

The Harwell News www.harwellparish.co.uk

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Parish Council

Resignation of Chairman

The Parish Council was very disappointed that Chairman, Dr. Keith Beswick, has felt it necessary to resign because of a perceived conflict of interest. The Council accepted his decision with regret, and thanks him for his valued Chairmanship over the last year.

February Meeting

Keith chaired the February meeting, at which there was a presentation by 2 boys from Harwell School about their request for a full cycle path between Chilton, Harwell and Didcot, so that children from local villages can cycle to school on a safe route, and reduce pollution from motor vehicles in the process. A survey is planned to investigate routes, and we hope to have an article in a future newsletter.

Mr. John Fisher reported on his meeting with Vale Environmental Wardens; they recommended signs in the Rec. to remind dog-walkers of their responsibilities. If you walk a dog there we hope you have noticed them and are keeping your dog away from the marked pitches in the near field.

It was reported that more residents from Orchard Way had made the Council aware that they are not in favour of the site there for affordable housing. The Council has indicated that it is in favour of a lower density than that recently proposed. Further information is now awaited from Sovereign Housing

Mr. Ricketts reported that the OCC had replied to the enquiry regarding the status of The Winnaway. Use by cyclists cannot apparently be used as evidence of a bridleway, but can be used to support a restricted byway, which also allows horse-drawn vehicles. He was due to meet an OCC representative in the Holloway to discuss footpath 6 and would report back on it. It was noted that residents of Manor Green are still not happy with the footpath from Grove Road to Gaveston Road; the Council sympathized, but has no power in the matter; it is the OCC's responsibility.

Mr. Lilly reported on his meeting with Oxford Bus Company; it may be possible to get the 35A route changed so it comes through Harwell on its circular route to Oxford. Sadly it proved not to be appropriate at this time.

An increase in the Cemetery fees for memorials was approved from 1st March to bring them in line with C of E fees. Other fees remain unchanged.

March Meeting

The March meeting was chaired by Mr. Stewart Lilly, who will be acting Chairman until the Annual Meeting when an election will take place.

Under matters arising, it was reported that a response to the SODC consultation had been sent, drafted by Mr Ricketts. One of the points made was that the proposed network of foot / cycle-paths should include a link from the Winnaway to the Icknield Way, on the east side of the A4185, a distance of about 200 metres. This would avoid 2 road crossings for those going from the Winnaway to the Icknield Way in an easterly direction and allow those going west to use the controlled crossing point.

Our District Councillors reported that the Vale WHDC had raised its Council Tax rate by 5%. Charges for green-waste bins are to go up to £33 per annum, but at least it is now going to be composted. They also wanted to encourage villagers to use the Curie Avenue Post Office in the light of closure threats to small Post Offices. It was mentioned that the Green Box collection lorries continue to damage verges; Councillors promised to report this and other collection problems to the Vale's responsible officer.

The Council made provision in the 08-09 budget for purchase of a new van. Mr Taylor reported that one had been located within the budgeted amount and the Council agreed to bring forward the purchase. The familiar blue van will soon be replaced by a white one. Also it was agreed to purchase a new mower for use in the Cemetery at a cost of approximately £600; this will allow the mulching of the cuttings so saving collecting and disposal.

Quotes had been obtained for replacement bollards to prevent vehicles driving onto the Recreation Ground; the matter was referred to the Lands Committee. The Feast Committee was given permission to use the Recreation Ground on 26th May.

Short discussions were held with 2 parishioners. First Dr Hughes said that Keep Harwell Rural had responded to the SODC green spaces consultation, voicing their concern that the allocation of open space to the northeast of Didcot may include areas which are potential sites of housing development, thus making Harwell Parish a more likely option.

Then a parishioner with an allotment was concerned about the proposed removal of the burning area, and compost heaps without wire mesh to keep out rats. The Council is keen to see a tenants Group set up so concerns can be collated and brought to the Council's attention. He was also concerned about traffic speeding in Grove Road and poor visibility and the junction with High Street. The Council will make such representations as it can to OCC, and ask PCSOs to monitor traffic speeds in Grove Road.

The next meetings of the Parish Council are on Tuesday 20th May and 10th June. Items for the agenda should be with the Clerk, Mrs. S. Taylor one week before this. Contact the Clerk at clerk@harwellparish.co.uk, on 01235 820006 where messages can be left, or in writing to 1, Wantage Road, OX11 0LJ. Office hours are 9 to 11am Monday to Wednesday.

Annual Parish Meeting

This will be held on **29th May** at 8pm on the Freeman Hall; among the items expected to be on the agenda are:

- New Pavilion project
- Waste and Recycling collections (Vale rep.)
- Affordable Housing

Harwell News distribution.

Many people in the village contribute to the life of the community. Among them are the stalwarts who, rain or shine, cheerfully deliver the Harwell News on behalf of the Parish Council. Some have been delivering for many years. 1100 copies are distributed every other month. We're glad to take this opportunity to thank them all. And particularly to Pat and Norman Staples who prepare the bundles and take them around.

Parish Council Web site

Don't forget this has the latest news, and the archive section is being added to by our webmaster, David Marsh. The Harwell Book has been recently added in a web format; there is a shortcut to it – www.village4a1000years.com

Contact details District & County Councillors:

Margaret Turner and Reg Waite reg@regwaite.co.uk
7 Hengest Gate

Colin Lamont colin.lamont@oxfordshire.gov.uk
2 The Old School, School Lane.



FUN CLUB NEWS

Fun Club is the village baby and toddler group. We meet in the Village Hall on Tuesday mornings in term time 9.30-11.30am. All parents and carers of babies and toddlers (ie 0-5s), as well as mums-to-be, are most welcome. Just to make it clear, we do also welcome men – some dads do actually come regularly. The cost per session is just £1 per family, including refreshments, regardless of the number of children. Your first visit is free.

For more information please contact Nickie Dunphy on 832963 or nickie.dunphy@gmail.com

Our next **Nearly New Sale** will be on Saturday **May 17** 10am-12pm at the village hall. Bigger and better than ever before, we will have more stallholders with a new layout, making it easier to get around, and as always lots of bargains to be had. We can also sell your things for you if you can't make it on the day. A few tables are still available for the November 2008 sale.

[If you would like more details about the May Baby and Toddler Nearly New Sale please call Sophie Soane on 01235 832927.](#)

Didcot Volunteer Centre

Phone 816709 Weekdays 10am-noon

We are a voluntary service to help elderly or disabled people without transport to get to Hospital, Doctor, Dentist, Chiropodist, Hairdresser's appt's and even Maybe shopping!

The cost being 40p a mile -to our driver-to cover the petrol cost, half the cost of a taxi. We already have clients from Harwell that use us regularly; feel free to contact us.

Harwell Gardeners' Club

Monday 12th May *The History and Propagation of Geraniums*, a talk by David Taylor
Visitors always welcome to our meetings.

In June, July and August we will be enjoying Garden Visits (tba) and looking ahead we have a coach trip on Sunday 31st August to Birmingham Botanical gardens.

Date for your diary:

Harwell Village Produce Show Saturday 13th September

Schedules available from village shops in due course.

Any queries please contact Wendy Sinclair (Chair) on 221008 or Janice Markey (Sec.) on 832802.

The **Parish Council** would like to thank the Gardeners Club for continuing to maintain the Memorial Garden. It seems there is usually something in flower:



Harwell Bowls Club Open Day on Sunday 27 April

Do you like fresh air and pleasant company with the gentle exercise of inexpensive Bowling?

Why not come and give it a try.

We are a small friendly Bowls Club located in the Village of Harwell and would welcome new faces of any age or gender from the surrounding locality. The Bowls club started bowling in the Harwell Cherry Orchards, between the lines of trees, in 1932 and celebrated 75 years of bowling last year. The Bowls England President and the Royal County of Berkshire Bowling Association President both brought teams to play us in 2007 and the occasions were celebrated in style.

The Club is having an Open Day on Sunday 27 April 2008, and you would be most welcome to come and try us out. Our Bowls Club is located in the Village of Harwell, adjacent to the RBL Club at the entrance to the sports field off a road called Westfield, on the South side of the Village.

Are only requirement on the day is to bring yourself and a pair of shoes that are flat soled to wear when going onto the Green.

If you missed the date or cannot join us on the open day but still want to try us out somebody is always around at the Club from 6 p.m. on a Monday evening from May to September weather permitting.

Further information can be obtained from the Club Secretary on 01235 834408 or the Club President on 01235 815076.

Harwell Village Tennis Club

Fancy playing tennis? Join Harwell Village Tennis Club. All ages and standards welcome.

Membership

£35 Family, £18 Adult, £10 Junior

£12 Senior Citizens and Students

Key for the court: £3.00 (free if last year's key is returned)

Tennis club nights start on Thursday 24th April - just turn up from 7.00pm onwards at the courts behind the British Legion at the recreation ground. There will be the AGM in the British Legion after the first club night at around 8.00pm.

Junior tennis coaching starting on Thursday 24th April for 10 weeks. Places limited so early booking advisable.

Contact: Clare Coombs, Membership Secretary on 01235 821305 or email harwelltennis@hotmail.com

Planning matters

Permissions:

HAR/9934/2 Single storey extension at Heron House, Blenheim Hill.

HAR/13273/2 Alteration frontage 20 Jennings Ln.

HAR/9479/6 1-storey extn. rear Harrow Hse Burr St.

HAR/2737/12 1-storey extn Almshouse Farm, High St.

HAR/19966/1 Erection of 2 detached dwellings & garages, land at rear of Blenheim Terrace, Burr St.

HAR/7315/2 Conservatory at Sun Grove, Downs Close.

Withdrawn:

HAR/19692/1 Dwelling at Greenbanks, Reading Road

New Applications:

HAR/20463 addition of various windows & new porch canopy at Rose Cottage, Gaveston Road.

HAR/6046/2 1-floor extension. loft conversion & garage at Eunice, Didcot Road.

HAR/1371/1 Erection of single storey extension at Five Corners, The Barrow.

HAR/20108/1 Erection of single storey and separate garage at Holloway Cottage, The Holloway.

The Council requested that any neighbours' comments be taken into account by Planners.

HAR/20485 Erection of 1x3 bed & 1x4 bed dwellings at Land adjacent to Reading Road, for Oak Dell Properties Ltd. (near Silverdown).

The Council objected to this application on the grounds that it may set a precedent for similar building projects in the village, which could push the village envelope out further than its present boundaries. The Council also requested that should permission be granted, the existing screen of vegetation fronting the road is retained.

Speed Limit on the A4185

The County Council has said that it intends to extend the 40mph limit which currently runs from near North Drive to just past the Harwell site main gate. It proposes to extend it over the A34 to just beyond the roundabout on the east side of the A34 and to join the Chilton 30mph zone. The reason given is to improve road safety where traffic has increased. Any objections must be made by 25th April.

Harwell Feast 2008

(weather permitting!)

Bank Holiday Monday 26th May

St Matthew's Church Bellringers 10.30am

High Street Parade – 11.00 am

Decorated Floats, Vintage Cars & Tractors, Benson Veteran Cycles, Bagg's Tree Buskers, Wantage Silver Band, May Queen, Traction Engine Fancy Dress, Organ Grinder, Island Farm Donkeys.

Recreation Ground Events

Car Boot Sale (£10), Farmers Market, Craft Stalls, Fun Dog Show, Dog Agility, Ferret Racing, Farms2Ewe, Morris Men, Bonny Baby Competition (up to 12 months), Children's Fancy Dress Competition (0 - 5 years, 6 - 11 years), Children's Races with Mr Cansell, Country Dancing, Veteran Cars and Vintage Cycles Display, Bouncy Castle, West's Fair, Model Makers, Wood Turners. Plus A feast of food includes 3 roast pigs, a barbeque, cream teas & ice-creams.

Entry by Programme £2.00 on the day or £1.50 in advance from Village Shops. Children FREE.

Could those organisations wanting to enter a float please ring Sid Gale on 821281. Those wanting a stall please ring Janice Markey on 832802. Children wanting to ride on the Fancy Dress Float in the Parade come to Townsend at 10.45am.

Harwell Feast Committee

We would like to thank everyone who has supported our fund-raising events throughout the past year. Our most recent event, The Auction, held in March, raised £2,500, including generous donations. Many thanks to all who donated or bid for a lot. And particular thanks to Stewart Lilly, the auctioneer, and his wife Kate for their help.

We are pleased to say that we are now financially solvent after our substantial losses due to last year's washout. We also have a good reserve as protection against future adversities!

Plans for this year's Feast Day are well under way as you will read elsewhere, and we are all hoping for a dry day!

If anyone would like to help with the day's events (for example marshalling on the parade, serving in the pavilion, selling programmes on the gate) for an hour or two we would be very pleased to hear from you – please contact Janice Markey on 832802, Patricia Cooke on 832702, or any committee member. Thank you.



News from
Harwell Scout Group

The Scout Group in Harwell remains very active with sections available for boys and girls of all ages from 6 years upwards. If your child is interested in joining or finding out more please call Liz Roberts on 834295.

Section	Age	Approx. numbers
Beavers	6-8	13
Cub Scouts	8-11	25
Scouts	11-14½	50 (2 sections)
Explorers	14½-18	35

What are they up to? With the lighter evenings and warmer (!) weather more outdoor activities are planned. Here's what has been happening or what is scheduled for the next couple of months:

Explorers: Duke of Edinburgh Bronze expedition to the New Forest in May. Aqua Camp in June: Explorers will be running the rafting at the Scout County Water Activities weekend. In July they will be participating in a 24 hour non-stop activity day in London along with Explorer Scouts from all over the country. And a trip is also planned to the Dutch National Jamboree and Cycling Expedition in July.

Scouts: HIKE Atomic: a night hike race between patrols in preparation for the HIKE Oxon later in the year. AQUA camp in June. They are also looking forward to the annual Summer camp and have been brushing up on their knots and navigation skills in preparation.

Cubs: Cubs have been busy making Mothering Sunday cards & gifts, and learning about road safety and first aid. Their next big activity is the Spring camp at Youlbury in April.

Beavers: Beavers are looking forward to getting out of the church hall more. They have Friendship and Outdoor Challenge activities lined up. They will also be joining the Cubs' Spring camp.

Quiz Night

The Scout Group ran a hugely successful Quiz Night in the Village Hall in February. A great time was had by all who attended and congratulations go to Gangrene, the winning team. The Scout Committee would like to thank all those who supported the event and helped us raise a fantastic £600 net for the Group. Look out for our next event!

100 Club

Hurry! Tickets are selling fast for the 100 Club! You buy a numbered ticket (for £10) that gives you a £1 entry into each of 10 draws running from 2008 to 2009. Each month three tickets are drawn to win prizes of 1st £25, 2nd £15 and 3rd £10. If we achieve our aim of selling 100 tickets, then you will have roughly a 1 in 3 chance of winning over the course of the 10 monthly draws. To participate you must be 16 years or older. Early entrants can choose their own (hopefully lucky!) number and this goes back into the draw for the next month even if it has won. For further details and/or an entry form please contact Nigel Hartley on 821442.

Look out for:

Saturday 21st June – Midsummer Sponsored Walk: 10 mile walk (shorter route for small children). Finish at the Recreation Ground with a BBQ & Social.

Date for Your Diary Harwell Open Gardens

Will be held on
Sunday 8th June 2 to 5pm

Tickets £4, proceeds to be shared between Harwell Gardeners Club and Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance

HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR OLD HOUSE A ONE DAY COURSE IN BLEWBURY

Marianne Suhr, of the BBC Restoration Programme, has put together an excellent course to be held in Blewbury in a historic barn on Saturday May 10th 2008. The course will cover the following topics - house- construction and dating, Dealing with damp, Timber frame repairs, Lime plasters and renders, Thatching, wattle and daub and lime-washing demonstration.

The cost will be £45 including lunch, tea and coffee, lectures and demonstrations. All speakers are giving their time for free, and proceeds will go to the Blewbury Cob Wall fund. If you want to attend contact Paul Whitehead at p.g.whitehead@reading.ac.uk or 850836.

From the archives

50 years ago The local paper reported "Harwell to Lose Clerk, Leaving for 6 months. Mr. W.B. Woollen, Clerk of Harwell Parish Council for the last 6 years, is leaving the district for six months. He will have gone by the time of the next meeting.

At Monday's Parish Council meeting the Chairman, Mrs. K. Lay, paid tribute to the work of Mr. Woollen and said the members were extremely grateful for his help and advice over the years. She told the Council that several possible people had been approached to fill the vacancy without result." The Council minutes just report "The Clerk advised the Council he would shortly have to resign his post." A few weeks later the minutes record "The meeting confirmed the appointment of Dr.C.S.Lees as Clerk ... at a salary of £45 per year."

The article reported several other items from the meeting: "The Clerk said permission had been received from the County Council to fell the two trees near the memorial if flowering trees were replanted. 'The trees can be felled and removed while the work on the memorial is carried out' said Mrs Lay, 'and the replanting can take place in the autumn'. ON the 31st October 1960 the minutes record "The Clerk informed the Council that he would shortly be moving away from Harwell, and would therefore have to resign. The next meeting concluded with "The appointment of Mr Woollen as Clerk from Dec 1st 1960 at a sum of £45 per annum was confirmed by the meeting." Minuting the salary would now be not allowed as it is personal information covered by the Data Protection Act! Mr. Woollen remained Clerk until sometime after the Parish Millennium celebrations in 1985. A recording of the Down Your Way programme has come to light recently in the Parish archives and records Bill Woollen in conversation with the presenter, Brian Johnston, plus a few other citizens of the Parish – more another time maybe.

Harwell Primary School's Outstanding Curriculum praised by OFSTED

Harwell School received glowing praise from OFSTED following a snap inspection on 12/13 December. The verdict, announced in an OFSTED report issued to parents recently, concluded that the School, "is a good school with outstanding features".

In particular, inspectors singled out for praise the School's "outstanding curriculum and good teaching and the pupils' excellent personal development and behaviour." The Foundation Stage was also regarded as outstanding. The report attributed the overall success to "consistently good teaching", which resulted in pupils' excellent progress.

In the report, in which every area of the School was graded as either "good" or "outstanding", inspectors highlighted only two technical areas which the School should seek to improve further " use of assessment data and to continue to strive for improvements in writing".

The school's significant community role was also highlighted, with special mention being made of the EcoSchool, Healthy School, Active School and FA Charter Status, awards. Inspectors praised the "very positive" ethos, through which children enjoy their education and reach high academic standards, also remarking that the School is "well led and managed".

Welcoming the report, Headteacher, Peter Cansell, commented:

"This is a great endorsement, not only of the School's pupils and staff, but of the way in which the whole community work together to make Harwell so successful. The Inspector referred frequently, on his visit, to the richness of the curriculum and the positive, friendly attitude of the children and staff," Mr Cansell went on: "education is about students fulfilling their potential, and this report is confirmation that Harwell Primary School delivers well on that target. We still have work to do - while OFSTED confirms that we have many outstanding features, our aim is to establish every aspect of the school at that level."

Also, dates for your diary:

May 22nd Ladies Salsa Night. Saturday July 5th Harwell School Summer Fair.

The Home Farm Trust at Milton Heights is holding a car boot sale on Sunday 18th May between 10am and 2pm. Tables cost £5 in advance and £6 on the day. Contact Sam on 01235 827629.

The **Rotary Club of Abingdon Vesper** is holding the annual charity Dragon boat Race day on **Sunday 11 May**. The races will be held this year near to Abingdon Lock, access from Bridge Street. there are also craft stalls, a fun fair, food and drink, and a raffle, which this year is raising funds for Oxpip, a local charity.

Neighbourhood Watch

There has been a recent increase in Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal damage offences in the area of Harwell. As your local Police Community Support Officer, please could I ask that all offences of Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal offences are reported to the police using the non emergency number of 08458 505 505 or the 999 system if a crime is in progress. The Police are involved in a multi agency approach to combat such behaviour along with Vale Housing, Environmental Health and Schools.

Thank you - Barry Gills PCSO.

Harcourt Arboretum Family Friendly Events

Spring Into Life: The Easter holidays have arrived! Come to the Harcourt Arboretum and take part in our FREE family activities. Spring is with us, and the deciduous trees are back in leaf. See all the new leaves and learn how to identify the trees. This is the time of year when our ducks breed. See if our real ducklings have arrived yet, and make your own duckling to take home.

Tuesday 15th April 2008 noon to 4pm. This drop-in session is free with Arboretum entry, £3 / £2-50

Contact us on 01865 343501.

HARWELL BUS SERVICES

As everyone is now aware Stagecoach lost their contract to Thames Travel in the recent re-tendering.

Oxford County Council was not prepared to subsidise a bus service for this village to have a direct service to Oxford. By changing contractors they claim to be saving the County Council £280,000 per annum. The County Council argued that as there are bus services from Abingdon to Oxford at frequent intervals then it should not be a problem to change from one route to another! I have indicated to County Councillor Hudspeth, who is now responsible for Public Transport, that his idea is all very well in the summer when it's light and dry, but that when some of our elderly citizens or young Mothers with buggies have to cope with the wind, wet and cold waiting around in Abingdon for a bus, it can be very lonely and unpleasant.

I have no other comment to report to the village apart from the fact that Councillor Hudspeth shrugged his shoulders at all of my arguments! I rather wondered why he bothered to meet me in the first place!

Not content with the outcome of that meeting with our County Councillor for Transport, I have now arranged a meeting with the Oxford Bus Company to see if there is an opportunity to discuss a direct link to Oxford, by utilising the existing Didcot – Oxford service (Route 35A). Hopefully the ability to run some buses through Harwell can be accommodated.

The sad loss of the Newbury services has also hit our village and Chilton extremely badly. We now have no link with the south of the county beyond the AEA site. (This is apart from one bus a day to Chilton) It transpires that the Berkshire and Oxfordshire County Councils failed to agree on their shared financing and subsidy of this service. Sadly it is us in the community who bear the brunt of that disagreement, by losing the service completely! Isn't local politics a wonderful thing?

100 Years Ago

At the Annual Parish Council Meeting on April 15th 1908 the Agenda was:

- Appointment of Overseers and other officers
- Fire-engine
- Twitchings

It was carried that - "Mr. H Tyrrell and Mr. J Day be appointed Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Harwell for the ensuing year"

The post of Cemetery Caretaker was under consideration. "It was decided to appoint F. Prior for the same salary as last year viz 50/-. It was also carried that two locks and a chain be secured so that the Cemetery gates might be locked. ... Surprise was expressed that Mr Joseph Lay had not answered either of the communications sent him concerning the Twitchings. On the proposition of Mr Greenwood and seconded by Mr Bosley it was unanimously carried "That the Clerk write to Mr Lay asking that the wall erected by his orders across the Twitchings be removed within 7 days of this notice."

At the Annual Parish Meeting, it was proposed by Mr Lay seconded by Mr. F Tyrrell and carried:

"That the Clerk be directed to draw up a resolution of protest against the special sanitary rate being so often levied of such serious amounts upon the Parish; and that such protest signed by those who are direct ratepayers be forwarded to the Clerk of the Rural District Council."

April 1908 was remembered for years afterwards for the snowstorm on the last Saturday of the month. The Berks and Oxon Advertiser the following week had:

The Great Snowstorm

Saturdays Extraordinary Experience

Snowed up in April

Not Since the memorable blizzard of Jan 18th 1881 has there been such a great snowstorm as that which swept over this part of the County last Saturday. There had been snow in the air for the last three weeks or so, and after the fall on Thursday the weather-wise shook their heads as they said there was a lot more about, and no warmer weather could be expected until it had come. They were right. Snow began to fall in a desultory fashion in the very early hours of

Saturday morning, but it was not until 5 o'clock that it began in earnest. Even then, the roads being wet from the previous day's sleet and rain, the snow vanished as it fell; but so persistent was the downpour that by 9 o'clock the white mantle began to spread itself over everything. Hour after hour the flakes continued to fall. It was not the powdery snow that one associates with a mid-winter blizzard - the flakes fell heavily, beating the snow into a close and compact mass...

As the afternoon advanced a bitter wind sprang up, driving the snow into deep banks and stinging the face of anyone who had to weather the storm ... Twilight gave place to dark and still the snow fell"

There was mention of rail services being disrupted around Didcot, where 16 inches, or 40cm, of snow fell.

"Sunday was fine and under the influence of the sun a rapid thaw set in, and on Monday a number of men were set to work to clear the streets (in Abingdon). Owing to the state of the ground, gardening is at a standstill and it is feared that fruit crops, especially early plums, will suffer."

Our little snowfall on 1st Sunday in April was not on the scale of a century earlier, but provided some Fun for those who were out early in the Recreation Ground:





From our MP Mr. Ed Vaizey

March has been a quiet month for me politically. This is because it has been a very busy one for me on the personal front. Our daughter, Martha, was due on 29th February, but arrived almost two weeks late, on 12th March. (I will resist the obvious joke at this point as I would lose half my audience.) She weighed what I am told is a healthy 6lbs 3oz, and is, of course, the loveliest baby in the world. Even better, her 18 month old brother Joseph has taken to her from the word go.

Martha was born on the same day as the sculptor Anish Kapoor, and the politicians Virginia Bottomley and Avid Mellor, so she could go either way. However, her delayed arrival meant that I could vote for a referendum on the European constitution, and her choice of birth day meant I avoided the tedium of Alistair Darling's Budget, so she has already demonstrated political flair. (That is not a political point - even his best friends think he is a boring public speaker.)

The birth of Martha obviously gives me the chance to wax lyrical about the NHS. Some of the problems with the NHS will be familiar to many of you. Every time we had an appointment before the birth, we had to basically give up the whole morning and wait for 3 hours. After the birth, we got the after care that we needed, but were otherwise left to our own devices. My wife was discharged after 2 days, despite having had a caesarean section, because of pressure on bed space. However, during the birth the care was world-class. If I hadn't known better, I would have thought this was the only birth that year for every doctor and midwife on the ward. They were always on hand, incredibly helpful, we never felt in any danger, and they were highly skilled.

I get a lot of letters from constituents concerned about the care they receive. More often than not, they have either been

refused treatment (mainly an expensive drug or IVF), or they have had their operation cancelled or delayed. I rarely succeed with the former problem, but have a better rate of success with the latter. Of course, those that get first-rate care don't bother to contact me.

What I do know about our local NHS is that we have some very good people working in our Primary Care Trust, and we also have some of the best GPs in the country. I have been speaking to all of them recently, as they are very concerned about the Government's proposals to set up polyclinics (also known as Darzai clinics) across the country. One is planned for Oxfordshire, and I understand Virgin want to run it. I don't necessarily oppose the idea behind polyclinics, but where I am as one with our GPs is that I oppose the Government imposing them from above, and I cannot see the need for one in Oxfordshire. The GP system in this country is a huge success, providing continuing care to millions of people and also acting as a crucial filter between us and hospitals. We put it at risk at our peril.

Contact your MP Ed Vaizey MP, Shadow Minister for the Arts and MP for Wantage and Didcot.
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA Tel: 020 7219 6350, e-mail: vaizeye@parliament.uk website
www.vaizey.com

Up Coming Surgeries

11 April 2008, Faringdon Corn Exchange, 5:30 7.00pm

18 April 2008, at Wallingford Town Hall, 5:30 -7pm

CAB Advice
Column

the charity for
your community



My father died recently and we are having great trouble locating his will. We know he made one, but the solicitor he dealt with originally, and where the will was left for safekeeping, has gone out of business. Is there any way of tracing its whereabouts?

Start by checking to see if your father kept a copy of his will, and contact the Law Society to try and trace what happened to documents deposited with your father's original solicitor. You could also check if your father's will has been placed at the Principal Registry of the Family Division of the High Court, a District Registry or Probate Sub-Registry for safe keeping.

You can write to The York Probate Sub-Registry, 1st Floor, Castle Chambers, Clifford Street, York YO1 9RG (Tel: 01904 666777) to request a copy of a will by post. You will need to provide your father's full name, date of death and last known address and pay a fee of £5.

You can also make a personal search free of charge by going to the Principal Registry of the Family Division, First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NP (Tel: 020 7947 6000). If you want to inspect or take a copy of the will, there is a fee of £5.

For more information about making a will or what to do when someone dies, go to the Citizens Advice website www.adviceguide.org.uk or call in to the CAB Info Point at Harwell School (Mondays 9 – 10.30am).

Have you Time to Spare to Meet Someone New and Help them?

South & Vale Carers Centre in Didcot is starting a new project and is looking for volunteers. Would you be interested in helping out someone caring for a relative in their own home? You would be introduced to a household where the carer and the cared-for person are living, and asked, to stay in the home while the carer took some time off, perhaps an hour a month, perhaps an afternoon a week.

This would all start off with an interview for you, and references sought, and then a short training course to equip you for any situation and send you free from anxiety into your future as a volunteer! We will take care in matching volunteers and cared-for people, and you would have constant support by phone when you need it as well as ongoing meetings with colleagues and with Chris Elliott, coordinator of the scheme.

Chris is waiting to hear from anyone interested, and has much more information to give. Please email her at the Carers Centre on chris@svcarers.org.uk, or phone her there on 01235 510212. She will be delighted you've called!

Didcot Country Park – hidden agenda?

HPC press release: Hundreds of houses can't be built in a country park ? So behind any move to declare an area a

country park is the potential conflict of the need for the same land for houses.

In the search for easily accessible open space close to Didcot an area of land to the north east (N-E) of the town has been selected. But several places in the same area are also shown –albeit very imprecisely – as possible sites for the next tranche of 4,000 houses to be built in the period 2016-2026

Didcot is marked out as a key area for growth in central Oxfordshire and will shortly see the start of the 3,200 houses approved in the plan for Great Western Park to the southwest of the town. In the planning process leading to this decision, the Inspector reviewing the options recommended the site to the N-E as the best option. But – no doubt with manoeuvres behind the scene – the County Council ignored the Inspector and opted for the southwest site. This reduces the gap between Didcot and Harwell to 1000 yards.

Harwell Parish Council is watching closely the schemes for designating N-E land as a Country Park as a move that could remove some of the possible housing sites from the future options. Thus the pressure will increase once more to fill the narrowing gap between Didcot and Harwell , and the Hagbournes.

Right now the Country Park report commissioned by SODC (Chris Blandford consultants) has been revised and will soon be published. It will be important to see if any revision of park boundaries avoids a clash with potential housing land to the NE. Indeed there needs to be more precision about these potential housing sites so that we can see that there isn't a clash, and we must also get assurances that the closeness of land designated as a park will not be used as an argument against using the N E sites for future housing.

Northmoor Trust May Events

Unless otherwise stated, **booking is required** for all events and meeting place is at Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, Oxon OX14 4QZ. Tel: 01865 407792 or email: admin@northmoortrust.co.uk Website: www.northmoortrust.co.uk

Sunday 20th April 2pm – 4:30pm

Newts, Frogs and Toads. Enjoy a walk around the Northmoor Trust Estate to learn more about these fascinating amphibians. Adults £4, Children under 16 & Friends Free Booking required.

Thursday 1st May, 4.30am - 6am

Dawn Chorus Walk. Listen and identify bird song on the Northmoor Trust Estate. Breakfast for sale and May Day Celebrations afterwards. Adults £4, Children under 16 & Friends Free. Booking required.

Sunday 4th May

Northmoor Trust Dawn Chorus Walk at Wallingford Castle Meadows 4.30am - 6am

Meet at Cemetery Lane entrance, Wallingford.

A stroll around the meadows listening to the amazing early morning bird song. Free event, but please book.

Wednesday 7th May

Northmoor Trust Bats at Riverside Meadows: 8pm - 10.30pm

Meet at Riverside Car Park, Crowmarsh. Learn to use a bat detector. Free event, but please book.

Sunday 11th May

Free Wild Waste Show Family Day: 10am – 2pm

Make a mask out of recycled materials. Fun for all the family. No booking necessary.

Sunday 18th May

Northmoor Trust Gateway For All Project Open Day: 10am – 4pm

See our plans for our new Sensory Garden, learn more about drought tolerant plants for your garden and meet some of those involved in the project. Presentations at 11am and 2pm. All welcome, just turn up!

Project Timescape now open every Sunday *plus* Tues – Friday during School Hols. Explore the history of the Wittenham Clumps landscape at the Northmoor Trust's interactive visitor centre. Adults £4.50, Child £2.75

District Council notes from Cllrs Margaret Turner and Reg Waite

Vale News

We hope you all read the article on the front page of the latest issue of Vale News headed “Your Council Tax”. This article provided a list of some of the vital spending commitments for 2008/9 and then highlighted what savings and increased charges were necessary in order to balance the budget for the year.

Turning now to page 3, we hope you were interested in the article headed “Your Vale – Your Future”. Work continues on developing plans for the next 20 years in the Vale

Many individuals, private, public and voluntary organisations participated in the workshops held last Autumn, and you are now invited to attend the next phase of workshops to comment on and discuss the new strategy.

There are 4 venues in all, but the two nearest ones to Harwell are –

- 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday, 30th April at Abingdon Guildhall, and

- 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, 13th May at Wantage Civic Hall.

Please endeavour to attend one of these, as it is important that the Vale makes its plans according to our wishes.

Local Concerns

Margaret and Reg have been approached recently by residents and businesses in their Ward with three main concerns –

- firstly, procrastinated action by Capita who look after the Vale's Council Tax administration and the payment of benefits, and

- secondly, Rural Rate Relief affecting shops, pubs and village halls, and

- thirdly, the lack of response and action from Environmental Agency re flooding.

Matters are being taken up with the appropriate authorities on these issues, and we request you do not hesitate to pass any cases on to both Margaret and Reg.

Editor's Note: As you have seen in your Council Tax Bill the Vale WHDC's share of it is less than 8%

Root and Branch

Here at Root & Branch we provide a range of activities which are designed to support people who are experiencing emotional or mental health difficulties, such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Among the activities we offer are organic gardening, bee keeping, forge work, woodwork, administration and computer skills, cooking and arts and crafts. Some of the things people have been involved in recently are making things to sell on the farmer's market in Faringdon. Based on an organic farm close to Faringdon in the Vale of the White Horse, we provide a safe and serene environment which fosters a culture of friendliness, mutual respect and community. We aim to work with people to help them achieve positive outcomes in their life, such as increased self-confidence, an improved sense of emotional well-being and a new sense of direction in life. People wishing to attend Root & Branch can either approach the service themselves or get a referral from their GP or Community Mental Health Team. If you are interesting in attending, or would like to volunteer fundraising, administration, publicity, supporting gardeners, being a trustee or helping to plan events. Contact us on 01793 780380 or via our website www.rootandbranch.info.

Editorial Notes: Harwell News is published at the beginning of alternate months. Other than in reports of Parish Council matters any opinions expressed are not those of the Parish Council or editor. Items for the June issue should be with the editor by May 25th. Send to M Ricketts, 16, The Park or email martinricketts@waitrose.com.
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