

Your councillors:-

Geoff Beer (Chairman), Buckland Rd. 868709
Jim Harper (Vice-chairman), Barnfield 868288
Penny McGuire, Main Street 868666
Geoff Rumble, Buckland Road 868738
John Stiles, Barnfield 868191

Meetings are held at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Hall on the second Wednesdays of odd-numbered months.

The next meeting is on 12th January 2005.

CLERK'S CORNER

Audit

The drawn-out procedure for auditing the Council's 2003/4 accounts is now almost complete and I'm pleased (relieved?) to say that the external auditors found no issues arising from them. The final step is for the Council to approve and accept the Annual Return, which it will do at the next meeting.

Precept

The January meeting of the Council is the one at which the precept for the following financial year (2005/6) is set. Councillors are presented with a paper which identifies known expenditure and suggests other expenditure which might arise. This is an opportunity for future plans to be included in the costing and as the money comes out of your Council Tax you might be interested in listening to the discussion on what the precept should be. Alternatively, if you'd like to see the Council spending money on a village improvement, lobby your nearest councillor to get it included.

Legislation

Most of my piece in Cherbury News was about new legislation coming into effect - well, there's more! On 1st January 2005 the final phase of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 comes into force and this will give a general right of access to recorded information held by the Parish Council. Actually I've always treated PC information as public and have made it available on a need-to-know basis, but now you can demand to see it with the force of law. Just give me time to check whether, like central government (allegedly), I need to shred a few documents first!

Christmas Lights

A number of our visitors have commented on how pretty Charney looks with its tasteful displays of Christmas lights visible as one drives through the village. But don't forget the light pollution clause in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill and take them down on Twelfth Night!

ADVERTISEMENT

Personalised Home-made Cards

The height of the card-buying season has now passed but Eunice is still making them. If you have difficulty finding just the right card for that special occasion, she'll make one for you. Give her a ring at "Narrogin", Longworth Road on 868646. Proceeds to St. Peter's church.

Deadline for copy for the next edition in March 2005: 20 February 2005
Contributions are welcome, in fact desperately needed! Adverts are free!

Charney Chatter

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2005

EDITORIAL

On to Volume 2 and a Happy New Year to all readers! I thought it was going to be difficult to fill this edition because Joan Plumtre, Editor of Cherbury News, asked me if I could help her to fill her next edition and I duly obliged with what I had ready.

However, this meant that I had to think of other items for this edition of Charney Chatter which appears at the same time. I have managed to do this, making this month a bonus month for Charney news - Charney Chatter plus a page of Cherbury News!

VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT

Most of you will be blissfully unaware that the lower end of the village came perilously close to being in the proverbial recently! On Sunday, 21 November, by sheer coincidence, John Daghish, who was working on his plumbing, discovered that his sewage manhole was almost overflowing and on consulting his neighbours found he was not alone. Indeed, the problem was not just in Barnfield but further up the village also. John informed Thames Water who failed to clear the blockage fully on the Sunday but by bringing in more powerful equipment, restored the system to normality the following day.

By another coincidence, the national papers that very day reported on the modern phenomenon of sewage blockages caused by using wipes

instead of common or garden toilet paper. Guess what the blockage was! Yes, you've guessed it - wipes.

The Council wrote to Thames Water expressing its concern at this incident and was told they shared our concerns! (Gee, thanks!). However, one piece of good news in their response was that the village sewage pumping station works well and has adequate capacity, thus laying to rest the myth that the station is not up to it.

Nevertheless, if you are a wipes user, please use them sparingly to ease the pressure on the village sewage system.

Thames Water advised that in the event of a blockage you should ring their Customer Centre on 0845-9200-800.

HEADLINE TOPICS

- Sewage Blockage
- Charities benefit
- Christmas Willow at Village College
- An Electric Mill?
- Big expansion at Manor Farm

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Village Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour (10.30 to 11.30 on Tuesdays) resumes in the Village Hall on 18th January 2005 and will run to 22nd March.

VILLAGE COLLEGE

Building on the success of previous willow courses, Charney Village College invited Norah Kennedy back to teach students how to use willow to create Christmas decorations. Seven students spent the day in the Village Hall bending willow branches into stars, spheres, garlands and platters - all shapes appropriate to Christmas. The variety of colours of willow available, green, brown, red and gold produced very attractive items.

Each student was coached in producing three or four decorations for trees and tables. A number of Christmas dinners in Charney included mince pies presented on willow-woven platters!

The course occupied the whole day with a well-earned break for sustenance in The Chequers at lunchtime. All the students thoroughly enjoyed the day although most thought it was hard work, especially on the fingers. The popularity of these willow courses ensures they will continue to feature in the College syllabus. The next willow course is likely to be on basket weaving.

College contacts:

Jackie Cross (868706)

Peter Davies (868646)

Elisabeth Dahele (868673)

E-mail: villagecollege@hotmail.com

Letters: Village Hall post box.

CHARNEY MILL

The restorers are now getting close to the point where the mill wheel can be turned, to set in motion the rest of the milling machinery.

Efforts to restore the water flow through the mill have so far been unsuccessful but another attempt to persuade the Environment Agency to give the OK is being made. The preferred scheme will pump water from the Ock until sufficient water is stored to run the mill for an hour or so. This arrangement, with strict controls, would ensure there is no possibility of flooding.

Incidentally, if you visit the EA web site and look at the flood plain map for Charney you

will see it has now been updated to take into account the diversion of the River Ock back to its original line of centuries ago. The diversion was carried out over 30 years ago so it's taken a while for the EA to catch up! The statement that the flood plain stretches up to the phone box is now no longer true - much to the relief of villagers down that end!

If all else fails, the restorers are prepared to drive the mill wheel shaft with an electric motor and although this would have the desired effect of turning the mill stones and possibly making flour, it would be akin to broadcasting a recording of church bells from a tower instead of the real thing!

CHARNEY AND LYFORD EDUCATIONAL TRUST

The next meeting of the Charney Bassett and Lyford Educational Trust (CLET) will be on 19th January 2005. Once again we would like to invite anyone living in Charney Bassett or Lyford to apply for a grant towards the cost of any type of educational project. Please apply to the Clerk for an application

form if you think the Trust could help you or if you would like further information about CLET. The closing date for applications is Sunday 9th January.

Alison Peters, Clerk to CLET, 5 Orchard Close, Charney Bassett. Tel: 868569

PLANNING

Extensions to Mill Cottage and Elm Cottage in Longworth Road have both received planning permission from the Vale Council.

Threshers Barn on The Green has been renamed The Stone Barn.

An application to extend barns at Manor Farm (that's New Manor Farm!) is being considered by the Vale Council planners on 4th January 2005. The Parish Council has not objected to this proposal but it has pointed out that as the extensions would increase the size of the barns very significantly some form of screening might be appropriate. It is understood that the farm owner intends to plant trees to screen the barns from the road at some time in the future. The proposal also includes re-siting slurry pits at the farm and the Council has

asked that care should be taken to avoid any environmental impact on the village arising from this work.

It's not really anything to do with planning but the Council was interested to learn that the extensions are required to accommodate an increase in the size of the herd of goats housed at the farm - a rare example of an expansion in a branch of UK farming! There will be getting on for 2,000 goats there eventually and in case, like me you say "but I've never seen one" you won't, as they are not ruminants so they are not put out to grass! One of the extensions will house a state of the art milking parlour to produce the milk which makes a highly successful brand of goat's cheese for a major supermarket.

CHARNEY HALL & FIELD TRUST

The Council congratulated CHAFT on another highly successful Bonfire and Fireworks on Charney Field on 7th November. Several visitors commented that it was very impressive that a little village like Charney could organise such a fantastic display and that most of the village population attended.

The evening was almost uneventful although there was one accident when someone fell over one of the rubbish bins in the dark, barking shins in the process but luckily avoiding falling in! This was not reported to the Health and Safety Executive in order to avoid embarrassment to the person concerned. A breath test proved inconclusive.

CHARITY NEWS

Steve Callaghan duly ran in the New York marathon on 7th November 2004 and raised over £2,500 in sponsorship for Whizz-Kidz, the charity which provides mobility for disabled children. Steve thanked his sponsors in post cards from The Big Apple reporting on a commendable 3 hrs 50 minutes time and added, obviously with feeling, "Probably the last time I do anything like that again!"

On 16th December, Carols on the Green around the re-sited tree (in error it was first placed in the maypole hole!) raised the sum of £83 - £73 for Y-Care International, a charity providing protection for children in danger, especially in South Africa and £10 for Wantage Silver Band who accompanied.

A collection at Carols around the Crib on Christmas Eve raised £136 for The Children's Society.