at Owen's Farm would harm an appreciation of the Newnham conservation area's rural agricultural setting.'

It now seems likely a Planning Application – with fewer houses (possibly 650) and more green space – will be submitted over the summer. Details will be circulated as available.

Parish Planning Applications New applications

17/01659/FUL (23rd May) Snipes Wood House, Scures Hill, Nately Scures. Erection of detached dwelling, landscaping and revised access.

Applications pendings

17/00619/FUL (17th Feb) Land to the rear of Nately Place, Scures Hill. One 6-bedroomed detached dwelling with garage and revised access.

16/03282/RET (amended 20th Jan, reg 15th Sept) Manor Farm, Blackstocks Lane. Continued use as a working farm with flexibility to welcome visitors for educational, leisure and therapeutic use (Class D1 and D2) with ancillary tea rooms and car parking (retrospective).

16/04600/HSE (12th Dec 2016) Well Cottage, Newnham Green. Single storey side extension and infill front extension, construction of front and rear dormer windows and installation of rooflights.

16/00097/OUT (13th Jan 2016) Land Adjacent to Oakfield Farmhouse, Scures Hill. Outline application for three detached dwellings, including access.

Applications granted

17/00224/FUL (27th April, reg 1st Feb) Highview Business Park, The Barracks. One 2-bed, one 3-bed and two 4-bedroomed dwellings, with access and landscaping. Amended scheme to replace that approved at 16/00742/FUL.

Applications refused

16/03850/FUL (11th May, reg 31st Oct) Land Adjacent To Nately Towers, Scures Hill. One 5-bedroomed dwelling with double garage and new access.

Appeals lodged

16/02187/FUL (lodged 8th May 2017) Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/17/3170845 Nately Scures House, Scures Hill. Three x 4-bedroomed dwellings plus garages including new access onto the A30, and landscaping. Previous responses to BDBC will be forwarded to the Inspector. Any further representations to the Inspector by 12th June.

16/01315/FUL (lodged 20th Mar 2017) Appeal ref APP/H1705/W/17/3169774 The Old House At Home. Change of Use A4 Public House to C3 Residential Dwellinghouse. Closing date for submissions was 16th May. Appeal to be held at Public Hearing Thursday 6th July 10am to 4pm. Venue tbc.

Hart applications

16/02243/CON (26th April) The Gate of India, Oaklands, Hook Common, Hook. Discharge of condition 5 – control measures; 10 – external lighting; 11 – acoustic fencing; 13 – refuse bins, and 14 – construction method statement, pursuant to 16/02243/FUL Change of use from Class A3 (Restaurant) to Class A5 (Hot Food Takeaway) with single storey rear extension with associated extraction and ventilation equipment.

17/00991/ADV (25th April) The Gate Of India. One externally illuminated fascia sign and one externally illuminated hanging sign.



OLD HOUSE AT HOME

BDBC Planning Officer's Report

The case officer's report was published on the website on 15th May. It confirms that BDBC's position is to Refuse the planning application for Change of Use to Housing.

'2.2 Had the LPA (Local Planning Authority) had the opportunity to determine the application before the lodging of the appeal against non-determination, it would have refused the application.'

PUBLIC HEARING

The Public Hearing for Red Oak Tavern's Appeal will be held on 6th July 10am to 4pm.

This hearing will be our one and final opportunity to argue our case for the pub to the Inspector. The bigger the turnout the better.

The Parish Council asked for the hearing be held in the Clubroom with evidence this is a suitable venue. However, the BDBC case officer believes it should be at the Civic Offices to 'ensure impartiality between interest parties' and arranged accordingly.

The Parish Assembly voted unanimously for a Clubroom hearing so residents could more easily attend.

With thanks to everyone who emailed the Inspector in support, the request has been re-referred to BDBC. The Parish Council has put the request directly to Mel Barrett, Chief Executive, and Matthew Evans, Head of Planning & Infrastructure, with the backing of Ward Councillors.

Hopefully we'll know the outcome in a couple of weeks. But wherever it is, turnout is important.

We can completely overwhelm the Clubroom; overwhelming the BDBC Council Chamber might be more of an ask but we can arrange lifts and car shares etc.

The Inspector will visit the Old House after the hearing so we need to make sure we have a reception committee for him there too.

More information will be circulated prior to the Hearing.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PLANNING OFFICER'S REPORT

The following extracts are selective but indicate that in several areas BDBC's conclusions should strengthen our case to the Inspector.

'6.1.11 It is clear from the 85 public representations and the 'Save our Newnham Pub' petition undersigned by over 1200 individuals, that the change of use of the OHaH to a dwelling is strongly resisted. The LPA also acknowledges that the Parish Council and local Ward Members are also strongly against the potential loss of this Public House... The views of the local community as established through public consultation clearly demonstrate that there is a strong desire for the building to be retained as a pub.

'6.1.14 ...there appears to be no substantive evidence to show that the number of competing pubs within the surrounding area is too great for the level of local demand which seems to exist in the immediate and wider area.

'6.1.15 ...the ACV (Assets of Community Value) status is a material consideration in this assessment, as it has been demonstrated to the LPA that the pub is a valued community facility.

'6.1.23 As described within the Parish's Business Plan and clear from representations received, local residents wish their pub to be inclusive, welcoming, providing quality food and drink, catering for all sections of the community.

'6.1.28 Newnham Parish Council formally instructed Planning For Pubs Ltd who produced a detailed representation against the planning application. This representation has been accompanied by a report providing a "critical commentary" on Fleurets' viability report and to "give an alternative approach to the future viability of the Old House at Home". This report is not a formal valuation, however its author concludes that in their opinion, the Public House is viable.

'6.1.32 The Parish Council representation asserts that the local area has not seen a significant economic downturn or dramatic loss in customer base and that "an emerging groundswell of community initiatives and community operated pubs is now evident". ... this does correlate with the rise in micro-breweries across the Borough and the region as a whole, and the reported increase in demand for quality beers, wines and spirits which is also well-documented nationally.

'6.1.43 An updated working Business Plan was submitted on behalf of the Parish Council to the LPA in Sept 2016, which identified the repair and refurbishment of the pub as a key component... Whilst the actions contained within this Business Plan are dependent upon the acquisition of the building, it does demonstrate to the LPA that there is a strong and realistic desire by the local community to improve, repair and refurbish the pub in order to enhance the offer available. The Parish Council expresses the view that under a community-ownership model with a live-in landlord couple, the OHaH could be a viable proposition. This option was not discussed by either the Appellant or the LPA's appointed consultant.

'6.1.52 Given the overwhelming public response to this application for change of use, there is clearly a strong degree of support for the pub's retention. Through the efforts of the Parish Council and CPSG (Community Pub Steering Group) to date, there appears the necessary commitment within the community to seek ways and means to achieve this goal.

'6.1.54 To that end Newnham Parish Council and the CPSG has commissioned a Working Business Plan which outlines how a loan available to the Parish Council via the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) would in the words of the Parish "secure the future of the OHaH as a thriving rural business and social hub of the village".

'6.1.55 It is clear that such a plan is not without risk and substantial upfront costs. Therefore this business plan cannot be regarded as definitive. However, the Parish Council and CPSG already seem to be demonstrating a degree of commercial endeavour and appear flexible to those likely changing variables over time.

'6.1.56 The LPA cannot say with any certainty that there wouldn't be a reasonable prospect of the OHaH becoming a viable business in the future... The LPA cannot overlook the aspirations and imagination of a community led venture of the type promoted by Newnham Parish Council and the CPSG... Furthermore, there are a range of other organisations like CAMRA and the Public Loans Board which are likely to lend support and assist in practical ways to bring about a reasonable prospect of viability under an alternative model....'

Greywell



VILLAGE HALL

To hire the Village Hall please contact isabel.pound@hotmail.com or alibarbarter@aol.com. For Marquee hire (Greywell residents only) contact Debbie Scott; Tel 01256 701624; deborahjscott1@gmail.com

PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Applications

17/01195/CA Street Record Hook Road Greywell Hook Hampshire. Horse Chestnut - Crown lift to give 4m clearance over Woods Lane, field access and Hook Road.

17/01099/PREAPP 1 Manor Farm Barns, The Street Greywell Hook Hampshire RG29 1DB. Erection of a garden studio.

Applications Granted

16/02836/HOU Southfields The Street Greywell Hook RG29 1BZ. Creation of new L-shaped extension to existing modern element at rear of property with hipped and pitched clay tile roof, to include new kitchen, with an additional timber-framed lean-to addition to provide utility room, boot room and porch. Refurbishment of existing dressing room and bathroom at 1st floor level in modern extension. Reinstatement of previously removed timber sash window at 1st floor level at rear of modern extension. Removal of roughcast pebble dash cladding to front of house on south west elevation. Introduction of traditional clay tile-hanging on section of front elevation between Southfields and The Old Vicarage.. Minor alterations and refurbishment to ground floor rooms adjacent to new kitchen extension including the removal of historic brickwork beneath the existing rear sash window to allow for new doorway. Minor alterations to first floor room layouts including the alteration of modern timber stud walls and reinstatement of previously removed arched door. Provision of new family bathroom and en-suite shower room to rear bedroom.

10TH JUNE 2017

GREYWELL SUMMER PARTY

5 PM

LIVE MUSIC
COCKTAILS
BARBECUE FINE DINING
SPLENDID LOCAL ALES
KIDS SUPERHERO FANCY DRESS
DANCING
KARAOKE COMPETITION
AMAZING PRIZES
MIDNIGHT FEAST
ADULTS £10 CHILDREN £5
PRICE INCLUDES COCKTAIL AND FOOD

IN THE FIELD BEHIND
THE FOX & GOOSE

TICKETS ON SALE AT THE FOX & GOOSE FROM 12TH MAY

The tickets for the Greywell Summer Party on 10th June are available for purchase. They are priced at £10 for adults and £5 for children, with family tickets (two adults and up to three children) at £25. They include food, a drink and all the entertainment as shown in the attached flyer. You can buy them from:

- (1) one of the members of the organising committee (see below),
- (2) the Fox & Goose.

James Pound (Weston House, The Street: james.pound@hotmail.co.uk)

Susan Sampson (1 Dorchester Way)

Nick Cross (Bryntirion, Deptford Lane)

Anita Cole (Woodlands, Deptford Lane)

Paul Barker (Greywell Mill)

BASINGSTOKE CHORAL SOCIETY

Summer Concert at Douai Abbey

PETITE MESSE SOLENNELLE

Rossini

Saturday June 24th, 2017 at 7.30pm.

Basingstoke Choral Society
Piano Mark Kinkaid
Conductor David Gibson

Wine and strawberries, included in ticket price, served from 6.00pm.

Tickets: £7, Under 16's £5 from Newbury Coin Exchange
0845 5218 218 or online at: www.coinexchange.co.uk
Booking fees may apply.

www.basingstoke-choral.org.uk

advertisement

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Church Notices

'Journeying together, we worship God and serve the community'
www.united-parish.org.uk

Mid-Week Holy Communion

We next meet in the warm and welcoming home of Lady Nell at The Dower House in Greywell on Thursday 8th June at 11 am. We have a traditional service, with a chance to discuss the gospel reading, to offer our own prayers and then to enjoy coffee, cake and conversation before we go home! We'd love you to join us – and if you would like to hear more about it, or would like a lift, please contact Rev Linda Scard.

Lent Lunches

Our Lent lunches this year raised a total of £795 for the Help Hoima in Uganda. This charity is supported quite widely throughout Odiham Deanery and has supported many different projects over the years from building and running an orphanage, building accommodation next to the maternity clinic for midwives, building a boarding house for girls so that they can attend school, planting trees as part of a sustainable growth programme, and many others.

Our grateful thanks to Lady Sara Allenby, Julie Kentish-Barnes, Sarah Hooper, Monica Wardrop and Juliet Wauchope for being such wonderful hosts.

Diary dates in June:

11th June Pet Service at Greywell, 4.30 pm

13th June Benefice Council, Odiham, 7.30 for 8 pm

14th June Newham VCC, 8 pm

20th June Up Nately VCC 6pm

28th June PCC meeting 8pm

Church Services

June 4th

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Nately Scures
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	Mapledurwell
11.00am	Holy Communion (CW)	Greywell

June 11th

8.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Up Nately
9.30am	Family Service	Mapledurwell
11.15am	Matins	Newnham
4.30pm	Pet Service	Greywell

June 18th

9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Mapledurwell
11.00am	Matins	Nately Scures

June 25th

8.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Newnham
9.30am	Family Service	Up Nately
9.30am	Morning Prayer (said)	Mapledurwell
11.00am	Morning Service	Greywell

Special Church Services in June

4th June Benefice Pentecost Celebration, St Mary's Herriard, 7 – 8.30pm
A service of informal worship, prayer and teaching for all ages, including anointing with oil for healing. All welcome.

11th June Pet Service

Please come along to the Pet Service in Greywell at 4.30 pm. Lots of fun and room for everyone!

Church Notices

'Thy Kingdom Come Beacon Event', Winchester Cathedral, Sunday 4 June, 7 – 8/30 pm

Tickets are FREE and available for both inside and outside the cathedral and can be ordered via www.eventbrite.co.uk. Book early as tickets went very early last year. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby will be with us in the cathedral that evening.

He is inviting people around the world to join in this global prayer movement, and is calling on Christians to pray that people might come to know Jesus Christ during a focussed time between Ascension and Pentecost from 25 May to 4 June – a period of nine days called a Novena. If you would like to join in at home and would like a specially produced prayer booklet to guide your prayer time during the Novena, please contact Revd Linda on 01256 704835 or linda.scard@btinternet.com

Focus 2017, Somerley Estate, New Forest, 24 to 30 July:

A group from across our Benefice is going to join people from other churches for a week of fellowship, worship, and teaching. We'd love you to join us! Our Benefice will have its own camping area with our own marquee for a place to hang out together and share meal times. We plan to have BBQs, camp fires, kids and youth work and space to play, and so much more. Accommodation is in tents or caravans, or you can stay in local B&Bs/hotels. To find out more go to www.focus.htb.org or contact Revd Linda on 01256 704 835) or linda.scard@btinternet.com

Food Bank Basingstoke

Our churches continue to support our local Food Bank and each has a box in church to collect items which are collected regularly and taken to Basingstoke.

Letter from the Benefice Ministry Team

Pentecost comes round again at the beginning of June—with a Benefice-wide service at Herriard at 7pm on 4 June. Being old-fashioned, I am happier calling it Whitsuntide, the old English name recalling how new Christians used to come to church for baptism wearing white garments. Pentecost is the Greek name (meaning fiftieth) for the Jewish Feast of Weeks on the fiftieth day after Passover. People were then invited to give a free will offering of produce to God at a sort of early harvest festival. It was here, fifty days after Jesus had been crucified, that his disciples had that extraordinary experience when the Holy Spirit came upon them “like the rush of a violent wind”.

I think all of us find this a little puzzling. Who is the Holy Spirit? How does he show himself in the modern world? There's a story in the Old Testament which I think helps. Around 600BC God's people were in a mess. They had tended to forget about God. Nebuchadrezzar (or however he spelt himself) had overrun the land, and the cream of the people had been led away captive over the desert to exile in Babylon. The people had lost their liberty, and they had lost their land. Had they even lost their God?

Then the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a desert filled with dry bones—all that remained of God's people. In the vision God said to the bones, “I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life”. The Hebrew word for “breath” also means “wind” and “spirit”, and as God breathed his spirit upon the dry bones there was a wind and a rattling sound as the bones began to come together, and as his breath entered them they came to life and stood on their feet. What had been lifeless and useless became a vast army. You can read the story in Ezekiel, chapter 37.

The Holy Spirit works today in much the same way, only with a different sort of drama. Before he was crucified, Jesus promised his followers that he would pray God to send the Holy Spirit as a gift to be with them for ever. The Holy Spirit can and will enthuse us and energise us and encourage us and enable us, as he did them. He is there for the asking, and puts the sparkle into life, as countless generations have found throughout the ages. In the Bible the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the new Christian church, beginning at Pentecost when the disciples, a useless and dispirited bunch, rather like those dry bones in the desert, were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and at once became new people, full of life and enthusiasm. What happened to them can—and does—happen to us.

Peter Moore

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