

The Letcombe Register



Issue 187

March 2021

VILLAGE DIARY

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1  <i>Return of garden waste see website</i>	2	3 <i>Book Buffs 8pm Zoom - for code click here</i>	4	5	6	7
8 	9	10	11	12	13	14
15  <i>Parish Council Meeting 8 pm For Zoom code click here</i>	16	17 <i>Gardening Club 7.30pm on Zoom Code for paid up members only</i>	18	19	20	21
22 	23	24	25	26	27	28
29  <i>Return of garden waste see website</i>	30	31				

* Most Events shown in the Calendar must be booked in advance, and could, currently, be changed at short notice. Please check the details before attending.

To submit items email:
Register@oldstableyard.co.uk
(They will generally appear in the order they were received.)

Past Registers are available to view, along with much more information, on the Village Website:
www.letcomberegisp.org

IF YOU ARE NOT **ALREADY** ON THE VILLAGE EMAIL LIST AND WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE, NOT JUST THE REGISTER, BUT ALSO UPDATES ON LOCAL ISSUES, DELIVERED DIRECT TO YOUR INBOX, PLEASE CONTACT THE PARISH CLERK: LETREGISPC@GMAIL.COM

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Message from the Parish Council

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 15 March, 8pm. You are all welcome to attend, just contact the Parish Clerk in advance and you will be issued with the Zoom joining details. Also if you have any items you wish to raise please let the Clerk have details in advance. Sadly we are not as entertaining as Handforth Parish Council but we can demonstrate a committed team of Councillors working for the benefit of the Parish!

Good news this month with the Covid-19 vaccination programme having a significant impact in controlling the pandemic, Councillor Light has provided the following explanation for the percentage success figures that are constantly being referred to –

The news media frequently report that a COVID Vaccine is a number of percentage effective. This means the number of people in every one hundred that will be completely protected by the vaccine from getting COVID. For example, if a vaccine is 70% effective then 70 people in every 100 will be completely protected. Those who are vaccinated but do not develop full protection are also more likely to develop mild disease or no symptoms if they catch COVID.

All in all whichever vaccine you have had, or will have, they are all proving a significant success in lessening the effects of the virus.

With the latest government Roadmap announcement enabling a stepped approach back to a more normal lifestyle, we are expected to adhere to the following Stage One advice,

From 8 March-

- All schools and colleges will reopen
- University students can return for practical courses. There will be a review by the end of the Easter holidays for all other students
- Face coverings are recommended in class for secondary school students and also for parents and staff in primary schools
- Wraparound childcare can also return for vulnerable pupils and where it is needed for parents or carers to go to work, support groups or to seek medical care
- Two people from different households can meet outside for recreation, which can include "a coffee on a bench"
- One nominated person can visit care homes, but will need PPE, a lateral flow test and to "keep physical contact to a minimum"

We are expected to adhere to the following Stage One **Lockdown Rules-**

- Stay Home – only leave for work, essential shopping, exercise or medical appointments
- Exercise allowed outdoors once a day, in your local area. You can exercise with your household, support bubble, or one other person
- All schools open, with outdoor after-school sports and activities allowed.
- Two people can meet outdoors to socialise eg to sit down for a coffee, drink or picnic.
- Care home residents are allowed one named regular visitor with whom they can hold hands.
- **No household mixing indoors or outdoors unless in your support or childcare bubble**
- **Non-essential shops, leisure and entertainment venues remain closed**
- **Pubs and restaurants closed but takeaway food permitted.**

(P.T.O)

As ever we are very grateful for everyone adhering to the rules, and we are on hand with a team of volunteers if you need any help. Please contact letcomberegis.virusupport@btinternet

From 23 February, The Beacon in Wantage will become a Covid-19 testing site for public-facing workers and volunteers who are not displaying symptoms. Find out more details via <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/.../the-beacon-in.../>

On to more local matters. The arrival of the better weather which has enabled us all to enjoy the magnificent display of snowdrops throughout the village, has also meant an increase in building and building improvement projects. Roadways through the village are often very narrow and there are significant bends to negotiate, so please if you are having any work done please ensure vans etc. are safely parked and not causing a hazard to other road users or those using the footpaths.

The PC is pleased to confirm that, after many months of negotiations, (and specific thanks to the Cllr Benton for her persistence), regarding the flooding at Bablakes a scheme has been approved to alleviate the issue. The County Council will be undertaking the necessary engineering works during April. Elsewhere in the Register you will find exact details (page 11), but please be mindful that the lower road to Wantage will be closed from 19 April to the 23 April between the hours of 8am and 5pm. You may wish to plan your journeys via Windmill Hill during this period.

Now onto a HUGE thank you to Rob Andrews who took it upon himself to clear back the path from Letcombe Regis to Wantage. This voluntary effort has been greatly appreciated by the many using this pathway for their regular exercise. THANK YOU Rob.

For those of you walking in the village you will have noticed the volume of water rushing through the Letcombe Brook and its tributaries. Many of us are fortunate to have these rare waterways running through our gardens and Mark Bradfield of the Letcombe Brook Project has provided a timely reminder to riparian owners and others on how to keep these water flowing cleanly and free of litter.

Litter Problems

There seems to be a lot of litter ending up in Letcombe Brook and its tributaries at the moment. Please ensure your waste and recycling bins are closed and any trade waste is securely stored, in windy weather it can end up anywhere. It can be very difficult to remove from the Brook and is dangerous to the rare wildlife it supports. There have also been complaints of dog poo bags not being taken home, but left on the BBOWT reserve. Please take your dog waste home with you, not everywhere can have a dog waste bin. Dog poo bags should never be left in the countryside but in a nature reserve is particularly careless as well as illegal.

If you are lucky enough to live by the Brook, please ensure garden waste, compost heaps and manure piles are not located near the banks as decaying organic material affects oxygen levels and can kill fish.

For the majority of us this reminder does not apply but remains as useful advice.

Work will soon begin on the Millennium Green to clear dead and overhanging tree material. The dates for the work will be communicated via the village email once finalised. Please take extra care in this area when the works take place.

Elections are due to take place in May this year. These do not directly affect us. However if you are interested in volunteering to help please download an application form from <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/local-democracy/elections/working-elections> or just www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk for further information.

Finally 'The Census is Coming on Sunday 21 March.' You should all have received a card giving information inviting you to look out for an invitation pack in the post. This will show you how to complete your census or you can find more information at www.census.gov.uk. You are legally required to complete the census, with your answers protected by law and kept confidential so please put this important date in your diary.

Jeanne Lapsley
Chairman
Letcombe Regis Parish Council.

Covid Update from VOWH

The VOWH have been given details for the Four-step roadmap produced by the Government. They have also issued some handy graphics for guidance. Please find the graphic for Step 1 (March) below. If you wish more detail on the 'cautious easing' of lockdown there is information aplenty [on the government website](#).

STEP 1: 8 March

- Schools and colleges are open for all students. Practical Higher Education Courses.
- Recreation or exercise outdoors with household or one other person. No household mixing indoors.
- Wraparound childcare.
- Stay at home.
- Funerals (30), wakes and weddings (6).

29 March

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors. No household mixing indoors.
- Outdoor sport and leisure facilities.
- Organised outdoor sport allowed (children and adults).
- Minimise travel. No holidays.
- Outdoor parent & child groups (up to 15 parents).

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200 Club results

200 Club Draw — No 12		March 2021
113	Betty SHARP	£50
86	Catriona GALBRAITH	£25
121	Dianna WADDINGTON	£15
195	Chloe BODEN	£10
89	Alison ROBINSON	£5
Special Draw:		
125	Paul CAMPION	£25
79	Graham THORNER	£20
150	Sheila REITER	£10
105	John CLURE	£10
173	Stephen MIKA	£10
162	Thérèse CLARKE	£10
58	Iain McCOUBREY	£10

200 Club Renewals: For those of you who have either not yet renewed their number, or have never purchased one, then please contact Ian Taylor on 764677, or email letcomberegis200club@gmail.com to get details of how to buy a number.



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Yoga with Beth will return in April.

Tuesday's in the Village Hall
0945 - 1045 (13th, 20th, 27th).



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HCPC registered, MBDA**

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COMPUTER PROBLEMS?

CONVERSION TO WINDOWS 10?

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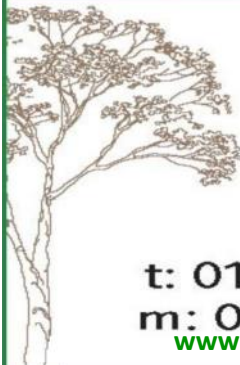



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New Beginner Classic Mat Pilates Zoom Course

Mypilatesflow will be coming to Letcombe Regis Village Hall in May once restrictions lift on a **Wednesday afternoon**.

In the mean time I am offering a 4 week online course starting on **March 10th** from **2.30-3pm**

£20 for the **4 week** block. Each session will be accompanied by an individual PDF for you to use at home. This could be an ideal time to prepare for this live class. Class size is limited to **8** and booking is via my website. No experience is necessary- you will be taught how to find neutral pelvis, engage your core and how to use lateral breath. I look forward to welcoming you soon!

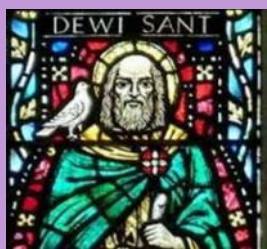
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Saint of the Month - St David

Register editor Francesca kindly agreed to include Saint of the Month when lockdown started last March and, with churches closed and many of their activities curtailed, there wasn't so much to report from St Andrew's. The first article appeared in April with St George and meandered through various saints, some well known and some obscure. With the possibility of restrictions

gradually easing, and a whole year's worth of saints completed, it seems a good time to call a halt.

So (handkerchiefs at the ready) this will be the last. And who better to celebrate in March than Saint David of Wales, Dewi Sant. (Before supporters of that other major saint for March, Saint Patrick, complain – he gets a mention, too.)

The grandson of the king of Ceredigion, Dewi was born in Myfyw, present day St David's. Legend has it that St Patrick was also born near here and that he foresaw the birth of Dewi in around 520AD. He was the son of a holy lady called Non and it is said that a famous preacher came to visit her when she was pregnant and found himself unable to preach in the presence of her unborn child. This was taken as a sign that the child would become a wonderful preacher, dwarfing all others.

He did indeed grow up to become a famous preacher. On one occasion as he was preaching to a large crowd, a white dove settled on his shoulder. The crowd surged forward to see this more closely and Dewi was in danger of being crushed. At this, the ground underneath him rose up and became a hill. The Welsh historian John Davies wrote that "one can scarcely conceive of any miracle more superfluous" in that part of Wales than the creation of a new hill.

He established several monasteries, not only in Wales but also in Brittany (Welsh and Breton are linguistically very similar.) His monastic rule was very ascetic: the monks should pull the plough themselves and not use animals. They drank only water and their diet should consist solely of vegetable and bread sprinkled with salt. (He later relented and allowed them to put honey on their bread and is credited with developing bee keeping in Wales.)

It is for his use of vegetables that he is perhaps best known: the soldiers of the ancient British king, Cadwaladr, were about to fight their traditional enemy, the Saxons. With no distinguishing uniforms, it was difficult to tell, in the midst of all the mud and gore, who were your friends and who were your foes. Dewi Sant advised the Welsh to wear a leek in their caps and being able to make out who was on your side gave them the advantage.

In 1346, when the Prince of Wales, Edward the Black Prince, defeated the French at the Battle of Crécy, Welsh archers fought bravely in a field of leeks. As a reminder of their bravery and loyalty, the Welsh began to wear a leek in their caps every St David's day. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Fluellen reminds the king of this: "If your Majesty is remembered of it, the Welshmen did good service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps which your Majesty knows, to this hour, is an honourable badge."

Although the purists will wear leeks, daffodils are also acceptable.

Though the year of his death is not certain, tradition holds that it was on 1 March, which is the date now marked as St David's day. The monastery is said to have been "filled with angels as Christ received his soul". In his last words to his followers he told them: Brothers and sisters, be joyful, keep the faith and do the little things that you have seen me do. "Do the little things in life" ("*Gwnewch y pethau bychain mewn bywyd*") is today a popular Welsh saying.

Time to wear a leek, sing joyfully, eat teisen bach (Welsh cakes) but, unlike St David, perhaps wash them down with something other than water.

Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus !



Happy St David's Day !



Issue 187

David Johnston, MP

I'm trying to get everyone to complete my Grove Station Survey by midday on 1st March. I've been campaigning for Grove Station to reopen since I was elected and the purpose of the survey is to show the level of local support and give the Government an indication that it would actually be used if it was reopened – so please complete it if you haven't yet!

In the Armed Forces Bill Debate recently I was able to highlight our constituency's contribution to the country's efforts – not just in being home to institutions like the Defence Academy at Shrivenham and the 11 EOD and Search Regiment in Didcot – but in service by some of my predecessors, too. As most of you will know, when the seat was Abingdon the MP was Airey Neave, who had a proud record of service in World War 2; his predecessor was Ralph Glyn, who served in World War 1 and was awarded a military cross.

We were having the debate because since 1688, the consent of parliament has been required for the raising and keeping of a standing army. In modern times, this means that every 5 years parliament is asked to give consent to an Armed Forces Bill, without which there is no means to ensure service personnel obey orders. The Government used the Bill to do other things such as update the Service Justice System, extend the use of posthumous pardons for abolished sexual offences and further enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant in law. The latter means local authorities will have to have due regard to service in decisions they make about health, education and housing – and rightly so.

I take a particular interest in the armed forces as my dad served in the army for 18 years. The army has of course played a key role in our superb vaccination efforts – at the time of writing we have passed the Government's 15 million target, which is a remarkable achievement in such a short space of time. From volunteering several times I have seen first-hand the fantastic efforts of our medical staff and volunteers – and the relief local residents feel when they have their first jab.

I recently became one of the Conservative Environment Network's Net Zero Champions. What this means in practice is I will be campaigning for nature-based solutions to help tackle climate change, including stopping the sale of peat for use in horticulture, protecting and improving our blue carbon assets and undertaking a national capital audit. More on this in the future – and some other campaigns.

While I am not doing face to face meetings at the moment, I am still doing telephone/Zoom surgery appointments – to book one of these or contact me about something else, do email david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk

Book Buffs



The next meeting of the Book Buffs will be held via Zoom on Wednesday 3rd March at 8pm.

We shall be discussing *'The Green Road'* by Anne Enright and also the alternative *'To Kill a Mockingbird'* by Harper Lee.

The new library book is *'Wide Sargasso Sea'* by Jean Rhys, which will be delivered to you.

Please return *'The Green Road'* to the blue box outside Blandy's Barn as soon as possible.

Photographic Club

The Letcombe Photographic Club April subject will be: **'Pets'**.

The deadline for submission is the 20th of February.

Please send your images (max 2 per resident) as an attachment to stevemikarics@gmail.com



Please use ONE of the following formats for your image - Bitmap (.bmp), JPEG (.jpg, .jpeg), PNG (.png) or your own camera's format. The March 'A close up' photos be found on page 7

“Close-up”

The subject for April is - “Pets”.



Skeletons - Loretta Light



Iris Reticulata 'Harmony' - Jane Prior



Euphorbia - Jane Prior



Close up in the Churchyard - Loretta Light



A Labyrinth of Flowers - Tony Prior



The Awakening - Michael Price



Split second snapshot - Kristine Hitchcock



The Letcombes Conservation Group

The magnificent display of snowdrops on the village banks will soon be replaced by spring daffodils, but those walking the field paths this month might find their gaze drawn upwards by the cascade of song from skylarks. The male birds sound jubilant as they announce the coming of spring and out-sing their rivals to attract females for mating. From our ancestors, who would have paused on their Chalk ridge hillforts, henges and barrows at the welcome sign of the passing of winter's gloom, to poets and composers, the skylark has captured the human imagination. George Meredith's wonderfully evocative poem that begins, '*He rises and begins to round, \ He drops the silver chain of sound*' gave Ralph Vaughan Williams the title for his well-known piece of classical music, *The Lark Ascending*. John Clare's depiction of a country scene anthropomorphically imagined young hares '*listen to its song, and smile and fancy*' while Percy Bysshe Shelley mused on the skylark as a '*blithe spirit*'. To another English romantic poet, William Wordsworth, the skylark was both an '*ethereal minstrel*' and an inspiration, '*Up with me! up with me into the clouds! \ For thy song, Lark, is strong, \ Singing, singing \ With all the heavens about thee ringing, \ Lift me, guide me till I find \ That spot which seems so to thy mind!*'



Apart from their song, skylarks are inconspicuous birds relying on soft, brown-flecked plumage as camouflage against farmland. They seem to burst vertically from the ground in complicated song-flights of 160 to 460 syllables of a narrow frequency range that last for up to half an hour until becoming a black speck against the sky reaching as high as 200m before descending. They sing also from perches in trees or on fence posts. Skylarks nest on the ground and often begin to breed in March having up to four broods by continuing into high summer, each of three to four eggs. The young become independent after only two weeks. (Photo credit: Edmund Fellowes, BTO.)

In past eras skylarks were regarded as a delicacy; the price of skylarks was recorded since the reign of Edward I. A dozen skylarks could be bought for the same price as one mallard, or a hundred for the price of one Great Bustard or a crane in 1695. The birds were caught for the table by dragging nets across fields at night. The Victorians liked to keep skylarks as songbirds, though skylark shooting was still a popular sport using either live birds or mirrors as decoys. The record bag of birds at a single mirror was over 1,000 birds in one day.

During recent times skylark populations have faced other challenges. In winter, crop stubble and fallow fields provided weed seed and spilled grain, but with the reduction in over-wintered crop stubbles and hence grain availability, plus the use of more efficient herbicides meaning fewer weed seeds, researchers have observed some skylarks eating more green shoots of winter-sown cereals. In addition, earlier nesting has been noted as autumn-sown crops are generally too tall and dense for skylarks to nest later on in the season. It appears that skylarks have adapted to farming changes but sadly their population numbers have not yet stabilised. Since a widespread decline identified from the 1970s, the skylark has become symbolic of the recovery of the farmland environment and is now a Red List species of conservation concern.

Letcombe Regis Open Gardens

Open Gardens is a biannual event for Letcombe Regis. Due to the pandemic we were forced to cancel the event for 2020 but thanks to the kindness of Letcombe Bassett, gardens opening is being rolled over and will be held in Letcombe Regis this year. Assuming that the recently announced route out of lockdown occurs the event will be held on 4th July. We would like to include some new gardens and would be delighted to hear from residents who are considering opening their gardens. Anyone interested please email me (paulb@public-health.ucl.ac.uk) before 31st March. In addition, the Village Hall will be open and we are looking for volunteers to demonstrate their culinary baking prowess and helping with teas and coffees. Again please let us know whether you would be willing to assist. More details of Open Gardens will follow as we get closer to the date.



Paul Batchelor



Garden waste update

(as of 11th Feb taken from the [VOWH website](#))

Dear Garden Waste customers

We have good news for you – we are able to restart our garden waste collections from next week (beginning 15 February). Please share this news with your neighbours and your friends and family in the district.

If you still have your real Christmas tree, as a garden waste customer, we can take it on your garden waste collection day. If possible please cut it up and put it inside your bin. If you do not have space or cannot manage to do this it can be put out at the side of your brown bin.

The crews will be working hard to complete the rounds and we are expecting more garden waste bins to be put out than normal, so please bear with us.

Please ensure all the garden waste fits into the bin with the lid closed. If you can't fit everything in the bin, please keep anything extra back (except Christmas trees) until the next collection.

We had to delay the restart of the service as many of our bin crews were off sick or were having to self-isolate due to COVID-19. While we are pleased to say that we now have enough crew members to complete the rounds we are still working on tight staffing levels and cannot rule out more disruption if those levels dip suddenly as they did before.

Our usual fortnightly collection with a one-collection pause at Christmas, normally delivers 25 collections per year. On top of that we provide double collections on the extra garden waste weeks in Spring and Autumn, which are in the weeks beginning 10 May and 8 November. This means we normally provide more collections than is set out in the agreement we have with you for the garden waste service.

Now we're restarting the service, we are confident we will make the 20 collections a year in our agreement, so nobody should be out of pocket.

Please note that we are not taking on any new garden waste customers at this time to focus on fulfilling the service for existing customers.

In the meantime, anyone who is not a garden waste customer can dispose of garden waste at one of Oxfordshire County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres. These sites are open but please check their [website](#) for opening times and any restrictions, particularly Covid-19 restrictions.

Thank You

Thank you to those who have done such a wonderful job in clearing the path to Wantage, Rob Andrews and his other helpers. They have cleared it all the way to the allotments not far from Ickleton Road. It had become very mucky in places and the verges had grown in towards the centre. My wife and I are regular users of the path which has become particularly popular since the arrival of the Great Bustard. It is now a pleasure to use it again without having to wade through muddy puddles.



Mike Price

Also thanks go to the lady from the village who has collected the litter on the verges on the road to Wantage. Over the last couple of months there have been a lot of takeaway MacDonalDs coffee mugs, odd considering there isn't a MacDonalDs locally.

Patrick Cable-Alexander



TRAFFIC REGULATION NOTICE
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT, 1984

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, that the Oxfordshire County Council

TEMPORARILY PROHIBITS THE USE OF AND WAITING ON THE HIGHWAY BY ALL MOTOR VEHICLES

- LOCATION:** Letcombe Regis, Unnamed Road known as Bablakes House Road
- REASON:** To facilitate drainage maintenance works
- DURATION:** Starting on 19 April 2021
 The anticipated completion date is 23 April 2021 (date included). This will operate between 08:00 and 17:00 (Traffic Regulation Notices cover a maximum of 5 consecutive days.)
- ACCESS:** Limited access will be maintained for emergency service vehicles and for frontages within the closed section of road, subject to the progress of the works

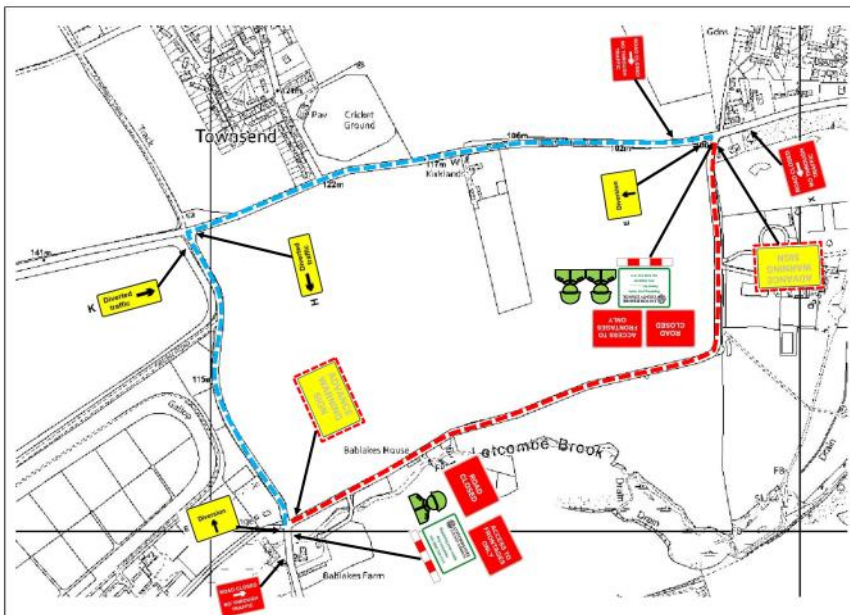
The "No Waiting" restriction means that wherever there are in place yellow "No Waiting" cones, you will not be able to park vehicles on the highway.

SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: via Windmill Hill,, B4507 Ickleton Road and vice versa

Jason Russell

Jason Russell, Corporate Director – Communities

Date: 22 February 2021



A	ROAD CLOSED	2	T	ADVANCE WARNING SIGN	2
B	ROAD AHEAD CLOSED				
C	Diversion		U		
D	Diversion				
E	Diversion	2	V		
H	Diverted traffic	1			
J	Diverted traffic				
K	Diverted traffic	1			x3
R		2			
		2			
W	ROAD CLOSED NO THROUGH TRAFFIC	2			
X	ROAD CLOSED NO THROUGH TRAFFIC	1			
Y	ACCESS TO FRONTAGES ONLY	2			

Letcombe Regis
Bablakes House Road
 Highway Drainage Improvements

Advance Warning Sign Details (T)



Tennis is back

We are so please that Tennis has been cleared to restart, from 29th of March providing an opportunity for all members to get well overdue exercise that is so important after a long boring wet winter.

All Outdoor tennis courts will be able to open including singles and doubles social play, 1:1 coaching and formally organised activity for groups, including formally organised group coaching.

For those on our Coaching programmes, NTA is in the process of organising and will shortly be in touch to confirm start dates.

The courts from the 29th of March will be available with no restriction on who you play, with single or doubles, however government social distancing rules will still apply :-

- All courts to be pre-booked online.
- No hugging, kissing, hand shake or high 5's (sorry)
- Use your own rackets and balls, leave the nets up.
- Use the provided Hand Sanitizer before and after play.
- Clean the key pad and handles with the provided wipes
- If there is someone on the courts shout to find when their session is ending, and stand well away from them (> 2 meters), while they exit.
- Do not play if you feel unwell / have a temperature.
- At all times STAY ALERT & follow all the Rules.

Membership FEES 2021-22

Next seasons joining fees will be due commencing April and the gate code will be changed on the 10th of April.

As members have lost so much access to courts this season, we have applied for a Covid support grant to enable us to discount the 2021 fees, but as yet we do not know. If unsuccessful we will hold the fees as last year at £90 per family etc.

Once we know we will email all current and past members with confirmation.

Richmond Letcombe Regis Village Shop is now open to the general public and Village residents.

The Lodge Shop will be reopening from Monday 8th February 2021.

Monday - Saturday 10.00-15.00.

Sunday - Closed.

Masks must be worn at all times and hand sanitizer used before entering the shop

One person in the shop at a time, with social distancing.

The Café will remain closed, but pre orders of Sandwiches/Paninis/Baguettes can be placed before 12.00 and picked up no later than 1.15pm on 01235 774789.

Contactless payment preferred.

Please note this will be reviewed on a weekly basis.

The Lodge Cafe will remain closed however takeaway coffee/latte/hot chocolates etc will be available.

Freshly baked bread, milk,

Gourmet meals and other essentials will be available.



Friends of the Letcombe Valley Community Nature Reserve

The Cattle Egret that was observed through January and February 'hanging out' with the three Little Egrets in the



Reserve and on the fields to the east towards Warborough Road seems to have departed, but should it reappear it is easily distinguished (on the right in the photograph by Mark Bradfield) from the similarly sized Little Egret by its shorter, yellow beak. In the Reserve a Woodcock was seen and a Goldcrest heard in February; along with the Great Bustard and Cattle Egret, Letcombe is fast becoming a go-to place for bird watchers with long camera lenses and offers plenty for residents to observe quietly! The otter that is frequenting the upper reaches of the

brook and the bats that will use the new boxes put up in the Reserve are more difficult to observe, but it is good to know that such a variety of wildlife is present.

As the days lengthen and the temperatures rise, early spring flowers are appearing. Already the leaves of bluebells and dog's mercury are showing through the grass, cuckoo-pint leaves are unfurling and lesser celandine flowers packed with pollen are attracting queen bumblebees. Watch out for the blackthorn in the hedges sporting masses of small, starry-white flowers that look especially fragile amongst their thorny stems before the leaves appear. Early spring flowers are vital to pollinating insects such as bees. Bees have been referred to as 'workhouse pollinators' since without them it would be difficult to support global human and animal populations as all the plants that rely on bees for propagation, including fruit and vegetables, would be severely reduced in number or even become extinct.

There is just one species of honeybee in the UK, mostly in the care of beekeepers such as those in the hives on the edge of the Reserve, though some wild colonies do exist still. Twenty-five species of bumblebees are known in the UK and live in nests of a queen and 50 to 400 worker bees. Normally only the queens survive the winter and are emerging now to find a food boost to keep warm with very few honey stores remaining. Bumble bees may become aggravated and sting more than once as, unlike honeybees, their stingers remain intact. In contrast solitary bees, of which there are more than 244 species, are not aggressive. The females lay eggs in underground or cavity nests, leave a store of pollen mixed with nectar for the developing larvae and cap the incubation cells. The new generation of solitary bees fend for themselves and will emerge later in the spring.

Bee populations are in decline and sadly many modern bred plants do not provide the pollen and nectar needed to sustain them. Fortunately many common native flowers and hedgerow plants are rich in these nutrients. Consider growing some wildflowers in your garden such as daisies, red and white clover, agrimony, birdsfoot trefoil, chicory, clustered bellflower, cornflower, red campion, ragged robin, purple loosestrife, teasels, yarrow or Welsh poppies.



A useful spring flower spotter, particularly for children, produced by the Wildlife Trusts is available online at: [sflowers.jpg \(3508x2480\)](https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/sflowers.jpg)

[wildlifewatch.org.uk](https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk). Rather than picking posies of wildflowers for Mother's Day as in previous decades, observing the delicate nature of each flower species and learning to leave them for wildlife, and for others to enjoy the colour they bring to the landscape, will maintain the vital biodiversity.



Issue 187

Letcombe Regis Village Hall and Recreation Ground Trust

With the recent announcement by the Government, it looks like the Village Hall should be able to reopen for at least some users at "Step 2" from 12th April. Then the majority of users, such as exercise classes will be allowed to start again at "Step 3" from 17th May, as long as the Government deem it safe.

Outside Sports, such as Tennis and Football will be able to restart at "Step 1" from 29th March, and it is expected that the Cricket Season will be able to start as planned at the end of April.

We have had a busy time after the Government announcement with enquiries from both existing and new users keen to book the Hall, although sadly some people have had to take the decision to cancel their bookings because they occur before the expected final "Step 4" on the 21st June. We continue to offer full refunds to those who have either had to cancel, or have just decided that their event is not practical to hold.

Although last year's AGM was delayed because of Covid, I expect this year's AGM to take place either as planned in May, or possibly in June, but a decision on that will be made nearer the time.

If you have any questions, or points you would like to raise about the Village Hall or Recreation Ground, then please either contact myself, or one of the other Trustees.

There wasn't a Trust meeting in February, the next one is on March 16th.

Richard Taylor
Chairman, Letcombe Regis Recreation Ground and Village Hall Trust

Letcombe Sports and Social Club



The Sports and Social Club are very much looking forward to reopening for all the Members, whether social or sporting. It does appear that we will have to wait until the 17th May before we are actually allowed to sit inside though. The committee will take a view on when it is practical to open, and when we do, boy is there some catching up to do!

For those of you who have already joined as Social Members, you will have had the email about the AGM on Monday 15th March. A few have already said they will attend, and you will get Zoom details before the meeting. The membership year runs from June each year, and currently the fee is set at a very reasonable £12 per person per year. There aren't any plans to change this fee, but this will get confirmed at the AGM.

The S&SC Committee and Members are very excited that planning approval was granted on the 5th February for the extended patio and new patio doors. If you've not seen the plans, then feel free to search on the Vale Website, or just click this link here - <https://data.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P20/V3168/FUL>

The expectation is that the improvements will be completed before we reopen, weather permitting. Feel free to contact any of the S&SC Committee, or the secretary (letcombesportsclub@gmail.com) if you are interested in finding out more, or becoming a member.

We will also be keen to repeat the extremely successful and enjoyable "Pizza at the Pavilion" events which were held last year, so watch out for news about those when they are organised.

Richard
Secretary, Letcombe Sports and Social Club



The Bells and Ringers of St. Andrew's, Letcombe Regis - Part 1

The origins of our six bells are outlined in the table below:

BELL	BELL FOUNDER	DATE	WEIGHT		
			Cwt	Qrs	Lb
Treble	James Wells of Aldbourne	1805	3	0	0
Second	James Wells of Aldbourne	1805	3	3	0
Third	Henry Knight of Reading	1620	4	2	0
Fourth	Oliver Corr of Aldbourne	1726	4	4	0
Fifth	Joseph Carter of Reading	1599	6	0	0
Tenor (in A, 35 inches in diameter)	Henry Knight of Reading	1621	8	0	0

The present oak frame was installed by Mr Frank White of Abingdon in 1907. An Ellacombe chiming apparatus was erected by John Taylor and Co. from Loughborough in about 1934. This mechanism allows one person to chime all six bells by pulling successively on six cords, each cord being attached to a hammer which then strikes one particular stationary bell. 'Proper' ringing involves a team of ringers, one person per bell pulling on a rope causing the bell to rotate 'full circle' and being struck by its clanger dangling inside the bell. There are excellent videos on YouTube demonstrating these two different techniques.

Very little documented evidence about our bell ringing predecessors at St. Andrew's has come to light. Fred Humphries (a sign writer, painter and decorator born in 1891) wrote down some of his memories of his life in Letcombe. He was taught to ring by the Rev'd J M Latham and he recalled ringing for the wedding of the daughter of squire Stephen William Silver (about 1907?). Miss Silver became Mrs Sinclair and after the wedding all the bell ringers were invited to the celebration and given champagne and a money gift.

Mr Ernest Stanley (born in LR in about 1905) once chatted to me in the allotments in the early 1980s. He had been a member of the ringing team but the Rev'd Griffiths (here 1918 to 1937) had objected to the ringers walking out of church and not attending the service. The ringers refused to go to church and disbanded!

Glyn Oliver (born 1929 and husband of Myra) who lived and attended church all of his life in this village could not recall any full circle bell ringing until the 1970s. As a choir boy he used to operate the Ellacombe chiming apparatus. Before or around 1970 Jim Finch, the portly landlord of the Greyhound Pub, tried to establish a band but without much success. I (Anne Williams) came to the village in 1971 and was asked to ring as I had learnt in Somerset in 1955 at the age of 12 and had rung until my marriage, but I had two small children with another on the way so I couldn't help out.

Patrick Manning (born 1925), who learned to ring in Wantage and then moved here, established a band from about 1973 to 1976. The team included his wife and daughter (Jean and Liz), Keith Benn, Shirley Haines and Mildred Needham. The bells were in need of attention, were heavy going and the team disbanded.

The bells were eventually rehung in 1979 at the cost of £840 and they were dedicated on St. Andrew's day, Nov. 30th, that year. Refreshments were served after the service and anyone who could brave the ladder was allowed up to see the bells. Then followed renewed efforts by the PCC to create a new band. Peter Davies, tower captain of Wantage, said he would teach learners in his tower and some went for a while, but no new band was successfully created. In 1982 I was approached once more and I agreed to give it a go. On Wednesday evenings Gregory Venn and Andrew Parker (17 year olds) from Wantage used to cycle over to practice with me, my three children (Derwyn, Bryan and Juliet) and other village children including Rob and Joanne Andrews, Emma Jelinska, Matthew and Becky Jones. We formed a new band and I was appointed tower captain. By Nov. 9th 1983 we were proficient enough to ring for Sunday services which we did from then on and also weddings. We rang half-muffled for Remembrance Day and that year we started the tradition of decorating the ringing chamber and having a New Year's Eve party there. We played charades and consequences as games and Mrs. McCallum always left a box of chocolates on the stairs beforehand. We rang the old year out half-muffled and then at midnight we rang in the New Year with 'open' bells. We rang on the evening of Prince William's birth on 21/6/82 and on the afternoon of Sat. 15/9/84 for the birth of Prince Harry. Between the years 1982 to 1990 I trained at least 17 young people to take the place of those leaving the village with their families or going on to college or university. In addition to those above others included Graham Christian, Lorna Coleman, Heather and Ian Coombes, Nicholas Drew, Kate Eden, Susan and Linda Watts (identical twins) and Christian Sawyer. Eventually our numbers dwindled to four and as there was then, as now, a dearth of children of a suitable age in the village willing to be trained, we reluctantly ceased to ring.

Anne Williams, February 2021.



Letcombes Gardening Club

Topical Tips

March heralds the arrival of spring and with longer days, lots of beautiful spring flowers and the prospect of restrictions easing there is much to look forward to. It is also the month when work in the garden starts to really ramp up.

Lets tackle those flower borders first. If you still have perennials and grasses that haven't been cut down then now is the time to give them the chop. You can also lift and divide any clumps that are getting too big or out of shape. Hostas should be divided before they come into leaf. You can also plant new perennials this month. I am now going to suggest something to you that I never get round to doing myself! Some perennials will need support to stop them flopping and it is best to do this early as any support put in once they have shot skywards never looks as good. Some decorative poles with string crisscrossed between them works well.

Make sure you keep an eye open for weeds starting to grow in your borders and whip them out as soon as possible. They often seem to get a head start on your treasured plants! Also watch out for slug damage on new shoots and take whichever is your preferred action to limit this.

Moving swiftly on to shrubs, if you have any cornus or salix with colourful stems then you should cut these right back now. You can also prune late flowering shrubs like buddleja, leycesteria and hydrangea paniculata. You can also prune campsis, winter flowering jasmine and summer flowering jasmine as long as it's pretty hardy in the position in which it is growing. If you are considering pruning summer flowering jasmine then just remove a couple of stems at ground level. Leave laterals otherwise you may be left with no flowers this season!

Lets have a brief look at fruit and veg. You can plant out your early potatoes now, following on at intervals with the second earlies and maincrop. A little bit of advice though. Don't plant out more than you can protect from frosty weather later on! You can also get on with planting first your shallots and then your onion sets.

We are really into veg sowing season now and this and next month there are almost too many for me to mention so I advise going through all your seed packets and sorting them by sowing month so you don't miss the boat.

Not much on the fruit front but do keep an eye on your strawberry plants and have fleece handy. If they start to produce flowers and we get a frost the centres will all go black and you'll lose the strawberries.

Well I think I've rambled on for long enough now so lets all get out into the garden and enjoy the nicer weather and the brighter times to come!

Gardening Club

The gardening club has another Zoom talk this month on Wednesday 17 March at 7.30pm. Helen Picton from Picton Gardens in the Malvern Hills will be talking to us about asters; or symphiotrichum and eurybia as some of them are now more inconveniently called. I'm sure Helen will elucidate on this!

To attend a Zoom talk you have to be a member of the garden club at an annual cost of £10. Do join us if you can. All our Zoom talks have been very entertaining and successful.

THE GREYHOUND INN

LETCOMBE REGIS · OXFORDSHIRE

TAKEAWAYS NOW AVAILABLE

Friday evenings Pub Classics 6-8pm

Order by midday Friday

Sunday Roast Lunches 12-2pm

Order by 10pm Saturday



**Please visit our web site to book
a time, choose your meal and
pay on-line.**

You can email us if you need help with your order.

www.thegreyhoundletcombe.co.uk

email: info@thegreyhoundletcombe.co.uk

Tel:01235 771969

Francesca Engelmann,
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The views expressed in the Register do not necessarily reflect the view of
Letcombe Regis Parish Council

Deadline for inclusion is the 27th of each month.

Register@oldstableyard.co.uk
01235 769310

Waste Calendar



March 2021

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
Green Recycling Garden Waste Food Waste			Grey Landfill Food Waste			

Vale of Whitehorse Waste collection information
can be found [HERE](#)

Biffa have been able to resume
Garden waste collections after a
short covid related hiatus.

You can keep up to date information
on collections and also any sudden
changes if you download the Binzone
app.

To download the app:

For PC click [here](#).
For iPhones click [here](#)
For android click [here](#)

You can find out more from the
[VOWH waste collection information](#)
site.