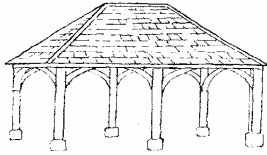


The Charlbury Chronicle



Volume 11 Number 1

March 2007

We all felt sad when we heard the news that Dean Vincent was giving up the Pharmacy after 18 years. We feared there would be another empty shop-front right in the heart of the town to remind us what we had lost. Happily this time we now know that the Mid-Counties Cooperative Pharmacy has taken it over and the business will continue as before. Dean has explained how he arrived at his decision on page 3. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for the service he has rendered over all these years — his pharmacy was always a friendly place to visit and he and his staff were cheerful and efficient. He will be much missed and our good wishes for the future go to him and his family.

From time to time we are asked to make mention in the editorial of a special need that has arisen in the community. This time, there are two requests. Firstly, the vitally important Meals-on-Wheels service is looking for a cook so that it can continue to serve the elderly in Charlbury and surrounding areas. M-o-W is also looking for more drivers and/or drivers' mates to join the rota, and for volunteers to help in the kitchen when the meals are being prepared. Do please give some thought to these vacancies and see if you can give a little of your time to this request (see page 4 for details). Secondly, Charlbury's Royal British Legion branch is looking for someone to take over as the Poppy Appeal Organiser. The RBL helps lots of servicemen and women and their families in so many different ways and the annual Poppy Appeal raises the funds to help to answer the many requests they handle. Helen Clarke has done the job for many years and feels it's time to hand over to someone else, so if you think you can help you will find details on page 21.

The *Charlbury Chronicle* will be paying for the new bench on the Playing Close to commemorate our tenth anniversary.

Please note that the deadline for copy for the June issue is May 1st.

Lynette Murphy

Letters to the Editor

Re: Christmas Lights in The Slade for Katherine House Hospice: We would like to thank everyone for their donations. A magnificent £70 was donated and has been passed to Katherine House Hospice in memory of the late Mr. Norman Stone.

*Ian and Jane Parsons
The Slade, Charlbury*

Charlbury is a wonderful, and funny place in which to live: Our few precious shops give superb service and offer the most unusual items for sale. One garage sells free-range meat and eggs, the excellent book shop will not only obtain our requests quickly but with a discount. John will accept outworn cassettes from printers to be recycled for charity. The pharmacy sells tights, hats and gloves - and gift-wrapping-paper. We can have pictures framed at the barbers. Best of all, delicious coffees and snacks are available at the newsagents, where the garden is a delightful summer venue. One can also buy deli items including kippers when settling the paper bill ! Maybe other readers have found different surprises in our shops ?

*Dee Moss
Enstone Road, Charlbury*

CORNER HOUSE AND MEMORIAL HALL NEWS

The Committee is very pleased to tell the users of the first floor rooms of the Corner House that there is now an upstairs kitchen for your tea and coffee etc which is called The Tea Bar.

Of course you will not forget the lovely Patio Garden, a sheltered and delightful place for refreshments. Repairs are being made to the disabled facilities in the Memorial Hall. Please remember that there are now notice boards in the hall of the Corner House which should be used. Please ensure that nothing is attached to the paintwork. Thank you.

Ann Gilbert

CHARLBURY MUSEUM NEWS

The Charlbury Museum will be opening again to the public on Easter Saturday, April 7th. From then until the end of September it will be open every Saturday, from 10 to 12 a.m., and on Sundays and Bank Holidays from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m.

The special exhibition this year will relate to methods of heating and lighting used in the past, including gas and electricity, and will include objects, photographs and other exhibits.

The Museum could not open without its faithful band of volunteer stewards. If you would like to join their number please contact Jennifer Bartlett on 810312. There will be a reception in the Museum, with a glass of wine, for all the stewards, on 27th March, from 6 - 8 p.m. If you are considering becoming a steward, and would like to find out more, please come along.

Charles Tyzack

CHANGING TIMES AT THE PHARMACY - *Dean Vincent explains what the future holds*

As many of you will know by now, The Pharmacy in Charlbury has undergone a recent change of ownership, and after 18 very happy years serving you all I have decided to pursue new and, hopefully, exciting challenges.

In January 1989 I arrived in Charlbury, with my wife Julie and three children, Gemma (6), Thomasina (4) and Henry (3). We had been looking to buy a pharmacy for some time, and after discovering the delights of Charlbury decided that this is where we wanted to live, work and bring up our children - so after throwing in my regular employment and selling our house in Milton Keynes, we landed here in Charlbury. The first couple of years were touch and go, as we worked hard to balance the books. Fortunately, the Pharmacy was a well established business in the town, so our customers were already here...our job was to provide a good service and keep our customers happy. We inherited good staff from the previous owner and they made our life so much easier. Being in the shop and having young children is such an effective way to get to know people in town and it wasn't long before we really felt part of the community.

With the support of our loyal customers, times got easier. Over the years the family have all pitched in at some time. Even our children did their bit, each spending time behind the counter on Saturdays and in school holidays once they were old enough. I think it is an experience that did them all good, and that they enjoyed...yes, we did pay them as well! They have now all gone through the local schools and completed their formal education, and with none of them deciding to pursue a career in pharmacy it was time for Julie and me to look to the future. After much thought we decided to sell the business, but remain living in Charlbury. I intend to become a locum pharmacist, working in various pharmacies in the area, including Charlbury from time to time!

So thanks to everyone who has supported us over the years, and to our hard working and loyal staff ... we'll miss you all.

Bus service from Water Eaton Car Park now serves the JR

Recently introduced this bus route , Service 700, will operate between Water Eaton Park & Ride (where you can park your car free) and will take you to either of the JR Hospital Bus Stops (The Main Hospital Entrance, or the West Wing & Children's Unit). The route goes via Jordan Hill, 5Mile Drive, Upland Park Rd, Squitchey Lane, Summertown Shops and Ferry Pool Road. For further information ring RH Transport Services of Witney 01993 869100 or JR Transport on 01865220108.

Arthritis Research Campaign

A Charity Bridge Drive will be held on Thursday March 29th 2007 at 2 pm in the Memorial Hall, Charlbury. Price £7 includes tea, sandwiches and cake. All standards of players are welcome.

Telephone Julia Caston for tickets on 01608 810240

Meals on Wheels News

We are pleased to report that the delivery coordinator role which Diana Griffiths has masterminded for nearly 40 years has been filled by her daughter-in-law, Jan Griffiths. Jan and I will be working together to ensure meals are delivered on Tuesdays and Thursdays to residents of Charlbury, Chadlington and Stonesfield.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteer opportunities are available for delivering once a month – either as a driver or as a ‘mate’. Please contact me if you have an hour or so per month and can help. And, as always, if you know of someone who would like a “home-cooked” meal delivered a few times a week and would like more information about us, please call.

Marjorie Glasgow 810161

Celebration at The Bull

We must thank Marjorie and Dine Glasgow who generously hosted a drinks party at The Bull before Christmas in order to give the volunteers the opportunity to toast Diana Griffiths for her sterling work over 40 years. It was a very merry occasion, when volunteers and their other halves were able to get together and present Diana with a gardening token and a flower arrangement as a very small thank you to her for all her hard work over so many years. We wish her a long and peaceful retirement.

Lynette Murphy

MEALS ON WHEELS IN CRISIS

We need a cook for Tuesday mornings. **This is a paid position** and you will be assisted by a volunteer who prepares vegetables and washes up. This can be a job share and we will give training if necessary. We would also be glad to hear from people willing to help in the kitchen. If you can help us maintain this vital service please ring 810130

Joan Belshaw

PLANTS WANTED

Over the last two years the staff, parents and children of Charlbury Primary School have been working hard through a series of ‘Ground Force Days’ to transform the school grounds and to make a pleasant and stimulating environment for the children to learn and play in. The pond has been revitalised, a brand new sensory garden developed and flower borders planted around the swimming pool. But we always need more plants. If you’ve grown too many seedlings, potted on too many cuttings, or just decided to thin out your borders, we can use all your spare plants in the ongoing refurbishment. If you have plants of any kind, colour or size going spare, please contact Alison Holthouse on 810954 or alichap@mac.com

MARCH FARMERS’ MARKET

Don’t miss the Farmers’ Market on the Playing Close on Saturday, March 10th from 9am to 1 pm. Charlbury Farmers’ Market is administered by Thames Valley Farmers’ Market Co-operative Ltd and is supported by Charlbury Chamber of Trade & Commerce. The Market is organised by Nick Potter, Roger Watts and Geoff Burroughs. The contact address is: Studio One, Sheep Street, Charlbury, Oxon OX7 3RR, telephone 01608 811554. Email rogerw@bfocus.co.uk

COTSWOLD LINE DOUBLING?

Way back in 1971, British Rail decided that the service over the Oxford to Worcester line could easily be provided on predominantly single track. The sections between Wolvercote Junction (near Oxford) and Ascott-under-Wychwood, Moreton-in-Marsh and Evesham and Evesham and Norton Junction (near Worcester) had one track and all intermediate signalling removed. Since 1971 there has been an unprecedented growth in demand for travel over the line, with the result that we now have twice as many trains trying to share the reduced amount of infrastructure.

Ever since the Cotswold Line Promotion Group (CLPG) was formed in 1978, it has been pressing for the reinstatement of at least some of the track removed in 1971, but successive operators have never seen a need to spend the necessary money. The failure to address this problem has resulted in serious operating difficulties over the route, with knock on delays or even cancellations caused particularly by late running trains. The Group would like to see an hourly off-peak service throughout the day, but, although technically possible, this could compromise punctuality and reliability, given the present infrastructure arrangement.

Now, the signal, which stubbornly remained at red, has suddenly changed to amber. Network Rail is currently looking at options for the full or partial re-doubling of the three sections of single line track (mentioned above) on the route. This is excellent news from Network Rail, which is already very positive that there is a viable, affordable scheme, and is welcomed and supported by the Cotswold Line Promotion Group.

Option evaluation will take place by August 2007, at which time Network Rail will have to decide internally if there is a viable scheme to progress. If funding is available the scheme will be designed in detail, with implementation taking place between December 2008 and December 2009.

Geoff Griffiths, Charlbury Committee Member, Cotswold Line Promotion Group

CHARLBURY'S OWN CINEMA:

Charlbury's Own Cinema (ChOC) is growing apace and now has a monthly film show on the second Sunday of every month. Films are shown in the Cornbury Suite at the back of The Bell Hotel. Here Choc filmgoers enjoy the intimate atmosphere of a good film club combined with the opportunity to have a meal or a drink at The Bell. You can bring your drink through to the film and complete the enjoyment with our free film-facts and quiz sheets.

The film for 8.00 p.m. on 11th March is *The Queen* (2006) (12A) with Helen Mirren as Her Majesty and Michael Sheen as Tony Blair.

On Sunday 15th April (week 3 due to Easter) we hope to show *Spirited Away*, a beautifully animated Japanese fantasy for both children and adults.

Also planned for May and June are *Sideways* and *Wah Wah*.

For up to the minute information about the films to be shown keep an eye open for posters on the town notice boards, or have a look at the 'Events' page on the Charlbury website. You can also join our email list for regular updates by contacting Hilda Reed:

hilda.reed@btopenworld.com.

If any keen film fans would like to join the volunteers who keep this project rolling, contact Paul Dawsey (01608 810676) or email choc@charlbury.info.

Hilda Reed

January 1997 – December 2006: 10 years of the Charlbury Day Centre in the Garden Room of the Memorial Hall

To make this a truly memorable day we invited those who have enabled this to happen to come to an 'Open House' in the Garden Room, on Wednesday 24th January 2007 to celebrate this decade.

We invited the following – past and present: members of the Steering Committee who were able to come and get the organisation of our Day Centre off the ground in 1996; Trustees who are also members of the Management Committee; Volunteer Drivers, Helpers and Cooks, and those who help us in other ways including our Auditor; Coordinators; and not least our link with Social Services. They were all well represented. It was a very full house!

We specially remembered Fred Bartlett who died last year. He chaired the Steering Committee and was also the first Chairman of the Management Committee. There was much to do at that time not least to establish us a Charity, and to conform with Social Services with all that is required of a Day Centre.

At our celebration Terry Walker spoke about the early days, particularly the building of the Garden Room in which he was very much involved, and which we appreciate today, and those who look after it. Gwen Wearing spoke about the photograph albums, of those we have served and serve today, who shared in our celebration. Joan Downes read her poem about what she thought it was like to be a member of "our family". The cake was cut, and we raised our glasses. The Toast was 'Our Day Centre – Past, Present and Future.'

Graham Canning, Chairman, Management Committee

Pamela Porter and her daughters Julia and Gabriel are most grateful for all the kindnesses and expressions of sympathy they received on the occasion of Don's death on January 10th, 2007.

HOME WANTED TO BUY IN CHARLBURY

We would like to buy a 3 to 5 bed period/character family house with garden and reasonable parking in Charlbury. We are currently renting here, have nothing to sell and our finances organised so we are in a position to proceed immediately.

We have children in the school and are intending to be here for the long term so we can be flexible on timing.

If you are thinking of moving, please call Megan or John Bell on 811849 (home), 07956 952 082 (Megan), or 07946 311 767 (John), or email meganmoore@hotmail.com, or John.bell@axonglobal.com

New online gallery of old photos of Oxfordshire towns

Photographs showing Oxfordshire's towns around one hundred years ago have been used to create a new online gallery.

Oxfordshire County Council has joined forces with the Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network - which promotes local businesses - to create the new gallery on the Network's website at www.otcn.co.uk.

Around 100 black and white photographs of Oxford and many of the county's towns have been drawn from the Oxfordshire County Council photographic archive and can be accessed through the Shop Locally page - click on the town links on the right hand side for contemporary photos of the county.

The same photos can also be found on the Heritage pages of the county council's website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/heritagesearch. **Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Didcot, Faringdon, Thame, Wallingford, Wantage, Witney, Woodstock**, are all featured.

Don Seale, Cabinet Member for Cultural Services, said: "This gallery is a great initiative from our perspective as it uses the County's rich photographic collections in a novel way to help promote the local economy. It also draws people's attention to the many thousands of photos which can now be found on the Heritage pages of the county council's website."

POLICE NEWS

UPBEAT by PC 4500 Colin James

One of the continuing problems that I get contacted about is anti social behaviour, often associated with underage drinking. I cannot stress enough how important it is that people contact us at the time this intolerable behaviour is occurring. I've lost count of the number of times I have heard 'Well, last night' or 'Last Saturday' followed by 'and the police did nothing' only to then discover that no one contacted us at the time it was happening. If you are suffering from anti social behaviour make a record of what is occurring, who is involved, or descriptions, and contact the police. You can either use the non emergency number, listed below, or if it's an emergency such as a crime in progress, then use 999.

One final word on this matter is that supplying alcohol to a person under the age of 18 is an offence which could lead to the offender being arrested. I have, and will continue to, seize alcohol from people under the age of 18 and those who I believe are supplying them.

TVP non emergency number
0845 8505 505

Crime stoppers **0800 555 111**

Another way that you can contact us is by using the mobile police station which will be at the Spendlove Centre on the 13th February and the 13th March and at The Slade on the 27th February and 27th March. At both locations it will be there during the morning.

Book Review: The joy of sax

Set in a might-be Charlbury, where the railway was long ago ripped out but much else is recognisable, Alan Fraser's new children's book 'Zoot' tells the story of a teenage boy and a beat-up musical instrument. Together, their power could be life transforming, if not outright magical. If you discount the saxophone, which is playing out its own story, the hero is young Jack Steppinstone. He lives in a 'scattermuddle shamble' of disused railway carriages and booking hall with his mother Janice (special subjects bingo and the telly), Uncle Terry (ironing fanatic) and Uncle Phil (who buys stuff for nothing and sells it for less). Altogether, Jack's is an unpromising station in life -- until the sax falls so inexplicably into his hands. With it, he just might be able to redeem the family and out-solo the strutting, Malfoyish Robbie Box and his Fender Strat at the school gig.

As a half-centurion in years, I thoroughly enjoyed the plot, humour and characters. But the book's appeal to its target readership depends crucially on whether its language -- particularly the dialogue -- strikes the right note.

Our son Nick, who'd once been lent a saxophone, but decided in the end to stick with piano, said: 'It's an enjoyable book. Some of the characters speak in a way that's a bit exaggerated, but Jack's is the kind of language I'd hear and use.' Trystan, aged nine, agreed: 'It's good. Like in 'Fiddlesticks', if it was for adults, the words are way too small.'

Alan Fraser's earlier book 'Fiddlesticks' was serialised on Radio 4. It was a thrill to come across it by chance when tuning in one early Sunday evening. I can almost hear 'Zoot' on the airwaves; and the BBC must have Alan on soundtrack sax.

Rob Stepney

CHARLBURY RAINFALL 2006

The rainfall measured at Lees Rest between January 1st and December 31st 2006 was 944mm (about 3.75 ins), the wettest year since 2002 (963mm/38.5 ins). The wettest month was May (128mm/5ins), the wettest May since these records began in 1983, and the driest was June (9mm/0.33 ins), the driest since 1995.

N.B. Lees Rest is about 1.5 miles due east of the town and about 500 ft above sea level, so the weather may have been quite different in Charlbury.

Nick Potter

The CSA Quiz is back ...

... by popular demand. The Charlbury School Association will be holding another of its very popular and highly competitive quiz nights, the first school fundraising event of 2007, on Friday 9 March in the School Hall. There'll be questions for everyone but even if you don't know the answers, you can still enjoy a delicious supper or – if you really don't know anything – just drown your sorrows at the licensed bar!

Tickets are £60 per team of up to six, or £10 a head if you don't have a team and want to be paired up with others (price includes supper) and can be obtained from Liz Donnelly (810056), Alison Holthouse (810954) or Susan Hoile (819013).

A main target for CSA fundraising at the moment is the building of an outdoor classroom, something both staff and children of the school are very keen to achieve. The raising of money for this got off to an amazing start with the first event dedicated solely towards this aim, the Auction of Promises, held in the School Hall on 1 December last year. The auction raised a massive £4300, our most successful fund-raising event ever.

The CSA's thanks go to all the parents, families and members of the community, not to mention local businesses, whose generosity both in donating promises and in turning out on a horrible cold, wet Friday evening to bid higher and higher for all manner of items was astounding and much appreciated.

Alison Holthouse

CHARLBURY WEATHER *John Stanley's quarterly report*

November 2006 in Charlbury recorded above average temperatures at 50.53° (48.89°). Daytime: High 57°, low 45°. Night time: High 50°, low 29°.

Autumn 2006 (September-November) was the warmest in the 18 year period at 59.84° (56.95°).

December 2006 was also above average at 46.68° (43.47°). This was the warmest December in 18 years. Daytime: High 54°, low 33°. Night time: High 50°, low 26°.

Review of 2006:

The Met Office web site reports that for England, 2006 was a record year with a mean temperature of 51.08° (average 48.92°). These figures take into account night values. However, on the basis of daily maximum temperatures, 2006 was not a record year in Charlbury. At 58.53°, it was 0.87° above the average for the previous 17 years, but was exceeded by 1989 (59.12°) and 1990 (59.45°). It also equalled 2003. There were 3 months in 2006 which were well below average (February, March and August) and this is why no records were broken.

January 2007 was the fifth consecutive month above average. At 47.77° it was the warmest January in the 19 year period, for which the 18 year average is 44.05°. The first 21 days were all above average, before a 5 day cold spell intervened. The month ended with 5 days above average. Daytime: High 53°, low 36°. Night time: High 50°, low 28°.

A Day's Life - Alan Fraser Writer & Musician

We get up around 7.30. Breakfast is usually cereal or toast. Christmas Day is the annual exception, when we have the full cooked plateful. Trish leaves for work around 8.30. Her office is in Abingdon where she heads up Quality South East, a company that delivers Investors in People. After Trish has left, I start my own work, writing at the kitchen table on an old lap-top. The machine has no internet, so that means no tempting distractions. I often turn on Radio 4 while I'm working, and it never hampers my concentration. At other times I'll listen to music – jazz, contemporary song, flamenco, or classical. I have very 'open' ears and I'm very drawn to musicians with a strong personality, like Louis Armstrong or Sonny Rollins. I write stories for children aged 7 plus, but I tend to focus on readers from 9 – 12. That said, I really believe my stories can be enjoyed by anyone. I never get a block and I choose my plots from my own experience. That way I don't have to sit in research libraries! I suppose I write stories about ordinary people where extraordinary things happen. But then, I believe that everyone is extraordinary.

I began writing in 1997. Before that I felt that the music was quite enough. And it was Trish's involvement with Charlbury Youth Theatre that got me going. It gave me the chance to adapt "The Little Prince" by Antoine de St-Exupery. My first piece of original fiction was written in 1999. And six months later I'd managed to find an agent. My first book '13 Pairs of Blue Suede Shoes' was published in 2003. 'Fiddlesticks' followed in 2004 and was serialised last year on the BBC's Go4it. Other books include 'Daisy and the Diva' and some work published in the United States - although this was not a happy experience. I've recently seen 'Zoot' published by Leo Children's Books – an imprint run by Charlbury publisher Ed Fenton. It's been a great experience to work with Ed, and the book even features Charlbury Station on the cover. At the moment, I'm working on 'The Ghost of Gurning Pier', a detective mystery for kids. I work straight through till lunchtime and I don't like to be interrupted. It can be very difficult to get back to it once you stop.

I have a light lunch – a sandwich or pasta perhaps – then I go for a walk on the footpaths to Finstock, or Spelsbury, or Ditchley. It gives me the chance to wind down, particularly if I'm mithering about something. I'm usually home around 3 o'clock when I get on with the everyday things like housework, administration, letters, sending books for review, etc. Then there's the shopping at the Co-op. When all that's finished I take my saxophone to the Shed and practise for an hour or so. I play tenor saxophone, clarinet and composer's piano. Music took up much of my early life. I was born in Bletchley. My dad was the town vet, but preferred to visit the surrounding farms of North Bucks. I went to school in Bedford and to university in London where I shared a wild basement flat with six (or more) great friends. By then I was playing harmonica and singing in a rogue jug band that played all the London Colleges and folk clubs. I don't know where my musicality comes from, but my mum loved to play records and I had a Scottish granny who could play wonderful singalong piano. More than anything I wish I was a better singer, but there it is. I bought my first saxophone when I was nineteen. Essentially, I'm self-taught, but I did have a teacher for a year. He'd formerly worked in the pit at the London Palladium and claimed to be the first British clarinettist to play Rhapsody in Blue.

Trish and I were married in 1973. By then we were living in Woburn Sands. In 1976 I went to work at the Open University and stayed there for ten years as a course manager in the Faculty of Arts. I was playing modern jazz by then and organising various gigs. For a

while I ran a gig that featured comedians. Julian Clary, Paul Merton, Harry Enfield and Jeremy Hardy all worked with me. And all for less than £30! They were all very easy-going and friendly. Our daughter Katie and our son Nicholas were both born at Aylesbury and were only little children when we came to Charlbury in 1986. We chose Charlbury because of its connections to London, and its primary school. Plus, after seeing North Bucks swallowed by Milton Keynes, I was keen to move back to the countryside.

Trish and I did a role swap when we came to Oxfordshire. I stayed at home with the children and she went to work as a teacher at Burford School. That gave me the chance to develop my playing and teaching. Early successes were the fundraising events called the Hot Club of Charlbury. These not only helped the Primary School buy its first minibus, but led to the first Jazz Picnics down by the Evenlode. It was these successes that encouraged me to approach the Gifford Trust about the then empty wing of the Old Primary School. And it was here I opened the doors of the Charlbury Hothouse in 1990. Looking back, I think the town can be proud to have supported such a vibrant project. There were shows every week featuring jazz, folk, song, classical, poetry and drama, with professionals and amateurs all mixing on an equal footing. CADS performed "Under Milkwood" there. Another notable production was "Lifting the Latch", which ran for nine sell-out nights. A particular memory for me was Stan Tracey's appearance. He was booked to play with saxophonist Art Themen but turned up very late, due to fog. Dramatically, he rushed to the piano and picked up the saxophonist's tune without taking off his coat! Some days my routine can be quite different. Often I'll have a school visit to make. I'm very happy to talk about writing and always aim to make my visits fun. My book Zoot is the focus of my recent visits and I always take along my saxophone. But I'm just as pleased to talk about what the children are reading. For three months of the year I live in Toulouse, which is a great privilege. My daughter Katie works there at the university. And that gives me the chance to enjoy the city life, with lots of music – playing and listening – great food, cinema and, of course, fantastic rugby. Allez Le Stade!

Around sixish I cook the evening meal, which we eat at about 7 o'clock. Music usually plays some part in the following hours. On Mondays I'm often rehearsing. My current project is to revitalise the Resignation Orchestra. I'm also working with Geoff Holmberg on Shed Theatre's forthcoming production of "The Beggar's Opera." It's going to be terrific too. So don't miss it. Jazz gigs are occasional these days rather than frequent. But over the years I've played at dozens of venues including the Jacqueline du Pre building, the Holywell Music Room, and the British Grand Prix where the audience were all offered ear plugs!

If I'm not out and about I'll watch television or read. My reading is fairly focussed. When I like an author I'll read and reread their work. I hate bad writing – I mean really hate it - especially if it involves a celebrity author. Madonna comes to mind. My favourite writer is PG Wodehouse who was such a virtuoso. But I also particularly admire Charles Dickens and Richmal Crompton. It's the comedy, you see. I never go to bed before eleven and I'm a very poor sleeper. But maybe I'll get an idea for some new plot line about ordinary people where extraordinary things happen.

*Alan Fraser was interviewed
by Diana Potten*

SUSTAINABLE CHARLBURY – WHAT NEXT?

Our objective: to help individuals, households and the community of Charlbury as a whole to make significant cuts in their CO2 emissions.

Climate change is becoming all too evident. A warm December - and now January, with frequent high winds - is the taste of things to come. These changing weather patterns underline the urgency with which we need to cut our CO2 emissions as far and as fast as possible.

And Sustainable Charlbury has been set up to help us all – good information, practical assistance, joint action and mutual support are all on offer.

The launch meeting on October 6th was attended by around 70 people. The film showing of Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' on December 5th was attended by over 100 people. With fifty people already signed up at Street Fair, our list of supporters is already approaching 200. 'When's the next meeting?' people are asking. There will be a next meeting – and quite soon. But first, the committee has been getting organised so that it can serve you well.

- We have set up a Community Interest Company and bank account
- We are delighted to have been awarded £500 by the Town Council to help us get off the ground, and £1000 by the Coop towards the purchase of a special camera – so we can show you how buildings lose heat, you lose money, and the planet suffers...
- But mainly, we have been ensuring that we have some excellent projects to take forward....

Why not have a Light Bulb Party? Kitted out with our new Light Bulb Library – bulbs of all shapes, sizes and fittings – why not invite some friends round to try them out. And then place an order, at excellent prices.

Work out your carbon shadow – how much CO2 do you and your household emit? And how could you cut it? We are training people to come and help you, either at a meeting or in your own home.

How could you save energy at home? We are organising a group to conduct home energy audits and then help you find people who can do the work necessary to save you money.

Eat local and seasonal – not quite yet. But by next year we hope to have Charlbury's own organic garden, supplying fresh fruit and vegetables to all who want them. We are having positive discussions with Lord Rotherwick about an accessible site on Cornbury Park land. We will be seeking funding for someone to manage the project – on the ground – so to speak.

And SOON, we will have our own **web-site** – a place for you to communicate with us, and with each other, and where we will publicise the dates of meetings...

Liz Reason

CHASTLETON HOUSE

2007 sees the 400th anniversary of one of the most unusual houses in the care of the National Trust. Chastleton House has an unremarkable history: what makes it special is the timeless setting and atmosphere of undisturbed age and continuity. When it acquired Chastleton in 1991, the NT adopted a groundbreaking approach to this unique time capsule. From the soot-blackened ceiling in the kitchen to the peeling 1960s wallpaper in the Library and abandoned slipper bath under the rafters, the house has been kept 'as found' rather than restoring it to its former glory.

Chastleton House, near Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos is approached only from the A436 from the A44 Chipping Norton to Stow road. The House is open to the public from March 28th 2007 to the end of October on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 1pm to 5pm. Entry is by timed ticket only (no same day bookings). Ring 01608 674 355, or email chastleton@nationaltrust.org.uk

Why not join our team of volunteers?

Opportunities from Room & Garden Stewarding to Conservation and Events are available. Please contact the Chastleton House Office on 01608-674355 for an Information Pack.

For further information: Chastleton House, Chastleton, Oxon GL56 0SU
or e-mail chastleton@nationaltrust.org.uk

CHARLBURY CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE

Local Calendar of Events: Businesses in and around Charlbury are supporting the compilation of a local quarterly calendar of events as a 1-page pull out in the *Charlbury Chronicle* and a directory of Charlbury Community Groups. It's one way of showing that local businesses feel they are a significant part of the wider local community.

If you'd like to have either your business featured in the June issue, or your event listed, please contact: chamber@charlbury.info

This initiative is being sponsored by the Charlbury Chamber of Trade & Commerce

Cally Robson, Secretary

Poems in a Pub brought out forty poetry and ale lovers from both Charlbury and Stonesfield on 22 January, allegedly the winter's gloomiest day. Held in the welcoming elegance of the Rose & Crown's Hayloft Hall, it raised £91 for Cecily's Fund. Two visitors from Belgium contributed a poem in Dutch and were tempted by the draught Hoegaarden White Beer. The locals sampled Ferryman's Gold from Dunsten Green and Aviator from Cumbria among six real ales on offer. As at the six previous evenings of this type, a long poem was read in full. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was read by Basil Eastwood. Local poets whose poems were read by them and voted the best by the audience include Rob Stepney, Moira Wyatt, Caroline French, June Osborne and Dawn Willson.

The highlight of the evening was the competition for the best poetic translation of Paul Verlaine's *Chanson d'Automne*, won by a witty, precise and touching 'Norfeck' version contributed from Brussels by Julia Leigh.

This is the last verse of the poem and two English versions:

Et je m'en vais Au vent mauvais Qui m'emporte Deçà delà, Pareil à la Feuille morte.	And push off into The wicked wind, what Give yer grief, Tossing yer round Like some Dead leaf.	Harsh toll of unremitting time The faded flowers of faded years Are carted by a careless wind. The dead leaves fall, as fall my tears.
<i>Paul Verlaine</i>	<i>Julia Leigh</i>	<i>Dawn Willson</i>

At the end of the evening everyone joined in the chorus of Flann O'Brien's *The Workman's Friend*, read by Caroline French.

'In time of trouble and lousey strife / You still have a darlint plan / You can still turn to a brighter life- / **A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN**'

Peter Clifton

FRIENDS OF SHORTHAMPTON CHURCH

Mark Perry, of the Perry Lithgow Partnership (restorers of the wall paintings) will give an illustrated talk on **'Conserving Wall Paintings - including the Conservation of the Wall Paintings at Shorthampton and other Churches'** in St Mary's, Charlbury, on

Saturday March 3rd at 7.30 pm in aid of the Restoration Fund.
Tickets on the door £10 to include wine and light refreshments.

Enquiries: Sarah Potter 01608 810388

A Winter's Ale

The Charlbury Real Ale Players' pantomime, A Winter's Ale, played for three nights to packed audiences and showed, once again, what a talented and generous group of people live here. Not only was this panto put on voluntarily to raise funds for local charities, but it was actually very good, and so popular it was standing room only at all three performances.

This was a masterfully scripted tale of determination to see real ale triumph over bottled beer, with everything in it played with complete professionalism by all – on stage and back stage. The references were refreshingly local – from digging up Church Street for gas leaks and unpredictably moving bus stops, to regularly late trains and 'sustainable Charlbury', with something for everyone – even an 'Elvis supports Biodiversity' placard.

Directed by Stuart Parker, the fabulous set, artful lighting and great stage management kept the story flowing and had us gripped from the start. Costumes and make-up were suitably colourful. The musicians were brilliant. The songs and singing throughout were wonderfully delivered, with such memorable tunes as 'There Is Nothing Like A Beer', and 'You've Got To Brew A Lager Or Two'. The dancing by Street Stage and Centre Stage was great to watch and well choreographed.

Bob Goblin, a cross between Hannibal Lecter and Dracula, was appropriately hissed and booed throughout, not least as he had kidnapped a large number of children from Charlbury Primary School (c/o Centre Stage) to be his 'microchaps', to brew bottled 'Red Bladder' beer for Lord Grotney. Grotney was suitably hoodwinked by lovely daughter Maria and head brewer Bob alike, while pursuing his dream of putting the Half-Way Inn and its range of real ales out of business.

The buxom beauties Ivanna Pint and her barmaid sister Stella, together with Ivanna's husband Arthur and son Ivor, made the Half-Way Inn and its highly versatile singing and dancing regulars the perfect good guys. Bruce Forsyth made a guest appearance to help with the 'hop'. Precious Ramotswe added a pinch of African Wisdom and a few senior moments to stealthy scene changes. And Donkey Oaty, the panto horse, stole the show every time he passed through. Of course it all ended happily, though Botswana may be in for a shock when it realises that Ma Ramotswe has brought back the wrong Bob G.

There were too many people involved in the play to mention them all, but the script was written by Ian Cox; Stuart Parker was Director and also played the part of Mma Ramotswe; Tim Crisp was producer, and also one of the 'Dames' - Ivanna Pint; Simon Towers was other main 'Dame' - Stella Mann; Jim Holah was Arthur Pint and Tessa Barras 'her' son Ivor Pint; Steve Hay was Bob Goblin. Lord Grotney was played by Mike Flanagan; and his daughter Maria by Ruth Franklin. Musical Director was Nick Parker.

As Precious tells us 'have faith your community will support you in the same way the trees support the sky'. So raise your glasses to all those who helped get those trees a little closer. And let's hope they feel inspired enough to give us another next year.

Jo Elliott

CHARLBURY COMMUNITY CENTRE APPEAL

We have been delighted to receive donations of £50 each from Glenna Chadwick and from Pauline Kiernan who gave us their fees for giving talks; we received £90 from Caroline Shenton who sold copies of the Town Charter in aid of the CCCA; Nicola Morgan and friends arranged another Book Sale and made £225.10p; there have been regular sums from Alan Hank's Lucky Draw; and there have been several individual donations amounting to £225. To each and all of these donors we send our grateful thanks and our total is now pushing £83,000. By the time you receive this issue we will have held a Bridge Drive which should produce a good sum.

Louise Littledale has offered to produce a book of 'Appealing Household Hints' as a fund-raiser. This sounds like an extremely good idea and we hope that all our readers will be able to contribute. **IT COSTS YOU NOTHING**, beyond a little time and thought. Most of us will remember the odd handy hint that has been passed down the generations, or have hints that we have worked out for ourselves to make life easier. Write down your hints and tips, put them in an envelope and pop it into the Chronicle Box on the hall table in the Corner House. **Please get thinking now** and let's see if we can get a good selection of all sorts of helpful hints which can be made into a booklet and sold to support the Appeal.

Appeal Coordinator: Lynette Murphy (810549)

Deputy Coordinator: Diana Potten (810991) Treasurer: Richard Neville (810594)

THOMAS GIFFORD CHARITY REPORT:

Thanks to all those who have provided the trustees with thoughts and ideas for the development of the Spendlove Site. A particular thank-you to those who have completed our questionnaires. Since the last Chronicle we have been receiving questionnaires from those who own or manage facilities in the town and collating the information provided by user groups. We are also continuing our discussions with WODC and OCC to put together an outline project for the Spendlove Site. The trustees are holding their **annual public meeting on 23 March at 8.00pm in the Memorial Hall** to bring everyone up to date about the project. At the meeting, we will describe our latest thoughts on a development scheme for the site. Please come along – we welcome your response and constructive suggestions. Our focus is on putting together a **financially feasible** project, which meets the needs of local residents. We are seeking the involvement of those groups who wish to participate, recognise the need to develop in harmony with other facilities in the town, and will set a specification which is environmentally friendly.

A few other items: Don't forget it is the Farmers Market on Saturday, March 10th on the Playing Close, one of the Charity's assets. Support for the market helps raise money for the Charity as we receive a rental from the organisers.

Thanks to the *Charlbury Chronicle* for sponsoring the new bench on the Playing Close to commemorate the magazine's tenth anniversary.

At the time of writing we are expecting to make a presentation to say 'Thank you' to our recently retired long serving secretary, Audrey Hereford, at the Town Council Chairman's reception on February 14th.

Trevor Jones, Chairman of the Trustees

Help your garden birds spring into action!

Last autumn's wet and mild weather is thought to have contributed to the outbreak of the bird disease trichomoniasis, or canker, which you may have heard about at the time. Caused by a parasite in the throat, the disease was most commonly reported affecting pigeons, doves and finches. However, as with most common bird diseases, prevention is always better than cure, and sensible hygiene precautions around garden feeders are usually enough to protect both you and your garden birds.

Don't put out too much food at once, and use a bird table or hanging feeders that keep food off the ground. Clean and wash your table and feeders outdoors regularly using a 10% disinfectant solution, and move feeding stations every month to prevent droppings accumulating underneath. Don't forget to wear gloves and always wash your hands when finished.

Water is a valuable addition to any garden, and if you have a bird bath, it should be rinsed out daily during the spring and summer. Alternatively, if you have a very small garden, you can provide a surrogate pond by using an old plastic washing up bowl. This can be sunk halfway into the ground in a quiet and shady spot. A large stone put inside it helps frogs climb in and out.

You may have noticed that birds such as robins and song thrushes have started singing particularly early this year, marking out their territories ready for mating and the nesting season. As they pair up, look out for robins, sparrows, blackbirds and other garden birds flying back and forth with twigs and other plant debris. You can help them out by tying up bunches of tiny twigs, dried moss, and other stringy vegetable matter near your feeders. Whatever the time of year, there are always things you can do in the garden that will help wildlife. So dive in and get your fingers 'green'...

Kirsty Meadows ,RSPB Conservation officer

Voices Unlimited - 9 months on and all's well reports Kath Lucas

Now under the official title of 'Voices Unlimited' Charlbury's Community Choir/Singing Group is sounding splendid. Numbers have risen steadily since its start in May 06 (50 on the list and 20-30 per session) as has the level of confidence. Four-part harmonies resonate around the walls of the Friends Meeting House with ease on Tuesday nights and we all go home feeling much uplifted. We went as a group of 16 people to a mass choir event in London last Sept ember as part of an event called 'Sing for Water' (a fundraiser for Water Aid). Many thanks to anyone who sponsored us and especially to the Baptist Church for their donation. We donned our velvets and sparkly bits for a Xmas sing at a residential home in Witney which was a lovely thing to bring to the folks there. If you feel moved to give the group a go...do come along. The numbers of men are growing (we are delighted to announce) - so if you are male and thought you might be a lone voice - be encouraged!

Tuesdays term time 7.15-9.15pm at The Friends Meeting House, Charlbury
Cost £4-£6 (commitment/concessions depending). Contact Kath for info 01608 811293

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION – CHARLBURY BRANCH

The Poppy Appeal for 2006 raised £4,118.29 in Charlbury and the surrounding area. The Poppy Appeal Organiser, Helen Clarke, would like to thank all those who helped to raise this sum and particularly those who gave so generously.

Helen has decided to stand down after 10 years and so **a new Poppy Appeal Organiser is now needed** for Charlbury and the surrounding villages. For more information please telephone the Branch Secretary, Jane Parsons, on 810822. Please also contact Jane if you would like to help with the 2007 Poppy Appeal in some other way.

The Charlbury British Legion Darts Cup for the Open Pairs was held at Ye Olde Three Horseshoes and won by Pete Scarrott and Elaine Abraham.

Poppy Collector Awards

A 20 year badge was presented to Cyril Kerry and a 10 year certificate to Sarah Potter at the Annual Band Concert.

A 15 year Brooch has been awarded to Mrs Delma Paish and 10 year Certificates to Helen Clarke, Rosa Charlesworth [Finstock], Kitty Turner [Finstock], Janet Knowles [Finstock] and Frank Schofield [Finstock].

Wreaths were laid at the War Memorial in St Mary's Church on Remembrance Sunday by the Charlbury Branch [Sq.Ldr. Joyce Clews], Thames Valley Police [P.C. Colin James] and Charlbury Town Council [Cllr.Nicolette Lethbridge].

Veterans Badge: M.O.D. has announced a further issue of Veteran's Badges. The Armed Forces Veterans Badge and the Merchant Seafarers Veterans Badge [for members of the Merchant Fleet who served in support of Royal Navy Operations] are now available to all those who served at any time until 31 December 1969. For more information please visit www.veteransagency.mod.uk or telephone the Veterans Agency on 0800 196 2277. For an application form please contact the Branch Secretary, Jane Parsons, on 01608 810811.

Army Training in Canada

The Legion would like to hear from anybody who went on exercise to Gagetown, New Brunswick in the 1960's and may have been exposed to Agent Orange whilst there, and may now be suffering from conditions such as Leukaemia or Hodgkin's Disease as a result.

Branch Coach Trip

The Charlbury Branch is considering a visit to either the Poppy Factory in Richmond, Surrey or to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire. If you are interested please contact Branch Secretary, Jane Parsons, on 01608 810822.

Assistance For further information about the work of the Legion, how to join or how to obtain assistance, please contact Nick Potter [Branch President] on 810388 or Derek Fowler [Branch Chairman] on 811706.

Charlbury Waste Action Group GREEN WASTE Collection Dates

Saturdays at the Spendlove Centre from 10 am to noon
on **March 3rd , April 7th, May 5th**

March 10th: BRING & TAKE SWAP SHOP

CLUBS, DRAMA, SPORT, GROUPS

Charlbury Scout Group

After a two year absence, due to lack of leaders, Scouting has returned to Charlbury. During this period Charlbury Cubs joined Stonesfield Cubs so that they were able to continue badge work and other activities. Our Charlbury pack meets during the school term on Thursdays 6.30pm to 8.00pm for 8 to 10½ year olds. Following an enjoyable camp in the summer the number of boys in Cubs has grown. The boys described the camp as:-

"In September I went to Cub camp we did: go-karting, adventure trail, archery and rock climbing." *Marc Colling aged 9*

"Climbing was great fun I didn't get to the top; the thing is we had the biggest wall!!"

Ryan Hart aged 9

"For my first time camping it was fantastic" *Daniel Eeles aged 10*

Plans for the next twelve months include starting a Beaver Colony for boys and girls aged 6 to 8 years possibly to be held on Saturdays between 10.30 am and 12 noon, and a Scout Troop for boys and girls aged 10½ to 14 years. We plan to hold this on Fridays between 7pm and 9pm.

This term the Cub pack will be visiting the Cotswold Wildlife Park at Burford and begin work on their Aviator and Air Activity badge with a visit to either Duxford Air Museum or RAF Brize Norton.

If anyone is interested in pre registering their children or in getting involved as a leader or committee member please contact Fiona Snell on 01608 810565.

Fiona Snell

The Charlbury Society

Meets in the Memorial Hall most months from September to May with a wide ranging programme of talks and visits, usually of a local history nature.

Our next meeting is on Friday 9th March when Joanna Matthews and Helena Chance of The Oxfordshire Historic Gardens Trust will speak about the Trust's work.

Our A.G.M. will be at 7.30 pm on Friday 11th May

The Society welcomes new members and visitors and is always pleased to hear from those willing to take an active part in its activities.

For more information about the Society, please contact: Brian Murray, Chairman (819091) or Lesley Deane, Secretary (810849) or visit www.charlbury.info and go to the Society's page from the 'Community' heading.

Brian Murray

Charlbury Cricket Club

Some good news to report: our proposed extension to the cricket pavilion has now been granted planning permission. The extension will provide additional changing rooms and improved facilities. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all those in the community who have supported our efforts to upgrade the pavilion; there is still a long way to go in terms of raising funds to cover the cost of the extension so your continued support in this direction would be greatly appreciated too.

(NB It has just been announced that the Town Council will be making an allocation of £2000 in the next financial year towards the needs of the Cricket Club and the pavilion.)

On the subject of fund-raising, our Bonfire Night event last November was a great success, with a superb attendance of almost 1700 people. We hope that everyone enjoyed the fireworks display and look forward to seeing you all again later this year.

News from the Youth Section: A newsletter will shortly be sent out to current youth members of the club; if you are not a member but would like a copy, please contact the Youth Section Secretary, Geoff Lowe, on 01608 810580. Geoff can also give details of membership to anyone new to the area. The main event for the Youth Section this year will be a tournament on the 8th July to celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Lastly, Charlbury is forming a women's team this year. We have quite a few ladies who have already expressed an interest but more would be really welcome; again, please contact Geoff Lowe for details.

Derek Collett

Charlbury Tennis Club

Is the next Andy Murray lurking in your household or do you just need to shed a few extra winter pounds? Either way, Charlbury Tennis Club offers tennis opportunities for everyone in the family. So why don't you look out that racket and join us for the new summer season which runs from April?

The well-established club is now over ten years old with a base at the 'cosy' clubhouse facing the courts at Nine Acres Recreation Ground.

We run regular social sessions throughout the year (see clubhouse for details) and occasional friendly club tournaments. We hope also to introduce a singles league within the club this year.

In the summer we run six adult teams for all abilities, ranging from the A team currently in Division 2 of the Banbury Town League and chasing promotion, to the sociable local Wychwood League.

Children's tennis is encouraged with free junior tennis evenings and a programme of tennis matches against other clubs for teams of various age groups. Coaching is available from both Mark Jarman and Peter Barnes.

Apart from all the tennis playing activities, members also enjoy various social occasions such as the summer barbecue and the very popular annual winter jazz evening. As an LTA-affiliated club, we receive an allocation of Wimbledon tickets which are raffled for members only. Every year, up to a dozen members enjoy a great day out and are inspired by watching the top players.

For further details about how to join the club phone Jenny Vaux on 01608 811209, pick up an application form from The Good Food Shop, or turn up to a club session where you will always find a committee member (times on the clubhouse noticeboard).

Alison Holthouse

WEA Day School

On Saturday March 10, at Charlbury Primary School, WEA will be holding a Day School from 10am to 4pm, entitled "Real Life in Ancient Egypt c.1300BC" based on the house remains found in Deir e Median, a village on the West Bank of Luxor, which have revealed much about the life of the community and characters who lived there.

The tutor is Rosalind Janssen previously Lecturer in Egyptology at UCL, now teaching at Reading University.

The cost is £25 to include a buffet lunch. For further information and enrolment contact Dawn Colvin on 01608 810545.

Charlbury Art Society

Charlbury Art Society goes from strength to strength and now has about 85 members. We meet most months with art related talks or demonstrations. Visitors are always welcome Membership is open to anybody interested in art - it is not necessary to be an artist. In September 2006, Princess Anne visited our annual Street Fair exhibition as part of the Town Charter celebrations, and met some members of the society. Although she did not purchase any of the exhibits, I know she enjoyed the visit. The society also had an impressive showing of members' work in the new Gallery in Oxford Town Hall. This display looked very good thanks to hard work by many members.

Last autumn, we had a series of life classes. These give a chance for those interested to work in any media with a live model. Although the sessions are untutored, we learn a lot from each other, just looking at other people's work and discussing it during the coffee break.

We are about to start a series of untutored portrait classes. We are trying to get local characters to pose for us, so volunteers please contact me or Marion Coates.

The January meeting was held in the Friends' Meeting House - our new venue with ramped access and hearing loop. Charlbury Art historian Valerie Holman, gave us an excellent illustrated talk on "Seattle to Sunderland - Art in Public Places" - covering why and how public art has proliferated since the 1980's.

On 14th February Charlbury artist Di Gold will be speaking on 'Painting with Light - working in stained glass', and on 14th March another local artist Kieran Stiles will give a live demonstration, working with a model in mixed media and monoprint.

Reg James (Chairman) 811105

Charlbury Bowls Club

Firstly, at our AGM on October 2006 Mrs Hazel Smith from Stonesfield was elected Lady President for 2007, the first Lady President in the history of the club — a milestone. Over the winter months we have had a successful winter season of short-mat with friendly matches, Thursday League, and Club individual competitions. We have also had a very successful Dinner Dance & Prizegiving, a most enjoyable evening, and a very good Christmas Bingo Night, which was well attended.

Now, as the winter passes we look forward to the coming outdoor season which starts at the end of April 2007 with our Open Day on Saturday April 21st to which all are welcome on the day. We are always on the lookout for new members, so do come along and see for yourselves what we have to offer.

Here's to a good summer season and good bowling!

Jack Fox, Hon. Secretary

*To submit an article for this section
please contact Julia Caston on 810240*

TOTBITS

PICK YOUR OWN (FRUIT, THAT IS)

I had originally intended to write about gardening with children in this issue, not realising that the deadline for articles would be during the glimmering frosts of February. However, you will no doubt be reading this as the earth is warming up, days are lengthening, and children are chomping at the bit to get out and about. Therefore, let me introduce you to a short list of local farm shops that offer pick-your-own crops from as early as May. Asparagus is first, followed by strawberries and broadbeans. Most of these farms have additional attractions, like bouncy castles, cafes, farm shops. Look them up on the web or give them a call. They're often well worth the visit.

Buscot Park Soft Fruit Farm (between Lechlade & Faringdon on the A417)

Tel 01367 245705

All sorts of unusual fruit, from tayberries to whitecurrants, plus veg and cut-your-own flowers. 10am-6pm daily, from June. Also fishery (tickets from 01367 241044 or 01793 721173)

Medley Manor Farm, Binsey Lane, Oxford, **Tel 01865 241251**

Pick Your Own and some ready-picked produce. They expect to have asparagus and rhubarb by the first week of May 2007. They'll be open then on Tue / Thu / Sat afternoons till 6pm. Later on, "when the fruit comes in", they'll be open 7 days, 9.30am - 7pm, for strawberries, broad beans, new potatoes, carrots, beetroot, garlic, and more.

Millets Farm Centre, Kingston Road, Frilford, Abingdon **Tel 01865 391266** Crop reports: 01865 391555

Large selection of fruit and vegetables plus dairy products, fish, patisserie, wine, meat, garden centre & restaurants, children's area etc. Open 7 days a week, 9am-5pm. Maize maze in July. In season, free tractor rides on weekends!

Peachcroft Farm, Radley, Abingdon

(leave A34 at first Abingdon North exit. Left to roundabout; left into 12 Acre Drive - farm is 400 yds on left). **Tel 01235 520094**

PYO: many kinds of berries and peas, also potatoes, asparagus etc. Farm Shop has soft fruits, vegetables, cream, free-range eggs, free-range poultry, cakes, pies, preserves, fruit juices, and honey. Easy disabled access. Tractor rides, apparently.

Q Gardens, Milton Hill, Steventon, Abingdon (on A4130) **Tel 01235 820988**

Farm shop (9am - 6pm), tea room (9am - 4pm) nursery (10am - 4pm). PYO & ready picked fruit. Open 7 days. Asparagus from end April - mid-June. **Specialising in cherries** (home of the Harwell cherry) and also strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, plums, damsons, greengages, apples & pears.

Rectory Farm, Stanton St. John, Oxford

(From the A40 Headington roundabout take road to the North signed Stanton St. John 2m. Follow farm signs after 0.75m).

Tel 351677 for crop reports, 351214 for the office or 07966 246388 for orders. Email rectoryfarm@farmline.com

Fruit, asparagus, lots of other veg (including lettuce) to pick or pre-picked. Also café and children's entertainments at weekends. Open daily, 9.30am-7pm. Easy disabled access. They will be open from beginning of May for PYO asparagus and expect strawberries from the end of May.

The Old Farm Shop, Milton Hill, Harwell, Abingdon **Tel 01235 831247**

PYO: Many berries, plus broad beans, cabbage, cauliflower, marrow, peas, pumpkins, runner beans, spinach, sweetcorn, asparagus.

Farm Shop: As for PYO plus greater range of fruit and veg. Own lamb, poultry, turkey, eggs, game, bread, cakes, pies, honey. Organic section. Easy disabled access. Toilets. Free delivery of local orders.

Wykham Park Farm Shop, Banbury

(A361 towards Chipping Norton from Banbury Town Centre. After 1 mile, turn left at cross-roads signed Bodicote. Farm shop is 1/4 mile on the left hand side). **Tel 01295 262049.**

Specialize in asparagus, beef, potatoes and paeonies but grow other seasonal veg as well and make their own sausages.

LITTLE FISHES: This group for the Under-5s has it all: songs, games, stories, crafts, toys, and snacks – packed into 1 ½ hours each Wednesday morning in term time. You don't have to be someone's mum to bring a child along – childminders, grannies, nannies ... all are encouraged to come down to St Mary's church for 10:30 and enjoy the company, the coffee, and the friendly atmosphere. Best of all, it's free!!! Contact Kate on 811579 for more information.

PRE-SCHOOL: The Pre-School is available for birthday parties from 2 p.m. onwards on Saturdays, and at any time on Sundays or during school holidays. For only a £15 fee, you have the use of two rooms (one vinyl floor and one carpeted), child-friendly tables and chairs, a kitchen, and space even for a 10x10 foot bouncy castle! The heating of rooms can be arranged, if required, for a small extra cost.

Pre-school premises are also available for hire in the afternoons during the week, either on a temporary or regular basis. Why not arrange a visit to see the venue and find out if it's for you? Telephone: 811200.

CHILDREN'S YOGA: Contrary to previous notices in Totbits, the children's yoga classes are no longer offered in Charlbury.

BABY AND TODDLER GROUP: Though this is generally known as "the toddler group" around town, it's nevertheless open to mums-to-be and very young babies as well as pre-school children. The group meets every Monday during term time, from 9:30-11:30 at the Memorial Hall. Children especially love the chance to run, jump, and ride on toys when the weather is wet and grey – and you'll love the hot cuppa and conversation. £2 per family.

SPANISH FOR CHILDREN: The Spanish Club takes place every Saturday at the Old Grammar School in Charlbury (the Pre-School). There are several sessions grouped by age and ability where the aim is to provide an enjoyable environment in which the children can learn basic Spanish. For more information and to arrange a visit to a session, ring Elizabeth on 811128 or e-mail her at elivergaravera@hotmail.com.

TotBits is compiled by Kat Patrick
kat.patrick@alumni.southwestern.edu Telephone: 811660

CAMPBELL COPSE - FORMATIVE PRUNING SESSION SATURDAY MARCH 10 2007 AT 12 NOON

The Campbell Copse on the Mill Field was planted in memory of the late Bill Campbell, schoolmaster, ornithologist, Nature correspondent to *The Guardian* newspaper, and Charlbury resident. The trees are now old enough to be pruned so that they can grow properly and develop into quality specimens. Formative Pruning is a basic woodland management skill. The Town Council has responsibility for managing the copse and feels that there is now an ideal opportunity for members of the public to become involved with that process (as is the case at Centenary Wood on Ticknell Piece). The idea is to show people how and what to prune so that they can then go out in their own time to work in the copse.

The training session will be conducted by the Oxfordshire Woodland Project Manager, David Rees, who is a Chartered Forester. Please meet him at the Copse wearing suitably robust clothing and footwear; also please bring with you secateurs or loppers if you have any. If you would like more information please telephone him on 01993 814140, or meet him at the Oxfordshire Woodland Project stall at the Farmers' Market on the Playing Close prior to the Training Session.

(NB See *Guardian* article by Bill Campbell on page 28)

ATTENTION ALL LOCAL BUSINESSES!



Do you wish to promote your services and products to a wider local audience? Then this year's Wychwood Forest Fair could be the place for you.

To be held Sunday 2nd Sept. 2007 at Capp's Lodge Farm, Swinbrook.

Since its inception in 2000, the Wychwood Forest Fair has become the most popular local environmental show in Oxfordshire and is regularly attracting 4000 local visitors, with 150 different stalls. The Fair is organised and run by the Friends of Wychwood to raise funds in support of the Wychwood Project, which was awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2006. Part of the Wychwood Project's concept is to help and support local businesses and communities, and the Forest Fair is doing that very effectively.

Here is an opportunity to get your message in front of thousands of local people who have the time to look and talk to you. We can offer spaces either inside or outside the trading marquee, advertising space within the Forest Fair programme, or you may wish to sponsor the event with banners or logos on display.

Contact: Ken Betteridge on 01993 878615

NATURE NOTEBOOK ARTICLE IN THE GUARDIAN BY W D CAMPBELL

Bill Campbell from Charlbury wrote his weekly Nature Notebook in The Guardian from 1964 until shortly before he died in 1994. Charlbury resident Joan Cook recently unearthed an old and very yellowed press cutting of an article which can be dated to August 1979. 2006 has been another 'cherry-plum year' with surprising red or yellow cherry-sized plums on trees around Nine Acres, hedgerows and gardens.

'Puzzle Over Intruder That Hides In The Hedge: It is understandable that in some western counties, field hedgerows were once extensively planted with damsons, thus providing both the requisite stiff barrier and a source of a marketable product. But another member of the plum family, the myrobolan or cherry-plum, must also have once had widespread use as a hedge-plant for remnants of what must have been deliberate plantings are still to be found in old hedges, sometimes as mere scrubby specimens, but, where out of the reach of browsing cattle, often surviving as large trees. This evidence of what must once have been a general practice, or at least a fashion having a widespread following, has always puzzled me. This particular plum is pretty useless as a hedge, for its growth is both loose and thornless. As to producing valuable crops, nine years out of ten it is even more useless in this respect, being (at least in the areas I know) a notoriously shy bearer. This plant (the source of many a false scent which I have followed in response to unlikely reports of "blackthorn" in full bloom a month or more before its normal time) is easily distinguished from the much commoner blackthorn not only by its earlier blossoming, often in early March, but also by the fact that its leaves open with the flowers, and of course by the by the virtual absence of thorns). Since it is not a native, hailing from a wide area embracing southern Russia, Persia and the Balkans, there must have been some good reason for its adoption as an English hedgerow plant. Perhaps in the more continental climate of south-eastern England it felt more at home, and was found to bear worthwhile crops of succulent and attractive cherry-sized red or red-flushed yellow plums. But in our area, during the last 30 years, I can recollect only three summers when good crops were produced – and this current summer, if such it may be called, is the third of them.

English hedgerows have received a great deal of attention during the past few years, perhaps because the increasing speed at which there are disappearing owing to the enlargement of fields to more manageable acreages for economic mechanical cultivation. One of the interesting facts which has emerged is that although many of them date back no further than to the enclosures in the last three centuries, some of them, still marking ancient Anglo-Saxon boundaries, were established before the Norman Conquest.

The main research on this fascinating topic, including the method of assessing the probable age of a hedge by counting the number of tree or shrub species in a given length, has been done by three biologists working at the Monks Wood Experimental Station – Drs Hooper, Moore, and Pollard. But although the standard, and indeed unique work on this subject in which they summarised their findings – the *New Naturalist* No. 58, *Hedges* – covers the whole field in a most comprehensive fashion, there is one to me inexplicable omission. There is no mention of myrobolan as a hedge-plant, and thus no answer to my puzzlement as to the reasons for its use. Unlike the native blackthorn, whose sloes are small enough to be swallowed whole by birds such as pigeons and pheasants, or even blackbirds and fieldfares, and which therefore can spring up as seedlings wherever these birds roost or rest, the larger cherry-plum is unlikely to become naturalised in this way, and so it is still almost entirely confined to the original hedges where it was first planted.

But there are exceptions to every rule, and I have just come across an example of a cherry-plum which arose as a chance seedling in my neighbour's garden (only 100 yards or so from a hedge where old specimens abound) a few days ago I was called into to identify the 10ft high bush, now probably eight to ten-years-old, which for the first time was bearing fruit. Included in the inquiry was a question as to whether the fruits were edible or poisonous – a query which has since been satisfactorily answered in the lady's kitchen and at her table.'

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Report from Cllr Sue Haffenden, tel 01608 676642 or email Sue.Haffenden@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

I am pleased to report some positive news on the County Council budget and Council Tax. The Conservative's 2005 manifesto pledge to reduce the rate of increase in Council tax from year to year has been kept: the increase this year was planned to be 4.25% compared with 4.375% last time. However, it now looks as though it will be an even lower rate of increase, perhaps as low as 4%, which was the target for two years' time. This follows on the good news that the Council was awarded a three star rating for its financial management, financial standing, internal control and value for money by the independent Audit Commission.

Central Government has requested all local authorities to undertake a review of all Primary Schools in their areas. This is because the Government intends to inject money into capital building projects during the next few years and needs to assess a school's sustainability.

Phase one-(the consultation with the school staff, governors, MP's, Councillors at District and County level) will come to an end this month but phase two will take another two years to complete. This is the stage when parents and local people will be able to have their say about the sustainability of their local primary school.

We all value our village schools: they are the heart beat of our community and represent its future in so many ways. There is no intention to close any school but with falling rolls and the difficulty of recruiting head teachers, the government has floated the idea of schools collaborating in "federations", possibly sharing head teachers or support staff. How this would work in rural areas, where transport is an issue, is not clear. Primary schools already work in partnership with their secondary schools but the idea of more collaboration between cluster primaries is still being explored. I urge you to participate when Phase two comes along, either on the County Council web-site or by picking up forms from your local library in the Spring.

The Chipping Norton hospital/care home has at last moved a little nearer to solving its problems. The question of the VAT has now been sorted . The question of impairment remains for the PCT and NHS to sort out. We have the chance to have a flag-ship community facility: it would be horrendous if it failed because of the impairment regulations.

Report from District Councillor Glena Chadwick (tel: 810555 or email chadwick@glena.plus.com); and District Councillor Mike Breakell (tel: 01993 868201 or email mjbreakell@aol.com)

When people are ill or disabled, having adjustments to their house can not only ease their lives but often make the difference between being able to stay in their home or go into care. Some time ago the waiting time for these referrals to be processed was truly horrifying; sometimes it took several years for improvements to happen. Some of us pressed for this to change and the situation did get better. Unfortunately we have recently had a report saying that due to the lack of occupational therapists and other problems, the waiting time has increased again. There are ways of overcoming this and it is vital that the waiting time is as short as possible; people live in pain and discomfort and sometimes will actually die before they have the assistance they need. We all agree that public consultation in

planning matters is important. The difficulty is how to do this effectively within a system that is highly centralised and favours speedy decision making. We believe that the decision by WODC to speed planning by only referring matters to the committee if they are raised by members, is fundamentally wrong. Surely Town and Parish councils know what is important locally and should still be able to ask for a committee rather than an officer decision on important matters even if of 'only' local concern.

WODC is carrying out a month long blitz to collect rubbish from verges on 156 km. of its main A and B roads. The size of the problem (literally) can be gathered from the fact that WODC has picked up 1,350 tonnes of litter per year over the last two years. The pavement leading to the Co-Op is our particular problem. How can we stop people despoiling our town and countryside ?

The Role of our Local Councils

Charlbury Town Council

Charlbury Town Council consists of twelve elected councillors, with elections taking place every four years. The council has six main sub-committees: Planning, Traffic, Finance, Allotments, Lighting, and Low-Cost Housing.

Responsibilities include managing allotments at Evenlode Close and Oxpens; the Parish burial ground at Pound Hill; providing additional street lights; providing and maintaining recreational facilities (including play equipment and grass cutting). The Council also provides bus shelters, notice boards, seats etc and manages public open spaces at Mill Field, Ticknell Piece, Wigwell and Nine Acres. Budgets are set annually in November, at which time applications for grants are considered from local bodies. Town Councillors also act as trustees for various trusts:

The Corner House and Memorial Hall: These two community buildings are managed on the Council's behalf by committees which include representatives of users.

Nine Acres Recreation Ground: This facility, including the Hard Surface play area, is managed by a committee on behalf of the Town Council; this committee also includes users' representatives. The area includes football pitches and a children's play area.

The Charlbury Town Council Nature Conservation Advisory Committee: This committee, originally set up to manage the Wigwell Nature Reserve (leased from Thames Water), also advises on other public open spaces.

The Council also has representatives on other Charlbury trusts, and nominates a governor to serve at Charlbury Primary School.

The Council is consulted on all planning applications, details of which are published on the town notice board outside the Corner House. These are available for viewing by arrangement with the Clerk. All meetings are open to the public, and at each full Council meeting (except May) the public may address the Council by arrangement with the Clerk. Councillors and the Clerk are happy to provide members of the public with any advice or information which is available to them if asked.

West Oxfordshire District Council

West Oxfordshire District Council is responsible for local planning, planning applications and building regulations, housing, environmental health, minor roads and waste collection. It is also in charge of the District's leisure centres, swimming pools and tourism. Responsibility for recreation, arts and museums is shared with county and local councils. Charlbury's District Councillors are currently Mike Breakell (Liberal Democrat) and Glenna Chadwick (Liberal Democrat).

Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for education, social services, libraries, fire and rescue, roads, transport, strategic planning, trading standards and waste regulation. Charlbury's County Councillor is currently Sue Haffenden (Conservative).

CHARLBURY TOWN COUNCIL REPORT NO. 42

by Councillor Trevor Jones

Christmas Decorations: The Town Council would like to congratulate everyone who put decorations, lights and Christmas trees outside their houses and businesses in the town to brighten up the Christmas period. Particular thanks are due to Pete Cahill and Charlbury Chamber of Trade and Commerce for coordinating arrangements and to Geoff Burroughs who donated the Corner House Christmas Tree.

Presentation: A presentation was made to Audrey Hereford to mark her retirement as Secretary to the Thomas Gifford Trust at the annual Town Council Reception on 14th February.

Public Meeting: The Council held a Public Meeting on 17th November in the War Memorial Hall to consider traffic and transport issues. 93 people attended including councillors and Local Government officers. The panel consisted of: Steve Howell (OCC Head of Transport), Paul Wilson (OCC Deputy Area Highways Engineer), Alan Field (OCC Public Transport – buses) and PC Colin James (Thames Valley Police – Charlbury Area Beat Officer). Dicky and Paul Worth of Worths Coaches and Simon Matheson of Stagecoach were also present. A number of topics, ideas, complaints and questions were aired and addressed in a positive atmosphere. The Council will be discussing these matters with the OCC staff and bus companies over the next few months. The meeting was summed up by Councillor Sue Haffenden.

Local Government: There appears to be some concern over what the County, District and Town Councils all do. Their functions are explained in a separate article. All 3 authorities raise the funds needed for the services they provide through the Council Tax which also funds Thames Valley Police.

Annual Boundary Walk: The walk will take place on Rogation Sunday, 13 May starting at 10am from the Old Oak Tree on Forest Hill. There will be a break for lunch at Model Farm by kind permission of Mr. & Mrs. Hobill. The distance is about 11 miles across country, along roads, paths and bridleways often in places where public access is not usually allowed. Arrangements can be made to pick up people at various points on the route where it crosses a road. The Town Council is most grateful to all the landowners who allow the walk to take place and to the Charlbury Society for their assistance with organising the work. Anybody who would like to help with marshalling and generally help-

ing is asked to contact the Clerk.

Annual Parish Meeting: Will be at 8pm on Friday April 20th 2007 in the War Memorial Hall. Please come and find out what your Council has been up to for the past year.

The Annual Meeting of the Town Council: Will be at 7.30pm on Wednesday 23rd May in the Corner House. The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Committees and representatives to other local organisations will be elected for the next 12 months.

Meetings: All the meeting dates for 2007 can be seen on the Town Council Notice Boards at the Corner House, opposite Five Ways Stores and next to the Enstone Road bus stop, or obtained from the Town Clerk, Roger Clarke, on 810608. All the meetings are open to the public, copies of the minutes of Town Council meetings are available in Charlbury Library.

Local Government Election: There will be a District Council Election on Thursday 3rd May. The Polling Station for Charlbury is the War Memorial Hall. One of the two seats for the Charlbury and Finstock Ward (including Fawler) at West Oxfordshire District Council is available. It is currently held by Cllr Mike Breakell (Lib Dem).

Riverside Festival '07: The Town Council has conditionally agreed to the Riverside Festival taking place on the Mill Field on 16 and 17 June subject to the issue of a licence by West Oxfordshire District Council.

Councillor Activities: Cllr Nick Potter represented the Town Council at the District and County Council Receptions on 23 and 28 November and was the Council's Reader at the Town Carol Service at St. Mary's Church on 17 December. Cllr. Ron Prew represented the Council at the Opening Ceremony of the Oxford Environment Centre in Sheep Street by David Cameron MP

Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG): Thames Valley Police held a Public Meeting to explain the work of the Chipping Norton Neighbourhood Action Group, which covers Charlbury, in St. Mary's Church on 23rd October. Sadly it was only attended by about 20 people most of whom had to be there. It is one of the few opportunities available to the public to ask questions and to express their concerns or praise to the local police.

The Town Council Report (Budget) 2007: The Town Council element of the Council Tax for the next financial year has been set at £80,442, compared with £69,047 for 2006/7. The reason for the increase is the Town Council's decision to provide electric vehicle activated speed signs on Nine Acres Lane and Pound Hill as requested at the Public Meeting on Traffic and Transport and to improve the street lighting between Five Ways and Park Street. The Council is continuing to build capital sums for the Community Centre to be built by Thomas Gifford's Charity and a new pavilion on Nine Acres, and is committed to repaying the Public Works Loan taken out to cover the cost of the new cemetery extension. Contractors' prices and Insurance Premiums have also increased the amount that the Council cannot avoid spending on maintenance, grass cutting, Nine Acres, The Corner House and War Memorial Hall, the Cemetery, Play areas, Clerk's salary and so on. The remainder is for grants to organisations such as the Cricket Club, Sustainable Charlbury and the Shed Theatre. The full list can be inspected by arrangement with the Clerk.

NEW POLICE OFFICER FOR CHARLBURY:

Please make a note that Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) **Stephanie Blake** will now be working out of the Charlbury Police Office on Wednesdays and Fridays each week. She is based at Chip-ping Norton. The opening hours at the Police Office at the Spendlove Centre are: Mondays and Wednesdays 12 noon to 3pm; Fridays 9am to 12 noon.

New volunteers are always needed

We have a mailing list for people wishing to receive *The Charlbury Chronicle* who no longer live in the town. £2.50 per four issues; £4 per four issues for overseas subscribers. Large-print £2.50 for **each** copy.

Please note that **ALL** cheques for advertising, mailing list or donations should be made payable to *The Charlbury Chronicle* and should be sent to the Treasurer, Dawn Colvin (see below)

Editor: Lynette Murphy, tel: 01608 810549, fax: 01608 811952
e-mail: lm@cchronicle.plus.com

Assisted by: Diana Potten (810991); Julia Caston (810240); Kat Patrick (811660)

Advertising: Jack Potten (810991); Treasurer: Dawn Colvin,(810545); Artwork by Ann (Gilbert) Buckmaster (810664); Distribution: Brian Murphy (810549); Robert Caston (810240); Peter Woolfenden (811296)

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