

# WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES BULLETIN

## MARCH

### 2001

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Published by the Whitchurch Parish Council in alternate months

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Annual Parish Assembly

It is that time again –

fast approaching is **your** opportunity to hear what is happening among our village organisations and to question **your** Parish Councillors.

The Annual Parish Assembly will be held in the Village Hall on Thursday 5 April 2001 at 8.00pm. All are welcome to come and take part in this village get-together.

Tea and coffee with biscuits will be served from 7.30pm and, following the meeting, the Chairman and Parish Councillors invite everyone to join them for a glass of wine or something non-alcoholic.

We look forward to seeing you on 5 April.

Peter Minton

Chairman of the Parish Council

#### **Parish Council Meeting**

On March 5 2001 there was a meeting of the Parish Council in the Village Hall. The meeting was attended by Councillors Vincent Aldridge, Nigel Grove, Peter Minton, Brian Mott, John Spencer and Geoff Weir. Also present were Janet Holmes, the Parish Clerk, District Councillor Deborah Whitfeld, County Councillor John Farrow and a number of parishioners. Apologies were received from Councillor Carol Porter.

After the minutes of the previous meeting had been accepted, various items arising were discussed. These included: the renaming of what has been generally called the Bridle Path (but really was Hartslock Road), which is now to be known as the Hartslock Bridleway; and

the renewal of grass cutting contract for which a fixed price two year sum (equal to a 3% a year increase) had been offered by our contractors.

The Clerk also reported that the protracted Audit of the Council's accounts had finally come to an end. The Parish Council has a small expenditure by local government standards but it is nonetheless expected to meet the same accounting requirements as substantial Parishes, which imposes a significant cost burden upon us.

## **Planning**

### **New Applications**

P01/SO008/LB      2 Whitchurch House – single storey rear extension  
(amended plans)

**Should be**

**refused**

P01/SO076      Heathfield, Hardwick Road – single storey rear extension

**No strong views**

P01/SO082      Long Barton, High Street – velux rooflight and carport

**No strong views**

P01/SO089/LB      Walliscote House – conservatory to rear and storage shed

**No strong views**

P01/SO098      Rivendell, Hartslock Bridleway – stable block

**No strong views**

### **Planning Appeal**

P00/SO443 and P00/SO961 Riversdale, Eastfield Lane – notification was received of planning appeals on these two applications which will be determined by way of informal public enquiry.

## **Other planning matters**

It has been the practice of the Parish Council to only report on planning matters which arise at full meetings of the Council unless these are of significance to the village. When possible infringements of planning are reported to the Council, these are passed to the relevant authority (usually the SODC) and mentioned only in our Bulletin report as having been passed on.

Following a letter of complaint from a parishioner about the fact that no comment had been made on the outcome of such a report, the Council has decided that it is right that, when an enforcement action is reported, the results of the investigation should be also carried. In order to set the record straight , it was agreed that the following report be carried in the Bulletin:

In August last year, the Parish Council passed a report forward to the SODC about an alleged breach of planning control at New Barn, Manor Road. Subsequently, the Planning Enforcement Officer reported that he had investigated the allegation and no evidence of a breach had been found.

## **Finance**

Cheques were issued for: BTCV – expenses for the Jubilee Footpath project; Viking Direct for stationery; CPRE subscription; D R Madgewick for work to the play equipment; Janet Holmes for Clerk's salary; and Legal & General, pension contribution.

## **Ward boundary proposals**

The Parish Councillors were pleased to hear that, following representation from itself and members of the public, the Local Government Commission had proposed a new ward arrangement, which is far more satisfactory than that suggested by the SODC. This latter, which would have joined us with Kidmore End and Sonning Common, was widely agreed to be not for us. The Commission has now suggested that Goring Heath and we join in a new

and enlarged Goring Ward, which will have two District Councillors (who will both represent the whole area).

On Village Maintenance, the Chairman reported that he had once again written to the County about the state of Hardwick Road and that some start had since been made on repairing the worst potholes (*since the meeting the potholes he had identified have all been properly repaired*).

It was also pointed out that larger items of green garden waste (trees etc) could now be taken to Oakley Wood Waste Centre where a chipping and composting area had been set up. Large scale DIY waste is now collected by the County under its 1,2,3 scheme. This allows you to dispose of three large items, eg baths or fence panels, at an OCC waste site free of charge and up to ten other items at £1 each. For information ring 01865 815796.

### **Refuse Collection**

The SODC waste collection contractor has informed a number of residents, whose front gardens do not have a kerbside where they can put out their refuse for collection, that they must take it to a designated point. This is obviously a problem for anyone who is either elderly or infirm and the Parish Council has been trying to resolve this, without much success since the refuse collection contract is tied to 'kerbside collection'.

However, the production to the SODC of a doctor's letter stating that a person is unable to take their refuse to such a designated spot, requires the SODC to arrange a home collection....We will watch the outcome of this matter with interest and will continue to press for better arrangements .

The next meeting of the Parish Council is on Monday 14 May 2001 at 8.00pm in the Village Hall. Everyone is welcome.

Don't forget the Annual Parish Assembly which is on Thursday 5 April in the Village Hall. Refreshments will be served from 7.30 and the meeting will start at 8.00pm. Following the meeting, you are invited to join us for a glass of wine or something non-alcoholic.

#### *NOTE*

*The Bulletin is a way of keeping our readers informed of what is happening in the village. If you have something you would like to say, comments to make about village matters, or interesting news you would like to share, please contact the Editor. Copy should, if possible, be in disc format (saved in plain text) and meet the deadline given on the last page.*

*Although we welcome all news items or letters ( we do not get enough of them) we do require that they be signed. We will not publish items or letters from sources which cannot be identified.*

*Peter Minton, Chairman WPC.*

#### **FROM YOUR DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

The District Council has set its budget at £12.184m, a rise of 6%. This increase includes an extra £100,000 to cover increased costs of homelessness, £90,000 extra for the half-price bus pass and £180,000 towards new waste collection initiatives.

The Council is going ahead with the free half-price bus pass before the government deadline of June, at the same time the Council will offer their alternative token scheme. Those eligible will choose between the two schemes from 1 April. From that date only National Transport Tokens will be valid and therefore the old plastic tokens must be used by 31 March.

Discussion is continuing on the details of the Council's new Political Management which will come into force in May. Consultation will take place with Town and Parish Councils, partner organisations and public bodies. This will be accompanied by an Independent Market Research Survey and enough publicity to enable residents to make any representations which they wish to their Parish Councillor to the District Council direct.

*Deborah Whitfeld*

## FROM YOUR PARISH CLERK

### Whitchurch Bridge - Concessionary Red Discs

The Whitchurch Bridge Company has asked the Parish Council to arrange for all legitimately-held Red Discs to be exchanged for Yellow Discs by 1 July 2001. For Whitchurch-on-Thames residents who already have a Red Disc for their car(s), the arrangements will be as follows:

1. Write your name, address and car number(s) on an unsealed envelope.
2. Post the envelope (preferably by hand) into the letter box at Wells House, Eastfield Lane. If you wish to use Royal Mail, post your envelope to Disc Change, Wells House, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Reading RG8 7EJ.
3. Your new Yellow Disc will be delivered back to you within 4 weeks.

#### **Please note that:**

- Until 30 June, Red and Yellow Discs will be valid. From 1 July only Yellow Discs will be valid.
- If you do not already have a Red Disc, or your car number(s) have changed, the usual arrangements (as displayed on the Noticeboard opposite The Greyhound or at [www.whitchurchonthames.com](http://www.whitchurchonthames.com)) will apply.
- There is no charge for this change.

*Janet Holmes, Parish Clerk*

## PANGBOURNE & DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Following the closure of the United Reformed Church the Volunteer Centre will operate from the Committee Room in Pangbourne Village Hall.

The office will be open every **Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday**

**from 9.30am to 11.30am**, but please note that the office will **not** be open on Tuesdays.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help either in the office or with driving. Driving can either be very local or to the hospitals whichever is your choice. Even if you can only help on a very occasional basis we would like to hear from you.

We are extremely grateful to the elders of the United Reformed Church for allowing us to use their premises for the past 24 years.

**The telephone number will remain the same : 984 4586**

*Susan Laishley*

## **BUS PASSES AND CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL TOKENS**

From 1 April residents of pensionable age and the disabled will be able to choose :

either            **£20 of National Transport Tokens**

or                 **a half-fare Bus Pass**

**The Travel Tokens** have a value of 50p each, and may be used on local journeys by bus, train and some taxis, or on voluntary transport schemes.

**The Bus Pass** offers travel at half the standard fare within South Oxfordshire and to certain destinations outside the district such as Reading and Oxford. They can be used after 9.0 am on weekdays and at any time on weekends and public holidays.

Neither passes nor tokens are valid on tours or excursions. The grey plastic travel tokens currently in use will not be valid after 31 March 2001 and must be used by this date.

If you wish to continue with the Travel Token scheme I will be distributing them in the Village Hall on :

**Wednesday 4 April and Monday 9 April between 10.30 am and 12 noon.**

Tokens are available for men over the age of 65 and women over the age of 60, and I would be grateful if new applicants would bring their pension cards with them as proof of eligibility. The Bus Pass Guidance Notes and Application Forms will also be available at these times – if you would like further information please phone me on 984 5214.

*Alison Michael*

## **THE WHITCHURCH SOCIETY - *Forthcoming events* :**

**Sunday 1 April**        **Village Litter-blitz** - to kick off the annual Village Spring Clean. We will be assembling opposite the Greyhound at 10am.

**Friday 20 April**      **Talk on Organic Gardening by Wendy Elicock** - 7.30pm in the Village Hall following the AGM.

*Nigel Grove, Chairman*

## **COMMUNITY WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE**

A supervised refuse service vehicle arrives at the Village Hall car park for householders to dispose of additional waste. If you are not able to attend the Whitchurch collection then it is

possible to use the service at another parish e.g. Goring, Goring Heath or Woodcote. Please note that this vehicle will only be on site for a short period of time, once a month. Any item left after the vehicle has moved to its next location will not be collected and legal action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be taken against any persons found to be “dumping” rubbish.

Whitchurch - located at the Village Hall Car Park

Goring Heath - located at the recreation ground lay by

	<b>Whitchurch</b>	<b>Goring Heath</b>
15 March	from 1115 to 1400	from 0800 to 1045
12 April	from 1115 to 1400	from 0800 to 1045
10 May	from 1115 to 1400	from 0800 to 1045

Woodcote - located at the Village Hall car park

Goring - located at SODC car park or Icknield Place

	<b>Woodcote</b>	<b>Goring</b>
17 March	from 1010 to 1200	from 0800 to 0950 at Icknield
27 March	from 1115 to 1400	from 0800 to 1045 at SODC
31 March	from 1010 to 1200	from 0800 to 0950 at SODC
10 April	from 0800 to 1045	from 1115 to 1400 at SODC
24 April	from 0800 to 1045	from 1115 to 1400 at Icknield
28 April	from 1010 to 1200	from 0800 to 0950 at Icknield
8 May	from 0800 to 1045	from 1115 to 1400 at SODC
15 May	from 1115 to 1400	from 0800 to 1045 at SODC
22 May	from 0800 to 1045	from 1115 to 1400 at Icknield
26 May	from 0800 to 0950	from 1010 to 1200 at Icknield

## **THE VILLAGE FETE – SATURDAY 23 JUNE**

The Village Fete will take place on Saturday 23 June at Walliscote Farm on the High Street.

There will be the usual attractions, and this year will see the return of **Granny’s Attic** and the **Barbecue**. We will also have a **Line Dancing display and even more entertainment for children**. We will be improving the site layout, and having a PA system that everyone can hear!

We will also be replacing the Grand Draw with a **Silent Auction of Gifts and Promises**, so would like to hear from anyone who can donate items which are interesting and perhaps unusual. Your own time and skills could also be valuable: a meal cooked and served, a day at a health farm, a trip on the river, your own website designed – these are all the types of “promises” we could auction, so please get in touch if you could offer anything like this.

Nearer the time there will be a house-to-house leaflet drop asking for books, cakes, CD’s etc and items for Granny’s Attic, with details of collection arrangements.

**As ever, we would love to hear from anyone who would like to help or run a stall.**

*Geoff Weir, Chairman Fete*

*Committee*

## **WWW.WHITCHURCHONTHAMES.COM**

Just a reminder that the Village Website [www.whitchurchonthames.com](http://www.whitchurchonthames.com) has lots of useful and interesting information about the Village. It also provides free links and server space for village businesses and groups, and there is a new section with links to residents' own personal websites (my brother's happens to be the first!). If you would like a link or some free space, please contact me.

We would like to include more details of local groups and societies and their activities - so if you are involved in a local group, please let me have some information I can use

*Philip Weir,*

*Webmaster*

## **EASTER CELEBRATION**

**On Easter Day, Sunday 15 April at 11.00am  
the morning service at St. Mary's Church  
will be taken by  
The Rt. Reverend Colin Fletcher OBE,  
Bishop of Dorchester.**

**All are cordially invited to the service  
and to a reception after in the Rectory.**

*This service has been arranged for 11.00am  
and replaces the normal 10.00 am service*

## **THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY**

I would like to thank everyone for their generous contributions to the Society for the year 2000 via the boxes and donations. The total amount banked in February 2001 was £258.41.

*Sally Woolhouse*

## **NEWS FROM WHITCHURCH SCHOOL**

We would be very grateful for your help in our appeal to raise £12,000 to improve and enlarge two of the school's four classrooms. We already have £18,000 but removing walls, strengthening the roof, etc. will cost an estimated £30,000. We do hope you will be able to

contribute to this community appeal either by making a donation or in some other way. We are setting up a charity and intend to make use of Gift Aid and the new Seed Challenge Grant which can potentially double what we raise.

We are aware that traffic and parking on Eastfield Lane is a problem and, following a travel survey and parents' meeting, have been working to improve things. Parents are sharing lifts and using Hardwick Road/ Muddy Lane more. Also, the LEA has agreed to implement a bus service from Whitchurch Hill if there will be enough demand for it and if it can turn round safely by the school. For this reason, we are trying different parking arrangements and would appreciate comments and suggestions.

Class 3 have enjoyed a living history presentation about life and death in Ancient Egypt and much excellent work is on the go. Class 4 pupils are off to Glasbury on Wye at the end of the term to stay in a mountainous area and find out about survival techniques, rock features and erosion from first hand experience.

Classes 1 and 2 have an appointment at Blake's Lock Museum in Reading to help Mrs Tanner to do the washing the old fashioned way.

**We are holding another of our most successful concerts on Wednesday 28 March.** Seats will be available for the morning concert starting at 10a.m. so do let us know if you would like a ticket.

We have all enjoyed the sunshine of the last few days. We hope that now that Classes 1 and 2 have stopped studying the weather we can all dry out a little.

*Penelope Smith, Headteacher*

*John Bradon, Chairman School Governors*

### **WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL GROUP - "learning through play"**

The pre-school half term holidays got off to a great start with a trip to see 'Little Red Riding Hood' at the Hexagon Theatre in Reading.....oh no it didn't.....oh yes it did! The children really enjoyed the play, especially shouting at the Big Bad Wolf whenever he came on stage. It was a very noisy but thoroughly enjoyable way to spend an afternoon.

Just a reminder to all parents with children at pre-school that the **Annual General Meeting is being held on Wednesday 2 May at the pre-school from 8pm onwards.** We would encourage as many of you as possible to come along and have your say as to how the pre-school is being run. We welcome any parents who feel they have any time to give helping with any of the activities that keep the pre-school going.,

*Trudy Reynolds 984 2609*

### **WHITCHURCH WANDERERS FOOTBALL CLUB**

**No First team action :** The Wanderers have not been in action for the last two months. Unfortunately the tournaments we were due to play in fell victim of the weather.

**Community football courses:** We have recently completed a very successful course in Woodcote. I would like to thank all of the children who attended the course as well as the parents bringing them to Langtree School each Friday evening. We are looking to run another course in Woodcote after the Easter Holidays and will keep you informed.

**Womens and Girls football:** The Womens and Girls football course has recently started at Castle Leisure Centre, Wallingford on Saturday mornings 10am - 11am. If you are aged over 12 and interested in playing football please contact the Castle on 01491 839 755.

**Sports camp:** South Oxfordshire District Council are running a sports camp in Woodcote over the Easter Holidays. Further information is available from Joyce on 01491 823 417.

*Paul Meakin 984 1631*

The Ancient Parish of

## **WHITCHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY**

Our AGM was held on 15 February and fortunately Vicky Jordan was persuaded to stay in the Chair for another year. Special thanks were given to Antonia and Philip Wellesley-Davies who were stepping down from their posts as Secretary and Treasurer, which they had held most ably and efficiently for some years. Sue Matthews was appointed Secretary and Tony Voysey as Treasurer. The Committee Members are Theresa Elsome, Alison Powell, Leon and Maureen Summers and Martin Wise.

Vicky, in her Chairman's address, outlined the year's achievements particularly the very successful Exhibition. The other project which reached fruition was the saving and moving of the Pump House to its new site behind Goring Heath Parish Hall. Unfortunately the cast iron cover of the reservoir, bearing the name 'Thomas Crapper', disappeared before it too could be moved. This has been reported to the police but it is possible that it may yet be found at the bottom of the reservoir when it is drained.

Which leads neatly to the subject of the very entertaining talk of the evening given by Pat Preece on 'The Water Famine of the Chilterns' in which she reminded us that we now take this commodity for granted. Water supply was a real problem in the Chilterns and was often only available from muddy ponds. The epidemics of cholera during the nineteenth century led to some landowners providing wells for drinking water to which people had to walk many miles carrying buckets on yokes. The well at Whitchurch Hill is 300 feet deep and took a strong man seven minutes to bring water up. This was superseded by the unique reservoir from which we have the Pump House and from 1904 water was piped from Woodcote reservoir. Our predecessors down the hill were fortunate in having clean River Thames drinking water right on their doorstep.

A reminder that membership subscriptions are now due. A bargain at £5 individual and £8 family group. Please give them to Tony.

Finally our 19 April meeting will be a Member's Evening (*i.e. the content is provided by members and does not mean for members only*) in Whitchurch Village Hall at 8pm (coffee will be available from 7.45pm). All are welcome to our meetings, held on the third Thursday of the month. Keep an eye open for the posters around the village.

Thank you

*Sue Matthews*

### **WHITCHURCH CRICKET CLUB 2001**

A new season beckons with all that the wonderful game entails - pace bowling at its finest, some of the most cunning spinners around, and batsmen to whom scoring a century is just a lazy afternoon knock about. These are the sort of people we are seeking to improve the ageing squad that gathers at the ground in Eastfield Lane every weekend from mid April onwards.

If you are new to the area, or if you know anyone who might be interested in playing the game, do please get in contact with me as soon as possible. There is also an opportunity to work off some of the winter excesses, and to meet some of the club members, in the pre-season nets. These are to be held on **Monday evenings at 9pm from 26 March** at **Bradfield College** - do make an effort to attend, or let me know if you are in need of transport.

Visitors to the ground will, as ever, be made very welcome, and fixture cards will be available soon so you can choose the key matches you may wish to watch. The club look forward to welcoming you all in the coming months.

**Nigel Cabeldu 984 4171**

### **PANGBOURNE AND DISTRICT BOWLS CLUB**

We now reach the exciting part of the year when **Open Day** is just around the corner on Saturday 21 April at 2pm. Please contact Bill Ayling for further information on 941 9437.

### **WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES HABITAT STUDY GROUP (WoT-HABS)**

Our main priority is to continue the maintenance work on the verges of Hardwick Road in order to preserve and further encourage the wild flowers and to renew the signs asking people to help and protect these verges.

Work is going ahead with the wildlife habitat project in the school grounds in a series of Saturday morning working parties. This includes removing brambles, placing hurdles to

protect the wild area and creating a mini-meadow around the pond. We are hoping to get a grant from South Oxfordshire District Council to help pay for this work.

A date for your diary: the annual **Cowslip Walk** at Bozedown Farm will be **on Sunday 6 May**

If you are interested in helping our group in a practical way, please give Alison Michael (our Secretary) or me a ring.

Gill Goodwin 9842934

*.... talking to Margaret Kerswill recently ....*

*One of the helicopters of the **Air Ambulance Service** speedily came to collect Jack Kerswill who at his grand age of 85 had fallen off his bicycle on the bridge on Saturday 6 January, on one of his regular trips to Pangbourne. The air ambulance team gave him their usual quick, smooth and comfortable ride to the West Berkshire Hospital but sadly he died on the way.*

*His wife Margaret would like to thank all her neighbours in Manor Road for their support and particularly for the grand collection they sent in memory of Jack to The Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance Service.*

*As Margaret says "you never know, one day you or your family may need the **Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance** - please do try to send them a donation to help them continue this wonderful service." Their address is :*

**Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance Service c/o C.H. Lovegrove 141 Oxford Road, Reading RG1 7UU (0118 957 2016).**

## **WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

### **VISIT OF THE FRENCH – WEEKEND 28-30 APRIL**

It is our turn this year to welcome a group from the village of La Bouille in Normandy. The programme for the visit is outlined as follows:

- Arrival of the French coach early Saturday morning 28 April
- Reception in the Goring Heath Parish Hall at 6 pm the same day
- Saturday evening with host families (combined dinner parties are planned – a format successfully used last time)
- On Sunday 29 April there will be an outing – options are currently being considered (last time we went to a Stately Home – Wilton House, near Salisbury)
- Departure of the French coach before lunch on Monday 30 April

Any parishioner in Whitchurch and Goring Heath is welcome to take part in both the reception and the outing (details of which will be publicised later). We would also like to hear from anyone interested in accommodating a French family (single person, couple, family with children, etc) for the two nights.

Contacts are:

Ian Bruce 984 2653, Vicky Jordan 984 3260 and Trudy Skidmore 984 2578.

*Ian Bruce, Chairman*

### **THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST APPEAL**

I would like to thank all those who so kindly contributed towards the Gurkha Welfare Trust. In Whitchurch I collected a total sum of £102.35. My cadet force contingent is raising money for the cause, and it goes towards providing pensions for those members of the Gurkhas who served in the British Army in World War Two, but did not qualify for a service pension by not staying in for 15 years. Such pensions amount to £20.00 a month, which does not sound very much, but goes a long way in rural Nepal. In addition, however, the Trust undertakes community projects for the Nepalese villages in which the Gurkha veterans live and from which the British Army's Gurkhas are recruited. One project is the provision of drinking water taps in the villages, another is the building of lavatory blocks for Nepalese schools. These lavatory blocks only cost £400 to build, but transform the quality of life at the school for which they are provided.

I myself have strong aspirations to join The Royal Gurkha Rifles after university, so I try to support the Welfare Trust in every way possible and I thank everyone who has done the same! Thank you,

*Rob Garside*

## **SPRING HORTICULTURAL SHOW**

## **Saturday 31 March Goring Heath Parish Hall**

A reminder for all of you to get your schedules so you can give yourselves plenty of time to try out the recipes and get the preserves bottled; to pick out the best of your photos ready to enter them in the Photographic Section or try out your ideas for the Floral Art. And don't forget to get the children started on their entries too. All your spring blooms and pot plants have just a short while to reach their peak - let's hope for some settled weather!

There is plenty of sections to give everyone a choice of what to enter.

Get your schedules from

**Pat Turner on 984 4200 or Theresa Elsome on 984 2056**

**GOOD LUCK !**

### **ALLOTMENT & GARDENING**

As Spring breaks remember to clear away any debris under fruit trees and shrubs that may harbour latent fungi spores. What you can't compost can be taken to the new "green" recycling facility at Oakley Wood (at the A329 Wallingford roundabout then sign posted up Crowmarsh Hill).

It would be typical of the perversity of climate patterns that our wet winter is followed by a Summer drought but even now it's not too late to mulch vulnerable fruit or shrubs with heavy well rotted cow manure and build up some tolerance. A pleasanter task is to get your early sowings of potatoes, beans and peas underway and to start hardening off your patio and border plants , but do remember to protect and encourage them with cloches or horticultural fleece to avoid damage from late Spring frosts.

*Rosamund Heath (984 2358)*

### **SOUTH CHILTERN CHORAL SOCIETY**

#### ***Mirror of Perfection***

In the last thirty years the Sonning Common based Chiltern Choral Society has performed much of the standard choral repertoire, including many of the most popular works - *Messiah, Elijah, The Creation, Bach B Minor Mass, the Requiems of Mozart, Faure and Verdi, several of the Masses of Haydn, Schubert and Beethoven, The Dream of Gerontius* and so on. At the same time, it has made a feature

of presenting music of the last century, particularly music by English composers - *Britten, Vaughan Williams, John Rutter* and a host of others.

So when conductor Gwyn Arch happened to see a review in a CD magazine of a new piece by Richard Blackford and the review said "Risks giving contemporary music a good name.... A seven-section work of some considerable beauty.... Lyrical, melodic, structured with direct simplicity... it is already beginning to be widely performed", he thought it should be investigated.

As a result, on **Sunday 1 April at 7.30 in the Great Hall of Reading University**, a Berkshire/Oxfordshire audience will hear *Mirror of Perfection* for the first time. Originally performed at the Royal College of Music in 1996, the work quickly was recognised as one likely to join the standard choral repertoire. It was soon recorded (by Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus) and then featured in its entirety on BBC2 on Easter Sunday 1999 with a commentary narrated by Jeremy Irons. The TV film was called *Seven Canticles of St. Francis* because Blackford had set texts by the thirteenth century St. Francis of Assisi, and set them with an eloquently simplicity that has had a remarkable effect on those who have heard the work.

The South Chiltern performance will be the eighteenth in this country and will feature the baritone William Berger, particularly recommended by the composer as one who sings his solo part particularly well. Indeed, Richard Blackford is anxious to hear him again, and so promises to attend the performance and introduce *Mirror of Perfection* to the audience.

However, that is only the second half of the concert; the first part being much more familiar material, the ever-popular *Gloria of Vivaldi and the Mass in G by an eighteen year old Schubert*. As usual, there will be professional soloists and full orchestral accompaniment for the 120-strong choir.

*Tickets available from Freda Millar - 986 2016*

## **Ken in freefall**

On 7 January, just after the closing date for copy for the last Bulletin, I stood on the tarmac at Hinton Airfield waiting to take-off for a sponsored tandem parachute jump. The jump, in aid of the National Asthma Campaign, was originally planned for October last year but poor weather conditions continually led to the jump being postponed. But on 7 January the weather was perfect for jumping, clear sky and little wind.

After being kitted up and doing a little practice (jumping off a table with my instructor!) it was out to the plane and up and away to 10,000 feet. When we reached jump height, my instructor strapped us together, the photographer who was going to video the jump climbed out and hung on to take pictures as we leapt out and then followed us down, filming as we went. We were in freefall for 30 seconds, which was breathtaking and very fast. The parachute descent was more peaceful and I was allowed to steer looping and turning so that I could see the countryside below. It was a fantastic experience and I cannot wait to do it again.

My sponsorship raised over £500 for the campaign and I am grateful for all the support I have had.

*Ken Minton*

## **CINDERELLA**

The pantomime came to Whitchurch Village Hall again at the end of January. The production by The Young Riparians was tremendous fun, and it played to two packed houses. All the old chestnuts were there "Oh no they weren't, Oh yes they were", including the traditional sing song and the chase through the audience. Trudy Skidmore and Pam Chandler had coached the cast into a pacey and tight performance. The Ugly Sisters gave especially fine performances and in Tom Dixon we have a budding Dame for the future. He, Eleanore Ridge and Madeline Redfern dominated the stage when they were on, but then they had the plum parts for a Pantomime, the chance to go over the top, and that is not given to the other actors. The Troop suffers from a dearth of boys, what is it about the male sex that they won't act as boys, but when they reach adulthood spent the rest of their lives acting like over-grown schoolboys. Congratulations to all, actors, backstage crew and front of house for thoroughly enjoyable evening.

*Tony Voysey*

## **PURLEY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

The Purley Horticultural Society is now open again to new members from Whitchurch. There are a number of meetings during the year, one or two coach trips to gardens and place of interest and currently two shows per year, one in the Spring and one late Summer. This year the Spring Show is on Saturday 7 April in The Barn by the Purley Recreation Ground.

There is also a store in the grounds of the Memorial Hall, which is open from 10am to 11am on Saturdays and Sundays and which stocks many gardening products at very attractive prices. There are a few special tools available to borrow such as a seed spreader and lawn scarifier.

*Contact Tony Voysey on 984 3946 for further details.*

**OXFAM of Pangbourne** is planning a book-sale for late April. Previously a similar event raised £1000 in two weeks. It is hoped that a wide range of good quality books will be offered for sale. We wish to encourage readers to donate saleable volumes for this purpose. This time we specially invite local authors to give us signed copies of their works, and we also plan to have a section of first editions and other collectables.

We thank you warmly in advance for your support; without it there would be no books to sell.

*David Farmer*

**THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN** will be published in May 2001.

Please send your contributions **preferably on disc in Word 95 version 7** or alternatively hard copy to the Editor:-

Sylvia Rosekilly, 22 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames, RG8 7HP

Telephone (0118) 984 3080 **no later than Monday, 14 May 2001.**

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