

The Villager

September 2016 Volume 45 No 8

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



HAVE YOUR SAY! POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER LAUNCHES CONSULTATION

Police and Crime Commissioner Michael Lane is asking all residents from across the Hampshire Constabulary area to contribute to his forthcoming Police and Crime Plan, which gives direction for policing and tackling crime in your community.

Through a survey, the Commissioner wants to understand your perceptions of crime, how safe you feel living and working across the force area, but also what issues in your community concern you the most.

Michael Lane, Police and Crime Commissioner, said: "I am currently preparing my Police and Crime Plan, which sets the strategic priorities for Hampshire Constabulary and gives direction for policing and tackling crime.

"Your views are important to me, and this is your opportunity to help shape the Police and Crime Plan for the next five years.

"My objective is to keep you, your family and your community safer. This plan will empower your priorities and the most effective operational policing to meet them that can be delivered with the budget and resources available."

The survey is available online www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/survey until 14 September 2016. Anyone unable to access the online survey can write to request a paper survey and freepost envelope to return it.

Write to: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, St George's Chambers, St George's Street, Winchester SO23 8AJ.

Diary dates

September

- 3 Mapledurwell Pond Clearing
- 7 Sunflower Cafe 2-4pm, The Old School Odiham
- 9 Up Nately Coffee Morning
- 10 Mapledurwell Rounders, 3pm
- 11 Mapledurwell Regatta, 3pm, Village Pond
- 11 Hook Flower & Produce Show, 2-5pm
- 12 Mapledurwell & Up Nately Village Hall AGM, 7.30pm
- 13 Beth Hough, Rowan Lodge, 2pm
- 14 Mapledurwell & Up Nately Parish Council Meeting, 8pm
- 15 Mothers Union AGM, 8pm, RAF Church Hall
- 20 Maple Tea & Cake Gathering
- 20 Newnham Parish Council Meeting, 7pm
- 22 North Warnborough & District Gardening Club
- 27 Musica, Rowan Lodge, 11am
- 30 Macmillan Coffee Morning, Rowan Lodge, 11am

October

- 1 Ceilidh, Greywell Village Hall, 7.30pm
- 19 Maple Tea & Cake Gathering
- 29 Upton Grey Autumn Festival

United Parish

Thank you to all the children and adults who supported the Summer United Parish 'Messy Church' Day! A special thank you to all at Miller's Ark Farm who made us feel so welcome, introduced us to their latest arrival - born earlier that day!! - and kindly coped with our extensive lunch order, allowing us to take over their barn in which to enjoy their delicious food. Rev Linda led us in worship before we headed off to meet the animals of Miller's Ark, returning to the church grounds for arts, crafts and our Team UP Olympics..... A record number of gold medals were awarded!!



Save the date!

Christmas Messy Church - Thursday 22nd
December - Look out for details in future
editions of The Villager



Mapledurwell & Up Nately

Next Up Nately Coffee Morning

The Coffee Morning will be held on Friday 9th September 10-12 at Lealands, phone Jane for more information 762891 Save the date 14th October at Eastrop Cottage for next months coffee morning.



Maple Tea & Cake Gathering

Please come and join us for afternoon tea at 3.30pm on Tuesday 20th September at the home of Sara Paterson at Manor Farm Barn, Tunworth Road. Please call Sara if you would like to join the tea party on 479814. All welcome.

Please come and join us for afternoon tea on Wednesday 19th October, at 3pm, hosted by Hilary and David Ellison at Crosswater Cottage, Frog Lane. All welcome but please call Hilary or David on 01256 478810 if you are coming.

Diary Dates

Pond clearing 6pm Saturday 3rd Sept
Regatta 3pm Sunday 11th Sept

Shoe Box Appeal

The shoe box appeal is looming large and just a little reminder to start collecting the special little gifts to go in the shoe boxes for deprived children in the Eastern Bloc countries. The appeal will follow in early October. Thank you.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Next Parish Council meeting

Wednesday 14th September, 8pm,
Village Hall Committee Room.

Everyone is very welcome to attend.

MAPLEDURWELL & UP NATELY VILLAGE HALL



HIRE THE VILLAGE HALL

Contact Caretaker Jayne Norman on 474432 or check out the website at www.mapledurwellvillagehall.com

AGM

Mapledurwell and Up Nately Village Hall will hold the AGM on Monday 12th September at 7.30pm in the Committee Room.

Please come and support your hard working team, let us know what events you would like us to organise!

Future Events:

Saturday 10th September, 3pm
Rounders

Saturday 3rd December
Children's Christmas Party

PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Application

16/02839/HSE (3rd August 2016) Am Brunnen, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell. Erection of a single storey side extension, replacement balcony, and alterations to doors and fenestration.

16/02766/HSE (1st August 2016) Hungry Lodge, Down Lane, Mapledurwell). Proposed extension to existing ancillary accommodation, conversion of shed to be included within ancillary accommodation and new window and door to front elevation.

16/02691/HSE (25th July 2016). Hungry Lodge, Down Lane, Mapledurwell. Erection of front porch, single storey front extension, a single storey rear extension and for tile hanging to be added to side elevation.

Applications Granted

16/01712/HSE (11th August, reg 12th May) Kolkinnon House, Blaegrove Lane, Up Nately. Construction of open swimming pool to rear of house.

16/02144/HSE and 16/02145/LBC (5th August, reg 10th June) Mead House, Heather Row Lane, Up Nately. Replacement of existing garage with new double garage and play room / hobbies room above.

The MONKEY HOUSE NURSERY SCHOOL

Are you looking for nursery education for your child?

Then we could be what you are looking for!

Our dedicated highly qualified team of staff provide a quality education in a happy caring atmosphere.

Mapledurwell Village Hall
RG25 2LS

Tel: 07778 031691

www.monkeyhousenurseryschool.co.uk



Rounders



on the Village Hall Sports Field

Saturday 10th September 3:00pm

Refreshments available

Afternoon Tea



Pimms



All ages welcome

Adults £1, Children free

For details contact jules@cresswood.net





POLICE UPDATE

Dear Residents

I am pleased to report a reduction in reported crime within the parishes that I cover within this magazine. One crime of note was a room broken into at the Country Hotel which is classified as a burglary dwelling. On August 17th we had a poaching related incident involving a silver Peugeot Export van MD16 *** on the downs at Mapledurwell towards Tunworth. Three men were stopped and suitable advice given. I would however like to thank the original caller and ask residents to please continue to report any suspicious vehicles / people that they see, likewise if this one is seen again please give me a call direct.

I am also aware of motorcycles being seen riding along the canal towpath in Up Nately towards Odiham, if anyone sees this or has any information please do give me a call direct and as always all calls treated in strictest confidence.

Outside the area of this magazine, at 1 pm on Monday August 8th 2016 a blue Honda possible an Accord was seen on the B3046 at Cliddesden containing three men, they said they had ran out of fuel, one was outside the car and smartly dressed, they were asking for money. This is an ongoing problem has taken place for sometime at various roads across the south of England, another aspect is offer to sell 'cheap' jewellery but for an expensive price as 'part exchange'. All three men were described as being of Asian appearance. If this happens to you please drive away are report to the Police.

May I also make horse owners aware of a suspicious incident between July 12th and 13th when a gate was lifted off its hinges at a field off the A339 at Herriard, I ask all residents to please keep a look out for any suspicious vehicles / people in gateways.

And finally the new Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the IoW, Mr. Michael Lane, is seeking your help in launching a consultation for the future policing of our area and the two counties for the next five years. To get involved and have your say, please go online to www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/survey or write to Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, St George's Chambers, St George's Street, Winchester SO23 8AJ. You have until September 14th 2016.

Many thanks for your continued support,

Andrew Reid, Local Constable

01256 389 050
Mob 07768 776 844
andrew.reid@hampshire.pnn.police.uk

Dogs and worms

Most dogs have worms from time to time. The most common type of worm being the round worm 'Toxocara Cainis'. These worms can lead to a disease called 'toxocariasis', which in extreme cases can cause blindness.

Worm eggs can be picked up on shoes, pram-wheels and hands and then accidentally ingested, especially by young children.

Dog fouling is therefore a potential danger and faeces should be cleared away as soon as possible to prevent the ground becoming heavily contaminated with eggs.

Dog faeces can cause serious diseases in sheep through the contamination of food and water. Dog waste on grazing land can pass worms and parasites to sheep, so it is vital that dog owners pick up their dogs' droppings when walking pets on farm land. The eggs of worms and parasites can survive on the ground for a long time, so dog mess must even be cleared from fields that do not currently have livestock grazing in them. It is also important to keep your dog thoroughly wormed all year round.

Diseases transmitted to sheep through dog faeces can be fatal, and can cause unpleasant effects such as impaired vision and neurological symptoms. Some can cause a sheep's meat to be condemned, making the animal worthless. Sheep are valuable assets and the loss of a sheep or of the value of a sheep's meat is a significant financial blow to a farmer.

MAPLEDURWELL

REGATTA



3PM SUNDAY,
11TH SEPTEMBER

VILLAGE POND

OPEN TO CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN
OF VILLAGERS FROM MAPLEDURWELL
AND ANDWELL

RACE CATEGORIES:

- ⚓ 5 years and under
- ⚓ Plastic Bottle
- ⚓ 6 inches and under
- ⚓ Fruit and veg
- ⚓ Boys will be boys
(motorised fun in this category only)
- ⚓ The Penelope
Edwards fantasy boat

Please return trophies
to Lucy Mace
(Jasmine Cottage)

Pond clearing:
6pm Saturday,
3rd September.
All hands
welcome!!!

advertisement

Kevin Curtis

Carpenter & Joiner



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Email kcurtis612@btinternet.com

Checkatrade membership number 230871



Newnham & Nately Scures

Newnham Clubroom is for hire



Please visit newnhamclubroom.org.uk for availability, booking and further information.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Next Parish Council meeting

Tuesday 20th September, 7pm
Clubroom. Everyone is very welcome to attend.

Rowan Lodge Village Article

September has crept up on us already, doesn't seem possible does it?

Lots to look forward to this September, we have our entertainer Beth Hough is here on Tuesday 13th September to woo the audience 2pm.

Tuesday 27th we have Musica here for singing and musical instruments at 11am. Friday 30th September we are taking part in the Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning 11am, so please do come along and support a very worthy cause. We shall see if all the secret bakers here will put their cake making talents to good use again! It will be great to see some of you so join us for a coffee, and lots of cake!



North Warnborough & District Garden Club

We look forward to greeting our members again at our next meeting which is on Thursday 22nd September.

For information, please telephone 01252 843848.

PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Application

16/02772/LDPO (2nd August 2016) 6 Kingsbridge End, Old School Road, Newnham. Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed Operation to change Hip roof to Gable for Loft Conversion using materials to match.

16/02771/HSE (2nd August 2016) 6 Kingsbridge End, Old School Road, Newnham. Erection of lean-to side extension.

16/02480/FUL (5th July 2016) Oakfield Farm Court, Scures Hil, Nately Scures. Erection of a detached house and garage (amended design to that approved under planning permission 13/01460/FUL).

Applications pending

16/02187/FUL (16th June) Nately Scures House, Scures Hill, Nately Scures. Erection of three x four-bedroomed dwellings and garages including creation of new access onto the A30, and associated landscaping.

16/01446/HSE and 16/01447/LBC (23rd May) Newnham Green Farm, Tylney Lane, Newnham. Erection of a two storey side extension and a two storey rear extension, following demolition of parts of existing building.

16/01315/FUL The Old House At Home, Tylney Lane, Newnham. Change of Use A4 Public House to C3 Residential Dwellinghouse. The agreed determination date is now 7th October though it's thought the officers' report should be available by the end of August.

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

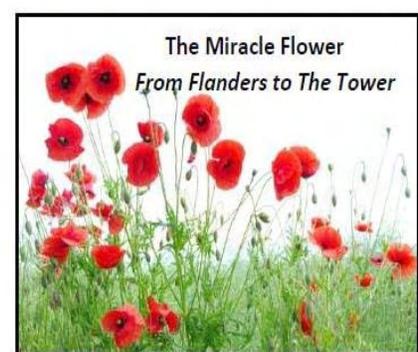
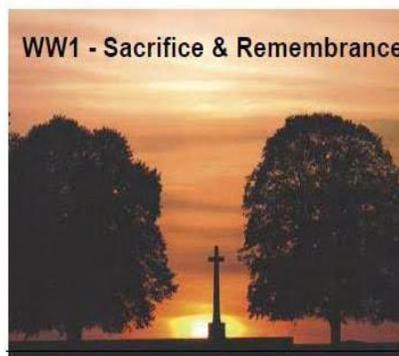
Applications granted

T/00262/16/TCA (19th August, reg 7th July 2016) The Pink House, Newnham Lane, Newnham. Fell 1 x Holly and 1 x Norway Maple.

16/00742/FUL (12th August, reg 4th March) Highview Business Park, The Barracks, Newnham. Demolition of existing buildings and erection of four dwellings (2 x four beds, 1 x three beds and 1 x two beds) with associated car parking and landscaping.

Hart Local Plan

Hart's Draft Local Plan is now expected to be published at the end for September for consultation in October.



WW1 - Sacrifice and Remembrance & The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

&
The Miracle Flower – From Flanders to the Tower

Lt Col (ret'd) Jeremy Prescott has delivered the *WW1 - Sacrifice & Remembrance* presentation to over 3,000 people and now offers a new additional presentation; *The Miracle Flower – From Flanders to The Tower*. He would be delighted to present either of these presentations to community groups, societies and other organisations on a voluntary basis.

Contact details : **email** jeremy.prescott@ntlworld.com **mobile** 07774 804243



Public Consultation: Serving Hampshire

A consultation by the County Council on the future of local government across Hampshire is available at www.hants.gov.uk/servinghampshire until 23.59 on 20th September 2016. For paper copies, email ervinghampshire@ipsos-mori.com or call 0808-2024-970.

HCC says that 'Serving Hampshire' is about finding the best way to sustain public services, and secure an ambitious devolution deal from Government for Hampshire's towns, cities and villages – with the voices of residents at the heart of any proposals.'

'Members of the public are invited to answer questions on a number of options involving proposals to create combined authorities, elected mayors and unitary councils, as well as the status quo.'

However the consultation has prompted a scathing open letter from the leader of Basingstoke & Dean Borough Council, which includes [extracts]...

'Dear colleagues...

'Unfortunately, the County Council has chosen not to work collaboratively with the boroughs and districts in Hampshire or with the unitary councils in Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, but has based the survey around a report it commissioned on its own to look at how to cut the most cost out of local government.

'The consultation asks for opinions on options including doing away with all 11 district and borough councils and replacing them with one all-purpose unitary 'mega council', based around the county council, serving 1.3 million residents. This would be bigger than Birmingham. We are concerned that this proposal may have a serious negative impact on the people and businesses of Basingstoke and Deane and it is our duty to draw these concerns to your attention.

'In the borough we have the sixth lowest council tax in the country but one of the highest spend per head of population. This is because we have significant financial resources... If the borough council disappears so too will those resources, to be used instead to prop up less successful areas elsewhere in the county. As a result council tax will be very likely to rise and much valued services will be cut or disappear... A 'mega council' run from miles away will not have the same local involvement or commitment.

'We recognise that because of financial pressures local government needs to change... We are concerned that the current County Council consultation is flawed because it fails to consider all aspects fully... The consultation fails to evidence 'what would that mean for me?' for residents, businesses and communities... There is insufficient consideration of how local people can maintain local control over decision making.

'We hope that the County Council may choose to resume collaboration with its partner authorities to achieve that goal. Until that happens we would counsel a high degree of caution and scepticism towards the Hampshire County Council consultation. It is the opinion of the borough council that the Hampshire County Council consultation is premature, partial and superficial. It is not supported by any other council in Hampshire.

'We have written to the County Council to express our views and would ask you to share our concerns with your colleagues and to take them into account when making any response to the consultation.'

With best wishes, Cllr Clive Sanders, Leader of the Council

SAVE OUR NEWNHAM PUB

A really big THANK-YOU to everyone who came out to highlight the plight of The Old House on Saturday 6th August. We had a terrific turnout especially as we are right in the middle of the summer holiday season.

The Basingstoke Gazette of 11th August ran a full page - 'Villagers unite to rescue pub' - lots of pictures, just what we'd hoped for.

Importantly everyone seemed to have good fun in a common cause and a day that will be talked about and remembered.

The event was masterminded by artist 'Bob & Roberta Smith' (Patrick Brill) presenting for BBC 4, led by excellent musicians Les Zoings who style themselves as a 'brass marching band unaffected by fame!' and supported with thanks with beer and props from Andwells.

Our event seems a small (hopefully significant) (unique?) part of a groundswell across the country of groups, councils and individuals trying to protect their pubs.

Following is a quote from letter to the Times of 18th August (prompted by an article well-titled 'Raising the Bar'):

'Pubs are integral to the local identity across the country. They create a sense of place, they are some of our oldest and most important meeting places and they track fascinating changes in fashion, taste, lifestyle and community values ... they make up the precious fabric of the local area.'



Greywell



VILLAGE HALL

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



Sunflower Cafe

For people with dementia and their carers
All Welcome



At the Old School
London Road Odiham RG29 1AJ

Every Wednesday 2pm-4pm
from September 7th



For more information please
contact: Elaine
Email:
sunflowercafe@outlook.com
Phone:
07553881474



Ceilidh

Saturday 1st October
Greywell Village Hall - 7.30pm



Come and join us for an evening of Dancing and Reeling, Scottish Fayre (including delicious McCaskie Scotch Pies amongst other treats from north of the border)

No previous experience required....'Caller' booked to lead the dancing and provide the music.

£15 per head - Tickets available from Rhona Blagden on gilesandrhona@greywell.eclipse.co.uk

Proceeds in aid of St Mary's Church, Greywell

PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Applications

16/02126/FUL Havoc House 5 Dorchester Way. Change of use of the land and building to additional accomodation.

16/02118/CON Manor Farm Barns The Street. Discharge of condition 2- underfloor heating and rainwater goods- pursuant to 15/00323/LBC and 15/00709/LBC: Conversion of existing farm buildings to five dwellings (pursuant to Listed Building Consent 15/00323/LBC). Amendments to include internal and external alterations to Plot 3, and external alterations to Plot 2. Application Ref 15/01294/LBC: Conversion of existing farm buildings to 5 dwellings (pursuant to Listed Building Consent 15/00323/LBC) - amendments to include; internal and external alterations to Plots 4 & 5.

16/02091/PREAPP Plot 2 Manor Farm Buildings. Internal alterations and additional windows to rear elevation.

UPTON GREY AUTUMN FESTIVAL – Saturday, 29th October

Upton Grey is holding its fifth Autumn Festival at the Hoddington Arms (The Hodd).

A unique, family oriented, event that all local villages are invited to participate in.

As Halloween is close, The Hodd is being especially Halloween themed this year and everybody is encouraged to come along in their Halloween outfits and judged for a magnum of champagne first prize after the evenings dining.

Free car parking in Church Meadow, RG25 2RA.

Starting at 2pm (prize giving at 4pm) in the back garden of the Hoddington Arms we have local produce to taste and buy. Conkers, apple bobbing, snail races, pumpkin bowling, kids Halloween fancy dress and silent disco competitions, bouncey castle, guy fawkes, giant pumpkins, gourds, autumn paintings and displays, autumn photos and lots more.

Newlyn's Farm Shop will be providing a fresh BBQ throughout the afternoon and drinks will be available from the Hodd Bar.

You can help add to the success of the afternoon by providing entries for the festival – for example, autumn photos and carved pumpkins are easy.

At 6 pm gather at The Hodd for mulled wine, church bell ringing, Jack O'Lantern procession, bonfire and professional firework display. Then back to the Hodd for the pre bookable 2 course Festival Menu (£10 only), bands and then Silent Disco in the heated marquee. Post bonfire drinks can be pre ordered and ready for your return.

Don't forget, be brave, and come along in your evening Halloween outfits to win a magnum of champagne as first prize.

Entry to both events is free for all kids, for adults it's £1 on the gate in the afternoon, £5 advance tickets (£10 on the day) for the bonfire etc. (tickets from the Hodd, the Shop or Roger Clark). It's too good to miss – www.uptongreyautumnfestival.co.uk for all contact, festival and competition entry details.

It's an excellent reason to invite your friends or family down for the day or weekend for a unique and highly entertaining autumn event and what's more all proceeds go to the excellent charity, St. Michael's Hospice who help man the afternoon's events.

Church Notices

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

From the Parish Registers...

Funeral Service

August 2nd at St Nicholas'
Newnham, Denis Miles

May he rest in peace

Weddings

August 20th at St. Mary's Greywell,
Mike O'Neill and Sue Williams

*We wish them every happiness in
their life together*

Baptisms

Sunday August 7th at St Mary's
Greywell, Olivia Sadler

*We welcome this little one into the
family of the Church*

Mid-Week Holy Communion

We next meet in the warm and
welcoming home of Lady Nell at The
Dower House in Greywell on 29th
September 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

September at St Mary's

2 morning services this month 11th
and 25th September

After 11th Sept service we will have
refreshments to say farewell to
Joyce our organist. If anyone would
like to make a donation to her
farewell gift give it to me Libbie.
(cheques to E Bromfield)

Harvest follows on 2nd October and
the Harvest lunch will be on 9th Oct
at the Village Hall.

Diary Dates for September:

**3rd 3.30 pm wedding at
Newnham**

**17th 2pm wedding at
Greywell**

Church Services

September 4th

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

September 11th

8.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Up Nately
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	Mapledurwell
11.00am	Morning Service	Greywell
11.15am	Matins	Newnham

September 18th

8.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Greywell
9.30am	Harvest	Mapledurwell
11.00am	Harvest	Nately Scures

September 25th

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

Special Church Services in September

It's Harvest time!

Please come and join us for our Harvest services which this month are in Mapledurwell, Nately Scures and Up Nately (see Church Services on this page for details). As always any food produce given as a gift during the services will be passed on to Camrose in Basingstoke, which is a drop-in centre primarily aimed at helping homeless and vulnerable people. It offers breakfast and a hot lunch, table tennis & games, advice on housing, employment, drugs and alcohol issues, telephone and computer facilities to assist with job applications, etc. and training in a variety of topics.

Maria Miller MP Guest Speaker at our next Women's Breakfast 22nd October

Our local MP, Maria Miller has kindly agreed to join us for our next Women's Breakfast and to talk to us about life in Westminster for a female MP, as well as the other major causes which Maria champions, especially where these relate to women and family.

Please make a note in your diaries now! Mapledurwell Village Hall, 8.30 to 10 am on 22 October. To help us plan for our catering, please let us know that you're coming by emailing: joyce.roberts60@gmail.com or telephone: 01256 762003 and please leave a message if there is no answer.

Hook Village Flower & Produce Show

Sunday 11th September 2016
Open from 2pm to 5pm

Have Fun and Join in this
FREE to enter Village
Gardening Competition

Winners
Presentation
by Ranil
Jayawardena MP
at 4pm

Categories & entry form can
be found at www.hookinbloom.org
and www.hookallotments.com or
from Trees Newsagents

Don't hesitate to enter by thinking
"my stuff is not good enough" and
then discover that yours is far better
than any on display!

There are all sorts of categories,
including children's classes, so get
your ideas flowing. It promises to be
a lot of fun!

For more information please contact
Diana Whittaker on 01256 769063

Greywell Hill Estate

LOGS

Fill your woodshed now with
seasoned hardwood logs
(oak, ash, beech, birch et al)

Delivered in farm trailer
(approx 90cuft) and tipped

£160 per load

£100 per half load

or smaller loads by arrangement

Tel: Office 01256 703 565

or Nigel 07973 715 361

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01256 701480

07719738897

imcs@hotmail.co.uk

From Your Curate

linda.scard@btinternet.com



Dear Friends,

I've just finished preparing for two weddings this coming weekend, one in Greywell (congratulations Sue and Mike) and one in Newnham (congratulations Lilia and Tim). As I thought about what I'd like to say to these two couples on their special day, my mind wandered....

We will have celebrated a considerable number of weddings in our Benefice this year, and this got me wondering whether marriage was enjoying something of a revival, especially marriage in church. So I made a cup of tea and started to do some research. The Office for National Statistics website was informative.

It turned out that I was only half correct in my musings. The popularity of marriage is indeed rising again after 40 years of decline. In 1972 the number of married men and women aged 16 and over represented 53.4% of the population. This did nothing but decrease year by year to its lowest point in 2011 when this had dropped significantly to 50.7%. By 2014 this had risen to 51.2%, so not yet back to the levels of the early '70s, but on the rise nevertheless.

However, that good news was somewhat tempered, from my perspective anyway, that marriage in church now only accounts for around a quarter of the total and seems to be going down a little each year. I can only rejoice that the North Hampshire Downs Benefice seems to be bucking the national trend!

To all those tying the knot, wherever that may be, I would like to say that on your wedding day all your special people will be there to love and support you and they will be reminded that relationships are the most important thing in our lives. God made us so that we can live in relationship with one another, love sustains relationships and it's those relationships that sustain life. Not the first flush of being in love – as wonderful as that is – but the deep, enduring love of true, faithful and lasting relationships.

At the very start of a wedding service in church, I say the words "God is love and those that live in love live in God and God lives in them". We should love one another because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. And love is of course at the heart of a wedding. It's love that brings two people together in marriage, and it's what carries them forward into the rest of their lives together.

Thinking of those couples that I will have had the privilege of bringing together in church this year, I pray for God's blessings on all those who have committed their lives to one another, be that this year or many years ago, and that this commitment may be true, faithful, and lasting and full of love and joy.

With love

Linda

Revd Linda Scard

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