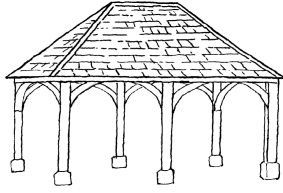


The Charlbury Chronicle



Volume 7 Number 2 June 2003

We constantly find ourselves in the *Chronicle* having to make a plea for people to come forward to volunteer for some particular community activity - at times it is a thankless task, but it is one that we must keep on trying to publicise. No community can function without volunteers to do the 101 jobs that are needed to keep it running smoothly, but these days it is harder and harder to find people willing to give some of their free time to helping others. As usual it is the few willing horses who always put up their hands whenever there is a request for help. If **YOU** find Charlbury an interesting and lively place in which to live, consider for a moment the numbers of people making their contribution towards keeping the clubs and societies that you enjoy so much and the charitable endeavours going strong. Are there any new arrivals in the town who have not yet come forward? Are there some newly retired residents who might give some time to the community now that they have more leisure time at their disposal? Please do identify yourselves and get involved in some way - you will be warmly welcomed. Meals on Wheels and Contact for the Elderly are but two of the groups badly needing more help - and the latest cry is going up from the Street Fair Committee.

Charlbury's Street Fair, besides being a jolly good day's entertainment, is crucial in providing funds to keep the War Memorial Hall and the Corner House going for the benefit of the whole community. Over the year there are many, many functions which take place in these two venues and they need regular main-tenance and attention to keep them in good order. A successful Street Fair can make £6000 or more but takes a great deal of time and organisation to ensure its success. We have had a heartfelt plea from the organisers, which we publish in full: *'Because of various commitments some of the nucleus of the Street Fair Committee are unable to help this year - so we are looking for **MORE HELPERS**. You don't have to necessarily come to the Committee meetings however we would like your assistance on the day, to help from putting up the stalls to manning a Street Fair stall - everything will be provided. **WE JUST NEED HELP**. If you can find it in your heart to do this (and I am sure you all will) just give either Pat Court on 811031 or Susie Finch on 810861 a call and we will welcome you into the fold! Looking forward to hearing from you!'*

Lynette Murphy

Please note that the deadline for copy for the September 2003 issue is August 9th. Copy may be placed in the *Chronicle* box in the hall of the Corner House. It is helpful if copy is produced in Arial font, point 9, and email contributions should be sent in rf.

NEWSBYTES

HEALTHY, HEARTY SCHOOLCHILDREN

Pupils from Charlbury Primary School raised a massive £3324.99 for the British Heart Foundation's 'Jump Rope Day' on 27th March by taking part in sponsored skipping sessions. Children right through from Reception to Year 6 (240 pupils in all) took part. All classes had skipping lessons prior to the big day and as well as being a brilliant fundraising effort the event has had a healthy outcome since skipping is now a favourite pastime in the playground. Well done to all those involved.

CHRONICLE AUDITOR RETIRES

We would like to record our sincere appreciation of the work of Eric Haslam, who has audited our accounts since 1997, and has now decided to hang up his calculator! We are grateful to Eileen Kenrick who has agreed to take over the annual audit.

NEW NINE ACRES MANAGER Nine Acres Recreation Field Management Committee are pleased to announce that as from May 25th David Mortimer will be taking over as the Hard Surface Manager. He will also be responsible for general maintenance on Nine Acres. Charlie Cook, the long-serving manager, is leaving Charlbury and we wish him well. David, who lives in Hughes Close, is already a familiar face to many residents as he is one of our local postmen.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

INTRODUCTION TO WIGWELL

Make a note that there will be an introductory walk to the Wigwell Nature Reserve on Saturday July 5th. Meet at the Scout Hut at 2.30 pm

FRAGRANT REMINDER

Another date to remember is the Charlbury Horticultural Society's summer Rose & Sweet Pea Show. This will be at the Memorial Hall on Saturday June 28th from 2 to 4.30 pm

MARKET DAY

The next Farmers Market on the Playing Close is scheduled for Saturday June 14th

CHARLBURY SUMMER FESTIVAL IS HERE AGAIN!

Look out for events through June and July, starting with a Barn Dance for all the community on June 6th. We'll also be visited by singers from the Republic of Georgia, and as usual lots of events for the kids and don't forget the Riverside Picnic on the weekend of June 21st/22nd. Please refer to the leaflet delivered with your *Charlbury Chronicle* for fuller details of all events. See you there!

THE FIFTH CHARLBURY OPEN GARDENS DAY

will be held on Sunday June 29th from 2 pm to 6 pm
with many new gardens to view. Tickets and route map will be
available from the Corner House from 1.30 pm on the day
(no payment at individual gardens). Teas and wonderful homemade cakes
will be served in the garden next to the Garden Room
to the accompaniment of Worldsong singers.

So do all please come along for a lovely afternoon's stroll with all the family. Draw tickets will be on sale, plus a quiz to test your brains! See you there!

CHARLBURY STREET FAIR SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 20th 2003

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Railway coming to Charlbury, Street Fair 2003 has a **RAILWAY** theme. Past, Present, Future – Fact, Fiction, Fantasy, Fairytale, Cartoon. So get your thinking caps on and organise an entry for the **Evening Parade**. Last year's evening parade was a great success with a total of six entries for the various categories, this year we want more ! Get together with neighbours, colleagues family or friends and join in the fun. You do not have to enter on a float. Entries can be on foot or decorate a bicycle or wheelbarrow etc. Last year we also had a number of vintage vehicles in the parade – do you have anything to join the parade ? If you would like to participate in the parade in any way please contact Teresa Laughton for an entry form or further advice.

Why not have a **stall** at Street Fair and raise money and awareness for your organisation, club or group as well as for Street Fair (profits from the stalls are split 50/50). Or sell your own crafts and produce on a commercial stall (cost £35). Contact Teresa Laughton for an entry form.

Can you help ? We need help with erecting stalls, serving teas, BBQ, running games and activities, folding raffle tickets and much, much more. Would you like to help with the organisation of Street Fair by joining the committee or can you spare a couple of hours on the day ? Please contact us.

Evening parade & stalls; contact Teresa Laughton (811000)

General enquiries: contact Pat Court (811031)

See notice boards and posters for further details of Street Fair events
prior to the September Chronicle

All profits raised from Street Fair activities go towards the upkeep and maintenance of the Corner House and War Memorial Hall.

ELECTION RESULTS - May 1st 2003

West Oxfordshire District Council - Charlbury & Finstock Ward

Breakell (Lib/Dem)	735
Potter (Independent)	386
Dighton-Brown (Green Party)	60

There were 10 rejected ballot papers. Turnout was 41.16% - the lowest for a District Council election in Charlbury for at least ten years.

Charlbury Town Council

Carol Jackson was elected to the vacant seat on the Town Council with 596 votes. (The other candidate, Kate Southey, received 238 votes.) *There were 60 rejected ballot papers. The turnout was 39.97%*

CHARLBURY PARISH COUNCIL 1894

(At about the time of the local elections the editor was shown a list of the successful candidates in the election for Charlbury Parish Council in 1894. Some of our readers may be interested to note that amongst them are the names of some families still living in the town.

G.S. Jones (confectioner); T.G. Smith (grocer); G. Morris (Headmaster, Free Grammar School); J.W. Richards (farmer); Rev. Charles West (vicar); J. Widdows (wharfinger); P. Kench (hotel keeper, the White Hart); W. Widdows (blacksmith); H.M. Cowley (hotel manager, Royal Oak); S. Johnson (glover); G.O. Gomm (dealer); H. Baskett (plumber); C. Gomm (tailor) were successful.

Messrs Brice, Bayliss, Nash, Sturge, Claydon, Harris, Kenny, Stone, Willcocks, Salmon, Gardener, and the only woman candidate Arabella Cooper, were not elected.)

A GLIMPSE OF CHARLBURY

In the 150 years since the opening of Charlbury Station, countless thousands of people must have admired our town from the windows of a railway carriage. One such was the diarist Henry Peerless, who stopped at Charlbury on two occasions in August 1894 on his way to and from Great Malvern: and I have a vision of him sitting on the train at Charlbury Station, notebook in hand, looking up at the church, and certainly never imagining that one day his diaries would end up here, in the ownership of someone who loved them so much that he would decide to edit them for publication.

Henry Peerless was born in Brighton in 1866, and kept a diary of his travels around the UK and Europe for almost 30 years, starting with his honeymoon in 1891. One of the most striking aspects of the diaries is his sense that he was living at a time of immense social and technological progress. No detail escaped him. He was even impressed by the train that took him through Charlbury, with its modern design and its 'long, sweeping kind of speed'.

After Henry Peerless's death, the diaries passed first to his son and then to his grandson: but following a rift in the family they were sold to a dealer in Cheltenham, from whom I bought them - sight unseen - in November 1998. Over a century after Henry Peerless's last fleeting visit to Charlbury, therefore, his Malvern diary returned to the town, together with the 26 other notebooks in a cardboard box. They were yellowed and dusty, and as I unpacked them my three-year-old daughter Charlotte quickly lost interest. 'Oh, dirty books,' she said.

I picked out a volume at random and began to read. The entry was dated 31 July 1897, and Henry Peerless had just bought a bicycle. 'It is absolutely surprising what a prominent part the bicycle plays in modern life,' he wrote. 'It has come amongst us, conquering all, and bids to remain for all time - unless the motor-car should supersede it, but at present the motor-car seems to lag dreadfully.'

It was another Charlbury resident, Rob Stepney, who urged me to contact East Sussex's senior archivist, his friend Christopher Whittick. Christopher not only managed to answer many of my queries about turn-of-the-century Brighton: he also succeeded in putting me in touch with the last two surviving members of the family, both in their 90s, who still remembered the diarist.

Christopher Whittick was unsuccessful in one respect, however. He failed to persuade me to donate the original manuscripts to the County Archives in East Sussex. Charlbury, at least for now, is where they are going to remain.

EDWARD FENTON

*'A Brief Jolly Change: The Diaries of Henry Peerless, 1891-1920' is published by Day Books in July 2003. A limited number of advance copies can be obtained from
Evenlode Books, Market Street (01608 819117)
or direct from the publishers (diaries@day-books.com).*

Kick start Charlbury Street Fair 2003 with the thrills and spills of
Street Fair 2003
Formula 1 Wheelbarrow Race
Friday 19th September
7.45pm on the starting grid

Dig out your Wheelbarrow find a team mate and challenge your friends to enter the Street Fair 2003 Formula 1 Wheelbarrow race. The track will wind it's way past many pit stops, conveniently placed at local hostleries past and present, where team members make a quick changeover and take on lubricants !

Teams of two (all entrants must be over the age of 18)

Free Entry

Prizes donated by local publicans for **Fastest Team** and **Best Dressed Barrow/Occupants**.

To enter complete the slip which will be found by the boxes located at The Rose & Crown, The Farmers, The Bell or News & Things.
Entries must be received by 11pm Friday 12th September.

See posters and notice boards for further details prior to the September *Chronicle*.

For further details contact Chris Wray (811363) or speak to Pete at the Farmers.

After the Wheelbarrow race the **Wych Wayz Border Morris Dancers** will provide music dancing and entertainment.

WALK YOUR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

Would you like to:

Take more exercise?

Enjoy the fresh air and
beautiful local countryside?

Meet new people?

West Oxfordshire District Council and South West Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust are looking for people who would like to become involved in a walking scheme based in the Charlbury area. Meeting points will be close to the Taxi Bus route in order to encourage more people to take advantage of the scheme. Walks will range from approx 1-3 miles, will be led by trained leaders and will be suitable for all the family.

Did you know that walking can:

- Help prevent Diabetes
- Reduce blood pressure
- Assist in the management of Coronary Heart Disease
- Reduce the risk of bowel cancer by up to 40%
- Prevent the development of osteoarthritis and osteoporosis
- Increase confidence, stamina and independence

If you are interested in taking part in the walks, becoming a walk leader or being on a steering group to develop the scheme, please contact Kate Arnold (01993) 861552 or email kate.arnold@westoxon.gov.uk.

NOAH'S ARK OPENS ITS DOORS

Ever since Noah's Ark in Sheep Street was bought by garden photographer Andrew Lawson to house his photographic picture library we've all been wondering what the finished building would look like. On April 26th, with the building almost ready for occupation, Andrew and his wife Briony hosted an Open House so that the curious could see for themselves the amazing transformation that has taken place. Entering through the traditional cottage frontage from Sheep Street one is transported into a stunning and quite unexpected architectural creation. Noah's Ark was the name given to a cottage on this site in the sixteenth century. In the twentieth century it became a series of garages - among others Warner's Garage, then A.H. Morrison's - until it was sold to Alan Bristow in 1987 for his architectural practice. It was acquired by Andrew Lawson on Alan's retirement about two years ago.

The building has been completely gutted and entirely refurbished, and now contains a spacious ground floor which serves as a facility and recreation space for the staff, centred around a glass-topped atrium extending the height of the building, complete with unique Zen water garden to give an air of peace and calm. Another unusual feature is a deep well which was uncovered during the course of the building work. This has been revealed, covered with thick reinforced glass and illuminated with concealed lighting. A nice touch, it now provides an interesting link with the site's past.

The upstairs floor houses a wonderful open plan office area entirely purpose-built with a series of carefully designed work stations each with built-in light-box for viewing the transparencies. Around the edges of the room will stand the filing cabinets containing approximately 200,000 slides, all carefully catalogued. There has been much use of beech wood to give a modern, light feeling to the spacious office.

On May 24th Office Manager Judy Dod will be supervising the move from the former offices at Gothic House in Church Street to the new location. All the staff (Alison Chapman, Philippa Hunt, Carolyn McNab, Marie Robinson, Maureen Sparling, Juliet Thomas and Alicia Wilkinson) are local to Charlbury or nearby and are very much looking forward to transferring to their exciting new workspace.

Andrew's garden and plant photographs are published in a wide range of publications, both in Britain and abroad. You can see his work in top gardening magazines like *Gardens Illustrated*, *BBC Gardeners' World* and *The English Garden*, home magazines like *House and Garden* and *Country Homes and Interiors*, and general interest publications like *Country Life*. His photographs also frequently appear on the gardening pages of the national newspapers, in particular the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*, and *The Sunday Times*. Andrew has written various books such as *The Gardener's Book of Colour* and contributes photographs to many publishers like Frances Lincoln and Conran Octopus for their range of gardening titles.

CLUBS, DRAMA, SPORT, GROUPS

CHARLBURY YOUTH THEATRE CHANGES ITS NAME

To mark ten years of challenging, inspiring, entertaining drama, Charlbury Youth Theatre is undergoing a name change to better reflect its aims and aspirations. Starting from Break Time (July 17 to 19) the group will be known as Shed Theatre.

According to Chris Wray, one of a quartet of talented, motivational directors, the youth theatre belongs to Charlbury, but is about much more than Charlbury. Its horizons are expanding beyond the confines of its locality. The Shed, in Nineacres, is its home and encompasses all that the theatre group is about. Other creative ventures such as Centre Stage, Charlbury's own children's theatre school are flourishing in this creative venue. "Watch this space" says Chris Wray.

Charlbury Youth Theatre productions have always been a treat, a diversion from the normal youth theatre offerings - you won't see Bugsy Malone as portrayed by this group. Productions such as Cabaret, which until CYT performed it was shied away from, are more their style. Or perhaps an adaptation of a classic tale, or an inspiring piece of poetry – the sources of their productions are as diverse as the talent on display. "We aim to create the climate which brings out what they have to offer" is how Chris Wray puts it.

The aim of the youth theatre is not to produce actors and actresses, but a measure of its success can be seen in the number of former members who go on to study drama at a "higher" level. Rather, the aim is to build confidence, self awareness and above all, to have fun, the freedom to create something, the space to play.

The productions stand alone as pieces of entertainment. Mums and Dads may form the bulk of the audience, but those without offspring attending CYT should not be put off. Shed Theatre offers a rare opportunity to witness quality drama in Charlbury.

The latest production, Break Time, is a time-travel fantasy devised by the group themselves, and drawn from a variety of sources. It's early days, but the show is already taking shape and promises to be a wonderful voyage and a great trip. There is currently a waiting list to join Shed Theatre, but again, plans are afoot to remedy the situation.

For further information on Shed Theatre, contact Trish Fraser on 810276.

CHARLBURY CRICKET CLUB

Another season of cricket has recently got underway at Dyers Hill, Cornbury Park, Charlbury where the cricket club aims to cater for all ages and abilities of cricket. The youth section of the club which primarily meets on a Monday evening, has organised practice on a regular basis for over 150 children whilst the ladies team have again increased their membership for the coming season.

We are constantly looking for new members and whilst there is active and positive competition for league team places, it is the policy of the club to try and ensure any person who wants a game of cricket can play. To this end you will often find a game at Charlbury on either a Saturday or Sunday afternoon from May until the end of September.

The club house, which has recently been refurbished, has a bar which opens at 6.00 pm on a match day, so please feel welcome to come and watch the cricket and enjoy a drink at very reasonable prices.

The current season sees both the first and second elevens enter new leagues following promotion from their respective divisions. The first eleven, under the captaincy of Glen McCallum, seek to emulate or even improve on last years successes where they finished the league on the same number of points as the eventual league winners and also made the final of the divisional cup. The second eleven, under the captaincy of Scoop Horne, will again try to balance the introduction of youngsters to club cricket yet seek to rise up the tables of the Oxford Cricket Association. The Sunday XI continues to have a strong fixture list combining youth, experience and social fun for all members of the club.

Off the field, Charlbury Cricket Club is working with a number of parties to secure a new Cricket Pavilion and the security of cricket for the next 25 years for all residents of Charlbury. Plans should be released soon detailing the club's future proposals for the Dyers Hill ground which, apart from the new pavilion, hope to include enhanced practice facilities and areas for the Youth and disabled sections of the club.

The club is well known for the firework display and bonfire evening in November but we hope to emulate the success of this event by carrying out a number of fun events over the next 12 months. Please keep an eye on local notice boards for these events.

Finally, a cry to all you would-be caterers. Due to the number of games held at the ground we are desperate for help in preparing teas for home games. The efforts are often well rewarded with thanks and more importantly cash! If you are interested in helping, playing or becoming a member in any capacity, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following representatives of the club:

Paul Faulkner, Chairman 810656; Paul Jenkins, Secretary 811778; Glen McCallum, Capt 1st XI
Scoop Horne, Capt 2nd XI We very much hope to see you at the Club.

Paul Jenkins, Hon Sec., Bell Yard Cottage, Church Street, Charlbury, OX7 3PP

The Choir of Girton College, Cambridge will be giving a concert at 7.30pm on Saturday 21st June at St Mary the Virgin church, Shipton-under-Wychwood. A chance to hear this world-renowned choir singing a range of music, from Renaissance and Tudor church music, to modern, more popular pieces, before their summer tour to China. Tickets cost £8, £5 for under-16s, and are available in advance or on the door. For tickets, or more information, please call Bernard West on 01993 831242.

NOTICEBOARD

SPURGEON'S CHILD CARE is an international Christian Voluntary Agency providing a range of services for children and families in need and is a joint project with Oxfordshire Social Services. They are currently trying to recruit more volunteers - men and women of all ages and backgrounds - to befriend or act as advocate for children and young people in Oxfordshire. If you have a few hours to offer once a fortnight and would like to know more contact Tony Thomas, Spurgeon's Child Care, Courtyard Youth Arts Centre, Launton Road, Bicester, telephone 01869 602570, or email oxoniv@hotmail.com

WEST OXON CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

The CAB is one of the UK's largest and best known voluntary organisations. In 2001 the West Oxon CAB (with bureaux in Witney and Chipping Norton) responded to almost 13,000 requests for advice from the local community. These queries ranged from simple requests for local information to more complicated issues regarding employment rights or debt management. In a recent survey, 92% of clients felt that visiting the bureau had made a real difference to their situation. The service of the CAB as a problem-solving organisation is provided by trained volunteers who derive a great deal of satisfaction from the work. West Oxon CAB is currently recruiting for volunteers to join training programmes - if you would like to find out more, please contact Liz on 01993 708492, or drop in for a chat to 33a High Street, Witney, or email on bureau@westoxfordshirecab.cabnet.org.uk

SOBELL HOUSE HOSPICE CHARITY

Can you help us to provide funding for the running costs of your local hospice by holding a fundraising event? The Charity needs to raise around £800,000 this year to provide hospice care, which is not covered by the NHS. We all hope that hospices will be there for us if we should ever need them. Can you help us to raise much needed funds to ensure that Sobell House Hospice can continue to maintain the range of care that they would wish to provide? If you are interested in holding a summer fundraising event but would like some advice on how to go about it, please contact the Charity Office on 01865 883339.

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND

Margaret Preston, Campaign Manager for the Oxfordshire Branch of the CPRE is asking us all to consider how we can help to preserve this beautiful part of the country. The CPRE believes passionately that these things cannot be left to chance as there are so many conflicting pressures at work and there is a risk of losing what we have for ever. Currently, the CPRE is focusing on signage which is proliferating throughout the area. Many signs are unnecessary, aesthetically poor and just serve to clutter up our villages and towns. The CPRE seeks to influence councils to develop more careful policies so that only signs that are absolutely essential are used. All the CPRE's work depends on the support and generosity of the people of Oxfordshire. Please consider joining the CPRE as an active way of helping to preserve Oxfordshire's special landscape. Call Margaret Preston on 01865 874780.

WEST OXON CITIZEN ADVOCACY

CITAD continues to look for volunteer citizen advocates to build advocacy relationships with people living in the area who have difficulty speaking up effectively for themselves. Ring Anthony Richards or June Ward on 01993 704826 or email info@CITAD33a.freeserve.co.uk for further information.

CHARLBURY EVERGREENS GOLDEN JUBILEE 1953 – 2003

Charlbury Evergreens were formed in the Spring of 1953. Money to help found this and many other clubs in the area came from a fund of monies administered by Dr Scott of Shipton under Wychwood. The Club met fortnightly at the beginning, and because of food rationing a Special Authority form was raised and approved by the Ministry of Food, to allow the purchase of sugar, butter and margarine from Mr Keyte's the Grocer in Sheep Street. Some of the founder members were Mr and Mrs Charlie Hughes, Mr and Mrs Charlie Bradley, Mr and Mrs George, Mrs Hughes, Rev T.J. Wood and Bridget Wastie as Secretary. The early meetings were in the upper room of the Corner House and in the garden of The Homestead in the summer, if wet they would go into the Billiard Room at The Homestead. To raise funds for the club a raffle would be held at each meeting, with all the prizes donated by members, many would be fruit, flowers and vegetables from The Homestead garden; it was also club tradition to honour the birthday of any member with a small gift.

The membership soon reached over 100 but not all would attend at anyone time, with the possible exception of the Christmas Party and the Annual Birthday Party, when volunteers would collect people from their homes and take them to the meeting. When the memorial Hall opened the parties were held there, and a picture of one of the first parties is in the Corner House. Older Charlbury residents will well remember that the membership represented most of Charlbury's old families - Parsons, Prew, Loader, Pratley, Hughes, Bradley, Timms, George, Sandalls and Blakes to name but a few. Catering and help for the parties was carried out by the families of the members including Queenie Hanks, Emily Hughes, Margerie Curry, Edith Bradley, Renee Wallis and Joyce Harrison, later to become the leading light of the club. Local talent used to give their time to entertain at these parties and one of the early and regular performers was Bob Arnold from Astall Leigh, later to be better known as Tom Forrest in the Archers. In the summer outings were made using John Phillips or Worths coaches, mainly to visit large country homes and gardens or other places of interest. One such outing in July 1955 was recorded in the August edition of 'The Leaflet', when sixty- six members had an outing to Henley and Reading, with tea provided at Reading.

The club prospered until the early seventies when it went into decline and the membership dropped to between 15 to 20 people who attended the then weekly meetings. It was at this time that Sadie Edwards stepped into the breach for a year which lasted for fourteen years. It was Sadie that first introduced the idea of an annual holiday trip and managed to persuade other local villages to raise sufficient people to go to Paignton in Devon. Over the years she has been succeeded by many people who have given years of service to the club such as, among others, Joyce Harrison, Bill Savin, Eileen Mitchell, Jesse Faulkner and more recently Ken and Margaret Taylor. The Club continues to prosper and still meets on the first and third Thursday of the month. Many of the old

traditions carry on but the membership is now even more active, with theatre visits, holidays, parties, coach trips, coffee mornings and many other activities.

Charlbury Evergeens would welcome any new members and others prepared to help with the club and carry it forward to its next milestone 'The Diamond Jubilee'.

The Charlbury Chronicle is grateful to the writer of this article who wishes to remain anonymous

A LIFE'S DAY Gerry Appadoo – Garage Proprietor

The alarm usually goes at 6.45am. I like to wake up gradually. Opening one eye first and then taking about ten minutes to get out of bed. Either Jo, my partner, or I go down and make a cup of tea. We feed our two dogs and the cat, put them out and go back up stairs to drink our tea while listening to the news. I shower and dress and have a breakfast of coffee and toast; then it's on with the overalls and off to the garage somewhere before nine. Dean has already opened up the garage and we start looking at the diary of jobs for the day. I usually order the parts we need and they can come from Banbury, Witney or Oxford. Dean and Luke now handle the bulk of our work and I can afford to choose what I want to do. I love handling unusual problems; ever since I was a boy I have enjoyed taking things apart and mending them. It gives me great satisfaction. It was because of this that I ended up in the garage business. I was born in Mauritius and my father was a meteorologist and my mother was the matron of Ecole Normale, the local teacher training college. The love of my life was cycle racing. I used to get up at five in the morning to train and spent three quarters of the year racing. My studies suffered and I knew I did not want to do academic things. My parents did not like the idea of a mechanic in the family, so they decided to send me to London to a college for foreign students where I could take some A levels and repeat some O levels. I was seventeen and a half years old. The college course did not go well and an uncle in Oxford knowing where my interests lay said that he could arrange an apprenticeship for me at a small garage in Cowley. Again this did not work as they were doing a favour for my uncle and did not really want an apprentice. I was now on my own as my father would not support me after I had dropped out of college. I went round many garages in Oxford and eventually Hartford Motors in Rosehill took me on. I told them I could not work on a Friday because secretly I planned to take a Motor Technicians course at the Oxford Poly on that day. After a while one of the managers, John Hunt came to see me to ask why I would not work the full week and when I told him, he said they would sponsor me. I was so grateful as they were hard times. I was earning £6.17s.6d a week and £3 of that went in rent but I was on my way in the garage business.

After a morning usually spent doing jobs that interest me, we close the garage for lunch. I stay on the premises. We have a cup of tea and a sandwich and I try and do the quick crossword in "The Telegraph". My early life in the garage trade working on Fords, Rovers, Renaults and Rolls Royces has made me very conscious of a garage mechanic's development and I take a great interest in the people working for me. I like seeing them develop their skills not only in mechanical work but also in the handling of customers. In the afternoon I might pick up parts or go out to breakdowns. Sometimes my whole day is spent rebuilding a gearbox. I like this because it taxes the brain and you have to make sure that everything is just right. I enjoy specialist work; it reminds me of the time when I was involved in rebuilding Bentleys, converting them into 1930 type cars; I ended up in charge of the Mechanical Department. It was 1979 and I was married. I realised that the only way I was going to get on was to go into business on my own. A friend and I advertised for a garage and the Charlbury Garage replied. We decided to go ahead and they had quite a lot of work scheduled but when we arrived on the first day nobody came. The second day was the same and we wondered what we had done. We even brought our own cars over to work on so that we looked busy. On the third day it was the same but a client's car was booked in. He did not appear so as he lived just up the road, I decided to go and collect the car. He looked very surprised when I called but let me have the car. It was the turning point because he recommended us to other people and the business started to take off. The first few years were very hard, working until late at night, sometimes until 11 pm. when we went to get fish and chips at the local shop. After three years I was able to move with my wife and two daughters to live in Chilson. Of course owning your own business means dealing with the administration and at 4.30 in the afternoon, I start to prepare the bills for the customers coming in. For me the customer is always right but it does lead to some funny situations. Some customers came to collect their car, drove off but returned a few minutes later with a squeal of tyres. "It won't go", they said, which was odd as they had just driven in. "It's the radio; it was working when we brought it in, now it isn't!". I got in the car, switched on and turned the knob for the radio. It was fine; it turned out that they had never switched the radio off in the whole time they had had the car! The garage closes at 5.30pm. but I usually stay on till about 7 o'clock working on administration. In 1997 I was lucky enough to be able to buy Parson's garage. Again my enjoyment of working on things came to the fore; we did quite a lot of alterations inside, we used furniture that was surplus when the dentist in the Spendlove moved. We opened up the front doors and put in new ramps. We are also anxious to use new technology and have a scanner with cartridges for most cars. We still have to get some for Japanese cars. A funny thing happened when we moved because a regulation made us continue doing MOTs at the old garage. One day I noticed that the safe had been stolen from the garage and it was thought that the thieves had been after the MOT certificates. It must have taken a great effort as the safe was under the stairs in a confined space; it was bolted to the floor and was extremely heavy. The safe was later found in a field miles away in Wheatley with the back cut out but they went away empty-handed as the certificates were not there.

When I get home I like to work in the garden, particularly in the summer. Jo works hard in the garden digging the vegetable patch and looking after the flower borders. I do the grass mowing, hedge trimming, log cutting. Recently I have enjoyed building a log shed with a four layer stone wall. We eat about 8.30 to 9.00p.m. We both like to cook and my specialities are Mauritian food, with rice and pastas, tomato sauce, garlic and lentils. We watch the ten o'clock news and are then ready for bed. We usually read; I am enjoying a book about the Tour de France. Now that I am beginning to back off a little from the business, I think about possibly cycling from the North to the South of France, because it is something Jo and I both enjoy. As I go to sleep I think of other plans like rebuilding an Austin Healey 3000 - my first car was an Austin Healey Sprite, which I rebuilt. I also think of chasing the sun - between 1985 and 2000 I saved to buy a house in Mauritius so that I can go back and relive some of my youth - and thinking of these things I drift off to sleep.

Gerry Appadoo was talking to Diana Potten

RAGWORT TIME AGAIN!

Everyone who cares about our environment and countryside will recognise the plant Common Ragwort (*Senecio Jacobaea*). It is an obvious weed in July and August when it grows up to 3 feet tall with ragged edged leaves and a yellow flower, but it is NOW that we need to act to eradicate this poisonous plant.

Some useful information about ragwort:

- Common Ragwort is a listed weed under the 1959 Weeds Act. To allow it to grow, flower and spread contravenes the law.
- Further legislation is planned this year when Mr John Greenway MP brings his Equine Welfare (Ragwort Control) Bill before parliament.
- The poisons in Ragwort are called pyrrolizidine alkaloids (Pas). These are dangerous to humans and animals. Evidence of PAs in eggs, grain, milk and honey has been recorded.
- If you had Ragwort growing on land last year it needs treating with a MCPA or a 2,4-D herbicide as soon as the young plants appear in April. A non-toxic environmentally friendly spray is also available called Barrier H.
- Never allow animals into areas where Ragwort has been sprayed until all the plants have rotted into the ground.
- The only way to deal with fully grown ragwort is to pull it up and burn it.
- ALWAYS wear gloves and long sleeves to cover your arms when handling Ragwort and remember to wash your hands when you have finished.
- Ragwort retains its poisonous properties whether growing, sprayed or dried in food.

Ragwort kills horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep and many other plants. Oxfordshire is one of the most beautiful counties with a wonderful spread of animal and plant life and we all need to be involved to protect it from the spread of this dangerous weed. Join the BHS campaign to eradicate this weed by dealing with any plants you find on your own land. If you see any areas of Ragwort growing please report it to either myself or The Oxford County Council Environmental Services department (telephone number 01869 241144) with full details of the location.

For leaflets, further advice on spraying or help identifying Ragwort please contact the BHS welfare officer Miss D M Harris on 01993 702844 or visit the web site, www.bhs.org.uk/welfare and follow the links for Ragwort or visit <http://members.aol.com/bhssouth/page12.html> for details on the research that has been undertaken.

The Friends of Wychwood will be holding the 2003 Forest Fayre on Sunday August 31st at the New Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton under Wychwood, from noon until 5 pm to promote the work of the Wychwood Project and raise valuable funds for their various projects. For further information about the Wychwood Project write to Countryside Service, Fletcher's House, Woodstock OX20 1SN; telephone 01993 814143; email wychwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk; or look at www.wychwoodproject.org

CHARLBURY CHILDREN TAKE CENTRE STAGE - *and Alison Holthouse was in the audience*

It's always exciting when a new venture takes off in a small town and, if the first end of term show is anything to go by, that is certainly the case with Centre Stage, Charlbury's new Children's Theatre School based at The Shed in Nine Acres Lane.

Anneke Hay, who has taught drama and movement to children at various drama schools, first sent out leaflets to find out if there was any interest in such a facility last Autumn and in the few months since those enquiries, eighty Charlbury children have enrolled. They are already enjoying and benefiting from weekly drama sessions as well as a programme of one-off workshops covering poetry, singing, contemporary dance and so on. A week's summer school is scheduled for July.

Turning up for the end of term show, to be frank, I didn't expect that much. After all, the children (age range 5-13) had only been attending for a term and from witnessing the bunch of high-spirited kids careering around in the confined space of The Shed at the beginning and end of sessions it seemed impossible that Anneke, who is helped by older children from the Shed Theatre (formerly known as Charlbury Youth Theatre), would have had time to achieve that much with them. I was in for a surprise.

From beginning to end the show, with just the simplest of staging and all the kids in either black or their newly acquired Centre Stage t-shirts, was full of energy, interest and above all complete focus and enthusiasm from the children. All of them, from the youngest, whose attention you might expect to wander, to the oldest, who could be expected to be edging towards that cynicism and self-consciousness that might preclude full involvement, were totally focussed on what they were doing throughout the performance. If they weren't actually on stage at the time they were enthusiastically watching and applauding what the other age groups had prepared.

The items in the show consisted of tableaux and mimes that the younger ones had worked on, an atmospheric Indian piece, a more comic 'Everlasting Sweet Machine' and an invigorating rendition of Blur's 'Park Life'. The choice of music for the children to work to was excellent throughout, engendering just the right mood for each section. The older ones had worked on the 'commercial break' devising a series of amusing adverts and also a very funny interview with Martians who have arrived in town which revealed some real comic acting talent.

The whole evening was 'compered' by teenagers from the Shed Theatre who conducted the show with composure and polish, obviously having benefited from their involvement with drama in Charlbury over the years. The overall impression of all the youngsters involved right through from 5 to mid teens was of a confident, enthusiastic group. One of the aims of Centre Stage listed in its literature reads 'Emphasis is placed on personal growth; enabling students to develop creatively, imaginatively, physically, emotionally and socially, increasing self-esteem and self-confidence, imaginative thought, articulation, co-ordination and self-expression.' From watching this group of children down at The Shed it's already working.

If you would like more information about Centre Stage contact Anneke Hey on 01608 811269

LOOKING FORWARD TO TOMORROW

A Chronicle reader suggested that an article on the NHFA might be of interest to some older residents and their families

Nowadays we are living longer, healthier and more active lifestyles, more so than ever during our retirement years. However, the need for care can often arise unexpectedly, leaving many older people and their families, unfamiliar with our care system, faced with a variety of problems.

Understanding what the state might provide, choosing the right care, and above all how to afford it, are some of the questions which arise. Those who choose to obtain and pay for their care independently often find that their capital if left on deposit will not produce sufficient income to meet high care costs and they find they are running out of money long before their need for care ceases.

Our complex care and legal system means that often individuals are unaware of the financial and non means-tested assistance that they are entitled to - such as, amongst others, attendance allowance (which can be as much as £57.20 p.w.) and the 12-week property disregard.

Over the last ten years over 150,000 families have benefited from the NHFA Care Fees Planning Service, which focuses on the needs of the retired often at a time of crisis in their lives. The NHFA is a specialist, independent organisation which provides a free advisory service which aims to guide people through the financial and legal issues to be considered when planning for payment of care fees. NHFA Advisers can help clients through the maze of specialist financial products or care fee payment plans that will help safeguard savings and enable capital to be preserved to leave to loved ones.

Their aim is to enable older people meet their care costs for life whilst also preserving their original capital, and with that their independence, dignity and the right of choice they deserve at perhaps the most vulnerable time of their lives.

For more information on care fees planning, the NHFA can be called on freephone 0800 998833

NATURE NOTES – A county Flower for Oxfordshire by Christine Elliott

The charity Plantlife is dedicated to conserving all plant life in its natural habitat. They recognise that the complex web of life on Earth depends upon plants and are therefore trying to stop the serious decline that has occurred over the past 50 years. In 2002, to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee, Plantlife introduced the County Flowers Project for the public to choose a favourite flower for each county. Tens of thousands of people nominated flowers and since the bluebell was by far the most popular it is now being adopted as our national flower. We are now at the final stage where each county can vote between just two flowers. In Oxfordshire, the choice is between the Snake's Head Fritillary and the Meadow Clary.

The pinky maroon Fritillary grows from a bulb and used to be a common sight growing in water meadows. Fritillary meadows can be seen during April and early May at Iffley Meadows, Magdalen College, and Ducklington. Traditionally, on Fritillary Sundays, people could go and pick flowers and put money in a collection box for charity. The thought of picking armloads of fritillaries now seems quite incredible. Ducklington church came under the patronage of Magdalen College and it is possible that bulbs were transferred from Ducklington to the Magdalen meadow. This could explain why Ducklington has had fritillaries "beyond living memory" while fritillaries at Magdalen were only recorded in 1785! To support this suggestion, Magdalen's fritillaries have a high proportion of white blooms just like at Ducklington.

The Meadow Clary has long-stemmed purple flowers in June and is related to the garden salvia, it is a rare plant in the UK but very common in Europe. Oxfordshire is its UK stronghold with 15 sites and Charlbury is the centre of a group of 8 sites with one being at Wigwell. Meadow Clary is a plant of pasture and woodland edge and has been directly affected by artificial fertilisers encouraging grass growth, which swamp the plant. It needs open ground for its seeds to germinate so small open areas caused by animals hoof prints, mammal runs, worm casts, and rabbit scrapes are all beneficial. The build up of plant litter, i.e. dead plant material prevents the seeds from germinating so it is important to have some disturbance from grazing animals to break it up.

Wildflowers used to be far more abundant in the countryside and now, because of intensive farming practices and the urban parks approach to the management of open areas, sites growing even the commonest of wildflowers need to be cherished and protected. Fortunately, the protection given to rare plants in nature reserves also benefits the other flowers that grow in the same habitat, but it is even more important to encourage flowers in far more ordinary and widespread locations or they in turn will become scarce. For example, sites like the grass under the walnut trees at Ticknell Piece, which is old pasture, could be a drift of meadow flowers if it wasn't cut so regularly. However, there are some success stories such as the town cemetery, which is being much more sympathetically managed now, and the wild flowers there are a real delight.

Votes for our County Flower can be made until October 31st 2003 on Plantlife's web site: www.plantlife.org.uk.

150 YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG

150 years ago, on Saturday June 4th 1853, the first Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway train steamed into Charlbury station. Prior to this, there had been a couple of years activity with "navvies" building bridges, digging out cuttings and creating embankments in the Charlbury area. One of them, Richard Coombs of Finstock, died in a landslide on 2nd October 1851, aged 21 years, and is buried in Charlbury Churchyard. In addition to the railway itself, one major visible change in Charlbury was the straightening of Forest Road which, prior to the arrival of the railway, formed a "dog-leg" around a field. The original station building, which survives today, is one of two on the Cotswold Line of a Brunellian timber built chalet type, which was designed for the South

West. The other was at Evesham, but this was replaced by a standard Great Western type of building in the late 1800s. Evesham and Charlbury were the two main passing places on the original single track line, so had an air of importance.

Prior to the coming of the railway, people in the Cotswolds did not travel far. Only the rich could afford such luxuries and this did not immediately change as train fares were high. However employment was created in the railway industry for local communities and other businesses sprung up, such as the gas works.

Charlbury was not a particularly busy passenger station. In the early 1900s, it attracted an average of only about 260 passengers per week, whereas today, it is coping with well above that each weekday. There was a considerable amount of coming and going with local freight and parcels, and wagons were loaded or unloaded in several sidings or the goods shed. Another siding was used to drop coal for the pump house which supplied water to the troughs towards Chadlington. In the 1920s and 1930s, we had a predecessor to the Charlbury Taxibus, as Wearings, the motor garage in Sheep Street, operated a bus link "meeting all trains". Coal merchants, Marriotts and Frosts, had offices in the coal yard at the station. As late as the 1950s, Nellie Hall, for a modest fee, would collect a wheelbarrow full of coal and after struggling up the hill with it, would deliver to houses in the town.

Even though they were comparatively low already, passenger numbers started to decline with the advent of the car. In the 1950 and 1960s, the situation nationally was becoming critical and in May 1964, the dreaded "Beeching Axe" was hovering over the Cotswold Line. It is interesting to note that in the Transport Act public notice, the geographical list of stations from which it was proposed to discontinue passenger services showed Kingham between Finstock and Ascott-under-Wychwood. Originally, Charlbury was for the chop, until, at the very last minute, the text was altered when it was realised that Kingham attracted less passengers! As it happened, all Oxfordshire stations on this list survived.

Increasing concerns about the viability of this slender silver thread through the Cotswolds - it had mostly been reduced back to single track in 1971 - led to the Cotswold Line Promotion Group (CLPG) being formed in 1978. Its aims were, and still are, to encourage the fullest use of the Line so that closure does not become an option. It was not long afterwards that British Rail announced its intention to withdraw all through trains to London and replace them with ageing diesel units shuttling between Oxford and Worcester. The CLPG saw this as the end of the Line if it were allowed to happen. British Rail was persuaded to retain the two most important morning and evening trains and, in 1983, the first InterCity 125 High Speed Train was introduced, although the situation was still far from satisfactory, with other trains regularly missing connections at Oxford or being generally unreliable.

This continued until May 1993, when, probably for the first time in its history, the Cotswold Line enjoyed the use of brand new rolling stock in the form of Turbo trains, and the through service to London was reinstated. This generated a large increase in passenger numbers and several extra trains have since been introduced to cater for the demand. This is broadly the situation at present.

The future for Charlbury station looks bright. How bright will largely depend on the way the railways are financed in future. The Strategic Rail Authority needs to be convinced that improving the infrastructure of the Cotswold Line will have wider benefits than just in the Cotswolds, and the letting of a new Thames Trains' Franchise from April 2004 and of a new "Greater Western" franchise in 2006 could also play a significant part.

An exhibition of local railway memorabilia is currently on display in Charlbury Museum as part of the "Cotswold Line 150" programme of events.

John Stanley, Cotswold Line Promotion Group

CHARLBURY COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTRE

There is still time to sign up for some local summer courses run by the CEC.

Saturday workshop on June 14th:

Decorated and Embellished Pieces from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm at the Memorial Hall. Fee is £25.

FREE Bitesize Intros:

Summer Foods at the Memorial Hall on Wednesday June 18th from 7.30 to 9.30 pm.

Ole - Spanish for Beginners at the Primary School on Tuesday June 17th from 7.30 to 9.30

House History in the Corner House on Wednesday June 18th from 2.00 to 4.00 pm.

For further details please ring or email Sue Godfrey at the Community Education Centre on 810961 or charlbury.cec@oxfordshire.gov.uk

CHARLBURY WASTE ACTION GROUP

7 June - Kitchen goods and tools collection (10-2pm) at the Memorial Hall; plastic bottles at Spendlove Car Park.

5 July - Green garden waste collection (10-2pm) Spendlove Car Park.

There was a timber collection on May 3rd in conjunction with Finstock Recycling. The collection was successful and the wood was recycled by M&M waste contractors, who use poor quality wood for making new chipboard, and good wood is sold to furniture manufacturers. Charlbury collected half a lorry-load of timber. CAWAG and Finstock are also producing an A-Z of waste reduction facilities locally, which will be sent to all householders when it is ready, probably in the Autumn.

BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION 2003

This year judging of the competition will take place during the summer in late June/July. All gardens visible from the footpath will be included.

There are four categories - large, medium and small gardens plus best tub, hanging basket or window-box. The presentation of prizes will take place on Saturday September 6th at 4.15 pm after the Horticultural Society's Annual Show in the Memorial Hall.

John Moore
Charlbury Horticultural Society

AN EDUCATION IN ALE

Last year's Charlbury Beer Festival raised almost five thousand pounds for the primary school. Organisers hope this year's event, to be held on July 12th, will comfortably exceed that amount. There is again encouraging support from our generous local sponsors. The Memorial Hall is booked; and seventeen barrels of beer are ordered. There will be two local ales: Bodicote's "Life Sentence" (which celebrates twenty years of success for the pub-based brewery near Banbury), and a bitter from Will Eckert's new microbrewery in Kidlington. Otherwise, following the pattern of the last four Festivals, beers will be drawn from all over the country. Among them are Frog Island's "Natterjack" from Northampton, "Radgie Gadgie" from Geordieland, and Orkney's "Red Mac-Gregor". Nethergates, brewer of this year's champion winter beer, will contribute their IPA; and we have "Flashman's Clout" from the noted Dorset craft brewer Goldfinch. As well as beer, there will be cider, wine and Pimms, food and entertainment. We look forward to seeing you there. Like last year, the Festival will coincide with the presentation of North Oxfordshire CAMRA's "Pub of the Year" award to Tom Page of the Rose and Crown.

Rob Stepney

PRAM SERVICE FOR THE UNDER-FIVES

Ecumenical musical praise, prayer, stories, craft activities, play and refreshments for the under-five's and their carers takes place on alternate Wednesdays during term times in St. Mary's Church at 10.15am (for a 10.30am start). The dates for June and July are 4th June (The Great Banquet), 18th June (Jesus the Builder) and 2nd July (The Greatest Treasure in the World). The term finishes with the popular pram service "Teddy Bear's Picnic" on 18th June at 10.15. All are welcome.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Treasurer: The branch is seeking a volunteer to take over as Honorary Treasurer. Please get in touch with Pam Neville (810594) if you are interested.

Commemorative Medals: The branch was successful in proposing the following resolution at the Annual County Conference at Kidlington in January: 'Charlbury Branch urges this conference to request the National Council to consider the guidance which denies members the right to wear at formal Royal British Legion occasions those commemorative medals to which they are entitled and which they have purchased in support of Service Charities'. The resolution was proposed by Branch Chairman Derek Fowler, seconded by John Hannis of Chipping Norton branch, and carried by 16 votes to 9. News of the National Council's decision is awaited. Copies of the Chairman's speech can be obtained from Jane Parsons on 810822.

Poppy Appeal: If anybody would like to help with the Poppy Appeal 2003 in any way please contact Helen Clarke (810608).

The Gulf: The branch would like to hear from any Charlbury residents with family members currently serving with the Armed Forces in the Gulf on Operation Telic. Please contact Derek Fowler (811706).

Information & Assistance: For further information about the RBL, how to join or how to get assistance please contact Nick Potter (810388).

SSAFA FORCES HELP

Nick and Sarah Potter were awarded badges for 15 years' service at the County AGM in May. For more information about the Charity and how it helps serving and ex-servicemen and women and their families, please contact Sarah on 810388.

CHARLBURY MUSEUM

To commemorate the opening of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway Line, and Charlbury Station, the Museum is putting on an exhibition of railway memorabilia, including photographs, models of the locomotives that used the line in the past 150 years and artefacts from the Great Western Railway and British Railways, such as old lamps, signs and various ephemera.

The Museum is open on Saturdays from 10 am to noon, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. Other times by appointment with the curator Ron Prew (810060).

We are still looking for interesting exhibits to do with the railway to improve our displays. If you have anything you would like to loan or give to the Museum please ring Ron Prew. The exhibition continues until the end of September.

BOOK REVIEW

WYCHWOOD AND CORNBURY by Charles Tyzack: Wychwood is a familiar local name, though the forest it refers to has largely disappeared. Cornbury too was once a Royal Forest, but in the 1300s it became a park. In 1660 it was given by Charles II to the first Earl of Clarendon who built there one of the great houses of Oxfordshire. This book tells the story of the forest and its slow decline and also builds on Vernon Watney's *Cornbury and the forest of Wychwood* which was published in 1910. The author's recent research brings the history of these two places up to date.

Published by Wychwood Press and available from Jon Carpenter BooksMarket, Street, Charlbury

TotBits – news for the parents of under-fives

OUT AND ABOUT

Picnics

Summer time is Picnic time. There is no better way to celebrate the arrival of good weather than to take a rug, picnic basket, sun hat, sandwiches, strawberries and juice and have a picnic in the sun. We are very lucky to have some beautiful picnic sites near at hand. In Charlbury itself, the fields down by the river make a beautiful picnic site, provided your children can be trusted near water. Blenheim Farm Nature Reserve near the dip in the Slade is another possibility for a warm summer day, and there are picnic tables up near the swings behind Ticknell Piece Road.

Further afield, the grounds of Minster Lovell Hall make a beautiful (free) picnic site with ruins to explore. There are ducks on the river there so take some spare bread and don't forget to take a peep in the old dovecote to see where the doves used to nest.

Swimming

Many toddlers and preschoolers love swimming. The Ace centre in Chipping Norton organises informal swimming sessions during school term time for babies (six months plus) to preschoolers at Penhurst School on Wednesday afternoons (12.45-1.45). The pool is very warm, so is good for the youngest children, and usually very quiet. It costs £1 per person, ring the Ace centre to confirm (01608 644440).

Also currently on Wednesday lunchtimes (12.30-1.30) the Chipping Norton Leisure centre (01608 646248) have a toddler pool session when the pool floor is raised. It is a little bit cooler but a very clean environment. The depth of the pool varies slightly from week to week but Hannah, my three-year-old, can just reach the bottom.

The Windrush Leisure Centre (01993 202020) in Witney has two pools – the smaller pool is just about the right depth for preschoolers. They also run Parent and Baby sessions for the under threes and grown-up swimming lessons for three-four year olds. The swimming lessons are booked on a termly basis and are popular. They also have occasional crash courses during the holidays for 3-4 year olds. Hannah went on a crash course over Easter and loved it. She had a lot of fun splashing across the pool with a float. Some of the four year olds were already managing a few strokes of front and back crawl.

Drop in Centre at the ACE centre

The family centre at the ACE centre in Burford Road, Chipping Norton is open to all prospective parents, parents and carers and their under five's throughout the year (and for children up to 14 in the school holidays). The centre offers families the chance to meet others and try out different experiences in a safe and stimulative environment. They offer the opportunity to learn through play with your child. Outdoor play is always available and there is soft play on Thursdays and Fridays. The Drop In is open Monday to Thursday 9am-12.30pm during term times. Family Friday runs during term time with special activities.

During the school holidays the Drop-In moves to the nursery. There is a large indoor play area with an upstairs-downstairs play house, many books and toys and a large outdoor area with climbing frame and outdoor toys. The session fee is 50p per family.

Other activities at the ACE centre include a Dad's Group on Saturday mornings and a Toy Library. The Toy Library opens on Friday 11.30-2.30 during term times and has a wide selection of toys, games, puzzles and videos to borrow at a reasonable price and also offers refreshments and a place for the children to play. The times vary so ask for a programme and details of the range of activities at the ACE centre (01608 644440).

Watch out for activities to celebrate childcare month on 19th June at the ACE centre. At the time of writing this is still being planned, but may include an afternoon picnic.

Charlbury Pre-School

Charlbury Pre-School are holding their annual Summer Fair on June 8th from 2pm until 5pm on the Playing Close. There will be a children's entertainer, obstacle course, raffle, tombola, cake stall, coconut shy, second hand toys, raffle, face painter, 'hook-a-duck', and much more. Charlbury Pre-School is a charity and this is their main fundraising event. You and every single member of your family are very welcome - Pre-School promises you a fun-filled afternoon!

Charlbury Toddlers

The Toddlers Group has been so well attended recently that they have been able to donate an amount of money to the Charlbury Preschool to buy chairs for the Preschool. The money raised by the Toddlers Group is usually reinvested in the group but there is a limited amount of space for new toys so they took the opportunity of helping the Pre-School.

If there are any parents or carers who would like to help with the Toddler Group, please could they contact Jacki Clark. Toddlers are currently short of helpers as many children move on at this time of year. People are needed to help on the day, setting out toys and tidying away, or even as new members on the committee.

The Toddlers group are holding a clothes sale on Monday 16 June from 9.30 until 11.30 in the Memorial Hall. This should give people an opportunity to buy good quality children's summer clothing at less-than-shop prices suitable for children from 0 to 6 years.

You can find the Toddlers group at the Memorial Hall on Monday mornings during term time from 9.30-11.30. It costs £1.50 per family.

TotBits is compiled by Alison Offer Drawings by Ann Buckmaster

OVER THE COUNTER - talking shop

As a service to our community the Charlbury Chronicle is happy to offer local businesses in the town the opportunity to feature in Over the Counter in each issue.

VINCENT PHARMACY is your local, independent pharmacy in the centre of Charlbury and at the heart of the community. Summer is finally with us and by the time you read this we will be deep into the hay fever season. Each year there are more and more new cases of hay fever and during the peak weeks (late May to mid July) we see many customers every day requesting cures and remedies for this annoying and sometimes debilitating condition. New products appear on the market every year, adding to the already wide range of products available. Ask the pharmacist or our trained assistants, who can advise you on the most appropriate treatments. They can also advise on other summer ailments such as sun protection, insect bites and medical needs for foreign travel. *The Pharmacy is open all day 9am to 6pm during the week and 9am to 1pm on Saturday.*

Whatever summer brings, keep your hair on! **PETER'S GENTLEMEN'S HAIR STYLISTS** have changed their special days, so make a note now. Boys' day is Tuesday, Senior Citizens' day is Thursday, and to save waiting your turn you can book an appointment on a Wednesday. Saturday is all go from a 7.00 am start till 4 pm, with three hairdressers in attendance. Appointments on 810630.

EVENLODE BOOKS has two new books of great local interest. 'Wychwood and Cornbury' by Charlbury Society chairman Charles Tyzack is the first history of the local mansion, its owners and its estate for nearly a hundred years, and includes many old photographs. Many local people still remember the schoolteacher and naturalist who is commemorated in 'W.D. Campbell: Naturalist and Teacher', a collection of talks, articles, stories, 'Country Diaries' and poems by a much-loved local figure who taught in Charlbury from 1928 to 1940, and retired here in 1970.

BUSINESS FOCUS (off Sheep Street) has a Multimedia projector and laptop that can be hired out by businesses for power point presentations, seminars etc. - they can be hired together or separately. Call Roger for rates on 811559. He also offers quality colour photocopying.

The new proprietor of **THE BELL**, Martyn Lyall, writes: 'My wife Louise and I have recently taken over The Bell Hotel and have concentrated on realising its potential by improving the service to our guests. We now have pleasure in offering a wide selection of gourmet food and real ales at reasonable prices, in intimate and comfortable surroundings. We are open all day for morning coffee, lunches, afternoon tea and dinner. Our provisions are carefully chosen from local suppliers with free range poultry and organic fruit and vegetables wherever possible. Our chef, Jane Silver, has been awarded two rosettes. Our self-contained function rooms can accommodate all your special occasions, meetings and conferences, and there are eleven warm and distinctive en-suite rooms available for overnight stays. To launch our new wine list we are offering £1.00 off a glass of wine or £2.00 off a bottle of wine. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Charlbury residents and hope you will enjoy The Bell's new range of facilities.'

Don't have your car's air conditioning let you down this summer! A system should be checked after 3-4 years of use, sooner if you do not use it regularly in the winter season. Mike Mahony, formerly of News & Things, runs his new business from home and carries out a mobile service and repair of car air conditioning systems. Mike's new business trades as **ACORN VEHICLE AIR CONDITIONING**. You can call Mike on his mobile number 07768 636 680: if you don't like phoning mobiles use the office number 01608 810009.

Jon Carpenter

If you wish to be included in the September issue please email your contribution to chronicle@huncot.fsnet.co.uk or telephone

Jon Carpenter on 819117.

The deadline for the September issue is August 8th.

CHARLBURY WEATHER

February was a rather cold month. After an average start, there was a short warmer spell before an eight day cold period. The month ended rather warmer and, without this, it would have been colder than January. Overall, the month was about 2° below average and was the coldest February since 1996. An air frost was recorded on 13 nights, bringing the total for this year to 25, already exceeding by 3 the number for the whole of 2002. The highest temperature was 56° and the lowest 24°. The winter as a whole (December-February) was just about average. The first half of **March** was rather cold for the time of year, then we had a remarkably dry spell during which the temperatures rose to well above average. Overall, the month was about 1° above average. An air frost was recorded on 8 nights, the lowest temperature being 29°. However, the month will be remembered more for its dry sunny weather rather than any exceptional temperatures - the maximum of 61° was 5° below the highest recorded in March. High pressure dominated after the first week and as far as can be determined, no rain fell in the last 22 days of the month, 10 of which had unbroken sunshine. During the period 1989 to 2002, we had just 2 days in **April** when the temperature reached 70°, the last occasion being 71° on 29th April 1994. This year, we had 3 consecutive days above 70°, with the highest, at 75°, breaking the previous record, which was set on 30th April 1990, by 3°. We also had some extremes, particularly between the 18th and 19th when the temperature suddenly dropped by 18°. Overall, the month was about 2° above average, being the second highest in the 15 year period, just slightly below 2002. An air frost was recorded on 4 nights, the coldest being 29°.

Temperature statistics are updated each month on the Charlbury website www.charlbury.info.

TRAFFIC CALMING ON THE SLADE

People living on or near The Slade and parents of children at the primary school have been increasingly worried by the speed, volume and noise of its traffic. A petition has been circulated asking "Oxfordshire County Council to consider means of slowing traffic and

improving safety for all users of the highway at The Slade, Charlbury particularly between Crawborough and Dancers Hill. The speed of traffic can be dangerous for people crossing the road, particularly children going to/from school, and for people in cars turning out onto The Slade; it also causes intolerable noise levels for the residents living near the road".

Nearly 400 people have supported the petition. Any action taken will depend on the priority given by the Traffic Committee of the County Council, but in view of the volume of traffic (570 movements between 8 and 9 am on Friday 7th March) we hope this will not be too long. Support for action has come from the School Governors, the Town Council and Brian Hodgson our County Councillor who has been urging the CC to address this problem for many years. Anyone wanting more information can consult the Charlbury website.

STOP PRESS: The Traffic Implementation Committee of the County Council have "agreed that officers would investigate the provision of interim measures pending assessment of a permanent scheme". A solution will be considered in the autumn possibly for inclusion in the budget for 2004/5.

Louise Spicer (810745)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Residents within West Oxfordshire who have achieved in Sports or the Arts now have the chance to be rewarded by the District Council. The deadline to be considered for the next round of Sports & Arts Achievement Award applications is September 27th 2003. The cash awards (between £50 and £300) are for people who demonstrate commitment and dedication in their chosen field from sport to dance, drama, music and art. It helps them pay for costs such as equipment, training and competition fees. Applicants must be able to show how the award would help them progress. These awards are primarily aimed at young people to help them develop skills to benefit themselves and the community. For further information or a sports or arts application form, please contact Cultural Services at WODC on 01993 861080.

BOOK REVIEW

A new collection of poems, essays and photographs by David Whittaker

David Whittaker is publishing his new book **Zawn Lens: Words & Images from West Cornwall** later in June (zawn is a Cornish word meaning 'chasm') as a signed, limited edition. It is a book of poems, essays & photographs, all by David, exploring the links between Cornish art and landscape. David will be running his bookmarket at the back of The Bell on July 19th where the book will, hopefully, be on sale. For further details ring 01608-811858, or email books@whithew.freeserve.co.uk

REPORT FROM YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Brian Hodgson (tel/fax: 01993 891310)

1. **SPRINKLERS IN ALL NEW HOMES TO REDUCE FIRE DEATHS & INJURIES:** The Government have replied to our suggestion of residential sprinklers in all new dwellings to cut fire deaths and injuries. They state that the issue will be considered in the next review of the fire aspects of the Building Regulations, which starts next year.

2. **COUNCIL TAX & REVALUATION OF PROPERTIES:** The Government have said that all properties in England will be revalued by 2007, for the purposes of council tax changes. The first estimates I have seen indicate that values of houses in Oxon have gone up more than in any other English county between 1991 and 2002. This underlines the need to continue the campaign for more council tax bands than the current 8 (bands A to H). There is also a strong case for different band limits in different regions of the country. If these ideas are not pursued Oxfordshire residents could be particularly badly hit. I am pursuing them, together with the proposal to change the ratios between the bands, so that people in the very highest (new) bands pay relatively more and others pay relatively less.

REPORTS FROM YOUR DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

(Glena Chadwick tel: 810555 or email Chadwick@Glena.fasnet.co.uk and Mike Breakell, tel: 01993 868201)

The last month was dominated by the elections for the Town and District Councils. Mike Breakell, who was elected, would like to express his thanks to those who supported him and looks forward to continuing to work with Glena and Nick Potter and the Town Council for the benefit of Charlbury, Finstock and Fawler. The first tranche of affordable housing in Ticknell Piece has been allocated and there are others to follow. The problem is finding appropriate land for more low cost housing for which there is such a need. There is widespread support for an enlarged Co-op in Charlbury but the Uplands Planning Committee of the District Council is still discussing the details. Parking, traffic, design issues and the impact on the retail centre of Charlbury and the surrounding environment are all being considered.

STRUCTURE PLAN FOR OXFORDSHIRE:

The County is set to consider the detail of a strategy that will govern proposals for the development and use of land over the next decade and a half. The draft Structure Plan for Oxfordshire contains specific proposals for development in the County up to 2016 and also includes the County Council's thoughts on where development could take place after 2016. The Plan has to comply with the Government's advice in regional guidance for the South East which sets the level of housing to be provided in Oxfordshire. The current Structure Plan to 2011 provides for new housing, employment and other development at Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney. Beyond that date the draft Plan proposes significant additional development up to 2016 at Bicester and Grove. A new area for working sand and gravel is proposed in the Stadhampton/Berinsfield/Warborough/Benson area. There may be further developments at Bicester, Didcot and Grove provided improvements to services and facilities and transport infrastructure can be achieved. The draft Plan does not see a need to release land in the Green Belt around Oxford. However, should a case be made after 2016, the

Begbroke/Kidlington/Yarnton area is considered the only potentially suitable place for a new community, subject to a high proportion of affordable housing being provided.

CHARLBURY TOWN COUNCIL - REPORT No. 27 by Councillor Trevor Jones

Town Council : Carol Jackson was elected to the council on May 1st filling the vacancy left by Robin Cooper and was welcomed to the Council at the Annual Meeting on May 28th.

Wheeled Sports Area : The planning application for the provision of a concrete area behind Ticknell Piece for wheeled sports with specific equipment for skateboarding has been submitted.

Best Kept Village Competition : The town is in the large village section of this competition run by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. Please keep the town tidy. It would also be helpful if branches that obstruct pavements were cut back.

Street Lighting : The Town Council has voted to provide 4 new street lights in Enstone Road and Browns Lane. These were identified as priority areas for improved lighting.

Cemetery Extension : The planning application for the extension is likely to be submitted soon now that negotiations for the purchase of land adjacent to the cemetery have been agreed in principle.

Affordable Housing : The building of the new development at Ticknell Piece is well under way and the first homes will be allocated shortly in accordance with normal procedures for the allocation of housing plus a requirement for a defined Charlbury connection.

Planning Procedures : These have now been changed to increase the number of plans being delegated to planning officers, rather than being determined by elected representatives. These procedures make it more difficult for the Town Council to ensure that it reviews all planning applications appropriately. The Council is therefore reviewing its own procedures to best meet the new District Council approach.

Town Council Grants : Grants paid in April included payments to Nine Acres, Memorial Hall & Corner House, Charlbury Boys FC, Charlbury School Association, Charlbury Cricket Club, Charlbury Arts Festival, Day Centre, Youth Theatre, Wychwood Project, Osrami and Charlbury Pre-School.

Traffic : The Council supports the provisional recommendations of the County Council for reducing speed on the Slade following the petition raised by local residents.

Allotments : New markers were placed on the Oxpens allotments following a recent meeting of the allotments committee.

Riverside Festival : The Town Council has agreed to the use of the Mill Field by the Riverside Festival, subject to acceptance of the usual conditions. The Council supports the festival which takes place this year on 21st/22nd June.

Permissive Footpath : The Council continues to work on developing an inner circular footpath around the outskirts of the town.

Annual Parish Meeting : This took place on 28th March. Attendance was again low and we do urge residents to use this opportunity to raise local issues. It is also the meeting at which representatives are elected to serve on the Conservation Advisory Committee, the Charlbury Tree Trust and the Centenary Woodland Committee.

Footpath Diversion Spendlove : An application is being made by the Council for the diversion of the footpath that goes between the Spendlove Centre and Nine Acres, to a route across the Spendlove Centre site.

Nine Acres Pavilion : Exploratory drawings based on a first draft plan have been sent to WODC planners for an opinion.

WANT TO RECEIVE THE CHARLBURY CHRONICLE?

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. 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, 3 Enstone Road, Charlbury OX7 3QR.

