

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES PARISH COUNCIL

www.whitchurchonthames.com

Minutes of the annual meeting of Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council on Monday 26th April 2010 in the village hall

Present:

Cllr Harry Butterworth (chairman), Cllr Vincent Aldridge (vice chairman), Cllr Matilda Oppenheimer, Cllr Nigel Grove, Cllr Elizabeth Robinson, Cllr Keith Brooks, Cllr Lindsay Austin

In attendance:

Jo Wheeler (parish clerk), District Councillor Pearl Slater

1. Election of chairman

Cllr Oppenheimer nominated and all voted to appoint Cllr Butterworth as chairman.

2. Election of vice-chairman

Cllr Aldridge nominated and all voted to appoint Cllr Brooks as vice-chairman.

The parish council approved the following committee members and councillor roles:

- Ø Allotment representative - Cllr Brooks
- Ø Environmental Committee – Cllr Brooks
- Ø Finance – Cllr Austin
- Ø Planning Committee – Cllr Robinson and Cllr Butterworth
- Ø Roads & Traffic Committee – Cllr Butterworth
- Ø Sports Field representative – Cllr Oppenheimer
- Ø Village Hall Committee – Cllr Grove

Churchyard maintenance

All in agreement that the parish council do not own or have any responsibility towards the maintenance of the churchyard. The grass is mowed as goodwill. No reply received from church warden.

Manor Road

Cllr Austin reported that a number of cars have been broken into along Manor Rd. Suggestion that the overhanging Yew Trees providing covers to the thieves. Cutting them back would provide more light and reduce the risk. Parish clerk to speak to Martin Gammie (Tree Officer) at South Oxfordshire District Council to ask him to inspect the Yew Trees.

Sports Field update

Cllr Oppenheimer reported that an arboriculturist is examining the tree on the plot and will provide a report shortly; this will be part of the planning application.

Planning

P10/E0078 Whittles Farm Mapledurham

Demolition of the existing hangar and replacement by 3 "T" hangars
Reply already sent

P10/E0360/LB

Thames Bank High Street

Formation of two new bathrooms. Re-arrangement of ground floor utility room area. Removal of studwork partition forming cupboards.

No objection

Environmental Matters

Cllr Brooks reported that the new lights will be installed shortly.

Traffic matters. The T and P group and the County and District Councillors have met with County Council Roads Engineers to apply as much pressure as possible over the state of our roads and pavements.

Financial matters : Grant application

All resolved to award the Community Responders £500, as it is a charity that will benefit the whole community.

The next Parish Council meeting is on Monday 5th July 2010.

South Oxfordshire District Council report

This year the council introduced the new waste collection to 56,000 households, a huge challenge for the council and residents. We received a national award for the communication methods to residents. We worked with the contractors for nearly a year prior to the actual start date. Recycling rates have gone from being 48% to 70% which means less land fill and more money for the council in the form of recycling credits. There were problems to overcome in some parts of the district which we have been discussing with those residents concerned. Then we had the hardest winter with snow which caused further problems but everyone working together enabled us to get back on track and continue the high recycling rates.

Nexus Leisure have taken over the running of our four leisure centres introducing a membership card which means members can use any of our centres activities. We have invested capital money into improving the facilities which will continue in 2010.

Working in partnership we have Go Active which has been well supported plus a sports development officer working with communities to gain sport out in the rural areas.

The Economic Development worked with consultants and the three market town partnerships and town councils which means we were able to get SEEDA grants, which the council will match, to enable some work to be carried out in the towns. We are employing three town coordinators to help businesses in the market towns. .

It is vital that we all do what we can for the local economy that is reasonable and achievable. We are involved in South Vale UK which is Harwell, Culham, Milton Park, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership working together to achieve inward investment. This will create more jobs especially taking into consideration all the new houses being built at Didcot and around the district.

The Orchard Centre is a great success even in the recession with plans in the pipeline to have stage 2 which will be more shops and offices.

Cornerstone continues to be successful with many events being sold out within days. This means that they are improving their financial position but we still need the subsidy which hopefully will reduce. Further information www.cornerstone-arts.org

PCSO's are working well in both the towns and villages. This is a joint project with the police and residents are now aware of their presence. CCTV will be reviewed this coming year as they are partly paid for by the town councils, police and ourselves. We need to know if we receive value for money and that our residents feel happy.

Housing, with the national economic situation we have not been able to deliver as many houses as we had expected. However working in partnership with housing associations we have built on sites in Wallingford with smaller in-fills in the villages. We do hope that this year will see the start of sites in Didcot, Fairmile and Chinnor

Choice Base lettings which was introduced has been a success in that those requiring homes have been able to bid for properties and have seen the openness of the process.

Planning, there has been a downturn in applications which again is mainly due to the recession. We have introduced a new process for referrals which has had some bad press but this has mainly been due to misunderstanding the process, it does not mean that parish council comments are not important. This process does mean as a district councillor we need to work closely with our parishes on applications especially those contentious.

Enforcement cases have reduced dramatically during the year but there are those cases that do take along time due to the complexity.

The local development framework (LDF) is the new planning system which sets out in the form of a portfolio, the local development documents which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for South Oxfordshire District Council's area.

The core strategy sets out the spatial vision for the local area to 2026 taking into account national and regional plans. This is a very controversial issue especially when we have to decide these sites.

Joint working with the Vale of White Horse District Council has caused some uncertainty for staff but we have now got a joint Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Managers. This has meant a reduction in staff but definitely given us efficiency savings of more than £1.5m

The council tax over the last five years has given an average of 1% increase due to three years of no increase. Once again we are able to have a nil % increase in council tax. This is a very good record and welcomed by the residents of South Oxfordshire.

Once again councillors agreed to no increase in allowances making us one of the lowest paid in the South East.

The Audit Commission has scored us as being one of the top councils in the country. We will continue to strive to be even better over the coming year and value for money.

Ann Ducker MBE

Pearl Slatter

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Notices and Notice Boards

The requirement for people to be able to advertise their activities by means of notices posted around the Village is regarded by the Parish Council as very important. The flip side is that things tend to drift into an unruly mess that is little use to anyone.

There are two generally available notice boards in the Village. The Parish Council now requests that any notice pinned (WITH DRAWING PINS PLEASE) to one of these boards must have the date on which it was posted clearly marked. Any poster with a date over three months old or advertising an event now past, will be removed. Preference will be given for postings by Whitchurch Residents if the poster is not out of date. Commercial postings may be removed at any time.

Technically speaking, posters placed anywhere else (on telegraph poles, for example) are in breach of planning regulations and remain in place only so long as everyone turns a blind eye. It has to be pointed out that placing a poster where it will be seen by a substantial flow of traffic may seem attractive, but it is not clear what the outcome would be if a motorist should claim that he was distracted by it

WoTHaBS (Whitchurch-on-Thames Study Group)

Despite the early rain and the biting cold wind, **Cowslip Day** at Chalkhills on Sunday 2nd May was enjoyed by a fair number of undaunted visitors, from the village and further afield. The tractor and trailer carried excited youngsters and their families up the track to the cowslip bank from where they could walk to the viewpoint overlooking the Thames. The cowslips were flowering in great profusion, catching up after the late spring. Everyone enjoyed the tea and cakes served in the shelter of the barn. Nearly 20 children took up the 'Up in the Air' challenge and discovered that stag beetles can fly but woodlice can't!

As usual, Sandra had worked extremely hard preparing for the day – all the paths have to be cleared of fallen branches etc. and then way-marked clearly. WoTHabs members and supporters pitched in to help with the various tasks, as best we could.

We would like to thank everyone who helped, especially the team who manned the Entrance tent – without their contributions, it would be very hard to manage. Also many thanks of course to everyone who came along and made it all worthwhile and to hear your kind words afterwards, saying how much you had enjoyed the event.

Maze Working parties will be held on the following Saturdays at 10am through the summer - 5th June, 3rd July, 7th Aug, 4th Sept, 2nd Oct. Check on the Maze noticeboard for last minute changes. Your help would be very welcome indeed!!

Sally Woolhouse 984 4365

Whitchurch Society Garden Walk

Sunday 6th June

Gardens will open from 2 to 4 pm. As in the past, with the generous agreement of Matilda and Neil King, tea and cakes will be served in The White House garden from 3.30 pm. Cost £3 adults, £1 children.

Dr Oppenheimer is happy for children to use the swimming pool provided they are supervised. The tennis court is also available if you bring your own racquets.

A list of open gardens will be published on the village notice boards and delivered to each household nearer the date. A Garden Open notice will be displayed at each address.

We are still keen to find new households willing to put their gardens on show. Please contact the undersigned ASAP if you are interested.

Ian Bruce

Secretary – tel 984 2653, email ian.bruce@btinternet.com

Allotments

Everything is breaking into leaf and finally our allotmenters are hard at work again!

We have welcomed some new members recently and they are enjoying cultivating their plots.

I always seem to be complaining about the weather. We seem to get too much of one or the other and now it is sun not rain! So hopefully the soil will be warming up beautifully and not drying out too fast.

Rosamund Heath

The Whitchurch Society

Art and Craft Exhibition 2010

This Art and Craft Exhibition is held in November each year and traditionally takes place on the first weekend after Remembrance Sunday. Art, craft and photographic work is submitted by local residents and most is entered for judging and then displayed for the enjoyment of visitors. Some work is available for sale. The three local schools in the area also display the work of their pupils.

The Whitchurch Society is inviting anyone who would like to join a sub-committee to organise this year's exhibition to contact Helen Beadsworth on Helen@bworth.co.uk or to telephone 01189 844394 as soon as possible.

WOODCOTE LIBRARY

Thinking about your holiday? Don't forget that the library can supply books about places at home and abroad, and language tapes to brush up your holiday vocabulary. If you're going on a long drive you may want to take a story tape or disc with you - or even a DVD for the passengers in the back.

There are two bank holidays when we shall be closed - May 3rd and May 31st.

Finally, for Adult Learners Week we shall be holding a Silver Surfers Morning on Friday 16th May. There will be help for anyone who would like to get to grips with the internet, sending e-mails, perhaps even browsing for holiday options!

Pangbourne Library,

Reading Road,
Pangbourne
Reading
RG8 7LY

Telephone: 0118 984 4117

Email: pangbournelibrary@westberks.gov.uk

Opening hours:

Monday 2.00-5.00

Tuesday 10.30-7.00

Wednesday 2.00-5.00

Thursday 9.30-12.30

Friday 10.30-5.00

Saturday 9.30-12.30

Did you know that if you work, study or live in West Berkshire you are welcome to join our libraries? Pangbourne Library is at the heart of Pangbourne village and it is free to join. To join; you only need to fill in a form, show us one item of proof of your name and address and you can borrow items straight away. We have over 7000 books, dvds, magazines and audio items, so we hope we have something for everyone.

We also hold Rhymetimes for under fives on the first and third Thursday mornings of the month starting at 10.00am – come along and join in the fun.

Internet taster sessions are also available on Wednesday afternoons. Just call to book a session.

This year's theme for the Summer Reading Challenge for 4 – 11 year olds is SPACE HOP - one giant leap into Libraries! It promises to be a fantastic voyage through the long summer break, so do join up and earn your stickers, a certificate and even a golden medal for your reading.

Want to know more? Visit our website at

www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries or better still, call in to

Pangbourne Library. We would love to see you.

Lifeboat Week

Lifeboat Week held during April 18th to 24th this year was very successful

I cover Whitchurch-on-Thames, Whitchurch Hill and Woodcote
We collected a total of £1,149.09, of which £567.78 was from Whitchurch-on-Thames.

Both totals were higher than last year, which is an excellent result in a very challenging year. Our thanks go to all who contributed for their generosity.

I thank all the gallant collectors for their time, perseverance and willingness to help me year after year.

Tony Voysey

Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group (WoTHabs)

Wildlife Explorers Day

We are planning to hold another Explorers Day at Chalkhills on Sunday 27th June (11am – 3pm approx). It is aimed at primary age children, to be accompanied by parents or responsible adults. It will follow a similar format as on previous years - we will explore some of the interesting different habitats at Chalkhills, as well as some games and a walk. It promises to again be a very enjoyable and interesting day for everyone! Numbers are limited to 16 children so do get in touch with me very soon to book your places or just to find out more.

Sally Woolhouse 984 4365 or
sally.woolhouse@homecall.co.uk.

Whitchurch Primary School

School Governors Wanted

Whitchurch Primary School is a warm, caring and lively place. We have 109 children with a strong track record of achievement in academic, music, drama and sporting activities. Our school is an important element of the local community, in an area of outstanding beauty next to the River Thames. We are well resourced and have the support of an active parent group and team of Governors. The school has recently been evaluated as ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted.

Our Governing Body would like to recruit new members to support its work. The role of Governor within the management of the school is an important and rewarding experience. The Governing Body meets on a regular basis, six times a year, at the school to define objectives and strategy for the school and to review progress. The Governing Body works in harmony with the school staff to achieve what we believe is best for the children.

We are looking for new Governors who are keen to make an active contribution to the community through the work of the school. The Governing Body needs a mix of people with differing skills: there are three committees that consider Curriculum, Staffing and Finance matters, and the whole Governing Body considers broader matters of vision and strategy as a team. If you have skills to contribute in any of these areas, and would like to help ensure the continuing success of the school, we would like to hear from you.

Please contact the Headteacher, Mrs Dawn Chesters or the Chair of Governors, Mrs Teresa Oldham for more information.

Mrs Oldham’s email : teresa.oldham@btopenworld.com

Mrs Chesters’s email: whitchurchprimary@me.com

THE YOUNG RIPARIANS

We are staging another show in July, entitled,

“A SELECTION BOX”.

This will run for two nights, and will consist of several short acts.

Friday 9th. July will be in aid of the Twinning Association, who will be providing cheese and wine for your refreshment during the evening.

Adults £6.50 Concessions £4.50

Curtain up 7.45pm

Saturday 10th. July Will be our normal format for members, friends, family and other enlightened folk who enjoy a pleasant evening.

Adults £5.00 Concessions £3.50

Curtain up 7.45pm

On both nights there will be a bar and raffle.

We hope you will come because the bigger the audience the more the children love performing.

For any further information please contact Pam Chandler on 01189845143.

WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL

Here at Whitchurch Pre-School we are gearing up for Spring. The Children have had great fun planting seeds – beans and sunflowers - and one of the Dads has dug over the vegetable patch for us so that it can be planted anew. We have also got a large tank of tadpoles, which the children are fascinated by, and we will be exploring the life cycle of a frog.

We are very excited to have a new Supervisor, Valerie Ross, who joined us after Easter. Valerie comes from Mortimer Pre-School, having worked there for just over 8 years. Valerie's enthusiasm and fresh ideas are very evident and it is wonderful to have her on board and see the excitement of the children.

Our Topic for this term is planning journeys – are we nearly there yet? We have explored getting places by road, by rail, track or trail, through the air, on or under water and of course by foot!

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

CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

Last year's Village Plan set out to involve all ages in Whitchurch. In particular the young children were encouraged to observe their surroundings carefully and to think about what makes Whitchurch a pleasant place in which to live.

A Creative Writing Competition was therefore initiated at the Primary School, based on a Treasure Hunt around the village, devised by Margaret Morfey, and the entries have now been judged. Two winners have been chosen for each stage:

5-7 years Alice McGlyne and Alex Oldham
7-11 years Emily Plumridge with Gail Lewis
 Jack Stovell with Jamie Close

with a special award to Matthew Ridley for a very individual poem.

£10 book vouchers for each winning entry will be presented by Stephen Trinder next term. In the meanwhile the pieces will be displayed on the Primary School's website.

Well done to everyone and special thanks to the teaching staff for their cooperation.

Stephen Trinder

WHITCHURCH HILL FETE

Saturday 29th May at 2 p.m.

Stalls & plants galore
25 piece concert band
Juggler, Punch & Judy
Ferret Racing Swing Boats
BBQ
Beer and tea tents
Lawn Bowls “have a go”
Children’s Races and Games
Bottle Stall, Raffle

Pangbourne and Whitchurch Sustainability

PAWS Sustainability Day

Pangbourne Village Hall
Saturday 12th June 11am – 3pm

The aims of PAWS are to:

Energy conservation/ creation

Low-carbon transportation

Grow your own

Foster Biodiversity of the local environment

Buy Local

Recycling

Organic gardening

PAWS meetings are on Thursdays at **8.00pm in Pangbourne Village Hall**: 27 May, 22 July, 23 September, 28 October, 25 November, 16 December 2010

If you are concerned for the future, join us now. For further information or to join PAWS, contact info@pawsg.com or just come along to one of our meetings.



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

www.pactcharity.org

Have YOU ever thought about FOSTERING?

There is a recognised shortage of 10,000 Foster Carers in the UK. PACT, founded in 1911, is also known as the Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work inc. We are a registered charity working to improve life chances for children. The focus of our work is within Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and aims to build and strengthen families.

We are an approved Adoption and Fostering Agency. We have a history of finding safe, loving families for children in care. Here are a few facts about Fostering:

1. Did you know you don't have to be married to become a Foster Carer?
2. You don't have to have children already although you do need to have experience of caring for children.
3. Did you know you get paid a Fostering Allowance of £335.70 a week to be a Foster Carer which is tax free and won't affect any other benefits?
4. Most of the children who need fostering are known as 'hard to place' children, they will usually be 8+ years of age.

Fostering is a hard but very rewarding job. If you think you might have what it takes to become a Permanent Foster Carer or you want to find out more then contact PACT now on **0800 731 1845** e-mail **fostering@pactcharity.org**

Bluebells

A walk of 2 miles, 3 miles or 5 miles – your choice.

For years I have wandered across to the grounds of Pangbourne College or driven up to Stoke Row to see the bluebells. Last year I walked a few paths in Woodcote and was absolutely delighted to find a magnificent display so close to home.

Park in their Village Hall car park and walk back to the cross roads, past the two churches and down the South Stoke Road (this was the water supply road for Woodcote, the carriers would charge 1 penny (1d) for a bucket of water delivered to the village from the river at South Stoke).

Walk down the road with care until you see the first footpath sign on your right (marked to Dean Farm and Red Lane). Go down this path and then follow it as it curves to enter the woodland (Dean Wood). This is a delightful walk and particularly so when the bluebells are out. Follow it until you meet a fork, take the left hand fork and keep to the main path throughout. You will eventually emerge onto an open area at a T junction of paths. Take the left hand one which runs by the side of the woodland.

The view ahead is extensive and is worthy of a short stop. Having turned left your path soon meets the South Stoke Road (a quick return route if you are short of time but carry on if you can). Turn right onto this road and shortly afterwards you will see a footpath sign on your left, turn onto it and immediately right over a stile and across the field to another stile which allows you to enter this woodland (High Wood). This is a charming path which has been freshly waymarked throughout; follow it with the edge of the field on your left until the path goes straight ahead at the end of the field. Continue straight ahead until you meet a crossing of tracks, again go straight across and drop down to the edge of the woodland and then onto and up a farm track to meet Beech Lane (again another return route but I trust you are made of sterner stuff). Turn right onto this lane, walk down until you are opposite the entrance to Beech Farm (again the view is rewarding).

On your left you will see a footpath, turn onto it and stride up the broad track and then down towards Elvendon Road and the Priory. You will meet a crossroads of paths above a gated field (those of you who have done the Daffodil walk will recognise this spot). This is another charming view which has remained almost undisturbed for centuries.

The bridle path you have reached on the exposed chalk is an ancient access route to the Icknield Way and would have provided the opportunity for you to join other travellers (for safety) making their way to Boudicca's lands or to the east coast or perhaps in later times on a pilgrimage to Lincoln or Ely.

On this occasion you turn left and head down the chalk road. When you meet Elvendon Road turn left, then shortly afterwards right up a bridle path. The climb is fairly stiff and you are allowed to stop and look at the view down the valley or just stop for a breather!

Just before you reach the last cottage on your left with the main road ahead you will see a wide hedged entrance to a field on your left - there is a blue bridleway marker pointing straight ahead together with a yellow footpath marker (pointing left) on the telegraph post opposite this short entrance lane. Turn left down this path and enter the field, follow the obvious path straight across the fields until it emerges by the side of the road from Crays Pond to Woodcote. Cross over the road with care and turn left and follow the grass verge down to the dip below Shirvell's Hill. Turn right up the hill until just before a left-hand bend in the road and a second 30 mph sign (on your right) you will see a footpath stile on your left. Cross over; this path is delightful and will lead you alongside the hedgerow on your right to meet another rather decrepit stile (the one on your right (the better one!) leads into private woodland). Cross over, stay in the field until you meet a stile that allows you to enter the copse on your right down a fenced path. The path leads directly ahead, take the major right hand path as it appears to fork and then turn left as it meets another path. You will see a narrow path on your left which emerges on the Bridle Path in Woodcote. Cross over to the main road, turn left and walk down the pavement to the crossroads below and back to the Village Hall.

Eric Hartley

P.S.'I forgot to include a plug for the new edition of the Chiltern Society's footpath map No.16 (Goring and Mapledurham). It is in colour and is well worth having on the bookshelf and is available from their shop on line for £3.29 (chilternsociety.org.uk).'

SOUTH CHILTERN CHORAL SOCIETY FIESTA!

A FEAST OF LATIN - AMERICAN MUSIC!

Calypso, Beguine, Bossa Nova, Reggae, Cha-cha-cha, Argentinian Folk Melodies,

Buena Vista-style band, the Raymond Miles Latin Dancers and a young and exciting Mexican tenor

You are promised a truly exciting and exotic evening of music and dance, not to mention the opportunity to picnic in the grounds between performances. So, all you aficionados of Latin-American music, put the date in your diary now!

Date: Saturday 10th July Time: 5pm & 8pm

Venue: Highdown School, Emmer Green, RG4 8LR

Tickets: £12 Adults £6 Under 18s (Children under 5 free)

Box office: Linda Rumble 0118 9543193

www.southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

Henley & District Citizens Advice

Now Recruiting Volunteer Gateway Assessors

Henley & District Citizens Advice Bureau are currently recruiting Gateway Assessors to work in the bureau at 32 Market Place, Henley. This voluntary role requires the Assessor to make an initial diagnosis of a client's enquiry and identify the 'next steps' to be taken. This may be providing the client with information, making an appointment with an adviser or directing them to another more appropriate agency. Full training and support is provided.

Volunteers need to be computer literate and able to attend to devote 1.5 days a week to undertake the 10 week training programme beginning in early September. Once trained volunteers should be able to commit to a regular day or two half days. Volunteering can be fitted in around school hours and holidays and we welcome volunteers of all ages. Interviews will be held at the end of June.

You can find out more about the Gateway Assessor role at an Open Morning on Wednesday June 2nd when there will be an opportunity to find more about the role, the training programme and to meet volunteer advisers and staff. If you are interested in attending the Open Morning or would like an application form or any other information please contact us in the first instance by email to reception@henleycab.org.uk including a contact phone number.

Citizens Advice is the largest advice-giving network in the UK with over 20,000 volunteers in 2,000 outlets. We help people deal with nearly 6 million problems every year. Our clients and volunteers come from all walks of life and we aim is to provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice.

In addition to the main bureau in Henley, we run regular advice sessions at Goring, Sonning Common, Watlington and Woodcote.

Call the bureau on 01491 572129 for further details and advice.

For more information contact: Christine O'Hare 01491 574508 (private line)

Back from the volcano

Thursday 15th April was our day for visiting Vesuvius. We drove the hire car up the volcano's flank as far as we could go and then walked up a steep path towards the crater rim. The clouds drifted away, the sun appeared briefly and in the distance far below we could make out Pompeii, the ancient Roman town we had visited in pouring rain on the previous day. We knew that its citizens had had a nasty surprise on 24th August 79AD when an eruption had buried them in ten feet of ash. We sniffed the air and watched coils of smoke escaping from the crater walls. All seemed quiet. But back at our hotel people were clustering around the reception desk. A volcano in Iceland had erupted and all flights were cancelled – hadn't we heard? Our holiday had three days left but from that moment it took on a new character as our thoughts kept returning to ways of getting home. We heard that all trains and buses going north were fully booked and decided that our best bet was to hang on to the smart Alfa Romeo estate (a free upgrade) that we and the couple we were holidaying with had been lucky enough to be allocated in Naples. Perhaps we could drive it all the way across Italy and France and leave it at a Channel port.

Compared to many travellers, some still stranded abroad at the time of writing, we were very lucky. Our travel agent Sunvil decided to help its customers get back home. We were told to leave the silver Alfa at Sorrento (pity about that!) but we could hardly believe our luck when we were handed rail tickets from Naples to Turin. We enjoyed a four-hour train journey from Naples to Milan via Rome, Florence and Bologna and then a shorter one from Milan to Turin, all courtesy of Sunvil. The next morning we collected a Renault Modus (a what? – no upgrade this time and it was a bit of a squash for four but we could hardly complain) to drive through the Alps and across France.

It had rained on and off for most of our week and we had scrambled around Roman and Greek sites under umbrellas. But when the holiday was due to end, the weather changed to sun and blue sky for the whole of the unexpected extension. Our road trip back across France, freshly green and blossoming, was a highlight of the holiday. We stopped for the night in the Burgundy area. We paused to admire the newly-cleaned stained glass windows in Chartres cathedral. In their uncleaned state they were spectacular – now they are crystal-clear kaleidoscopes of colour. We had managed to book an early morning ferry crossing to Portsmouth after hearing tales of Calais being crowded with exhausted travellers and of companies charging extortionately for hire cars dropped there. So we spent a final night at Ouistreham, the port of Caen, before sharing the ferry with a large party of tired but relieved Glaswegians returning from Majorca. We thanked our lucky stars that we had booked this particular holiday not via the internet but through a travel agent who turned what was a worrying situation into a bonus. We are a bit poorer as a result but the travel agent carried much of the cost.

Richard Wingfield

Bee Keeping in Whitchurch

I have precisely 12,131 Bees and they are pollinating the flowers and trees of Whitchurch on Thames. To keep them warm over the tough cold winter I had to wrap their hive up in a big old coat. I am so pleased that they have survived the harsh weather and are now entering their hive with pollen covered knees.

You need not worry about my bees because they are very friendly and will not sting you unless you get very close to their hive. When working on the hive I always wear protective clothing - a veil, white jacket, gloves that come up to my elbows and thick Wellington boots.

Bees need nectar for energy as well as pollen for protein. There is a shortage of nectar at this time of the year so I have tried to make up for this by feeding my bees sugar syrup. By accident I left a bowl of this syrup next to the hive. Over night the bowl filled up with rain and today I found 30 of my bees drowned in it. How could they be so stupid?

I have a big fat queen who is rapidly laying eggs into the hexagon cells of the hives combs. She picks these eggs up with her shapely little legs and gently places them into the lowest position in these cells. They are only just visible to the naked eye and will soon become larvae which the worker bees will feed on partially digested sugar and pollen.

The queen will attempt to swarm this year. She will fly from her hive followed by over 1000 worker bees and try to find another home which unfortunately may be the neighbour's chimney pot. To stop her swarming I will clip her wings by lifting her up by her feet and cutting one of her wings off. She will wriggle and moan when I do this.

If I allowed my queen to swarm then my hive would be queen less. Very quickly a new queen would emerge from the hive and fly high into a cloud of drones flaunting her nubile body and mating with as many drones as she is able to. After this the drones would die and the new queen bee would eventually fly exhausted back to my hive and begin to lay eggs. .

The queen bee is looked after by the worker bees of the hive who build combs, clean out cells, feed and clean the brood, heat and ventilate make and store honey, guard the entrance and forage She does not control their activities. Instead they are controlled by communication between the bees which is derived from the exchange of chemical secretions and "dances". This communication generates the intelligence and soul of the hive. Perhaps my bees should not be regarded as 12,131 individuals but as one composite and salient being.

During August I will crop my hive and obtain many jars of honey which I will give away to my friends. If you want to be my friend let me know.

Alan Boarder

Village Plan

It is now almost exactly one year since the publication of the Whitchurch Village Plan. We were very concerned that it should not be a paper exercise and deliberately set out to ensure that it was an active vehicle for the improvements that the village wanted. Now then is a good time to review progress on the various actions that were proposed.

1 Parish Council

The restructuring of the council to address the main areas in the Plan has greatly facilitated its implementation, both in terms of focus and funding.

2 Website

The village website has been re-designed by the considerable efforts of its journalistic team. It carries up-to-date local news as well as providing a most attractive and comprehensive information base about village societies and events.

3 Traffic, Roads and Pavements

Despite very active pressure from the Traffic & Roads Group, it is proving hard to persuade the authorities of the need for a 20 mph limit or other calming measures. The financial constraints are also making it extremely difficult to effect any significant improvement in the condition of the roads or pavements in Whitchurch but regular contacts are being maintained to try and rectify this. Attention will be given to the clearance of the drainage grips in Eastfield Lane to relieve roadside flooding.

4 Village Hall

The hall has been refurbished so that it is now a pleasant venue for village activities. New mains switchgear and other improvements are also in hand for 2010.

5 Cricket Ground

Very extensive negotiations have taken place between the Parish Council, SODC and the owners of the cricket ground, with the object of its acquisition for the wider use of the community. A planning application will be submitted shortly to this end.

6 Street Furniture

New road signs have been introduced while smart waste and dog bins have replaced the motley selection of old ones. Two new street lights are on order to correct poorly lit areas, while others are to be upgraded to a traditional design. The benches will be re-painted by volunteers.

7 Open Spaces

Discussions aimed at improving some of the village verges are progressing, with particular attention to Hardwick Road and the approach to Manor Road. The owner of the verge to Hardwick House has agreed to the creation of a footpath and this is gradually taking shape as the grass is cut more regularly.

All this has been achieved by a tremendous amount of hard work over the last year by very many people. Frankly nothing happens otherwise. It is hoped that they will feel rewarded by the improvements they have effected and that the village as a whole will benefit. This effort will be maintained on all fronts to complete the programme and, if you are willing to help in any way, please let me know.

Stephen Trinder
Chairman, Village Plan Steering Committee

From the Churchwarden

As many of you are aware, the Revd Peter Steddon ended his seven year tenure as House for Duty priest in Whitchurch at the end of April. He and Christine will continue to live at St Mary's House until early June when they move to Nether Worton in north Oxfordshire to begin the next phase of their life and ministry together.

On Sunday 4th July at 10.30am at St Mary's Whitchurch-on-Thames there will be a Team service of welcome and commissioning for the Revd Claire Alcock. Claire will be ordained at Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday 3rd July, and she is to be a non-stipendiary House for Duty Curate in the Team, based here in Whitchurch. She and her husband Chris, with their three children, will be moving to St Mary's House in July 2011, once Chris's "tour of duty" as a Housemaster at Shiplake College finishes. The Parochial Church Council has met and welcomed Claire and Chris informally, a delightful couple, and we look forward to having her working in the parish. During her first year as Deacon, Kevin Davies and members of the Langtree Team will be taking care of communion services, weddings and baptisms in our two churches.

Peter Ferguson

Police report

Crime levels in the area remain low, as do levels of anti-social behaviour. We have not received any questionnaires back from residents in Whitchurch or had any calls regarding issues in the area. Therefore at present the Henley Rural Neighbourhood Team can only assume that residents do not have any problems they would like to report to us.

However, if you would like to bring an issue to our attention, you can download a consultation form from South Oxfordshire District Council website at::

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/content/corporate-support/community-safety/neighbourhood-action-groups.en>

The form is a questionnaire which allows you to highlight any problems and also what you believe the solutions could be. These forms can either be e-mailed to: HenleyRuralNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or posted back to the team at the following address Henley Rural NHPT, Henley Police Station, 4 Greys Road, Henley on Thames, Oxon, RG9 1RY.

As a Neighbourhood Team, we are committed to the safety of the community where you live. Therefore, this is your opportunity to raise any issues of concern, no matter how small you feel they are. In addition to this, there is the opportunity to attend the Have Your Say Meetings with PCSO Kathy Brooks, which are being held on

- Friday 14th May, 10am – 11am, the Corner Shop, Station Rd, Shiplake
- Tuesday 15th June, 10am – 11am, the Corner Shop, Station Rd, Shiplake

These meetings are an ideal opportunity for local residents to speak to their local police officers and PCSO's about any local issues, no appointment is necessary just turn up and speak to your local officers.

If you want any advice or would like to contact the neighbourhood team you can call us on the police non emergency number 0845 8 505505 or email HenleyRuralNHPT@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk. Please note this email address cannot be used to contact Thames Valley Police to report crimes or for any urgent matters. Alternatively you can visit the force website at www.thamesvalley.police.uk to view information on your neighbourhood.

DIARY DATES

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

MAY

29th Whitchurch Hill Fete

JUNE

5th Maze working party
12th PAWS Sustainability Day
27th Wildlife Explorers day

JULY

3rd Maze Working party
5th Parish Council meeting
9th & 10th Riparians "A Selection Box"
10th SCCS Concert 'Fiesta'

AUGUST

7th Maze Working party

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN

will be published in JULY 2010.

Please send your contributions **preferably by e-mail to**
Sarah.pongo@talktalk.net by 8th July 2010

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