

The Beckley Newsletter

News Views and Comment from around the Parish

SUMMER 2011

Produced under the auspices of the Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

Any comments or opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Council



PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Annual AGM Moved to 7 July

The Parish AGM has been moved to Thursday, 7 July, at 8pm following the Beckley Village Hall Management Committee AGM at 7.30pm

Pete Gibbons Steps Down As PC Chairman

At the recent election Pete Gibbons did not put his name forward for the parish council. This ended a long association with the council which included two lengthy periods as a councillor in the past thirty years. During the past four years Pete has also served as chairman. We have been very fortunate that Pete has been willing to give so much time to the parish and dedicate himself to our needs.

Many will remember that in the past Pete also served on the village hall committee including a period as chairman. He has certainly spent longer than almost anyone else sitting in meetings in the village hall, which is not entirely inappropriate as he had a major role in its original construction!

Thank you, Pete, for all you have done in the past and let's hope that your talents and experience will not be entirely lost to the village in the future!

Bob Bixby Past PC Chairman

New Clerk Sought

Sam Hawkins will be leaving her post as Parish Clerk at the end of May and advertisements are out for the position. Sam says she has loved every minute of being clerk, has made many friends, and is only leaving to spend more time with her infant son and his health problems. Thank you Sam for your time and commitment to our community. Sue Cox will be acting clerk until a new clerk is found.

New Parish Council Officers and Members

David Scott Old Farm House, 351 607
scotttd@uk.ibm.com Chairman

Michael Soanes Royal Oak Farm, 351 246
Vice Chairman

Councillors

Chris Cox Folly Farm, 351 415

Clare Marsh Moorleys, 351 134

Vivienne Rust Lavender Cottage, 351 746

Sue Cox Folly Farm, 351 415

suecox17@supanet.com Stand-in-Parish Clerk

District Councillor

Anne Purse The Cottage 351 404
anne.purse@oxfordshire.gov.uk

VILLAGE HALL NEW BUILD FUND PROGRESS REPORT

We thank you for responding so positively to our survey with regard to our new village hall. Since our group came together 18 months ago we have made substantial progress.

In times past a group of villagers have got together, agreed what needed to be done and got on with it. Sadly those days have gone and since our inaugural meeting our group has had to follow a tortuous path to get to our present position.

In summary we have cash of £42,500 with a commitment from our parish council of another £40,000 over the next 4 years. At the present we anticipate that our total costs to build and furnish a new village hall will be about £400,000.

Our group has formed 3 sub-groups who are responsible for;

1. Design and planning
2. Major fundraising
3. Business Plan (which we need when approaching potential donors)

Each member of our group was involved in visiting a number of other village halls which have been built in the last 2/3 years. This has given us a wealth of information which we will be using in the design of our own new hall.

A number of villagers have raised monies through sponsorship and hopefully you will have attended our 'Come Dine With Us' at the Abingdon Arms' or joined in the quiz, again at the Abingdon Arms. To those who have attended, many thanks.

The main committee of our village hall continue to organise events to raise funds for the new hall and to give villagers an opportunity to attend events and meet new friends.

Gary Chalmers, who maintains the village website, is keen that villagers keep up to date with the village news and also to contribute. It is our electronic Beckley Village notice board www.beckley-and-stowood.gov.uk/beckley

Colin Day 351 581

FUNDRAISING FOR BECKLEY VILLAGE HALL NEW BUILD FUND

Shop Online Through EasyFundraising and Raise Money for Beckley Village Hall!

You will have read in the last newsletter about EasyFundraising, by which your online purchases can raise money for the Beckley Village Hall New Building Fund. Nine people have signed up to it, and have raised £34.96 in the quarter to end March. As we only started at the beginning of February, just think how much more we could raise when others in the village join in. Please sign up for free at

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/beckleyvh> and use the links on the site to take you to the retailer; a percentage of whatever you spend comes directly to us at no extra cost to you.

Search the Net with EasySearch

Searching the net using EasySearch - at <http://beckleyvh.easysearch.org.uk> - combines the results of several search engines such as Yahoo!, Bing and Ask to ensure you can always find what you're looking for - and - EVERY TIME you search - half a penny is raised for Beckley & Stowood Village Hall. Search just 15 times a day and you can raise around £25 a year for us.

Donate using Gift Aid

It is a simple process to make a DONATION using Gift Aid, a system by which our committee can reclaim the basic rate tax from HMRC. At no additional cost to the donor, every £100 donated through Gift Aid becomes worth £125 to the Village Hall Charity, very cost effective! Higher rate tax payers can contribute even more. Your committee can provide you with the necessary minimal paperwork. **Colin Day 351 581 or Ted Cloke 358 881**

More Help Always Needed

Anyone who would like to help with fundraising activities, please contact **Marion Weinstein, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee 351 251 or Colin Day, Chairman of the Village Hall Building Fund Committee 351 581**. Alternatively, if you would like to join either committee, please get in touch.

50/50 CLUB PROFITS VILLAGE HALL

There are no 150 Club winners yet as we have not started this years draws, but a reminder for those who have not yet joined or rejoined to do so as soon as possible.

Pete Carter 351 352

EVENTS PAST AND FUTURE

Since the last newsletter the village has been busy with fundraising events in aid of the new village hall building fund. The Quiz and Curry Night held in April at the Abingdon Arms raised over £400 with an attendance of 68; thanks to Bal and Kuldeep Gill, Pete Burt, Colin Day and Ann Carruthers. We have also held 2 very successful Come Dine With Us evenings in the Abingdon Arms, in March and May, raising over \$800 total. Good value 3 course menus were created by villagers, the first by the Dicksons and last week's by the Crowleys, and Mark, the pub's chef cooked the meals. Anyone interested in producing the menu for a September meal should contact Bal Gill at the pub, or email **Pru Dickson 358 237 prudickson@gmail.com**.

NEXT EVENT - SAVE THE DATE

CAR BOOT/TABLE-TOP SALE

Sunday 26 June from 1 – 4pm

Beckley Village Hall/Recreation Ground

Sellers set up 12 noon.

(£8.00 if booked in advance, £10 on the day)

Light lunches served from 12 noon.

Pat Moss 01865-358849

mossdurrant@totalise.co.uk

Profits to Beckley Village Hall Building fund (for a new and larger hall).

Plus, why not consider donating a proportion of your sales to the fund; if you can do this via Gift Aid, we can reclaim tax on your donation, and this would increase receipts for the fund even further.

LOST AND FOUND

Keys (a set of two keys, one a Yale lock, the other a gold coloured key) were found on the steps of the Village Hall on 8th May. The name of J & Sons Autoparts, Kidlington appears on the key tag but seems they are just the people who cut the keys.

There will be a Lost and Found on the website too.

Pat Moss MossDurrant@totalise.co.uk

MORE ON VILLAGE HALL FUNDRAISING

Cottage Industries Advance Notice:

For many years I ran a soft furnishings business from home and I am often asked for tips and ideas for home interiors. It seems a pity not to use this to the good; consequently I propose to run some sessions from my home Prospect Cottage, Church Street, during late autumn through to spring 2012. If you would like to learn how to make curtains, re-vamp some treasured fabric for a Roman blind or cushion, learn to knit, embroider, do patchwork or have your own ideas, then you would be very welcome. All ages and genders are welcome and I aim to run some Saturday morning or Monday evening classes, depending on the response. The cost per session will be £20 for adults and £10 for school aged children, all proceeds going towards the new building costs. Come and learn a new skill and have some fun at the same time. Contact me **Julie Ross by phone on 351330 or email: julie_a_ross@hotmail.com** if you are interested. (Parents please note that I have CRB clearance to work with children because of other work I do.)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

- Saturday 11 June** Concert by Sarah Stuart-Pennink and Maddy King in the church
- Sunday 26 June** Village Car Boot/Table Top Sale, 1.00-4.00pm
- Thursday 7 July** Beckley Village Hall Management Committee AGM, 7.30pm
- Saturday 15 Oct.** Autumn Supper – a buffet style meal at the village hall. Tickets £12 each
- Nov. date TBA** Village Bonfire Night with fireworks and barbecue
- Sunday 4 Dec.** Beckley's Got More Talent! family event with performances by village children and young people
- Sunday 18 Dec.** Carols and Claret Carol in the church followed by mulled wine and mince pies

Dorrie, Jan, and Fred at Thames Barrier

One Small Step for Jan

I am pleased that I have managed to keep a promise to myself to complete the 184 miles of the Thames Path before my next birthday. The walk from a quiet stone marker in a unremarkable field in Kemble Glos to the massive barriers rising out of the Thames has given me a mass of images to sort out.

How do you manage to make preferential choices between quiet open water meadows, the colleges of our own Oxford, or the castles and royal palaces of London.

Certainly one memory which comes to mind when I discuss this walk is the Commonwealth Air Forces Memorial to 20,000 personnel, both males and females, who gave their lives in WW2 and have no marked grave. It is high above Runnymede, the tower reaching for the sky, a splendid tribute to those who we should never forget who died, many before their twentieth birthday.

The walk was covered in twenty or so separate bites, the distances dictated in many areas by public transport availability, the longest being some 14 miles.

My thanks to my friends from Leicester who did the Source to Lechlade with me, to Dorrie Gethings (and Rollo her dog) who then joined us and made the transport issues so much easier, and of course to Fred who managed Google and the Sat Nav.

Jan Weller 351 693

*** Total raised was £1075 plus gift aid for the village hall.** £400 also collected for Kidney Research and Preschool.



RSPB OTMOOR FEBRUARY - APRIL 2011

Volunteers

Against all the odds, the hedgerow coppicing was successfully completed by the end of February, so congratulations to our hard-working volunteers on a job well done.

March brought a little variety; the annual elm coppice was undertaken, beneficial to white-letter hairstreak butterflies. This year the cut elm is to be re-used, with the larger elms being placed in the reed bed to act as perches for water birds.

The ongoing volunteer-led wildflower project continues. The seed collected last summer was either sown for plug plants last autumn, or sown straight into the meadows this March.

April saw much of the volunteers' time devoted to checking and repairing the reserves network of fences, to ensure the safety of both stock and nesting birds.

Taking advantage of the good weather, more path repairs were undertaken, mainly repairing the damage from the winter's frost and snow. Hard work and onerous, the high quality of work has ensured the visitor experience on Otmoor is a safe and comfortable one.

Bird/Wildlife News

February is always a tantalising month for bird sightings. The birds seen and the behaviour witnessed give a hint of spring. It can also be the month when winter bird numbers reach a peak.

Excellent numbers of golden plover, lapwing, shoveler, pintail, and teal were seen. The occasional shelduck and little egrets in the middle of the month as well as bewick swans towards the end were highlights. A small flock of barnacle geese were present throughout, possibly from a feral population nearby. One of the most exciting visitors was a wintering bittern seen feeding out on the Greenaways field, with possibly another bird seen flying across the reed bed.

Early wader migration was seen in February. The first curlew and redshanks returned mid-month and were quickly joined by others. Dunlin were also seen, diminutive waders who appear every spring and autumn on migration, using Otmoor as a feeding site.

Bird behaviour in February heralds spring, chaffinch started singing very early in the month, soon followed by great tits and dunnocks. Singing skylarks, on milder sunny mornings really did give a fleeting glimpse of summer in the grasslands. And who can miss the trilling 'little bit of bread and butter no cheese-seeeeeee' song of the yellowhammer

March is always an exciting month, with the return of the summer waders. First to be heard was the chiffchaff, singing out its name from the hedgerows. Sand martins were soon seen swooping over the reed bed to pick off insects from the water as they travelled through. Shortly after, willow warblers returned from slightly further afield to sing their descending song. A stunning male garganey duck was seen feeding on the Ashgrave lagoon.

April brought the return of all the expected migrant warblers, and the first call of the cuckoo echoed across the moor on the 9th. There have been frequent reports of cuckoos being heard from several locations. The arrival of swifts, turtle doves and hobbies towards the end of the month, completed the spring migrants.

The Ashgrave lagoon has proven popular with wading birds during the spring migration period. Visitors have had good views of whimbrels, greenshanks, black tailed godwits, and a single bar-tailed godwit, all feeding in front of the Wetland Watch.

The warm spells of March and April also increased the chances of seeing grass snakes basking in the sun, often just off the stone visitor tracks. The first few butterflies, brimstone, peacock, small tortoiseshell, and small copper have also been seen fluttering around the reserve in sheltered spots. **Judith Lloyd RSPB Otmoor**

ART WEEKEND 21/22nd MAY 2011

Beckley Art Group had a splendid display of paintings, prints, fabric collage, ceramic, pottery and jewellery over 2 days in the village hall. The numerous visitors were also able to indulge in delicious homemade cakes with tea.

Thank you to the following artists who contributed: Lesley, Marcel, Peter, Cassandra, Michael, Tim, Maeve, Pam, Rupert, Jim and Liz. Contribution from their sales and gift aid added over £500 to the village hall rebuilding fund.

Many thanks to all those who came and supported this event. **Liz Bixby 351 282**

THE OXFORD HARMONIC SOCIETY

The Society, which is based in Oxford, but has several members living in Beckley, will hold a summer concert 2 July at 7.30pm in the Oxford Town Hall. The programme includes Rutter, *Feel the Spirit*; Vaughn Williams' *An Oxford Elegy* and *Lark Ascending*.

BECKLEY WI

The WI May meeting had two reasons to celebrate - the Royal Wedding had taken place the previous Friday and our Tuesday meeting was the time we also celebrated the 80th birthday of Mauveen Pether. Mauveen has been a member of Beckley WI for 54 years. Members dressed up for the occasion, drank sparkling wine, had an amazing array of cup cakes to choose from and listened to music from Maeve. Also celebrating her 80th birthday was Rosemary Money, a WI member from Stanton St John and a member of the Beckley Bells Group.

The Beckley WI meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.15 at the Village Hall, and is always open to visitors and new members. Future programmes include a talk on their African Treks by Ann and Geoff Henman on the 7th of June and a picnic at the Bird Sanctuary on 5th of July at 5pm at the sanctuary car park. There will be no programme in August, but in September there will be a trip to Buckingham Palace for the Faberge Exhibition [reservation needed].

Marion Weinstein President 351 251

Brenda Lambourn Secretary 351 793.



BECKLEY BOOK GROUP

The next meeting is at 8pm on Friday 15 July at the Stradlings' house, The Ridings (third last house on the left in the High Street before Otmoor Lane). The two books chosen are *Saraswati Park* by Anjali Joseph and *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. New members are welcome. **Mary Worthington 351 270**

MOB

On the 4th May 12 of us met for lunch at The Abingdon Arms and the weather was good enough for us to sit out and enjoy a leisurely lunch in the sunshine. Topics covered ranged over many subjects but most important we enjoyed each others company.

On the 12th May 4 of us joined Geoff Mills on his sailing boat out of Portsmouth to Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu river. The sun shone and the winds were kind, a great day was had by all.

We meet on the 1st Wednesday in the month at 12.30pm at the Abingdon Arms. We welcome men of all ages.

Colin Day 351 581

CHURCH STREET WEDDING PARTY

Church Street residents, family, and friends held an all-day street party to watch and celebrate the Royal Wedding. Despite rain (which thankfully never reached London) a good time was had by all.



BECKLEY BELLS

The Beckley Bells will hold a workshop on Tuesday, the 5th of July, in the village hall at 5pm. We would be pleased to see anyone who is interested in bell playing, whether it is just to listen, or to find out more about bell playing. Please contact **Barbara Rose 351 376** for further details.

A FREE RIDE TO OXFORD? (or at least for us over 60s)

It always surprises me that there are not more villagers on our Beckley bus. It is so quick, (only 35 minutes door to door), convenient, friendly, reliable, relaxing, fun and free, (for over 60s) and if you sit up high nearer the back, the added bonus of brilliant views over the countryside and if you're nosey like me, into people's gardens. Also you don't have the added hassle of the Park and Ride or huge expense of parking in Oxford. These days there is much more choice with timings as I've listed below but see printed timetable for full list.

FROM BECKLEY ABINGDON ARMS

07.38 NOR SAT
07.58 SAT
10.18 MON TUE THURS
10.57 WED FRI SAT
14.08 MON TUE THURS

FROM OXFORD HIGH STREET (stop L1)

13.30 MON TO SAT
16.15 MON TO SAT (Beckley stop by request)
17.35 MON TO SAT (Beckley stop by request)

For more choice of times, you can park in Stanton St John Village Hall car park and catch the bus on the main road.

FROM STANTON ST JOHN

09.03 MON TO SAT
12.33 MON TO SAT

FROM OXFORD TO STANTON

15.15 MON TO SAT

The bus has been saved for another year, but who knows what will happen after that so if it is convenient for you, PLEASE use it! Any queries telephone **Liz Reis 351 259**

APPEAL TO RESTORE THE OUTER CHURCH DOORS

The fund received a considerable boost last weekend with Serendipity's magnificent concert in the church, given by Chris Britton, Rey Lear and Keith Fairbairn. Beckley turned out in large numbers and many have since said that it was the concert they enjoyed the most in the whole series, which has been running since 2004. Chris had arranged a wonderfully varied programme, ranging from medieval dances to favourite numbers from films and shows. The interplay of flute, guitar and percussion (including marimba, xylophone and bongos) had the audience enthralled. **Mary Worthington 351 270**

CONCERT VILLAGE CHURCH

Saturday 11 June

**Sarah Stuart-Pennink (cello)
Maddy King (piano)**

**Music by Bach, Bax, Beethoven,
de Falla, Fauré and others
as a tribute to
Pablo Casals, worker for world peace**

**Concert starts at 7:30pm
Tickets available at door
or**

from Mary Worthington 351 270

WALLS DO TALK

The cottages, houses, and barns of our community have a history that dates for many centuries. What stories would be told if walls would talk - history be uncovered?

One such time travel happened recently when Kate and Andrew McMichael began further conversion of their utility room at Midsummer Cottage. The McMichaels know the cottage's grade two listing was because the property had once been a brewery, but how and where the mechanics of brewing took place, and when the brewery had become a dwelling, had remained a mystery.

In the process of remodelling, mysterious nooks and crannies, plus wonderful old hooks, nails, chains, and hand-carved beams were discovered, plus evidence of a stove in the store room.

The name of the brewery is yet to be uncovered. An ale house was built on the back of the brewery at a later date, which are now the hall and study. Here people came with tankards and jugs, and purchased the beer that had been brewed in the part of the house that is now a kitchen (and at that time extended into what is now the living room), and then either went home or sat in the garden to drink and chat with friends. Malt for the process probably came from a hill to the east known as Malt Hill.

The brewery employed workers, who lived in 'one up one down' cottages adjacent to the brewery. Aflyn is two, one was where Aflyn's extension now exists, but was bombed during World War II. Two more cottages existed where cars are now parked. The chamfered timber in the kitchen dates from the 1600's. There is an insurance plaque above the kitchen door and a plaque on the first floor wall dated 1742 and carrying the initials RGM.

has the date 1742 and the initials RGM. There is a big well in the garden.

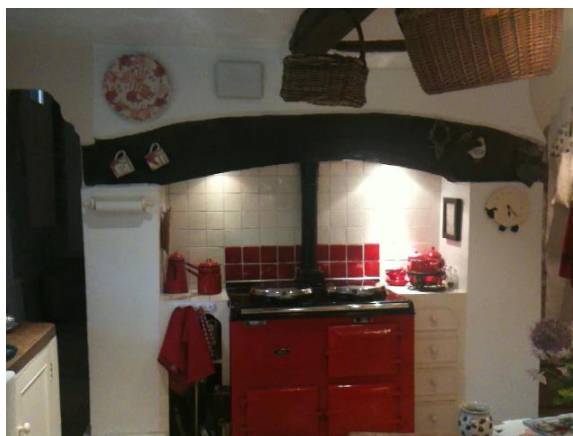
Old doors from the outside into what was a storage room/coal shed have been retained, plus a timbered window that seems never to have had glass. Stones from an early stone floor can be seen in the herb garden.

What do you think might be the history of your property? What unusual nooks, crannies, beams, nails, hooks, or wells have you discovered? The Time Team of Beckley is open to more and more discovery.

Ann Henman 351 492



Window with vertical slats, no glass



Chamfered beam in kitchen



Insurance plaque above kitchen door

WHEATLEY PARK SCHOOL – SPECIALIST MEDIA ARTS COLLEGE

Developing our links with the local community

Here at Wheatley Park School, we have more wonderful, creative events ahead of us and hope that you will be able to join us for them. You do not need to have a connection with the school and will be very welcome to come to our events and meet some of our students and staff.

On **Thursday 30th June at 7pm, we will be holding our Midsummer Night Concert.** This promises to be a treat for everyone with a wonderful evening of music and drama. The concert will take place in the Main Hall at the school. Tickets will be available on the door at £4 (£2 concessions).

If you like the visual arts then why not visit our **Art Show on Friday 8th July** from 6pm to 8pm and Saturday 9th July from 12pm to 4pm. The show will be held in the school's Old House, the magnificent grade 2 listed arts building, and will exhibit a variety of work including GCSE & A level art & photography.

Finally Wheatley Park School will be celebrating its 40th anniversary on **Saturday 9th July** from 12pm to 5pm with an exhibition entitled '**40 Years of Wheatley Park School 1971-2011**' in the school archive and the Farndell Library. Tea will be served from 2pm so please come and join many former members of staff and re-live old times. Any artefacts for the archive before the event, e.g. photographs, reports, exercise books, would be welcomed. Please leave these at the school reception for the attention of Kevin Heritage with your name and contact details.

For more information about any Arts event, please contact **Mellie Budge, Community Arts Manager on 01865 872441 on ext. 118.**

MESSAGE FROM ST LOUANS

By the time you read this we will have held our Dîner-Champêtre at St Louans. This year we are particularly pleased that eight people from Beckley will have been able to come over to share the evening with us. Like you in England we have had a hot and sunny start to our summer. The river Vienne that flows past our village is unprecedentedly low and the barrage across the river opposite the village is barring access for all boats except the smallest. It is proving to be an exceptional season because the fruit trees have been laden and the vines are two weeks ahead of schedule.

When a group from St Louans came to your village for the first time Jean-Claude (our self-styled mayor) was impressed with Beckley. He particularly liked the church but was surprised to see the condition of the ancient outer door, so it was with delight that Peter Dickson wrote to tell Jean-Claude that the door would be restored. Jean-

Claude on behalf of our village immediately dispatched a donation in return for a copy of Mick Bennett's booklet on the lych-gate. He has written some thoughts about the door for the newsletter: [translated by Peter Dickson].

'Dear friends, how happy we are for our twinning brethren from Beckley that your church door is finally to be restored. When he first came face to face with the delapidated state of the door it was this idea that occurred to the unofficial 'mayor of St Louans' and with good reason. It is certainly the case that even Prince Charles himself has taken the trouble to inform his views on architecture by referring to the good taste shown by the French in all matters involving old stone buildings.* So, it is hardly surprising that we should have the reaction that we did when we saw the state of the church door.

Our twinning connection has got off to a very good start and I'm sure that our friends in Beckley will have suggestions to make to us – how to start a pub for example in St Louans.'

*"A French commentator would be unaware that Prince Charles's taste in matters cultural and architectural is regarded as populist and backward-looking in the UK" [translator].

VISIT TO ST LOUANS

Continuing with our programme of informal Twinning with the French village of St Louans, eight village residents help St Louans celebrate **Diner Champetre**, the week end of June 4 to 5. French conversation lessons have been conducted (?) under the talented leadership of Sue Roberts throughout the past few months, with results to be tested! See the September 1 newsletter for news and pictures of the visit. **Ann Henman 351 492**

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It is a pleasure and a challenge to put together the four seasonal issues of the Beckley and Stowood Newsletter. A big thank you once again to all who contribute so generously with content, proof-reading, technical assistance, and delivery.

The editor reserves the right to edit any material submitted for publication and to reject anything considered unsuitable. Editor's decision on all such matters shall be final.

The next edition of the newsletter is due to come out on or near 1 September, with a deadline for material of 20 August. If there is anyone willing to help/take charge of the issue it would be much appreciated as I may be away at that time.

Ann Henman 351 492 annhenman@gmail.com

Please don't forget to use the Beckley Website at www.beckley-stowood-gov.uk for up to the minute news of the parish.

The Beckley and Stowood Newsletter is published four times a year at the end of February, May, August, and November.

ONE SMALL STEP FOR JAN (continued)



Jan at Windsor

