

Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council summary of meetings

This is a summary of the Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council meetings on Monday 14th December & 11th January 2010. The full minutes will become available when they are agreed at the meeting in March. You will be able to access these, and previous minutes, at your web site:

www.whitchurchonthames.com.

Whitchurch Sports Field

Cllr Oppenheimer provided an update on the progress of the community sports field planning application. The final documents have been prepared by the architect. The council agreed that they are pleased with the work the architect has produced, and thanked Matilda for her hard work at managing the project.

All agreed to combine the public presentation of the plans with a party to celebrate the refurbishment of the village hall. The event will take place on Saturday 30th January at 2.30pm, in which the architect will make a full presentation of the plans. Tea, coffee and cakes will be provided.

This is a unique opportunity to obtain land for community use and help and support from residents could make all the difference. If you cannot come but want to support the project you can email the parish clerk at wotparishclerk@aol.com who can send you details of the planning application once it has been submitted.

Sub Committees

Reports from the Traffic & Roads Group, Environmental Group and the Village Hall Committee are summarised elsewhere in this Bulletin and in more detail at www.whitchurchonthames.com

Planning applications

REference	Location	Description	Council Decisions
P09/E1052	New Place High Street Whitchurch RG8 7ET	Erection of single storey front and side extension. Installation of roof light to north elevation and replacement of existing front door with window	Parish Council: No strong views (Some reservations!) SODC Permission Granted
P09/E1145	Glebelands Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ	Erection of first floor rear extension	Parish Council: No strong views SODC Permission Granted
P09/E1184	1 Whitchurch House	Conservatory to rear of property	Parish Council: No strong views SODC Permission Granted

Budget planning and precept

The council drew up its budget for 2010/11 and resolved to set the precept at £16,000; which means no increase from the previous year.

Next meeting

The next meeting is on Monday 8th March 2010 in the village hall at 8pm.

WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH
TWINNING ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 5th February 2010, 8.00 p.m.

Little Langtree, Hill Bottom, Whitchurch Hill

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last meeting
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of New Committee
6. Correspondence
7. Future Activities
8. Any Other Business

The main Future Activity will be the visit to La Bouille.

Anyone interested in participating in this and other twinning activities is welcome to attend (or contact any committee member).

Visit

www.whitchurchtwinning.org.uk

for more information.

David Robinson Chairman
tel: 0118 984 4142 david@whitchurchtwinning.org.uk

**You are invited
by the Whitchurch Parish
Council
to a Presentation
with tea and refreshments
in the Village Hall at 2.30 pm
on
Saturday the 30th January**

The Whitchurch Parish Council and the Whitelock family, who own the Cricket Ground in Eastfield lane, are preparing a joint planning application for a single house on the Ground immediately adjacent to the existing houses in Eastfield lane, and a car park next to the school for users of the ground and the School.

The architect David Parker is preparing the application for us and will present a detailed demonstration of the proposal at the meeting and answer your questions about it.

If planning permission is granted then the rest of the ground will be gifted to the Parish Council for sporting, school and community use by the Village in perpetuity. The ground will then be known as the Community Sports Field.

We believe that this will be a great asset to the village and protect the land from all future development.

To obtain planning consent it is vital that we have the support of the Village by letter or email to SODC when the application is submitted.

If we can demonstrate the very considerable benefit that this will provide for the village and the support of our whole community the application will be looked at much more favourably by the South Oxfordshire District Council.

How can you help us?

- **Come to the Meeting**
- **Support the application in writing or by email or letter in due course.**
- **Contact our parish clerk
(email: wotparishclerk@aol.co.uk).**

We will then let you know when the application is submitted and how you can contact SODC with your support

- **Tell ALL your friends about this project**

Village Hall Report to Parish Council Meeting January 11

Arising from an inspection ordered by the Village Hall Management Committee, the electrician strongly advised the replacement of the mains switchgear and trip mechanisms. This was considered both a necessary and important measure and has accordingly been ordered at a cost of £ 1 500 + VAT (recoverable by the PC).

The basic work will take three days and is scheduled to run from **20 – 22 January. During this time there will be no electricity and the hall will be closed.** The users concerned have been notified.

An additional pair of curtains in the annex and four new sets of curtain tracks will be fitted on 13 January, completing this aspect of the refurbishment.

Stephen Trinder
Chairman

Can you help WoTHabs?

Here's why we need you:

Looking forward to a beautiful spring, WoTHabs hope to again have Cowslip Day at Chalkhills (formerly Boze Down Vineyard) on the first Sunday in May. We seriously need helpers if it is to run – volunteers who will help man the tea tent, organise the parking, and so on.

There's always plenty to do beforehand as well. In most years our small team of WoTHabbers have readily set to work to ensure the woodland paths will be safe and clearly signposted, a quiz/wildlife trail is organised for the children and tractor rides are available for those unable to climb the hill on foot, or who just enjoy the ride. However, a few health problems among our small number mean we now need more help to keep the cowslip day as an annual event or, at best, it will only happen every other year.

In mid-March, or a little later – depending what the weather has in store for us and the plants – we will have a Violets Day at Chalkhills.

But please contact me (Gill on 9842934, gill_goodwin@yahoo.co.uk) or Sandra (9844031, sandraparkinson7@googlemail.com) if you can offer help for that first weekend in May. It would be nice to hear from you well in advance. We're not looking for a firm commitment written in stone, but a willingness to help if you are able when May comes.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DEVIL'S HOOFPRIENTS

The winter of 1855 was very similar to the one we have been experiencing. Heavy snowfalls followed by freezing nights left much of England under a thick and paralysing blanket of snow. 150 years ago, winter's icy grip carried on into February with further heavy snowstorms.

As is often the case with such cold snaps the far West of England, particularly Devon, was especially hard hit. On the night of 8th February snow fell continuously between early evening and midnight. The following morning residents in scores of towns and villages stretching across the county awoke to a bizarre and frightening spectacle. Tracing a line for over a hundred miles across the county from the River Exe to the Totnes on the River Dart were sets of cloven hoof prints.

The fact that the prints were placed one in front of the other like a human's and seemed to pass effortlessly over thatched roofs and high walls was particularly frightening. This was especially the case with the superstitious members of the population. What animal could walk on its hind legs for so many miles without being seen or heard? Indeed what goat or sheep walked on its hind legs at all? To many this was no animal but the Devil himself who had walked across the Devon countryside.

It was not long before this theory took hold and the Legend of the Devil's Hoof prints was born. Within two days the story had spread to London and articles reporting the phenomenon appeared in the papers.

Another supernatural entity that was blamed for the prints was Spring Heeled Jack, a favourite Victorian bogeyman. The first sighting of Jack was made by a businessman one night in 1837. He reported seeing a devil like figure with mask, cape and claw like hands being able to make superhuman leaps to great heights. Further sightings were reported throughout the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, there was no shortage of those attempting to provide rational explanations for the prints. The biologist, Sir Richard Owen suggested they were made by foraging badgers whilst it was said the culprits were kangaroos who had escaped from a private zoo in Sidmouth. Virtually every other mammal from otters to foxes were blamed for making the prints. It was even suggested that the prints were made by a balloon drifting across the countryside trailing a tethering rope.

But none of these theories could fit the bill. A naturalist who measured the prints found each were three and a half by two and a half inches and were exactly eight and a half inches apart. Normal animal hoofprints would have had a much more random pattern.

My mother, who first told me about the Devil's Hoofprints when I was six, always thought they may have been caused by a freak whirlwind speeding across the countryside. This would certainly account for the prints travelling a hundred miles over thatched roofs and jumping rivers in a matter of hours. On the other hand perhaps it was Old Nick playing a practical joke on the Devonians. But if that was the case, surely he would have burned at least one church on his journey and left just a hint of brimstone in his wake.

© Nick Brazil 2010

Keep up with Village News

For lots of information about our Village, ranging from information about rubbish collections to pictures of the Village in the snow, go to

www.whitchurchonthames.com

Whitchurch PreSchool

Here at Whitchurch Pre-School we are enjoying the snow and making snow men in our lovely garden, although we have also found it a bit disruptive! We had a lovely end to last year, with a wonderful and very sweet Nativity play and our Christmas party, where of course we had a visit from Father Christmas!

Now we are looking forward to spring and some warmer weather. The children always keenly anticipate our annual visit to Rushall Farm, where we get to see lots of newborn lambs and hopefully even hold and feed a few! Our topic for this term is 'People who help us', for example mums and dads, policemen and firemen.

If anyone has any children they wish to register for Pre-School, please contact Vanessa Saunders on 984 5692 or Leanne Fox on 984 4516.

WOODCOTE LIBRARY

A happy 2010 to all our readers! Our New Year Resolution is to continue to provide the books and films for your entertainment during the dark winter evenings, and to have available broadband internet computers during opening hours, bookable in advance. We will play host to the Rainbow Children's Centre that runs a storytime every Tuesday here in the library at 2.15pm especially for the under fives.

So, business as usual - come in and see!

We are offering another chance to those a bit unsure about getting onto our computers to have a try with a little help from a member of staff. On Friday 12th February from 10am to noon there will be the chance to log on, look at what is on the internet, set up an e-mail or just type a letter. Please book a slot at the desk, or by phone 01491 682323. Quite a few of our regular users started this way, so do get in touch, don't be shy!

We have now collected about enough names of people who would like to meet as a book club and the inaugural meeting will take place on Monday, 8th February at 6pm at the library. Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Whitchurch Hill W.I.

Whitchurch Hill Woman's Institute, it could sound quite intimidating as titles go, for your local W.I.!

This particular branch was formed in April 1953, and met as it has ever since, in Goring Heath Parish Hall, then known as St John's Rooms. The membership then was large, well into the high thirties in number; the meetings were held in the afternoons, with talks and quite a few demonstrations, cookery, in particular to try and encourage new ideas when food preparation was still suffering "the post war era" of limited imagination and ingredients.

As the years have past, the older generation, who had such an influence in the running of the WI, have gone; a lot of the younger woman found their independence, went to work and had families and priorities and fashions changed. They did not come forward to take on the running of the WI here in Whitchurch Hill until they too had more leisure time or had retired.

The WI, as a countrywide organisation, has changed immensely and is much more relaxed and also caters for a much wider range of tastes, as we try to do here. We now meet in the morning at 10.15am on the third Tuesday of the month, and start with a cup of coffee! In 2009, we have been out to lunch as a group either to pubs or in the course of outings, roughly every other month and have "entertained" other WIs here.

We have visited places of interest both locally and further a field;(two such were to the Watercress Beds at Ewelme and Sulgrave Manor birthplace of George Washington's ancestors) then of course we have had regular monthly speakers, the majority of whom have given both entertaining and interesting talks.

So here we are fast approaching 2010 with a membership of 16!

SO WE NEED NEW MEMBERS, both young and "mature" with new ideas. It would be such a pity for this WI to have to end after fifty seven years, when, I am sure, there is a parish full of woman with all sorts of ideas and talents. So if you want to find out more, would like to join us or would like to think about starting another WI, in conjunction with, say Whitchurch, that meets in the afternoon or evening then do get in touch with me.

Email bnt@waitrose.com or phone Theresa on 01189842056.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Next meeting, Tuesday January 19th "Talks on the Wild Side" given by Nigel Glover-Wright.

Whitchurch-on-Thames Traffic & Roads Group

Note on Crossing the High Street, Friday 4th December 2009

Present: Harry Butterworth, Peter Hawley, Richard Wingfield

1. Observations from 8.30 am near the Greyhound:

- The weather was sunny; the temperature just above freezing.
- 12 families were seen on their way to school. One Dad and eleven Mums. Four were not relevant as they were on the Ferry Boat side of the road and may have come from Pangbourne (ie crossed at the toll bridge).
- Four crossed opposite Duchess Close (seems very sensible but may not be so when coming back because visibility is not so good there from the east side of the High Street).
- Three crossed opposite Eastfield Lane.
- One crossed opposite the Church Drive bell mouth and appeared to come through there (perhaps also from Pangbourne)
- Traffic conditions were unusually light for the time of day. Two vehicles were parked on each side of the white line marking. The two on the bridge side were identified as belonging to nearby residents who have no parking. One was a bulky blue Land Rover causing extra visual obstruction.
- No car driver was seen to drop children off at the Greyhound to walk to school but all drove along Eastfield Lane (while others parked in Hardwick Road and walked down Muddy Lane).

2. Parked cars

The hazardous nature of the crossing was commented on by several of the Mums. It is made worse by vehicles parked on the west side of the High Street, especially the bulkier ones. But any extension of the white line that restricts parking opposite Eastfield Lane (installed for the benefit of the school bus) would tend to reduce the beneficial effect of parked cars on traffic speeds.

Short lengths of parking restriction also provide a refuge for northbound cars to pause while southbound traffic proceeds down the hill. There is a case for a further white line parking restriction to be established across the entrance to Walliscote Farm with the loss of only two parking spaces

3. Potential crossing sites

The potential crossing site at the **church hall corner** has real benefits for walkers to and from Pangbourne and should be pursued by arranging for dropped kerbs to be included in the design of the new raised area of pavement. But it seems unlikely that family groups from say Manor Road would walk as far south as there, cross, and then walk back up to Eastfield Lane. A defined crossing point of some sort is needed near the Eastfield Lane junction.

One site for a crossing, with a pavement as the refuge at both ends, is outside **Prospect House**. To improve the sightline for pedestrian safety an extension of the no parking white line to the south would be desirable. This would deprive the village of three parking places. Residents without garages could then park either further north along the High Street or they might by agreement be able to use the new parking area to be provided for the new church hall. Many more than three new places will be created there.

Another site for a crossing would be north of Eastfield lane, at **Duchess Close**. But the sightline is not ideal when crossing westwards, as noted above. And there is no formal pavement on the east side.

4. Crossing facilities

There is no possibility of a traffic light controlled crossing as there is no history of accidents and therefore no OCC budget available for something like that. Besides, from an environmental point of view there is a need to resist urbanisation.

Dropped kerbs are relatively cheap and as well as helping pushchair users their existence acts as an indication to pedestrians of the best crossing place.

It is possible that OCC would be prepared to provide road surface texture or colour to define a crossing and as a traffic calming measure.

As a short term (or possibly long term) measure a 'Lollipop Lady' should be considered. He or she would be needed for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon during school terms.

5. School Travel Plan

Issue 1.3 of the Plan seems to make no reference to crossing the High Street, the focus being more on parking in Hardwick Road and reducing traffic down Eastfield Lane. RW has asked the school for confirmation that Issue 1.3 (undated) is the latest available.

6. Actions proposed

- Arrange a site meeting with an OCC roads engineer to discuss options to improve crossing conditions near Eastfield Lane to benefit school families.
- Pursue the installation of dropped kerbs in the future church hall refuge as a second crossing point for walkers to Pangbourne
- Check that we have seen the latest school travel plan
- Check the legal aspects of appointing a 'Lollipop Lady', the qualifications needed and the cost involved.

Richard Wingfield

GORING HEATH PARISH CHARITY
and
SALSAENGLAND
'Strictly come Salsa! Latin Party Night'
on 6th February 2010 at 7.30pm for 8.00pm
GORING HEATH VILLAGE HALL

The Latin rhythm is infectious and the music is truly uplifting making you want to dance all night long. The SalsaEngland Dance Company is run by enthusiastic dancers who want to pass on their passion for all styles of salsa dancing.

- Consists of - fun icebreaker
- first session - learn and practice salsa steps-interval and salsa by
SALSAENGLAND
 - second session - learn and practice more salsa steps.
- Music and dance for the rest of the evening. Bar and raffle.
Tickets £10 and £8.

Please contact Ann Wilson for reservations
on 01189 844620 or 07809-611952 or email
annatkeepers@btopenworld.com

Goring on Thames Decorative and Fine Arts Society

GADFAS

We are now looking forward to the New Year lunch and to the January lecture The Yellow House – Van Gogh and Gauguin in Arles and in February Conjuring With Colour together with a visit to The Victoria and Albert Museum .

For further details of the Society please visit our website at:
www.gadfas.org.uk or telephone either the morning
membership secretary on 0118 9596699 or the afternoon
secretary on 01235 850181.

DIARY DATES

Contributions welcome for this column if anyone knows of a date that would be of interest to the village.

January

Saturday 30th at 2:30 in the Village Hall
Community Sports Field Presentation

February

Friday 5th Twinning AGM

Mon 8th - Inaugural meeting of Woodcote Library Book Club

6th February at 7.30pm for 8.00pm
'Strictly come Salsa! Latin Party Night'

March

Monday 8th Parish Council meeting

April

May

2nd Sunday Cowslip Day at Chalkhills

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN

will be published in MARCH 2010.

Please send your contributions **preferably by e-mail to**

Sarah.pongo@talktalk.net by 11th March 2010

Views of individual contributors
are the views of those contributors,
and are not necessarily the views of the Parish Council, or the
editor.