

West Hagbourne news

February 2014 ISSUE 113

Flooding

We certainly had a lot of rain at the start of January. Although West Hagbourne is not near any large rivers, it is at the foot of the Berkshire downs and has always had some problems with run-off. However, what happened on Monday 6th/Tuesday 7th was unprecedented, at least in the 35 years I have lived in the village. Unusually, water levels in Brook Lane did not seem to be particularly high, but in the middle of the village a large puddle had formed outside Broomsticks, and Wycherts, spreading up towards the entrance to Moor Lane and down towards the pond. At the same time, water was building up on the junction between York Road (by Appledore) and Main Street and stretching towards the pond from the other direction. Traffic began to by-pass the worst of the flooding by diverting through the village often at stupid speeds along York Road.



Thoughtless drivers

One frustration for residents was the inability of some drivers to modify their driving to take account of the lying water. Seemingly under the impression that they needed to get through the puddles as quickly as possible, cars entered the water pushing a veritable bow wave splashing water over garden walls, leaving them full of dirty water. This was particularly bad in the centre of the village. Perhaps we should ask about signage about slowing down to put out when the roads are flooded.

And then a water main burst

As if the rain were not enough, on Tuesday evening water levels began to rise again and this time it could be traced to a leaking water main outside Rose Cottage. Thames Water arranged for a repair crew who arrived promptly on Wednesday morning and further traffic disruption ensued as they had to dig up the road to effect their repair. This meant that the Road Closed signs now really

drivers as they explained that there really was no way through. Mums coming from Didcot to collect their children from the nursery at lunchtime were faced with a long diversion through Harwell village.

School bus chaos

The closure of the road had some other consequences. I came back into the village, from Didcot, on Wednesday afternoon following the two Tappins' school buses. The first met the road closed signs at the bus shelter and turned into York Road, as if to go around, only to meet a large lorry coming the other way, in front of York Farm Cottage. Given that there were also several parked cars, it was a delicate manoeuvre for the bus to back across the entrance to Woodleys. In the meantime, the second bus had backed along Main Street and finally the lorry was able to pass, on its way back to Didcot (having discovered the road really was closed). At that point, I slipped through the gap and made it home. I guess there was considerably more shunting required to get both buses turned around and heading back to Didcot from where they might continue their journeys.

Properties flooded

At its peak the water reached the kitchen floor in one property and the entire ground floor of another. In the latter case, the owner had to move out temporarily to other accommodation as there was no heating or electricity in the house. Despite the efforts of the Fire Brigade in pumping out the water, the levels promptly rose again, making it impossible to stay.

Repairs shown to be inadequate

Many villagers will recall that work was carried out outside Wycherts in the summer in an attempt to resolve a long-standing drainage problem in Main Street. A major pipe was re-lined, to avoid further encroachment from tree roots. However, recent events show that this was not a complete solution. In fact, the issue still remains that water from the road drains does not seem to be reaching



Moor Lane Ditch, either through lack of maintenance or failure to keep the roads clear of mud and straw. When water was pumped into the ditch (by the Fire Brigade), it had ample capacity to successfully take the flood water away from the village and housing.

For more photos of the flooding go to the West Hagbourne web site

www.westhagbourne.org/floods_2014.htm

U3A



Didcot & District U3A meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 2pm at Didcot Civic Hall. On Tuesday 18th February there will be a talk on "The Mary Rose". Please arrive 15 minutes before the start time to ensure you are all seated for the 2pm start.

If you would like to join, membership is £20 per annum plus £1 per meeting. Visitors are welcome to come to one meeting as a taster before joining. Visit the website to find out more about membership: <http://u3asites.org.uk/code/u3asite.php?site=535&page=1>. Members also have the option of joining some of the many interest groups, including singing, dancing, drama, art, languages and more.

meant what they said. Sadly, as earlier it had been possible to avoid the worst flooded area, many drivers continued to try to come through West Hagbourne only to have to turn back when they got to just before the pub. Several villagers reported being abused by frustrated



News

Lunch Club

On 20th December there was a good turnout at Horse & Harrow where everyone enjoyed a traditional Christmas meal. Thanks go to the staff at the Horse and Harrow for all their hard work that made it such an enjoyable occasion.

On 17th January 19 people waded through the puddles for the monthly get together at the Horse & Harrow and it was good to see some new faces joining the regulars for conversation and good food.

The lunch club meets throughout the year on the third Friday of every month. All are welcome! The next lunch will be on Friday 21st February. If you intend to come along, please do remember to notify Sue Totterdell (850 080) or Marion Judd (850 143) in advance, as the pub needs to know numbers for catering.

Fish & Chips

As part of The Great British Fish and Chip Supper you could hold an event in your own home, at work or hold a larger supper at your local community centre on Friday 16th May 2014, to raise awareness of spinal cord injury and support the work of the Spinal Injuries Association.

SIA will provide a fundraising pack containing hints and tips, recipes, invitations and donation envelopes. By inviting 8 friends and asking them to donate an additional £5.00 means you will raise at least £40.00 from your supper but we will also give you additional fundraising ideas to raise even more money for SIA. In 2014 SIA is celebrating its 40th anniversary and so we want to make the better matter and raise £25,000 from everyone holding suppers. Last year we raised £12,500 from the suppers.

The money raised will help the SIA offer support to individuals who become paralysed and to their families.

For more information or request a fundraising pack call Elizabeth Wright on 0845 071 4350 or email fundraising@siafishandchips.co.uk or visit www.siafishandchips.co.uk



Oxford's Villages

What to do with myself now I've retired? That was the question back in 2003. Then I hit on the idea of taking photos and started visiting nearby villages with my camcorder which, despite the poor quality of its still images, was my only digital camera. My son suggested creating a website to display the images on, so digital it had to be. He registered a domain name for me, gave me some suitable software and advice, and oxfordshirevillages.co.uk was born.

I decided, rather optimistically, that I would try to photograph every village in the county. I differentiated between villages and hamlets by whether they had a parish church or not. Generally speaking I have followed that rule closely and, by studying Ordnance Survey maps, ignored "villages" lacking their own parish church. Inevitably this has thrown up several anomalies. For example I am sure no-one living here would be happy if West Hagbourne was referred to as a hamlet even though it has no church. Conversely many small "villages" with only half a dozen cottages are included because they have a parish church. I ruled out photographing any towns and also decided not to visit any of the villages within the City of Oxford boundary. Large villages sometimes caused a dilemma. Hence, Watlington, calling itself a historic town but listed by SODC as a village, is included. Kidlington on the other hand, with a population of 17,500 and the appearance of a small town, is proud to be the second largest village in England.

Photos obviously look better with bright colours and blue skies so most years I only went out if sunshine was forecast but I soon learnt that the Met Office appears to find it difficult to forecast cloud. I often had to return home because of cloud that had not been predicted and which annoyingly was later denied on the weather forecast. But by 2013 I was eager to finish and I am afraid that several villages were photographed last year on days when the light was poor.

Rather than the website being just an album of photos, I decided to include some information about each village, adding my own comments about many of the villages. People have often contacted me about the villages through the website, often with interesting queries. Some came from Americans researching their ancestry and in doing so finding references to places in Oxfordshire. One was trying to find about about a village an ancestor had come from that clearly has either completely disappeared or changed its name. Surprisingly, after a long search on Google, I found reference to the old village name in the name of a pub near Henley. One Canadian family, so impressed by the villages shown in my photos on oxfordshirevillages.co.uk, decided to spend their vacation in the Vale of White Horse area. Some queries from the UK were quite amusing, like did I know the name of the paint used on a particular house as they want to paint theirs the same colour? Or did I know if a bus ran from a particular village to somewhere else? I directed that person to the bus map on the county council website.

Initially I obtained interesting information about villages from leaflets or booklets obtained from the parish churches but eventually I stopped visiting church as a matter of course since many were locked. I was surprised, though, to find that many churches have the remains of medieval wall paintings; sometimes just a fragment and sometimes several paintings on all the walls, some of which are quite beautiful. St. Peter's Church in South Newington is a good example of a painted church. It makes one wonder what is hidden under the whitewash in so many other churches.

Roger Sweet

We have some beautiful villages in Oxfordshire, the equal of any in the country. See most of them at www.oxfordshirevillages.co.uk

Events

If you have a local event that you want to publicise, please get in touch and we will include it in the next edition.

Village lunch 21 February 12h30 at the Horse and Harrow

Didcot Film Club 5 March will be showing Forbidden Planet (1956) directed by Fred M Wilcox at Cornerstone, at 8pm.

For more information go to <http://didcotfilmclub.weebly.com/>

Choir concert 15 March 2014 at 19h30 in Trinity Church Abingdon to include Faure: Requiem, Rossini: Gloria from the Petite Messe Solenne and Franck: Psalm 150 Tickets £10 in advance from Sue Totterdell £12 at the door

Village lunch 21 March 2014 12h30 at the Horse and Harrow

Local Culture: Are you aware that performances of plays, opera, and ballet are beamed live to our local cinema from time to time? These come from the Met and the Royal Opera House, the Royal Ballet, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare company.

For example the following are being shown:

Giselle on Monday 27th January,

La Boheme on Saturday 5th April,

Cosi fan Tutte on Saturday 26th April

War Horse on Thursday 27th March with 2 repeats on 18th and 22nd.

Visit Cineworld Didcot website to see the full range of live performances.

New baby

Anna, Nigel and Alina are pleased to welcome the arrival of their second daughter Safia Elizabeth to the village.

Energy prices

If your energy prices have shot up, you can find out whether you can get a cheaper deal elsewhere by using a price comparison site approved by Ofgem, or by getting help from your local Citizens Advice Bureau. Energy suppliers must give you at least 30 days notice of any price increases. If you decide to switch supplier, you need start the switching process within 20 days of being told about a price increase, that way your existing supplier can't enforce the price rise. Under new rules, if you're on a fixed term contract and it's coming to an end, your supplier must tell you between 42 and 49 days beforehand so, if you want to, you can switch suppliers during this time without any penalties.

And if you are on a fixed term contract signed on or after 15th July 2013, suppliers can't increase prices, unless the price increase was agreed in advance - for example with a tracker tariff. If your supplier breaks these rules you can complain, first to the energy supplier, then to the Energy Ombudsman.

OFGEM have announced that finding a better deal on your energy is getting easier. A ban on complex tariffs will help consumers get the best deals. The reforms aim to make the energy market simpler, clearer and fairer. Households who have never switched could save more than £200 per year.

Suppliers can now only offer customers a maximum of four tariffs for gas and four for electricity. These changes make it far easier for consumers to compare and find the best deals. Complex deals like charging high rates for energy which then fall as more are banned.

Energy firms must structure their tariffs to produce a single unit rate and a standing charge. The unit rate is the cost for each unit of electricity or gas, the standing charge is a fixed amount applied to recover the costs of getting the gas and electricity to your home. Suppliers will be allowed to set their standing charge at zero.

Lower standing charges can benefit people who do not use a lot of gas or electricity, higher standing charges benefit people who use more. Customers on fixed term deals will remain on that tariff until it finishes - increasing those prices during the contract period is now banned. At this end point, suppliers should automatically put you on the cheapest standard tariff available and it's worth shopping around to check this is the best deal.

April will see further reforms to give consumers clearer, more personalised information on energy. Suppliers will for the first time have to write to customers regularly informing them which of their tariffs is cheapest.

The Citizens Advice consumer service can provide general advice about what the reforms mean. If you have a question about what will be happening to your gas and electricity tariffs and when, contact your supplier. You can find out more about tariffs and how to compare prices for gas and electricity from Adviceguide, the self-help website of Citizens Advice.

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/english/consumer_e/energy_contracts_explained.htm

Disabled Riding

The Wantage group of Riding for the Disabled (RDA) recently started a Thursday morning session at Blewbury Riding Centre, in addition to its very successful Tuesday sessions. We are looking for more volunteers to help keep this going on a regular basis. It is currently attended by six children from Fitzwaryn School, who enjoy and gain confidence from the experience. The session is from 10.00 – 11.00 a.m. during term time. Experience with horses is not necessary.

For further details please contact Evelyn Bracey on 01488 638248 or Pauline Taylor on 01235 553574.

Parish Council

Clerk

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parishclerk@westhagbourne.org

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South Oxfordshire District Council
01491 823000

County Councillor

Patrick Greene 813 396

patrick.greene@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire County Council

01865 792422

Meetings in 2014

- 5th March Ordinary Meeting
- 7th May Annual Meeting

Annual Parish Meeting
to be advised

- 2nd July Ordinary Meeting
- 3rd September "
- 5th November "

Minutes of all meetings of the Parish Council are available online. If you do not have access to the internet, call the clerk and a printed copy will be delivered to you.

www.westhagbourne.org/pc_minutes.htm

Planning Applications

You can search for any current or past planning applications. See decisions based on your post code at <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationCriteria&TYPE=Application>

Solar Farm

The proposed site was found not to be within the Parish of West Hagbourne.

HGV's & potholes

The Community led plan highlighted that the police are not interested in reports of oversized vehicles in the village. You should report breaches of weight restrictions in West Hagbourne directly to Trading Standards <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/weight-restriction-orders> or by phone (0845 051 0845) or email trading_standards@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report potholes direct to Oxfordshire Highways. If you can supply a photograph that gives some idea of the extent of the pothole(s) this will help assess the urgency of its repair.

You can do this online at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/contact-highway-enquiries-team>

by telephone: 0845 310 1111

All of this information and the relevant links are available on the village web site. Go to Noticeboard:

www.westhagbourne.org/noticeboard.htm#potholes

Next edition

The newsletter is written and edited by Sue Totterdell and Marion Judd independently of the Parish Council and its production is funded by the advertising it carries.

The next edition will be in April and any copy should be supplied by the last day of March.

Contributions are welcome especially for local events.

The deadline is the 30th day of the month before publication.

Next Edition April - **deadline 30 March**

small ads

If you have items you are prepared to give away, send us a short advertisement with the details for inclusion (free of charge) in the next newsletter.

For sale or wanted small ads are free if you live in the Parish, but all other advertising revenue pays for the production of the newsletter and the costs associated with the web site. If you would like a feature on your **local business** please e-mail copy for inclusion to editors@westhagbourne.org



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singers wanted

Do you sing and would you be interested in joining a small choir in West Hagbourne? If so, please contact Eva Pinkava:
evajpinkava@gmail.com; phone 850 770



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