

WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES BULLETIN

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MAY 2005

Meeting of the Parish Council

A meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday the 9th May at 8.00 pm in the Village Hall.

In attendance were the Chairman Matilda Oppenheimer and Councillors Harry Butterworth, Vincent Aldridge, Kate Thatcher, Nigel Groves and Elizabeth Robinson.

Also present were the Parish Clerk Janet Holmes, District Councillor Pearl Slatter and two members of the Public.

Matilda Oppenheimer was re-elected as Chairman and Vincent Aldridge as Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year. Councillors with special responsibilities were also appointed.

Parish Clerk

Janet Holmes has been Clerk to Whitchurch Parish Council since August 1994. She is retiring from this position in July after nearly 11 years. We will all be very sorry to see her go as her hard work, excellent judgement and sound knowledge of all the regulations that govern us is invaluable to the Parish Council. We have been very fortunate to have had such a highly qualified Clerk and someone so interested and committed to the Village.

Advertisements for her replacement will be placed shortly. (See page 3)

The Parish Clerk's Email address will remain: clerk@whitchurchonthames.com

New Parish Councillor

We now have a vacancy on the Parish Council following the resignation of Geoff Weir. A Notice to this effect has been put up on the Parish Notice Board.

Please contact the Parish Clerk or look on the Notice Board for further information if you are interested in joining the Parish Council.

The Whitchurch Thyme Maze

The Parish Council are funding an "Interpretation board" or lectern, which will be put up in the maze field.

This will provide information about our maze, how it came about, how to explore it, how to use the sundial and many other interesting things about mazes.

The board is very interesting and has been beautifully designed and written by Nick Brazil and Sally Woolhouse

Toll Bridge

The Parish Council has discussed the recent increase in the tolls and taken advice about this.

We are satisfied that all due processes were complied with by the Whitchurch Bridge Company.

However, we recognise that this is an emotive issue within the Village and will be meeting with the Whitchurch Bridge Company to put across the views of the Parish.

Playground

The Parish council are waiting for the Land Registry to finalise their part in the land transfer from Mr Sam Josefovitz to the Parish, before organising for work to start on the new area of the Playground. Initially this will involve moving the fence, clearing the shrubs and cutting back the trees to make sure that the area is safe for use as a Playground. After this the new playground equipment will be installed.

Concerns have been expressed to the Parish Council that Dogs have been allowed into the Playground and have been soiling the area. Wearing my "other hat" I am very concerned about this as it is a real health hazard to young children. Please obey the signs that are on the railings and ensure that dogs do not enter the Play area.

Planning

New Applications

PO5/EO377 May Cottage, Eastfield Lane
Erection of single storey front extension

NO OBJECTION

PO5/EO501 The Chevin, Eastfield Lane
Demolish existing dwelling and outbuildings.
Erect two new dwellings and alteration to existing access.

OBJECTION

Decisions

PO5/EO108/0 Land adjacent to Walliscote House
PO5/E0213/CA) Prospect House, High St
PO5/E0211)

**REFUSED
GRANTED**

Finances

The following cheques were agreed for payment.

To the Clerk for salary, pension and expenses, to PCC as a contribution towards clock repairs, Allianz Cornhill insurance, Impact (software support), Viking Direct (stationary), Oxfordshire ALC annual subscription, PC World (software).

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Monday the 4th July in the Whitchurch Village Hall at 8.00pm. An agenda and the dates of future meetings will be posted on the Parish Council Notice-board opposite the Greyhound before the next meeting.

Matilda Oppenheimer

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

At the recent village assembly, some excellent reports were given of the activities within the parish over the past year. For those who were unable to attend we have printed a selection in the Bulletin, which we hope will be of interest to the villagers.

Ed

Vacancy for Clerk to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council

From 1st July, I will be retiring from the role of Clerk to Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council. This is a small parish in South Oxfordshire with 620 electors, a 7 member council.

Applicants should have a knowledge of local government processes, a good range of communication skills, the ability to facilitate the meetings of the Council. They will be responsible for all aspects of the Council's administration, including finance. Use of a computer is essential and the work is undertaken from the Clerk's home.

Currently the council has a maximum of 10 meetings per year and the Clerk is paid for 5 hours per week. This could increase if the applicant is willing to undertake a role with the administration of the village hall in the near future.

Further information may be obtained from me at the following address.

Applications to be received by 3 June 2005

Janet Holmes
3 Vine Crescent
Southcote
Reading
RG30 3LT
0118 9598577

Annual Parish Meeting - Chairman's Report

12th April 2005

Welcome to the Annual Assembly of the Parish.

Our plan for this evening is to start with a brief review of what the Parish Council has been up to during the last year.

I would like to give a special mention and thanks to our Clerk Mrs Janet Holmes. Janet attends all our meetings and advises us about the regulations that govern us as a Council. She is a very knowledgeable about practically everything we need to know. Janet can always find an excellent tree man, sign maker or anything you care to mention. She also works tirelessly behind the scenes to put into action all the decisions that are taken by the PC. We are all very grateful for all she does for the PC and the Village. I am particularly grateful that she has come tonight shortly as she has not been well recently and is "off work" at the moment.

Thank you Janet, for all your help and hard work.

Cricket Club

During the last year two public meetings that have taken place in the Village concerning the Cricket Club Ground.

As you will all know the CC was given notice to quit in November 2003. The CC is in the process of continuing negotiations with the Whitelock family and plans to purchase

the land for the benefit of the Village as a whole and for the CC itself to ensure that Cricket continues to be played in the Village. The sum in question is £300,000.

The CC proposal is to seek planning permission for one property on a small plot of land on Eastfield Lane. This will be kept by the Whitelock family to raise the sum they want and the remainder of the land will pass to a Trust with which will own and administer the Ground for the benefit of the CC and the Village as a whole. There is also a generous grant from the SODC towards the purchase of the ground.

Progress has been slow recently due to unforeseen and unavoidable delays with the Whitelock's Lawyers who are drawing up the draft Contract and Trust deed. We all await further developments.

The Parish council are in support of the Cricket Ground and hope to see many benefits to the Village as a whole especially increased sports facilities at the ground and also improved parking for the school.

SODC land for purchase

The DC owns various plots of land within the Village.

They have approached the PC and have suggested that the ownership of some of these plots of land could be transferred to the PC.

The land includes the Playground, the Village Hall, various verges in the Village and other plots within the Village. We will only purchase land that will be of obvious benefit to the Village and not involve the village in further expense that could be a burden to the Village.

We are currently in discussion with the SODC about this and will keep you informed.

Playground

The Playground was officially opened by Mr Sam Josefovitz on the 26th June 2004.

Despite the rain this was very well attended, lots of children climbed all over the Play equipment, many Villagers came and we are very grateful for everyone's support.

Mr Sam and Mrs Popper's families, many of whom travelled to Whitchurch from Switzerland especially for the occasion, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Extra land at the back of the Playground, which was previously Mr Sam's garden, has now been given to the Village. This enlarges the Play ground significantly.

New fencing will be put up, the area cleared (leaving the trees) and more new equipment and bench seats installed. We plan to replace the large slide and also provide a smaller slide for younger children. Mr Sam has given some new benches for sitting in the shade and watching the children play. We hope to get this next part of the project underway as soon as possible.

The Parish Council are very grateful to Mr Sam for this further generous addition to the Playground. Interestingly he has a similar project in Israel for the children of Jerusalem.

WOTHABS have also made a wonderful contribution to the Playground by planting shrubs and small trees by the railings. They have been carefully chosen to enhance the look of the Playground but be safe for small children.

Traffic Calming

Although nothing much has happened in the last year concerning traffic calming we have come to a decision with the CC about what is to be done and await developments. It has been agreed that Virtual Footpaths should be installed by Oxford County Council at both narrows in the High Street. This is following the advice of Peter Ronald from OCC. It was felt by the Parish Council that this is the least visually obtrusive and most effective method of preventing accidents at these sites. Pedestrians were particularly vulnerable and we are keen to ensure their safety.

Giving one direction priority in the narrows was discussed but this was not recommended as it speeds up the traffic in the priority direction.

A “SIDS” Machine to measure and indicate vehicular speed to discourage speeding will be installed from time to time on a temporary basis by Road Safety Group. It has visited the Village twice already.

The Maze

We now have the wonderful maze in the Village.

This is entirely due to the hard work and enthusiasm of Nick Brazil and Sally, Lorna and Peter Woolhouse.

The Maze was opened on the 27th of June and has been enjoyed by many since then. I certainly often walk round it with my family and enjoy reading the names of friends who live in the Village and also those who have died and are remembered there.

The PC is going to give an explanatory Notice Board to the Maze designed by the maze builders

Village Hall

The management of the Village Hall is to be reorganised as the VH committee has been diminishing in numbers and no one has come forward to replace Kate Thatcher as Chairman.

Lastly but by no means least I am very sad to have to announce that **Geoff Weir** is retiring from the PC after 26 years. The Parish Council is enormously grateful for his contribution to the Council. He has chaired the council for many of those years and contributed to innumerable aspects of Village life. We all wish him well in his new position at the Toll bridge and will doubtless still benefit from his tireless enthusiasm for the Village.

However this means that there is now a vacancy on the PC and if anyone is interested in becoming a PC please contact one of us or the Parish Clerk later.

It is interesting and worthwhile, we only meet about 6 times a year and I think you would enjoy it as much as we do.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow councillors for all their hard work and good judgement during the last year and thank you all for supporting the PC by your attendance at this meeting.

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN FARROW TO WHITCHURCH PARISH MEETING 2005

Another busy year has just been completed, no sooner that the year began the Executive Group to which I belong took a hard look at the financial arrangements for the year and how with careful planning we could keep the 2005/06 budget realistic. Again as with last year Under Government direction the Council had to identify savings from every department without reducing to service to the community I am pleased to say that our careful planning went well, and we were able to return a budget for 2005/06 at 4.5% increase.

Although I have again been heavily involved within my Portfolio, I have not neglected the local issues that have needed attention. Whenever local issues are drawn to my attention, I have always dealt with them to achieve the best result possible, and advised you through the Whitchurch Bulletin. Two of the local issues I am currently involved with are the parking and safety for parents at the school, and the road safety through the High Street including the narrow approach to the bridge.

During the year I have been involved in a variety of areas concerning public safety, crime and the emergency services both local and county wide. Other areas I have been working with both locally and across the County are:

- **Schools**—This year it was pleasing to receive a good Ofsted and that the inspectors were satisfied that pupils are attaining a good level of Education. Whilst looking at our schools may I draw your attention to Governorship, if you would like to become a school Governor please let me know.
- **Environmental**—Again addition money has been allocated in order to catch up with repairs to damaged road surfaces. I know that there is still a lot of work required in this area but I am assured that every effort is being made to catch up as quickly as possible.
- **Youth**—I have been working hard with the youth service addressing the lack of County support for a youth worker in the village. One of the prime reasons we are short of youth workers is the lack of volunteers in this discipline.

Any changes that have taken place have not interfered in any way with my views on the way the County Council works, or the way in which I can assist you with queries or guidance you may require, from any services of the Council.

Looking to the future it is my intention to continue my fight for maximum efficiency from all of the County services.

J. Farrow
County Councillor

**THE WHITCHURCH THYME MAZE
1ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Saturday 11th June from 12 noon**

It's hard to believe that it is nearly a year since the official opening of the Maze. It was a most enjoyable and memorable occasion, attended by many of you, and we thought it would be fun to hold an informal gathering to mark its 1st Birthday!

Bring along a picnic lunch and enjoy the lovely surroundings of the Maze Meadow, hopefully in summer sunshine. We shall set up a big BBQ so that you can cook your own bangers if you wish, and there will be a small quantity of free beer laid on, so come promptly!

For any further details, please ring me on 984 1602.

Nick Brazil



This term's theme is 'Around the World'. So far the children have been looking at their Pre-School and the garden, progressing onto the village. They've made flowers, trees, road signs and traffic lights, producing some wonderful displays. We're also nurturing a number of tadpoles and watching how they change.

The next weeks leading up to the end of term will be exciting as the children start to look at Europe followed by other continents such as Africa and Australasia. As always our topics are discovered and explored by the children through play and by allowing the children to experience and handle different media.

Thanks to some of the parents, last term we had a wonderful Easter Egg hunt, which, not only raised some substantial funds, but also turned out to be a fantastic afternoon of entertainment for children and adults alike. The hunt started in the Pre-School garden with numerous clues catering for a range of ages and moved on up through Muddy Lane to the Maze. It ended in the village hall with refreshments, a cake sale, raffle, Easter bonnet parade, face painting and a larger than life Easter Bunny ! Many of the children then spent the rest of the afternoon at the village playground. Excellent fun.

In March, we also visited Rushall Farm for our annual 'Lambing' trip. The children thoroughly enjoyed feeding the lambs and the chickens, cuddling the kittens and going on a super trailer ride. The Summer trip is still in its planning phase, but the Pre-School picnic is already scheduled for the last day of term and will be in the garden.

Talking of the garden, the Summer holidays will see the arrival of diggers and landscape gardeners to produce a wonderful 'Outside Classroom' for Pre-School children and the children from Class One of the Primary School. It's been a long time coming, but it'll be here in September !

If you're interested in visiting the Pre-School, please telephone Helen on 0118 9844516. You can also find out more about Pre-School from our new web address www.whitchurchpreschool.org

Or come along to our **open day** on Tuesday 28th June at 1.30pm

Supporting the School and Pre School

The School Association and Pre School Group have registered with a company called Brightminds, who supply educational toys and games for kids. The company are going to give the school and pre school 25% in vouchers for any sales which include the appropriate source code (FR-2211 for the School FR-2210 for the Pre School). So if you need presents for the kids in your family, have a look at www.Brightminds.co.uk - if you do order DON'T FORGET THE SOURCE CODE!!

I have got some extra catalogues if anyone wants to look at one.

Kate Thatcher 9844656

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report to the Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council Annual Assembly

Whitchurch Primary School has accomplished much in the past year: a change of both chair of governors and headteacher and some exciting projects that have or are soon to be completed.

Mrs Pearl Slatter has stepped down as chair in favour of Mrs Julie Huntington and at this point I must say how wonderful it is to have such a supportive governing body. They have taken an active interest in the day to day activities of the school and have each visited us for a day to get the in depth picture of the workings of our school, they followed their visits up with a number of very helpful suggestions which have had a positive impact on the pupils.

The School Association under Mrs Kate Preston is one of the most successful I have ever had the pleasure to work with. They have provided the school with two smart boards and 2 laptop computers as well as numerous other very costly items that the school could never afford. We now have a Smartboard in every classroom and all teaching staff have access to laptop computers. I feel that the most important aspect of their work is the fact that they have provided a focus for the parents as well as supporting some very ambitious projects. There are not many schools that have this level of technology.

Our community links are important to us and we hope to forge many more. We are extremely grateful to the Diocese and Dr. Peter Steddon, for the excellent relationship with the school and we thank them for the £1, 000 donation that has been used to enable children to attend camps and go on trips when their parents could not manage financially.

WOTHABS and Mrs Sally Woolhouse continue to work with the pupils on projects that focus on environmental awareness. This is a unique relationship and one that other schools envy.

The sporting talent at the school has been enhanced by the very successful AFC Whitchurch Football Club and in a recent inter-schools tournament Whitchurch came first. We hope to repeat this performance in the inter-schools' Tag Rugby Tournament next term. On a more informal basis, we have just held our first annual Dowdle Cup football match. This will be held on the first Saturday in April each year. This cup is in remembrance of the Dowdle family who have just recently left for New Zealand.

The school is in the process of looking at the provision of ICT and as our building does not provide us with enough space for a dedicated computer room, we have decided to purchase the latest wireless laptop system. This will enable teachers to have up to 18 state-of-the art laptops on the children's desks in the classrooms. Our school will be used as a model school for this system that both the LEA and RM Computers can use as an example for other schools.

We have also been busy in the classrooms and have held a number of highly successful sharing assemblies where the children have given their parents a taste of the work they have been doing throughout the term. These assemblies include academic work, art, music and drama. The depth of the music talent at the school has prompted us to hold music assemblies on a regular basis and we welcome parents and visitors from the local community to attend these if they wish.

Whitchurch Primary continues to be a very happy, hard working and special place to work in and this is largely due to the co-operative and well-behaved children. There are some exciting changes ahead of us and we look forward to sharing our progress with you through our new website at www.whitchurch.oxon.sch.uk. Please feel free to visit us on a 'normal working day' if you would like to find out more about the school.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the meeting.

G. Mottram

Whitchurch and Goring Health Twinning Association

Report for the Parish Council AGM 12th April, 2005

The twinning association kicked the year off last May with a wonderful and interesting visit to France. The main event of the weekend was a day out in Les Hortillonages, which is an ancient and atmospheric series of waterways, interspersed by market gardens and weekend retreats. The tour of the area was conducted in electric gondolas, which glided silently round the waterways. We then visited the 13th century gothic cathedral at Amiens, and the Quartier St. Leu – an area rich in arts and crafts, with cafes and restaurants all along the canal.

Then back to the reality of scraping funds together, by organising stalls at the local village fetes in May and September, and a boules evening in late June. We also had a visit from the French twinning president Martine, which coincided with the inauguration of the Thyme Maze.

We are now preparing to welcome our French friends in June. May I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the twinning association – your support is greatly valued and greatly needed – thank you.

David Robinson.

Visit to Whitchurch and Goring Heath 2005-05-10

Our French ‘twins’ will be arriving on Saturday June 4th at approx 11.00hrs.

We are planning a visit to Blenheim Palace on the Sunday, pre-ceded by an evening together on the Saturday night. If anyone is interested in joining us, or even hosting 1 or more guests, do please get in touch.

David Robinson 01189 844142

WoTHABS - WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES HABITAT STUDY GROUP

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING ON 12th April 2005

The Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group (WoTHabs) continues to be active and effective on various fronts within the Parish. The past year has seen our members getting actively involved in hands-on conservation work, community links, environmental data recording, training and forging wider links with other environmental groups in Oxfordshire.

We helped Sandra Conn with way marking and stewarding at the very popular and successful Cowslip Open Day at Bozedown last May, and we more recently did some brush clearing for a new path through the New Plantation, which should provide an alternative return route for visitors at the next Open day to be held on Sunday 1st May. Also, recently, a Sunday morning was spent removing some of the overhanging branches on the Jubilee Path – this has improved headroom for walkers on the path and width of road for riders and drivers on Hardwick Road.

Four sapling native trees were purchased from funds and planted last month, three in the new Manor Road play area near the fence, to enhance the site and hopefully attract more birds to interest the children, and the fourth tree was planted in the Maze Meadow. We have made a start on a project at the Meadow to enhance the underplanting in the little copse in the SE corner of the area, and also to establish a small meadow area adjacent, using locally sourced plants. The intention is to dedicate this planting to Lady Phoebe Rose, who dearly loved our English native flowers and plants.

We continue to maintain our strong links with the Primary School in several ways. Each week, one of us helps with the Forest School session with the Reception class. The wildlife areas (the pond, the meadow and the woodland corner) are regularly maintained with help

from some school parents. In January, the Class 3 children also took part in the RSPB School Birdwatch for the fourth year running with our assistance in observing and recording the birds in the grounds.

WoTHabs ran a popular stall at the Village Fete in September. As well as the challenging Log Quiz and the Caterpillar Making, there was considerable interest in our ongoing Garden Pond Survey initiative. We are endeavouring to record all garden ponds within the Parish and also encourage the owners to note regularly what they have seen in and around the pond each season. There has been good feedback from over thirty residents so far. To aid identification, Gill Goodwin has organized two sessions which are open to anyone who might find them useful – an introductory indoor session here on 28th April and a site visit to Crays Pond on 18th May.

All the pond species observations and other recorded data, such as the Garden Bird Surveys and the Garden Butterfly surveys, from the Parish, are now being stored on computer on our Observations database, Recorder 2002. This package is the standard software used nationally by the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) and English Nature, and regionally and locally by councils and groups such as ourselves. It is designed for easy transfer of records between users and we plan to send our observations regularly to the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) who hold Berkshire and Oxfordshire data. There is growing awareness of the value and importance of good long-term environmental records when making planning decisions and for observing trends in climate and habitats. We are very keen to add to our Parish database any records that residents may wish to pass on to us, such as bird surveys, local climate records or any informal observations of an environmental nature.

We are proud of our achievements over the past year – all the members draw on their various strengths to contribute effectively to particular tasks. Alison Michael is our very efficient Secretary, I am the Treasurer and we rotate the Chairmanship for each meeting. It is an informal arrangement without paid up membership which seems to work very well. Our active members and supporters lists have both increased over the past year, to 10 active and 13 supporters.

New members will always be made very welcome – whatever your skills or background, all you need to contribute is your enthusiasm, a little time and a love for our beautiful local environment!

Sally Woolhouse

8th April 2005

THE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Report to the Annual Assembly

We have a thriving and busy membership, and in the last year we have welcomed three new members. Most members are keen and grow a wide variety of fruit and veg. Keeness means however fencing in the individual plots to help reduce damage from unwanted visitors, ie pigeons, rabbits, etc.

We overhauled the water system at the beginning of the season, as we had discovered a number of leaks the previous season. Most plots have a bath either on or near their plot which makes it much easier to water vegetables when there has been no rain.

Most people had reasonable crops, there was no shortage of water, possibly more a shortage of sunshine! I took advantage of the rhubarb that grows abundantly on my plot, it requires no attention, just picking, perfect when you have three children.

We had a stand at the Whitchurch Hill fete at the end of May, this is a good fundraiser for us. Unfortunately by the time the Whitchurch Fete comes round in September, most plot holders have run out of produce.

We have acquired a new shed for Allotment holders. We were fortunate to be offered by Sue and Alan Matthews for a very reasonable price, although we have had to put new felt on the roof which added to the cost.

For anyone interested, we do have a couple of plots available. If the rain continues the plots will be very diggable for a little bit longer Baths are always welcome!

Rosamund Heath 984 2358

Whitchurch Society -Report to the Annual Assembly

The Church daffodils which we planted continue to bloom. These were designed as waves around the "ship" of the church and this has appeared as a band of white daffodils in front of the rest. And the replacement pink magnolia, planted for Lady Rose, is also looking stunning. We had quite extreme weather conditions for some of the events. The garden walks were enjoyed by many visitors from Whitchurch and beyond despite a deluge over the tea-tent. There were some interesting new gardens and new themes and we look forward to seeing both old favourites and new on the 12th of June this year. On both occasions Matilda Oppenheimer extends her hospitality to her terraced garden for our welcome tea. The Fete, under a blazing sun, featured a very successful tombola stall; we were able to seek shade under the striped awning thoughtfully supplied by the Plumbs. The Annual litter blitz was carried out to benefit the village. We gave support to the Maze and enjoyed its spectacular opening last summer. We also supported the Arts and Craft Weekend; this was seen as a great success, with its new committee. Particularly appreciated were the Archive Corner and the display of paintings by Jack Orford, featuring local scenes.

We are actively seeking new members for the Whitchurch Society Committee.

Anne Tuckwell, Chairman

WoTHABS

For a resumé of our activities over the past year please read Sally Woolhouse's report on WoTHABS to the Parish AGM last month, which is copied for you in this issue of the Bulletin. Sally has here also a piece about polecats – recently seen in and around this area. We are keen to collect any records of interesting sightings (not just polecats) which we can add to our Observations database, Recorder 2000. If you spot something that interests you it could well interest others.

There was a good turnout for Rod D'Ayala's excellent talk and slideshow on Pond Ecology held in the village hall. Many interesting points emerged including the fact that some of the most ecologically rich ponds – e.g. those supporting the highest numbers of invertebrates – appeared the least promising: a particularly good one looked like little more than a muddy cart track. Especially valuable is the separateness and variety of ponds, capable therefore of supporting a variety of plant species, amphibians, invertebrates and other creatures. The more ponds and the more varied they are the better. A particularly appealing point follows: it's often better to leave an old pond as it is (no major clean-out jobs), and dig a new one if you have the space. Also the richest part of a pond may well be that muddy-looking edge (the 'draw down zone'). We are now looking forward to an evening learning in a more hands-on way outdoors at Crays Pond.

On May 1st the weather was beautiful for the Cowslip Walk on Sandra and Dick Conn's hillside, Boze Down. There was plenty to enjoy including the walk, tractor rides, muffins and tea, and the superb view as well as a variety of wild plants and quizzes to match. Lots of people came, helping to raise a substantial sum for BBOWT.

Next WoTHABS Meeting - **8 p.m. Monday, June 6th** at Boze Down Vineyard.

We all remember Janet Reed with great affection. She was one of our founder members and made a tremendous contribution with her enthusiasm and particularly her knowledge of butterflies. She will be sadly missed and our thoughts are with her family.

Gill Goodwin 9842934

Polecats – some interesting facts

Over the past year or so, there have been nocturnal sightings of polecat-like mammals in our area, which have been reported to WoTHabs members. One was killed on Whitchurch Hill in March – I retrieved the body and photographed it. It was about 70cm long with a distinctive mask-like pattern of dark and light fur on its face, and with a dark body with pale underfur. It was similar to a mink except for its fur colour.

This led me into a bit of research on the subject. The polecat, *Mustela putorius*, is an elusive nocturnal carnivore which is expanding its range in Britain, having been eradicated from most of England by the early 20th C. It belongs to the weasel family, *Mustelidae*, comprising over 60 species of badgers, otters, skunks, martens, mink, ferrets, stoats and weasels. In many areas of Britain, ferrets, *Mustela furo*, occur in feral populations, and they interbreed with true polecats to produce fertile offspring, called polecat-ferrets. It is not easy to distinguish between the pure polecat and the hybrids in the field, but their fur colour and skull dimensions are indicators of the difference. I think that the road victim was actually a polecat-ferret.

An organisation called The Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT), with The Mammal Society, is currently running a Polecat Distribution Survey (2004 – 2006) in Britain to identify its range since the last survey in 1993 -1997. This previous survey identified a slow recovery and an expansion of their range from Wales and into the English Midlands. It also confirmed the existence of introduced populations elsewhere in England and parts of Scotland. We may have mixed feelings about an increasing population of these predators, but as rabbits and rats form the main part of their diet, farmers and landowners should tolerate their presence. As they can squeeze through a gap as small as 4cm, chicken pens should be built with this in mind!

If you see a polecat or polecat-ferret in our area, please make a note of it and get in touch with any WoTHabs member and/or the VWT (01531 636 441). If you pick up a dead polecat on the road, the VWT may want the body for genetic identification purposes, so keep it as cool as possible and ring them up for instructions. I have several interesting booklets from the VWT which you are welcome to borrow if you would like to know more. I would like to thank everyone who has already passed on their own observations and information to me.

Sally Woolhouse 984 4365

WHITCHURCH CRICKET CLUB

Where to begin - with today's summary of last year's report from Eastfield Lane? 12 months ago I reported here and gave some detail regarding the impending sale of the ground and I am pleased to say that there have been lots of "off field" activities with a series of communications with the Whitelock family, and also cricket club representatives have attended various Whitchurch Parish meetings to update on this. I don't plan to dwell on the detail now, but obviously Mike Butt (who has met the

Whitelocks on a number of occasions) and I will happily field any questions at the end of this meeting.

Talking of fielding, perhaps you might like to know a bit about the “on field” business of the club. 32 games played, mainly against the well known local villages but also a couple of touring sides, with 13 wins and only 10 defeats. This is a marginally better performance than the previous year but we did have to abandon 3 games due to the weather. The format of the games has changed a bit recently with the Saturday team preferring the limited overs game, whilst Sunday still play the more traditional way. The benefit of this is that there is scope for all to enjoy.

With 42 different players having batted at some stage during the year, the figures would seem to suggest that we have a very healthy club in terms of numbers, but of course there are still only about 20 of us that can be considered as regulars. So do please encourage anyone you know or who is new to the village who may be interested in cricket to come along to the ground and hopefully play the game with us.

However, what of 2005? This season’s work on the ground has already started, the outfield cut and square grass duly “weeded and feeded”, and we are confident of continued success on and off the field in the coming months. I am sure the village would like to see us continue to play here way into the future, so your support through coming down to the ground and watching a couple of our games would be much appreciated.

Many thanks. Nigel Cabeldu

Report to the AGM of the Parish Council
by the Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, The Revd Dr Peter Steddon

- 2004/5 has been a very busy and active year in the life of the parish.
- Numbers on the Church Electoral Roll grew from to 58 to 65, with 8 members deceased or leaving the area, and 15 new members joining, a net increase of 12%
- The pastoral or ‘occasional’ offices have also kept us busy, with 18 baptisms, weddings and funerals during 2004. We have also had adult confirmations during 2004/5 for the first time in some years.
- But the main interest should not be in counting numbers but in taking the spiritual temperature of the parish, and on that qualitative level there is a very

encouraging sense of new life, positive growth and real development, with 'every-member ministry' high on the agenda.

- Family Services have already shown significant growth: we increased the frequency from quarterly to monthly, and there are now more attending every month, a steady attendance of over 30, than previous came quarterly.
- On Rogation Sunday last May, parishioners carried out the traditional ceremony of Beating the Bounds from my boat on the river, along the southern boundary of the parish against the Berkshire bank from Hartslock Wood to Hardwick House, and rounded off the afternoon with a picnic. No choirboys were harmed during the observance of this rite.
- In July we held our first Parish Awayday at Dorchester Abbey, reviewing the life of our church (the people, not the building) and beginning to develop outline plans for the future. The day was enjoyed by over 30 parishioners, and ended with a family service and tea in the Abbey guest house. Positive practical results have already come from the day, and it will be repeated this coming July.
- September saw the revival of the popular Fireworks Spectacular: this year it will be repeated as part of our planned Patronal Festival Weekend on 10th & 11th September
- The second annual Pets Service with blessing of the animals was held in October, as were the traditional Harvest Thanksgiving services, and of course a very well-supported Harvest Supper.
- Remembrance Sunday in November was marked with a civic service in the traditional way, and wreaths were laid by the respective Chairpersons on behalf of both Whitchurch and Goring Heath Parish Councils.
- In January 2005 we held our first Plough Sunday service with the blessing of the plough (thanks to Sally and Peter Woolhouse for the loan of same).
- During February and March, we held our second course of Lent Groups, and Lent lunches. This year it was our turn to host the Maundy Thursday service for the whole Langtree Team, so our observance of Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Easter Eve was complete: many have told me how much the experience has moved them.
- Other signs of new life include the emergence of new Bible study and prayer groups in the parish, and the beginnings of a new pastoral care team, as well as

new folk joining the electoral roll and becoming actively involved in the life of the congregation.

- We have had regular Guest speakers at the main Sunday service on the theme of ‘God At Work’, based on the research finding that three-quarters of regular churchgoers had never in their lives heard a sermon linking the Christian faith with their weekday working lives. The first of these speakers was Mr Grant Mottram, the new Head of our local primary school.

So now we look forward to the coming year with confidence and anticipation. From June, we will introduce a new monthly pattern for Sunday services which should make our worship more welcoming and accessible to newcomers and younger families, whilst retaining the best of traditional Anglican liturgy.

Peter Steddon, Rectory Cottage, Whitchurch-on-Thames, April 2005

THE WHITCHURCH ARTS & CRAFTS EXHIBITION

The weekend of 19th/20th November 2005

Yes, the time has come round again to put the date in your diaries for this year’s Exhibition and to start thinking about your entries. If you have never entered before, remember that there is a special prize for 1st time entries! We really value ALL entries so don’t be shy and think you can’t match the standard of work displayed on previous years - the ethos of the exhibition is that it is a ‘whole village’ event for the participation and enjoyment of all.

This year’s theme for the Joyce Voysey prize is “Water” – this topic should give scope for many interesting ideas. This class is open for adults and children to enter art, craft or photography.

We shall hopefully be giving prizes again to winners in all categories - this is thanks to the generosity of local businesses. If you would like to be a sponsor this year, we would be delighted to hear from you! Our website (www.wotarts.co.uk or via the Village website) has lots of details about last year’s event and the categories, rules of entry etc. for 2005 will be loaded soon.

Sally Woolhouse (Tel 0118 984 4365).

WHITCHURCH HILL FETE

2pm

Steel Band Ferret Racing
Juggler Punch & Judy Show
Children's Races & Games
Bottle Stall
Beer and Tea Tents
Stalls & Plants Galore
Raffle Barbecue

Whitchurch Hill Recreation Ground

The Spring Gardening Show

The Show, held on Saturday 9th of April, was a great success despite the fact that exhibitors in the flower section, who had not taken heed of the weather forecast, which correctly predicted a heavy over night frost, woke to find their daffodils lying flat & their camellias & magnolias had turned brown!

Even with all the near tragedies there were a record number of entries in all sections, with Liz Gibson, Whitchurch Hill, winning overall & taking the Show Cup.

Emily Whatmore took the Children's cup; Tony Voysey, Whitchurch won the new Flower Section cup; (donated by GHP Charity) & two more entries from Whitchurch Hill, Kate Giles & Theresa Elsome won the Photographic & Baking & Preserves Cups respectively

Thanks, as always, go to our Judges, Stewards & everyone who in any way helped to make the show so successful.

GCSE Music Performance at Langtree School

On 15th March Langtree GCSE Music students gave their annual concert performance in the school hall. The concert began on a gentle note with 'Fields of Gold' expressively by Louise King, Angelina Ferreira and Jessica Davies, also accompanying on piano. Flautist Hazel Stanworth played a perky 'Whistling Blues', followed by an impressively rhythmic duet by Peter Watts, trumpet and Chris Campbell, Saxophone.

An acoustic guitar arrangement of 'Radioheads' was sensitively handled by James Musgrove and Daniel Adams whilst 'Queen for a day' was well executed on electric guitar by Ben Protheroe and David Pratt.

As always, singing was a highlight, with strong performances by Carla Conwill, Alex Durand and Clare Haggarty with Sarah Cheeseman in the duet 'I know him so well'. A lovely performance of 'Es mentiroso esse hombre' sung in Spanish by Angelina Ferreira and supported by male and female dancers, stunning in black and white costume, brought an exciting finish to the first half.

Part 2 opened with a rousing number from Year 10 musicians Shaun Russell, Paul King, Drew Sewell and Sam Godfrey. Freddie Lewis-Wall performed one of his virtuosic piano compositions, incorporating blues, funk and classical styles.

Rachel Brooker reached the high notes with 'I could have danced all night' from My Fair Lady, while Duncan Cresswell brought cheers from the audience with a dazzlingly 5-minute solo on the drum kit. Charlotte Hawes and Rachel Hitchin sang a beautiful rendition of their arrangement of 'You've got a friend' and then, in complete contrast, Alex Chambers rapped a couple of numbers 'Break' and 'High Fidelity'.

The fitting finale to the concert was an arrangement of 'Stairway to Heaven' with Year 11 singers and Band joining forces, led by brilliant lead guitarist Stephen Hanna.

Headteacher Rick Holroyd thanked Head of Music, Maureen Idowu, for organising an excellent concert and congratulated all students on achieving such high standards of musical performance.

THE YOUNG RIPARIANS

PRESENT

DRACULA IN PARADISE

**by
Tom Jordan**

Plus a few other bites ----Oops!! - bits and pieces!

On Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd July

At Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Road.
Curtain up at 7.45 pm.

Adults £5, children and OAP's £3.50, and you can buy tickets at the door!

oo0oo

The Club is held on Saturday Mornings from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
If anyone age 7+, would like to join us or come and see what it is all about,
please just turn up on Saturday morning.

Trudy 984 2578

WOODCOTE LIBRARY

As part of Adult Learners Week we had a Silver Surfers session where people unfamiliar with computers were invited to come into the library to try them out, with a little help from one of the staff. The offer is available at all times - we just need a little notice so that we can help at a quiet time such as Monday evening. The computers are on broadband, use is free, and there are programmes for typing letters or making posters as well as the usual E-mail and using the internet. We only charge for printing at 10p a page in colour. For those who use computers more there is the option of having a PIN number so that you can renew books online or consult our catalogue and reserve books or videos and DVDs. Please bring your library card to the desk for a PIN.

Our video and DVD promotion this month is 3 for 2 on crazy comedies. We continue to receive new books, including bestseller paperbacks which are particularly handy when you are enjoying the sunny weather outside, perhaps swinging in a hammock! Or inside when it rains. Do come in and see what we have.

WHITCHURCH VILLAGE FETE

The Village Fete will be held this year on Saturday 3rd September, by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Aldridge at Walliscote Farm.

Anyone who would like to hold a stall please call me to book a space. As ever, I need as many helpers as I can get, whether it is helping before the day or with setting up on the day so please call me if you can spare some time. All help is very gratefully received!

Kate Thatcher 984 4656

Pangbourne and District Tennis Club

The new tennis season got off to a good start with a successful American Tournament. A high standard of tennis was played and 6 full rounds were completed, meaning everyone played the equivalent of 5 sets! There was a nice mix of club and match players, with conveniently even numbers of men and women, and it was good to welcome some new members as well.

The weather was kind, so we were able to sit out on the grass and enjoy a barbecue afterwards. The results were close and the winners were Linda Thomas and Jeremy Skelton - congratulations to both of them.

Pangbourne & District Tennis Club encourages all children to get involved in tennis. The Club resumed its junior coaching programme after April half-term, and were pleased to welcome our new coach, Joe Reddick, of the Berkshire LTA. Tuition for the 10-week course is in small groups of between 10 and 12 children, ranging in age from 6 to 16, and including a late session for over 16s and adults.

In addition to the Tuesday evening coaching programme, the Club is running mini-tennis practice sessions, using creative coaching aids, on Saturday mornings. These are proving to be great fun, and we are very grateful to the Pangbourne Fete Committee who kindly donated funds for the purchase of some fantastic equipment for the kids.

Although the current Tuesday sessions are all fully subscribed, we will be expanding our coaching programme, details to follow shortly. Please express interest in being placed on our waiting lists, or come along and join our Saturday sessions, by calling Jennifer Holmes on 0118 984 4272.

The Club always welcomes new members, so if you might be interested in joining, please call Brian Kingston on 0118 984 5650, or just come down on a Sunday morning. The courts are also available for hire when not in use by the Club, for only £4 an hour. So dust down your racket and enjoy one of the highlights of an English summer.

JAZZ IN A SUMMER MEADOW

Harcourt Arboretum, Nuneham Courtenay

Saturday 30th July 2005

With the

Victoria Newton Quartet

Bring a picnic, your friends and family and enjoy the sounds of swinging jazz and Brazilian beats in the lovely meadow

Gates open 6pm, performance 7pm

Tickets £10 individual, £25 family ticket

Phone 01865 286690 or send a cheque to

FOBG, Oxford Botanic Garden, Oxford OX1 4AZ

In aid of the Harcourt Arboretum Primary School Education Programme

JANET REED 1947 – 2005

Janet's family came to Whitchurch in the late 1800s. She lived all her life in Eastfield Lane having been born at Sunnyside [now Lerryn]. After marrying Jim she spent her married life at her grandfathers house 'Aldermans'.

Her class at Whitchurch Primary School was unusual in that more than half the children were Polish from the Manor Road refugee camp. She maintained friendships with some of her Polish classmates all her life. She loved all sports and her grandfather, father and Janet were all members of the bowling club on the site now occupied by Meadowlands and Pavilion Cottage. She was also a County level sprinter and hockey player.

She enjoyed driving and was the youngest advanced driver in the UK. She also took a motorbike test and a minibus test to carry handicapped children. She was nearly 50 when she raced a Formula Ford car around Thruxton circuit.

Janet was involved with many village activities including stints as Parish Councillor, bellringer, organising school activity weeks and cycling proficiency tests in summer holidays. For many years she helped with the Riding for the Disabled.

She bred and showed bantam poultry and won many awards. She had a great love and knowledge of nature and growing things.

Everyone knew Janet; she greeted all with her cheery wave and sunny smile, usually whilst whizzing by on her trusty bike.

In the last nine months of her battle with cancer she knew no cure could be found but she battled for every extra precious day and never stopped smiling. The gatherings she arranged around her sofa, of friends and neighbours will be remembered by those who came to support her and found themselves uplifted by her indomitable spirit.

Janet was everyone's friend and Whitchurch will sorely miss her.

Janet's memorial service will be held at 11.30 am on 4th June 2005.

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN will be published in JULY 2005.

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

sarah@pongo.freereserve.co.uk or on disc.

Formats can be Word (.doc) or text (.txt or .rtf) or PagePlus (.ppp), or Acrobat(pdf).

Other formats by arrangement

Alternatively you can send hard copy to the Editor:

Sarah Butterworth, The Little House, High Street, Whitchurch on Thames, Reading,
Berkshire RG8 7EX (0118 984 2922)

no later than Wednesday 6TH JULY 2005.

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