

The Bulletin of Whitchurch on Thames

Whitchurchonthames.com

January 2015

Now the Bridge is back in action at least we don't have the long trip round by Goring (or Reading) if we are travelling to anywhere that is south of the River. But it is not the end of the story. Many people wonder why it appears that no consideration has been given to the safety of pedestrians, and our young ladies walking to the shops with their buggy and children at foot in particular. And then there is the question of the proposed toll charge hike.

The proposal presented by the Bridge Company is somewhat technical and your Parish Council considered that we needed the best advice we could find. We asked a group of four of our residents, all highly qualified and respected professionals, to present their analysis to us. This they have done and we have sent their Memorandum to the Minister as the opinion of this Parish Council. The report is available on the web site and a very good appreciation of it by James Burton appeared in the *Henley Standard* of 2nd January.

Another problem which has emerged since the re-opening has been parking on the High Street. Although it is known that bridge traffic is currently 11% down on pre-rebuild levels it seems that a number of drivers have got used to leaving their vehicles in the High Street for long periods and this is causing a whole new set of problems.

The Parish Council considers that the first responsibility is to our own residents. Strictly speaking, anyone can park anywhere on the High Street but cars are being parked in such a way that sight lines are being obstructed. The resulting snarl-ups have been known to result in long queues along the High Street, over the bridge and even in Eastfield Lane. It is particularly worrying because children crossing near the Greyhound may appear suddenly from between parked cars.

Our Traffic and Pavements Advisory Group has spent a lot of time researching this matter and has consulted Keith Stenning. Keith is in charge of OCC Highways therefore has the last word in such matters.

TaPAG's proposal was put to the Parish Council at the January 5th meeting. The main underlying considerations were :

We have to improve sight lines.

We need gaps in the line of parked cars so vehicles can get through without getting stuck, even if it means playing "ducks and drakes".

The first responsibility is to our own residents.

Whatever we do (or Highways do) the Parish will have to pay for.

Your Council noted that yellow lines are disliked, very expensive (£4K possibly £6K) and take months to get into place. Designated parking places and limited waiting areas hit the same problem: by the time the survey and legal costs are covered the bill is soaring to similar heights and you still have all the posts and signs to pay for.

It is not obvious how you police the result.

White lines will work well if they are respected. People do need to understand that if they are not respected we may have double yellows dictated by OCC Highways and we may have little say in where they are positioned.

As Keith put it to us when the Hardwick Road project was being considered, "Where any adopted road or highway is concerned, OCC Highways have absolute authority over the roadway *from hedge to hedge*, regardless of the actual ownership of any part of it."

The cost of white lines is determined by the fact that we can only have a lining team in the Village in increments of whole days at £1500 per day. There are obvious places where the passing places should be. One needs to cover the Aldridge Farm entrance, so the existing line needs to be re-painted. Another obvious place is in the region of Tudor Cottage where there have been problems of access for those with off street parking. If they can't get their vehicles onto their premises we have even more cars parked in the road. Perhaps most important is that the pinch point near the post box at the north end of the Church entrance needs to be kept clear.

Of course TaPAG is aware that we could go the expensive route some time this summer. However their recommendation is that, at least in the first instance, we use the much cheaper and far quicker route of asking people to respect some white lines.

Following a detailed discussion at the PC meeting on the 5th the modified version was approved and will be presented to OCC highways for action as soon as possible. The full report will be appended to the PC meeting minutes and be available on the web site.

Other matters:

The defibrillator project is moving ahead. Our population is significantly skewed to the older age groups and it is considered to be very important. We have promises of donations which will mean that there will be no burden on the council tax. It will be housed in the red telephone box and the power needed to keep it charged and warm enough to be handled regardless of the weather will be donated by BT, who will also arrange for power to be re-connected.

Although the device will be housed in a locked box, fast access will be available because anyone dialling 999 will be given the access code by the emergency operator.

Anyone concerned about safety may care to note that these devices are already installed in many schools. The machine literally tells a user what to do and until it has found the medical condition it is designed to treat it will simply refuse to do anything.

Training will be available, notification of which will appear in the web site once details are available.

Sadly one of our village “characters” has passed away. John Dolby was very well known throughout the Village. An appreciation appears later in this issue.

Ed Pilcher has now formally retired from his post as Village Hall caretaker and there was a party on the 1st of January in the Hall. The Parish Council made a presentation at the party as their appreciation of the way Ed looked after the hall for many years.

The War Memorial

At the the January meeting representatives of Goring Heath Parish Council presented their ideas. These produced some very mixed reactions which ranged from “lets do it” through “not sure it is sensible in the long term” to “not appropriate”. The estimated cost of £18,000 to be shared between the two Parishes was more than a little daunting: it appeared to suggest an increase of our precept by 30%.

From a personal point of view, I could not help thinking that even if we did decide to spend so much money it would be better sent to the British Legion to help service people who need the cash now.

The outcome was that we chose not to join the scheme, at least as currently presented. Councillor Donahue will look at the possibility of a public meeting in the Village Hall for our residents to indicate what their reactions are.

Planning and other matters:

So far as planning matters are concerned the most significant item was SODC’s formal refusal of permission for the latest version of the Eastfield House expansion proposal. That will almost certainly go to appeal. When it does and we know details we will need everyone to write yet again, this time to the latest Inspector.

I have commented before that as the buck passes down the line from OCC through SODC to us the nature of the Parish Council is having to change. One aspect of this is we are finding that meeting every other month is causing problems and we therefore propose that our next meeting should be on Monday February 2nd. Recent meetings have dragged on until rather late and so we also propose that in future we should start half an hour earlier at 7:30.

Finally, the PC decided that the current Parish Council Notice Board does not give visitors a very good impression of our Village. As allowance was made in last year’s budget for a replacement, the upgrade was agreed.

Harry Butterworth

Whitchurch Bridge

For reasons that we have explained previously the cost of reconstructing Whitchurch Bridge was significantly higher than expected, and because of this the Whitchurch Bridge Company needs to increase the Class 1 Toll from 40p to 60p.

There is a legal process to be gone through before the Tolls can be increased – the Tolls are regulated and any increase has to be justified by the Company and approved by the Secretary of State for Transport.

We submitted a Toll Application in November. The Public Consultation period ended on 2nd January 2015. The Department for Transport (DfT) received some objections, so we are expecting that it will ask the Planning Inspectorate – part of the Department for Communities and Local Government – to arrange a Public Inquiry at which the Company and the objectors can put forward their respective cases to an independent Inspector. The Company will ensure that, in its evidence, it addresses all the points put forward by the objectors.

We expect the Public Inquiry will take place locally, hopefully in Pangbourne, in late Spring 2015. We will publicise the date and location on our website as soon as we can. Being a Public Inquiry anyone may attend. The Planning Inspectorate will contact objectors directly with details of how they can participate.

The DfT normally receives the Inspector's Report within 2 months of the Public Inquiry. This Report, with an accompanying submission from civil servants, is then put to DfT Ministers for a decision (note that this will be after the General Election). If the Toll Application is approved a Toll Order is prepared by DfT civil servants, approved by lawyers, registered with the National Archives at Kew and then sent to the Company.

The Company must receive this Toll Order before it can increase the Tolls. Based on our experience when we last applied for a Toll increase in 2008 we are not expecting any increase in Tolls to be approved before September 2015.

We regret that a Toll increase is necessary. Bridge users can be assured that the Secretary of State will only approve the increase if he/she believes it to be justified on the facts.

Finally, may I thank you for the courtesy shown to our Toll Collectors, who do their best to collect the Tolls efficiently and good-humouredly.

New Year's Day Walk 2015

Walk organiser Eric Hartley set this year's route to take us from the Maze towards Hardwick and up past the Baulk, then through Bottom Wood in the muddy footsteps of Charles I, down past Bottom Farm to Mapledurham. There we turned right at the White House. Eric's walk note said this had been a pub but it was closed when they were caught by the owner of Mapledurham estate playing bowls on a Good Friday. There were different reasons for closing pubs then. Back to the village along the ancient Tuddingway (explained in the article about Eric and the Hartslock Bridleway on the village website, under About the Village).

Roger Crawford deputised as Eric was unwell on the day, managing to keep most of the 34 of us sociably together, though a few dashed off ahead. They missed the group photo, taken by a lady visiting from Reigate (the fame of Eric's walks is spreading) which can be seen on the village website.

Richard Wingfield

Hedge Laying Course

to be held in Goring Heath Parish Hall Car Park.
Saturday January 31st and Sunday February 1st.
Beginners and Intermediates Course.

Details at:-

<http://www.chilternsanob.org/calender/27/1109-Hedge-laying-course-beginners-intermediate.html>

or contact Martin Wise on 07754486979
or 0118 984.

Whitchurch & Goring Heath History Society

New Year, new diary, and here are some dates to reserve:

January 15th Short talks by members, including the Toll Bridge fiasco of 1902, Family war diaries, and letters from World War 1.

February 19th AGM. Speaker Tim Healey on the Green Man Trail in Oxfordshire

March 19th Bruce Smith gives an illustrated talk on Drove Roads

April 16th Elizabeth Hazeldine recounts the "Wilful murder of Kate Laura Durgey: being an account of a murder in Henley on Thames that occurred December 1893 which shook Victorian society".

Come to the AGM to hear more of our programme. Visitors are welcome, at £2 to include coffee. All these meetings take place at Whitchurch

Whitchurch and Goring Heath Twinning Association

This year we will be receiving a party from La Bouille over the weekend 2nd to 4th May. Everyone who would like to be involved will be very welcome. To find out more please come to our Annual General Meeting on Friday 13th February in the Old Rectory Stables at 7.30pm. Refreshments will be available.

It will be over 37 years since the the twinning association came together, after Tim Claxton stumbled on the pretty village by the Seine when he was on the way to Le Mans. Many friendships have grown up over these years so that the village near Rouen has become an extension of our own. To ensure future ties we would like to involve new people from our villages. Most of us get by without a great knowledge of French, and we are on an equal footing, as most of our visitors will not have a great knowledge of English. But it seems to work.

There will be more information in later editions of the newsletters.

We'll Miss You John An Appreciation by Nick Brazil

Some years back, probably as many as fifteen, I bumped into John Dolby in the High Street.

“How are you?” I asked.

“Not too good I’m afraid,” he replied. “Got a problem with the old tum. They’re putting a camera up there to have a look.” Then he added with a wicked chuckle. “Good job it’s not a Box Brownie!”

Ah, that was so typical of John wasn’t it? That dry sense of humour combined with the talents of a born raconteur made him excellent company wherever he was.

Indeed, his extensive experience travelling throughout the Middle East with his family equipped him with no shortage of fascinating stories and encounters.

One of these occurred whilst he was working in Iran or it may have been Iraq. He and Anthea became good friends with a distinguished archaeologist called Max Mallowan and his novelist wife Agatha Christie. As John told me in the Greyhound, Max gave him an ancient bowl when they were returning to England.

“Max said this was one of the many artefacts he could not take back to the UK so I might as well have it,” John explained. Some years later, after the bowl was effectively stolen from him, John saw a picture of it in the Times. Apparently it had been auctioned for many thousands of pounds. He never managed to bring the perpetrators to book but they never managed to profit from their deed. Within a few weeks of the auction, one was killed in a car crash whilst the other lost his highly placed job never to work again.

Then there was the time that the Dolbys were invited to tea with Agatha at her house in Winterbrook near Wallingford.

“With a full silver tea service and the maid looking as if she had come out of one of her novels, it was like stepping back in time,” he recalled.

Of course, I really got to know John well when we collaborated on the biography of his ancestor, Sir William Curtis. Before embarking on that project, I had never heard of William Curtis and had only a rudimentary knowledge of eighteenth century history. So, it is fair to say that writing Billy Biscuit was, thanks to John, not only an education but also a great adventure.

John often said that he wanted to see the book finished before “I fall off my perch” as he so colourfully put it. Well we certainly managed that with four years of his excellent company in hand.

Now he’s gone, to be sadly missed by his many friends. But we still have many good memories of his countless conversations and anecdotes.

We’ll miss you John.....

The 2014 Whitchurch Art & Craft Exhibition

This annual event was held in Whitchurch Village Hall on Saturday 15th November and, as always, it was a very popular and sociable occasion. The number of entries was marginally down on the previous year's record numbers but they were still very encouraging - 174 exhibits from 109 exhibitors. There was a wonderful variety of artwork, craftwork and photographs from young and old, showing a very high standard of skills from the local community. This year for the first time there were also two exhibits in the 'New Media' category which received much interest. Colourful displays of work by children at the Pre-School, the Primary School and the Oratory Prep School added to the show. Visitors enjoyed refreshments all day and meeting up with friends and neighbours before the prize-giving ceremony at 5pm. There was also a Tombola for extra entertainment, raising additional funds to cover the costs of staging the show.

Congratulations to all the prize winners, a full list of these can be found on the Whitchurch village website.

Very many thanks to everyone who entered and also to everyone who helped with the setting up and running of the show, including serving the refreshments all day and making delicious cakes. Finally, my special thanks to Chris Martin and Sarah Dixon who joined me on the planning committee and to the Whitchurch Society members who supported us.

***** STOP PRESS ** The theme of 'Bridges' has now been selected for the Joyce Voysey category in the 2015 Exhibition. This is an Open class which can be entered by all ages and in any media – you can start thinking about your winning masterpiece now!!!***

Full details of the next exhibition, which will be held as usual in mid-November, will be posted on the website in the spring.

Sally Woolhouse (sally@wotarts.co.uk)

SCRABBLE

Would you like to fill in those miserable winter days and join a group to play scrabble in Whitchurch?

All levels welcome, even beginners.

If you are interested please either email me on

annaponek@btinternet.com or telephone me on 01189 841234.

THE WHITCHURCH AND DISTRICT **THEATRE CLUB**

Organiser: Christine Martin
“Sonia”, Goring Heath Road,
Whitchurch Hill, RG8 7PG
Tel: 0118 9844252 e.mail

whitchurchtheatreclub@gmail.com

The Whitchurch & District Theatre Club takes you to musicals, plays, ballets, operas, classical concerts etc. once a month or more. Salisbury, Cheltenham, Oxford, Stratford and Chichester, amongst others, are often visited.

Major London venues and productions. Mainly matinees in the week, but sometimes evening performances and weekends. Trips away.

Tickets purchased at group/concessionary rates. Coaches depart from Pangbourne.

For our forthcoming programme please check the Whitchurch-on-Thames Website.

Subscriptions £10 per annum but £8 if paid online.

COMMUNITY

COFFEE MORNINGS

EVERY TUESDAY IN TERM TIME

10.30 am - 12 noon

IN THE OLD STABLES ROOM

FREE REFRESHMENTS AND FRIENDLY CHATTER

Volunteers needed to help make coffee etc.

Contact Yvonne on 984 1424

Calling all STUDENTS!!

Will the government cuts in funding and support make it even harder for you to afford to study? The trustees of Whitchurch United Charities want to remind all students and families that the Charity has funds available to help with the cost of books and equipment or other educational expenses.

There are two closing dates per year for grant applications – these are 28th February and 31st August. Please note that late applications are considered if the available funds for the previous 6 month period have not been fully allocated.

Eligible students are young people between the ages of 5 and 25 years and whose permanent residence is within the parish of Whitchurch. (Note - if the St Mary's and St John's Parish Magazine is delivered to your house, then you are in the parish and therefore eligible).

All applications and decisions are treated in strict confidence by the Trustees.

If you would like to know more, please do contact Peter Hawley (our Grant Application Secretary) on (0118) 984 3069 or write to him at:-

3 Whitchurch House, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames
Reading RG8 7EP

PANGBOURNE CHORAL SOCIETY'S 'MESSIAH'.

For their first concert in 2015, at which Music Director Roy Raby will make his debut, Pangbourne Choral Society will perform Handel's *Messiah* for the first time since 2003. The concert will take place on Saturday 14th February 2015, starting at 7.00pm in the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel

PCS's new Music Director, Roy Raby will be making his debut. He was appointed Director of Music at Pangbourne College in September 2014, having previously been Head of Academic Music at Cheltenham Ladies' College following on from Westonbirt, Pate's Grammar School, and Rendcomb College. 'As a performer' I am known for my eclectic musical taste' he comments 'equally at ease as a specialist in early music or performing pioneering contemporary music. I look forward to sharing my passion for and love of music in all its many guises with Choir members and audiences alike. And where better place to start than with the *Messiah*?'

This concert will also see the debut of four soloists: Hannah Davey (Soprano), David Allsop (Countertenor), David Webb (Tenor) and Stephen Parham-Connolly (Bass).

All have distinguished international careers and share Roy Raby's love for 'music in all its guises'.

The excellent Southern Sinfonia Orchestra will be performing on baroque instruments

Tickets for *Messiah* (£15 including programme and concessions) will be available online (www.pangbournechoral.org.uk) and via PCS members or on the door. **Early booking is advised as Pangbourne Choral Society concerts are in high demand and usually sell out fast.**

Tony Maynard – Publicity Officer – Pangbourne Choral Society: 0118 974 4818



John Howell M.P. Writes:

Firstly, my good wishes for this year. As we begin a new year it is often a time to look forward and I do so filled with optimism. This is partly because as we ended last year there was the excellent economic news that we have been working hard to bring. The Office for National Statistics published the news that there are 1.75 million more people in work in 2010 and that wages are rising above inflation. It was an announcement to celebrate, whilst at the same time remaining mindful those who continue to struggle. I will continue to support every effort to help these people too in 2015. The unemployment news for this constituency was also very good dropping below 300 at 278.

As Parliament drew towards the Christmas and New Year recess there were two important debates on issues that have been played out in the media, for better or for worse! I would like to take this opportunity to set out my views on them.

Benefits – the spare room subsidy. This has been a reform based on fairness but has been much mis-interpreted in the media. Essentially it simply means that people in social housing will no longer be paid a portion of their Housing Benefit to enable them to live in a house that is larger than they need. For people living in private rented accommodation receiving housing benefit this rule has long been applied. Social housing is invaluable for hundreds of thousands of people who need help in getting accommodation and it is simply not fair to subsidise households to live in houses that are too big for their needs while there are nearly 375,000 families living in overcrowded conditions. Many families have been able to make the financial adjustment through their own budgeting. For those who genuinely have not been able to make changes the government has trebled the budget for Discretionary Housing Payment.

Fire Service pensions. Just prior to the debate I met with the Station Manager covering several of the Fire Stations in the constituency. He explained to me the issue of pensions especially in relation to fitness and also showed me the equipment fire fighters have to handle. I appreciate the fitness issues and am thus pleased to see that the move to give firefighters protection on the issue of fitness and capability has been taken in the last 3 months. The improvement of the early retirement terms at age 55 was made as a result of the recent consultation. I am grateful to all those who work in the Fire Service and especially to the many in the constituency who work as retained fire fighters, often holding down the own job in addition to the responsibilities that the fire service work brings.

Email: howelljm@parliament.uk Website: www.johnhowellmp.com

To be added to my regular updates email me at john.howell@oxfordshireconservatives.com

Whitchurch Hill War Memorial

Does anyone have any photographs of the War Memorial on Whitchurch Hill prior to the storm damage of 1989?

I have a drawing that I made at the time in preparation for obtaining quotes for the repairs, but photos of the original would be really valuable as part of our proposed improvements to the Memorial site.

Please contact Martin Wise n 01189 843071 or martinwise10@hotmail.com

BUS TIME TABLE

143 Bus times: To Reading - 08:02; 10:02; 11:42; 14:02; 16:32
To Whitchurch - 09:00; 10:40; 13:00; 15:30; 17:20

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OWL (Our Woodcote Library)

Volunteers have been training at Oxford and have taken part in a welcome and orientation evening. The rota has been in operation since mid January and staff are busy training volunteers in the library so that when the new system starts on March 30th all will go smoothly. We'd like to thank the Rally for the generous donation made to OWL, which will help to cover the incidental costs we will have and you should see the results in the library.

Our Annual General meeting will be on Monday March 2nd in the library at 7pm and we welcome all to join us.

Goring Heath Parish Charity
Regd. No 1056772

It May be a new year

- But the “old” favourites are the best!

Mike Holland’s Quiz Night

Is back in

Goring Heath Parish Hall

on

Saturday 21st March

8.00 p.m.

There is plenty of time

to get a team together, so don’t miss out.

There will be food and drinks to simulate the brain.

So book a table now

Phone Mike on 0118 984 4867

or Theresa on 0118 984 2056

DIARY DATES

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

JANUARY

15th History Society meeting

FEBRUARY

13th Twinning AGM

14th PCS 'Messiah'

15th History Society meeting

MARCH

2nd OWL AGM

19th History Society Meeting

21st Quiz Goring Heath Village Hall 8pm

30th New system starts at Woodcote Library

APRIL

16th History Society Meeting

MAY

2-4 Twinning Visitors

THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN

will be published in March 2015

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

Sarah.pongo@btconnect.com 5th March 2015

Views of individual contributors

are the views of those contributors,

and are not necessarily the views of the Parish Council, or the editor