

WHITCHURCH ON THAMES BULLETIN

www.whitchurchonthames.com

NOVEMBER 2008

Parish Council meeting on 3rd November 2008, in the Village Hall

Present: Dr Matilda Oppenheimer (Chair), Cllr Vincent Aldridge (Vice Chairman), Cllr Nigel Grove, Cllr Nigel Cabeldu, Cllr Harry Butterworth, County Cllr John Farrow.

Jo Wheeler (parish clerk).

5 members of the public.

Apologies: District Cllr Pearl Slatter.

Proposed toll increase

The parish council have discussed the Whitchurch Bridge Company's proposal to increase the toll to 40p from 2009. It has issued a notice explaining the situation and seeking the views of parishioners. The parish council has already received a number of letters and emails from parishioners unhappy about the proposed toll increase. The council will pursue the matter further and publish further notices and information on its notice board (opposite the Greyhound) and the parish website and by email. The Whitchurch Bridge Company application for a toll increase is likely to be sent to the Dept of Transport towards the end of November. We will keep the parish informed about this.

Chairman role

The parish council was extremely pleased that Councillor Oppenheimer will continue as Chairman until the next annual meeting, in May 2009.

New Councillor

The parish council is delighted to appoint a new Councillor, Dr Keith Brooks. Councillor Brooks has been living in the village for six years and he is very interested in taking a more active role in the area. He has a particular interest in environmental issues such as recycling, energy usage, carbon footprint and other current hot topics. Councillor Brooks will be taking a specialist role in village maintenance, for example, investigating problem pavements or road surfaces. He can be contacted on 0118 9841178 or by email at brooksd49@aol.com.

Speeding Survey

Oxfordshire County Council has published the results of the survey it carried out a few months ago. The survey monitored the speed of traffic both ways on the High Street and Hardwick Road.

County Councillor John Farrow informed the parish council that the average speed northbound is 29.5 mph and the average southbound speed is 28.7mph. This means that people are breaking the 30mph speed limit. Copies of the survey results can be obtained from the parish clerk or viewed on the village website at www.whitchurchonthames.com

The parish council is in discussion with Peter Ronald, area traffic engineer, about the options that are available to the village to help to reduce speeding. More information will be published in future editions of the Bulletin.

Remembrance Sunday

The parish council has arranged for the memorial to be professionally cleaned in time for Remembrance Sunday. The parish council will be laying a wreath at the memorial service.

Village Hall

Rebuilding the village hall at its present site or at a new site as yet unidentified is being looked into by the Parish Plan Village Hall Subcommittee. This cannot be done within 5 to 7 years as it takes time to purchase land, draw up plans and apply for grants etc. In the meantime the council proposes to fund some refurbishments such as new flooring, paint and curtains. This should greatly improve the appearance of the hall and help to encourage usage. The solicitors are progressing with the purchase of the village hall from South Oxfordshire District Council.

Village plan update

The parish council would like to encourage parishioners to attend the village plan meeting on Friday 28th November, 7.30 pm in the village hall. The meeting will include the results of the village plan questionnaire and reports from the study groups.

Planning Applications

Location	Description	Parish Council Comments	SODC Decision
The Garden House	Erection of single storey front, side and rear extensions. Raising of roof to allow first floor accommodation. Erection of car port to existing garage.	No Objection	
Jasmine Cottage, High Street	Single and two storey extension to the rear (North) elevation, replacement of flat roof with pitched to south elevation, and internal alterations.		Granted
The Ferry Boat Inn	Alterations to existing rear store to form external covered area		Granted – (conditions)
29 Manor Road	Two storey and single storey side extension		Granted
Ivy Cottage, Hardwick Road	Installation of flue through roof and masked by dummy chimney		Granted
Eastfield Lodge, Eastfield Lane	First floor extension over rear dining room		Granted

The full minutes will be available to view on www.whitchurch.com from December, when they are approved.

Notice from South Oxfordshire District Council - new household waste collection

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils are joining forces to secure a new waste collection and street cleansing contract. The councils have decided to work together to identify the new contractor in an effort to produce a more efficient service, increase recycling and reduce waste going to landfill. The new services will start from June 2009 in South Oxfordshire and from October 2010 in Vale of White Horse.

The main driver for changing our existing services is the pressing need to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill - it's damaging on the environment, landfill space is rapidly running out and we face huge fines from government if we don't.

The new services will not only help us to achieve this but were also the most cost effective options.

The procurement process for the new contract is now well underway. Three companies have been short-listed and officers are now involved in detailed discussions about their proposals for the new service. All three are proposing similar solutions to help to meet our tough waste and recycling targets and we know that from June 2009 the new service will include;

- weekly separate food waste collections in kerbside bins
- fortnightly residual waste collections in wheeled bins
- at least fortnightly collections of dry recyclables (including glass)
- continuing with the garden waste service in wheeled bins (charged for service)

The final decisions around container types and sizes will be agreed once the new contractor is appointed at the end of 2008.

Over the next few months officers will be working closely with Town and Parish councils and housing associations to identify those properties that may have difficulties storing and using wheeled bins and to provide suitable solutions.

The contract will be awarded to the successful company at the end of the year and we will be letting residents know more details about the new service at the start of 2009.

Village Plan – Public Meeting 28 November

The analysis of your responses to the Plan questionnaire has been completed and the four study groups have tabled reports of their researches and recommendations.

The Steering Committee would now like to invite you to a Public Meeting on Friday 28 November at 7.30 pm in Whitchurch Village Hall to let you know the key findings and to discuss with you their recommendations on the way forward, based on what you said.

We want the Village Plan to improve the quality of life for everyone in Whitchurch. This might be done in two ways :- first, by addressing the negatives – traffic speed, litter, dog fouling etc and secondly, by building on the positives – extra community activities, upgrading facilities, enhancing our open spaces for example – and we shall be talking about these and many other issues. Most importantly too, we want to develop the sense of community by including something for everyone.

The Plan has provided a valuable opportunity to engage a large number of people in the project already. Adding together the members of the Steering Committee and Study Groups, those distributing the questionnaires and analysing all your comments, over 70 to date have participated, which is very satisfying.

This is an important point because one of the crucial elements in the implementation of the Plan is going to be your active involvement. The Parish Council, SODC and Oxfordshire CC can be expected to help us to action some of our recommendations, but only within their limited financial and other resources. The rest realistically will be up to us - running events, courses or improving the village ambience. Our success will therefore depend on your individual support and that of local societies. We believe everyone has something to offer.

We very much look forward to seeing you on the 28th, sharing a glass of wine and hearing your views about our observations and proposals. Put the date in your diary.

Stephen Trinder
Chair, Steering Committee

The Reconstruction of Whitchurch Bridge

The Whitchurch Bridge Company is close to finalising the details for the reconstruction of Whitchurch Bridge, which is 106 years old and life expired. A team of engineers and architects commissioned by the Company has successfully come up with a design which retains the character and appearance of the existing Grade 2 listed Bridge whilst dealing with its structural problems affecting safety and load capacity. The distinctive lattice side girders will be retained, and new longitudinal steel beams hidden under the roadway will add the strength required for to-day's traffic conditions.

The work is planned for 2013, and the cost of reconstruction is estimated at £3 million at current prices. A simple concrete Bridge would be cheaper, but the Company believes that local residents share its view that the distinctive appearance of the Bridge should be retained, and this is in accordance with its listing status.

The Company has a legal obligation to provide a safe and reliable Bridge crossing by the Act of Parliament under which it was constituted in 1792. The Company has to fund all its operations from the Tolls it collects. Although it has reserves set aside, an increase in Tolls will be required to ensure the Company is able to fund the reconstruction works.

The Company is therefore submitting a Toll Application to the Secretary of State for Transport to increase the cash Tolls for cars from 20p to 40p as from July 2009. The Bridge Card system, which gives a substantial discount to regular users, will be retained.

Company Chairman Mike Beckley says "This is an exciting time as we plan for the reconstruction of our Bridge. The work will ensure that the Company can continue to meet its legal obligation to provide a safe and reliable crossing over the Thames between Pangbourne and Whitchurch-on-Thames for the next 100 years".

There is more information about the Whitchurch Bridge Company on its website at www.whitchurchbridge.com .

Geoff Weir
Company Secretary, the Whitchurch Bridge Company

CHRISTMAS CHEER

Do not miss the
Christmas Coffee Morning
At
Lesley Landon's,
Coombe Lodge, Hartslock Bridleway,

on Saturday 13th December

10.30am - - 12.00 noon

Come and meet old friends and make new ones.
There will be a raffle,
Homemade cakes and gourmet foods for sale.
All cake contributions most welcome.

Proceeds will go to the Church.

Tel 984 2414

WHITCHURCH SOCIETY

New Year's Day 2009 Village Walk

Following last year's successful Inaugural Walk, when around 100 people took part, we have decided to establish the event as a regular feature on the village calendar

As last year, the walk will begin at the Greyhound at 11 am

For this walk, Eric Hartley has planned two routes, one slightly shorter and, in parts, easier underfoot, but both to the West of Whitchurch Hill. A brief description is included in this Bulletin. Further details plus a map will be distributed at the start of the walk

Arrangements for the lunchtime rendezvous point will be announced later

Friends, extended families, accompanied children of all ages, house guests and dogs (on leads) are all welcome

Westward Ho!

New Year's Day Walks

There will be two routes for the 2009 New Year's Day Walk; one will be about 6 miles and take 2½ hours and the other just over 4 miles and 2 hours.

Both will take us once again up Whitchurch Hill to Beech Farm and this time north through Beech Wood to Boundary Farm. The longer route will go to Coldharbour and then westwards to Stapnall's Farm and the shorter a slightly easier route to Stapnall's Farm. We will turn south into Great Chalk Wood and through to meet the road above Upper Gatehampton Farm. Here the shorter route will turn left to return home and the longer one right to and past the farm and down to the Old Reading Road to return up and over the BBO Wildlife Trust's nature reserve. Then through Lower Hartslock Wood along our section of the Thames Path and Hartslock Wood to the horse steps and home along the bridle road.

Eric Hartley

Car lights

As the nights really close in it might be sensible to check your car's lights. Pay particular attention to your rear side lights and your brake lights (you may need another person to look at them or to operate the brake pedal). The front side and head lights are often more obvious when they fail.

Eric Hartley

**Whitchurch Village Fete
A Great Success
....despite the weather!**

Whitchurch Village Fete went ahead as planned on Saturday 6th September and despite the menacing rain the night before and the splattering of showers that came on the day, it turned out to be a fun-filled afternoon.

Although many of our star attractions were unable to make it due to the bad weather (observational beehive, bungee trampolines and kiddies rides, Young Farmers with remote control tractors to name but a few...) we were still lucky enough to have a variety of stalls and activities that really made the fete special.

It was great to have the support of all of our local clubs, organisations and charities and to see how the Village Plan is progressing. It makes you realise how fortunate we are as a village community to have such wonderful social clubs and the opportunity to take part in them.

This year, we had our first arena attraction, a falconry display given by Paul Gray of GMG Falconry, which was amazing to watch.....for those that were worried, Mr Gray DID get his bird of Prey back...although it took him a while!.....I think the renegade falcon quite liked the village, he was found perched on the war memorial.....and let's not forget the MEMORABLE 1st Whitchurch Fete Tug of War competition. The 'Whitchurch Hill Dads' against the 'Whitchurch-On-Thames Dads'. Although I hate to declare it..(being a Whitchurch Hill lass myself) the 'Whitchurch on Thames Dads' WON! Congratulations to the winning team! We are looking forward to the rematch next year!

On behalf of the pre-school, who organised the fete this year, I would like to thank everyone that helped and supported on the day. I would love to list everyone individually but with the amount of support we had I think the editor would be a bit worried if I took over most of the pages in this issue - akin to an Oscar speech lasting ten minutes. So a collective thank you to everyone that helped make the day a success - to those that made a cake, put up a marquee, manned a stall, helped gather equipment, advised with the preparation and turned up on the day to enjoy the event, thank you.

We would like to say a special thank you to Geoff Weir, our wonderful pre-school trustee for being a great compare. To Matilda Oppenheimer for her kind support and overwhelming generosity with the Grand Draw. To the Whitchurch Cricket Club & The Whitelock Family, for allowing us to use their grounds and in particular to Andy Arthur, Tim Close and David and Mary Matimo. To Nigel Groves, for his tireless support in helping the fete organisers on the day.. every year. Thanks also to Sarah and Gavin McGlynn for their kind generosity in donating some brilliant raffle prizes.

I would also like to thank our sponsors -Warminghams Estate Agents, Richard Wilson Solicitors of Goring, Castrol/ Technology Centre. If it were not for these chaps, we would not have been able to fund some of the attractions or provide Grand Draw prize money - so thank you!

The final amount raised on the day that will go to Whitchurch Pre-school group was £1559.00! This is an excellent kick-start to the school year and goes some way to helping us meet this year's fundraising targets for the pre-school!

Thank you again and see you next year!

Helen Bowsher

Whitchurch Pre-school Group

Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group

Wildlife Explorers

In July, WoTHABS held a Wildlife Explorers event (a new venture for us) at Chalkhills. Eleven primary age children came along with their parents and they took part in various activities including investigating the contents of pitfall traps and searching for flowers by colour. We started off with a short lesson in using a hand lens – a must for budding naturalists!

After a sociable picnic lunch in the sunshine, Sandra led us on a walk up through the New Plantation and up onto the top ridge. The weather was perfect – warm and sunny – and so there were plenty of insects and flowers to observe and identify.

There was lots of positive feedback from everyone who attended so we plan to hold another similar event, probably next spring.

If you would like to be circulated with the details, please ring me on (0118) 984 4365 or preferably email on sally.woolhouse@homecall.co.uk.

The Fete

We got a good response to our geology and local habitats display, which was skilfully made by Martin Parham and John Southey. We were keen to find a more permanent home than Martin's garage for the geological part of the display. The case measures 120 x 80 cm. and is quite heavy, as it contains a quantity of gravel, chalk, sand etc., but is an excellent teaching aid and much too good to discard. It has been temporarily rehoused elsewhere but please contact us if you can suggest a home for it where it would be put to use.

For the children's activity this year we repeated an old favourite: bumblebee making. It proved just as popular now. Our youngest customer was 2 years old. We like to get them early. Another told us that she still has the bee she made with us about 6 years ago at a previous fete. Does this demonstrate the durability of the natural materials used, such as sheep's wool and burdock seeds, nature's Velcro, as well as the skill of its maker?

Gill Goodwin 9842934 (gill_goodwin@yahoo.co.uk)

WOODCOTE LIBRARY

Good news for those researching their family history! All libraries in Oxfordshire now have access to the "Ancestry" website through their Peoples Network computers.

The URL is <http://ancestrylibrary.proquest.com>, a very popular family history database which was previously only available at larger libraries. Our computers are free to use, but at busy times it is worth ringing up to book an hour's slot.

If you think you may need help to use the computers it is probably best to come on Monday evening when there are two library staff on duty.

We have recently had quite a few requests for "classic" books, such as *Pride & Prejudice* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Please do ask for these as we have a good collection, held in our stockroom as there isn't room for all of them on the open shelves.

After the happy event in the library over half term of the Big Draw, when adults and children worked together to produce a magnificent story tent, November is upon us and the countdown to Christmas!

First however the library will host an exhibition, "Lest We Forget", which is a commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the end of the first World War. Mike Willoughby has done an enormous amount of research to find details of all the names on local war memorials and will display the results for a week either side of Remembrance Sunday, November 9th.

There will be details of over two hundred local men who lost their lives in the conflict, from over a dozen villages - Checkendon, Goring Heath, Ipsden, Kidmore End, Nettlebed, Nuffield, North Stoke, South Stoke, Rotherfield Greys, Rotherfield Peppard, Stoke Row, Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill, and Woodcote. There will a lot of background information too, so do come in to see the display.

South Chiltern Choral Society

An English Christmas

The South Chiltern Choral Society Christmas concert weekend is a wonderful mixture of English music. As usual the concerts are being held the weekend before Christmas, so this is a great way to relax into the Christmas spirit with audience participation, singing traditional carols.

The main feature is the ***Son of God Mass***

by James Whitbourn,

with the unusual combination of a soprano saxophone and organ accompanying the choir. Composed in 2001, the music was written for a BBC TV documentary and grew out of its visual images, creating an unusual atmosphere by the combination of the beguiling saxophone and choir.

In contrast, the concert also includes Vaughan Williams' ***Fantasia on Christmas Carols***, founded on four traditional English carols with fragments of others and featuring a baritone soloist.

As ever, the society has invited a primary school choir to join us, this time from Caversham. They will be singing together with SCCS and providing a solo spot too!

We always have a charity collection at these concerts.

Date for your diary: Saturday 20th December 7.30pm and Sunday 21st December 2.30pm

Venue: Chiltern Edge School, Reads Lane, Sonning Common

Tickets £10 (£5 for under 18s & children under 5 free) from Choir Box Office: Heather Clark 01491 575727

Further information on choir website:

southchilternchoralsociety.org.uk

GORING HEATH PARISH CHARITY

**Quiz Night is Saturday November 22nd
with the “One and Only” quiz master Mike Holland!!**

As usual food will be available and included in the price of the ticket. So start getting your team together and book your table, don't leave it too long as these quizzes are becoming very popular!

Phone Mike Holland on 0118 984 4867

**Saturday 6th December at 7pm –
Sir Garwain and the Green Knight.**

This is the now regular pre Christmas show for the Children and their Families. We are sure it will be as entertaining and enjoyable as all the past events have been.

Sir Garwain and the Green Knight is a story everyone should hear

“Young Sir Gerwain, a Knight of the Round Table, accepts a challenge from the fearsome Green Knight. Soon he is riding north on a terrible quest.....! Believe it or not, this version of Gerwain was originally commissioned by Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant for a private Christmas party! This show proves you can turn a piece of traditional medieval literature into an entertaining show with lively modern language”

Families and children 7+

Tickets ~ Children and OAPs-£5.50. Adults- £8.00

Phone 0118 9842056 to book your seats.

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Silver Pen Found

A Silver Cross Pen was found at the Whitchurch Village Fete on Saturday 6th September 2008. It is obviously quite sentimental and important to somebody as it has engraving on it of two peoples names.

If you have lost a pen, please call Helen on 0118 9841826

ANOTHER YEAR OF RECORD ACHIEVEMENT AT LANGTREE

Year 11 students at Langtree yet again achieved record breaking levels of attainment in their GCSE results this summer. Following last year's excellent outcomes, the class of 2008 maintained outstanding results with 69% of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE. Even more impressive was the fact that 64% of students achieved five high grade GCSEs including English and Maths, the government's new benchmark of attainment. This was one of the best results in the whole of Oxfordshire and once again makes Langtree one of the highest achieving schools in the whole authority.

Another cause for celebration was that students did so well at the highest level: 28% of all grades were at either A* or A, an increase of 7% on last year's very pleasing results. Furthermore, it was gratifying to see how well the boys had done in 2008 as their results bucked the national trend and saw boys' results at A*-C grades outstrip the girls by 7%. Although the year group did exceptionally well across the board, certain individuals are worthy of note: Joanna Maskens and Alex Smith both achieved 6 A* and 5 A grades; Sam Dickens secured 7 A* and 3 A grades; and Sam Fitchett celebrated with 5 A* and 5 A grades. The GCSE results capped an impressive year all round for the school. In July, Year 9 students celebrated outstanding results in the Key Stage 3 SATs with 85% of students achieving level 5 and above in English and Mathematics, and 80% doing so in Science. These results make Langtree not only one of Oxfordshire's highest attaining schools, but also place the school in the top 25% of schools nationally.

Headteacher Rick Holroyd was delighted with the summer results. "The students and staff have worked extremely hard to achieve these results and all are to be congratulated for their efforts. Credit too, in no small part, is due to the parents who have played a significant part in supporting the students and the school to help us achieve such impressive results". It is no wonder that the school is now so heavily oversubscribed. Over 300 families applied for just 112 places in 2007 and with consistently high levels of achievement again this summer, the school's popularity seems set to grow.

NEW IDEA: number 5

WoTHabs(Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group)

was formed in 1996 following an initiative by SODC encouraging all parishes to form local environment groups. The group has retained a core of founder members and gathered more supporters over the years but always welcomes new ones.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

The parish has several species-rich habitats including six designated County Wildlife sites:

Seymour's Meadow – wet meadow, unimproved neutral grassland
Chalkhills and Straw Hill – unimproved chalk grassland
Bozedown - unimproved chalk grassland
Hardwick Riverside Pasture – lowland meadow
Bottom Wood – ancient replanted woodland

We aim to:

- encourage the protection of local habitats and enhance biodiversity
- promote interest and enthusiasm for the natural environment
- do surveys and record species found in the habitats in our parish
- provide the survey results to regional and national organisations

We organise work parties for environmental projects and run and support events which involve the local community. We hope that a wider awareness and appreciation of our local flora and fauna has resulted.

Examples of our activities in the past few years include tree and hedge planting, pond surveys, pond maintenance, cowslip walks, wildlife explorer day for children, stalls at the fete running activities for children and offering information, greener eating event in conjunction with Climate Change Club, attendance at day events/conferences run by Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum, RSPB birdwatch, butterfly and plant data collection for regional and national groups, recycling initiatives.

WoTHabs (continued)

Group Meetings: usually at Chalkhills (formerly Bozedown Vineyard) the home of Sandra Parkinson.

Webpage: Oxfordshire's community website www.oxnet.org.uk see 'groups'

Contacts:

Alison Michael, Secretary (9845214) bob.michael@virgin.net
Sally Woolhouse, Treasurer(9844365) sally.woolhouse@homecall.co.uk
Gill Goodwin, Publicity (9842934) gill_goodwin@yahoo.co.uk

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Whitchurch & Goring Heath History Society

Our forthcoming meetings are:-

At Whitchurch Village Hall

Jan 15th Colonel Forbes and the Matabele Wars. Illustrated talk by Peter Hawley

Feb 19th AGM, speaker to be announced

All meetings start at 8pm

The society holds lecture meetings from September to May and then has outings in June and July.

Everyone with an interest in history is welcome to come, and we aim to cover local as well as general interest topics - usually with a local slant. We have informal working parties from time to time to study particular material (eg enclosure, building plans) and publish books on local topics.

DIARY DATES

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

RUBBISH COLLECTION OVER CHRISTMAS PERIOD

THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER

Collection will be on Saturday 27th December

THURSDAY 1ST JANUARY: NO COLLECTION

Next collection:

THURSDAY 8th JANUARY 2009

NOVEMBER

Friday 28th

Village Plan Questionnaire Report
At the Village Hall

DECEMBER

Saturday 13th

Christmas coffee morning
At Coombe Lodge

20th & 21st

South Chiltern Choral Society concerts

JANUARY

Thursday 1st

New Year's day Walks

Friday 15th

History Society meeting

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN

will be published in January 2009.

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

Sarah.pongo@talktalk.net by 8th January 2009

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