

# Charney Chatter

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 5

SEPTEMBER 2007

## PUBLISHED BY CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

**Editor: Peter Davies, Clerk**  
"Narogin", Longworth Road  
Phone: 868646  
E-mail: p.g.davies@btopenworld.com  
www.charneybassettpc.org.uk

### Your councillors:-

Geoff Beer (Chairman), Buckland Rd. 868709  
Jim Harper (Vice-chairman), Barnfield 868288  
Geoff Rumble, Buckland Road 868738  
John Stiles, Barnfield 868191  
Jos Bath, Buckland Road 868260

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 September 2007.**

## ADVERTS AND EVENTS

### Personalised Home-made Cards

If you can't find the right card for that special occasion, Eunice will make one for you. Ring her on 868646. Proceeds from the sale of these cards go to charity

### Village Diner

The Village Diner provides home-made food from local sources in Buckland Village Hall, every third Wednesday in the month. For £4 you get a splendid meal, tea or coffee and a chat. Next date 19th September.

### Piano Teacher

Liz Cowlam, experienced Piano Teacher qualified to CT ABRSM. Preparation for exams if desired. Tel: 868318.

### Village Hall Bookings

Contact Eunice Davies on 868646 for a booking form and conditions of hire, both for the Hall itself and the crockery and cutlery.

### Special Harvest Celebration

St Peter's church on Sunday 14th October at 4.00 p.m. Come and join us - refreshments after the service. Details from David Douglas 868782 or Sue Wales 868182.

### Home-Start Antiques Roadshow

Dig out your treasures and bring them along for valuation by the experts on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon between 10.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. Bonhams, auctioneers and valuers since 1793, will value your household wonders in aid of Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire, a local charity helping local families with small children. £5 for two items, £1 each extra item. Refreshments are also available. So come along and bring your treasures, ceramics, books, toys, silver, pictures etc. You never know what might be in your attic!

## CLET

Charney and Lyford Education Trust, CLET, supports a range of educational projects, with grants awarded both to individuals under the age of 25 and to the community in Charney Bassett and Lyford.

Applications will be considered by the Trustees who meet in January, May and September. For further details please contact the Clerk: Mrs Frances Rothwell, "Oldwalls", Buckland Road, Tel: 868704 E-mail: fc.rothwell@tiscali.co.uk.

## 100 CLUB

June winners:- Mark Tweddle (13) £50, David Nellist (104) £25. July winners:- Dave Belcher (68) £25, Jackie Cross (129) £10. Contact Geoff and Julie Rumble (868738) to join.

## THE WETLANDS OF THE VALE

What do the names, Charney, Hanney, Pusey, Binsey, Osney (and many more like them in the country) have in common? Well, of course it is obvious, the 'ey' element. That element signifies an island or higher ground surrounded by water or marsh, wetlands in fact. They were, right from prehistoric times, say 6,000 years ago, very good places to live. Their inhabitants would have enjoyed a more varied diet and had some extremely useful resources at their disposal.

Goosey means goose island and goose is just one of the creatures that were prized, and not just for its flesh but also the goose down and quills. All the wildfowl, fish, eels, the sedges, the rushes, the peat, all were put to good use. Some obviously for food, others for fuel and shelter. The sedges were harvested in the frosty weather, stacked and dried in the winter and in the summer used for the repair and renewal of roofs. In the Middle Ages eels were used as currency especially for the payment of rent. In the fens, Stuntney fishery produced 24,000 eels per annum. Fish is one of the

reasons that so many monasteries were located near wetlands. Remember, Charney was one of the manors held by the Abbot of Abingdon and there were still fishponds in the village in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The early farmers did not think of flood prevention or drainage but were concerned with how to come to terms with their environment. Today the Vale is criss-crossed with drainage ditches, but that process of control did not begin until the late Saxon, early Norman times hereabouts.

Don't get the idea that such a way of life existed only in far-off times. As late as the 1930's James Price, who lived on the edge of Otmoor to the east of Oxford, would, when the floods were about, put stakes and wires across the flooded areas to catch fish as the water drained back into the River Ray. His catch would be sold around the local villages.

So next time the floods surround the village think what you might be missing out on.

**Bruce Hedge**

## FLOOD APPEAL

Thanks to all who came to Marion Gardiner's coffee morning on August 21st. The sum of £230 was raised for the Bishop of Oxford's Flood Appeal.

## HEADLINES

- *Chequers - good news and bad news!*
- *Flood post mortem*
- *On your bike for St Peter's.*
- *What's happening on Charney Field?*
- *NAG formed*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

CHAFT update	2
From your MP	3
Flood report	4
Ride or Stride	4
Field update	5
Neighbourhood Action Group	5
The Chequers	5
Adverts & Events	6
CLET	6
100 Club winners	6

**Coffee Hour** sessions in the Village Hall on Tuesdays (10.30-11.30) resume on September 4th. Call in and chat. 50p buys you as much tea or coffee as you can drink - with biscuits too!

Deadline for copy for the next edition in November 2007: 20 October 2007  
Contributions are welcome, in fact desperately needed! Adverts are free!  
Charney Chatter can be e-mailed free to anyone giving their e-mail address to the Editor

Visit [www.charneybassettpc.org.uk](http://www.charneybassettpc.org.uk) for the very latest village news

---

**CHAFT UPDATE**


---

**Village Hall Development Project** - more optimistic news this time around with our grant applications:

We have been encouraged by the Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE) to increase our request from the original £10,000 to £50,000 and this will be on the agenda for their 13th September meeting. It will make all the difference if we can secure this grant.

The latest communication with the Vale Council suggests they would be amenable to acting as third party sponsor for our TOE application and we are putting in an application which will be considered at their Executive meeting in early October.

Our earlier application to Oxfordshire County Council for £7,500 has been agreed in principle and will come up for ratification at their next meeting shortly. If awarded, we have some flexibility on how we use these funds and could, if needed, use some of it as third party sponsorship of our TOE application, if that is successful.

Charney Challenge - we continue to receive donations towards our project fund - and Lucy and Paul Gildersleeves' challenge still stands - so this is your chance to make them pay up!

npower - not such good news - we were turned down on the £1,000 we asked for.

A recent initial estimate for the build costs is around £130,000 (ex-VAT but we would hope to be able to reclaim the major part of this). If we are successful with all the above applications this will give us about 60% of the total - still a way to go but very encouraging.

Future Fundraising - now that we have the Big Lottery outcome we will focus on:

- Village events
- Local organisations where we have connections, especially supermarkets,

banks, companies

- Awards for All and other national grant-funding bodies

**Charney Field (see also page 5)**

Ideas for replanting the copse and incorporating suggestions for everyone's enjoyment were discussed at a public meeting on 16th July and thanks to all who came along. Action in the short term will include the following:-

- progressing the plan put forward by Geoff and Julie Rumble for planting. This includes specimen trees (Oak, Lime, Walnut, Sweet Chestnut, Beech) and we welcome sponsors for these, as well as stands of other well-loved species, especially birch, holly, hornbeam, dogwood, hazel, spindle. A copy of the planting plan is on the village notice board
- bat boxes, nesting boxes, play den (Geoff has kindly said he will build this) and
- within the copse, palisades alongside a suitable path with raised areas for children to cycle along and over.

If your idea is not listed here, it may be scheduled for the longer term. Some suggestions were thought unsuitable either for health & safety reasons or incompatible with keeping the Field as natural as possible.

In the meanwhile, it was agreed help is needed to clear the ground for planting and we have made enquiries about this. Charney Army does a wonderful job in maintaining the Field but we need to make sure the task is manageable.

Our next public meeting is Monday 10th September at 8.00 pm in the Village Hall - do hope you can join us.

**Elisabeth Dahele**

---

**CHARNEY FIELD UPDATE**


---

At the risk of repeating some of what Elisabeth Dahele has written on page 2, here are the details of proposals for development of Charney Field. Suggestions aired at the public meeting have been made available in several ways to villagers in recent months and are therefore not repeated in full here.

The following criteria for assessing the suggestions were agreed:

1. health & safety and supervision implications
2. maintenance commitment
3. identifiable level of use, and flexibility of use
4. cost of purchase, preparation, installation etc.

Some of the suggestions received were rejected as not meeting these criteria (e.g. the zipwire). A number interested those present at the meeting and are being referred back to the originator for further discussion on feasibility and funding.

After some debate, the following priorities were agreed for 2007-8:-

1. more frequent, and regular, cutting of the grass - especially of the football pitch area. CHAFT has been working on this with the Parish Council to implement this urgently;
2. completion of ground clearance and

levelling of the woodland area. CHAFT is working with local firms to achieve this for autumn 2007.

3. replanting the woodland. First phase, including tree and shrub planting - autumn 2007-spring 2008. Second phase, including under-planting, 2008-9.
4. provide netball goal - 2007
5. build a rustic play den for the small children - 2007/8
6. continue work on development of the wildflower area - 2007/8
7. identify nesting box sponsors and install boxes - 2007/8
8. provide more bench seating in non-play areas of the field - 2008.
9. develop cycle bumps and run - 2008
10. re-stain and overhaul existing play equipment - 2008

The planting scheme for the wood area was discussed and will incorporate hedging, shrub areas, birch stands, several larger trees, bulb and wildflower under-planting, bark-chip paths, features to encourage a variety of wildlife. We are grateful to those who have promised funding to sponsor the larger trees. We would welcome sponsorship of shrub areas, under-planting etc also. Thank you also to the Charney Army for all their work!

**Lucy Gildersleeves**

---

**THE CHEQUERS**


---

There's good news and bad news about The Chequers! First, the good news. The arrival of David and Heather Wheeler last month suddenly transformed the pub from a failing enterprise to a rejuvenated one. Almost overnight, the customers were back and, indeed, there were occasions when people were turned away due to the restaurant being fully booked! The cooking reached standards way above anything seen for some considerable time (the Sunday roasts were out of this world!) and there was a feeling

that at last, Brakspears had arrived at the necessary formula to revive a country pub.

Now the bad news. Brakspears, in a master-stroke of mis-management, have arranged for the kitchen to be refurbished and the cooking equipment replaced, just as things were taking off. Current expectations are that the kitchen will be fully operational again in the week after the Bank Holiday but watch the village web site for news - and remember to book!

---

## THE FLOODS

The floods may have abated but the after-effects linger on and six properties are still drying out. It is important that lessons are learned from this traumatic experience and that any necessary steps to prevent a recurrence are taken as soon as possible.

Councillor Jim Harper attended a "Flood Surgery" in Abingdon and presented a report on the happenings in Charney, which was welcomed by the Environment Agency which organised the surgery (the report is on the village web site). They have acknowledged his report and attendance and have promised to get back to discuss actions. Central to the role which the EA needs to play is the maintenance of drainage ditches around the village. The failure of the culvert under Main Street to handle the increased flow of water caused the flooding of Main Street and Barnfield. It remains to be seen whether clearing out this and the ditch on the other side of the road will prevent a recurrence. It will be important to establish the route of this ditch to ensure there are no impediments downstream to hinder drainage to the River Ock. The EA was interested to learn of the existence of the Charney Army which it felt could help supplement their stretched resources in undertaking drainage clearance (get your waders out, folks!).

The flooding of Elm Cottage in Longworth Road was more puzzling than the other properties lower down in the village. It seems that it was the sheer volume of water which

flowed into the slightly low-lying garden and then welled up through the floor. This occurs when the soil under the house is no barrier to the efforts of the water inside the house to rise to the same level as that outside. But, more importantly when considering action to prevent this is the poor condition of the ditch running north from Elm Cottage and the lack of a ditch running south. If either or both of these had been in use, the water may not have been able to build up in the garden. This will be followed up with some urgency with both the EA and the Vale.

On 21<sup>st</sup> August I took the Emergency Planning Officer and his assistant from the Vale Council around the village to show them the sites of flooding. I hadn't actually realised there was emergency planning in the Vale, thinking it was a matter for the County but they explained that their remit was to study the local effects of flooding in the River Ock catchment area to ensure the villages are not forgotten when the current primary focus is on the more numerous properties flooded in Abingdon and Oxford. I hope their report on their findings adds pressure on the authorities to act.

There was one piece of (short-lived) good flood news. For the first time for decades, water flowed through Charney Mill. Unfortunately the field downstream of the mill was flooded so there was insufficient flow to turn the wheel.

**Peter Davies**

---

## ST. PETER'S CHURCH

A Reminder. The sponsored Ride or Stride will take place on **Saturday September 8th**, organised by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Half of all monies raised will go to the local church, and this is an opportunity to help St Peter's by sponsoring one of the local participants. Several people

in the village are taking part, either by cycling or walking to visit several churches during the day, and would welcome your sponsorship and encouragement. Please contact either myself (01235 868788) or Mary Daghish (01235 868557). Many thanks.  
**Barbara Douglas**

---

## FROM YOUR MP - ED VAIZEY

Following the floods that have devastated our area, I have had a chance to sit down with the Environment Agency (EA) to try and work out what can be done to prevent such devastation in the future. In particular, I want to see:-

- more monitoring of rivers and brooks in order to better predict where future floods will happen
- much better drainage systems for any future developments. Present drainage systems are wholly inadequate and not built with any risk of severe flooding in mind
- all new schemes built on flood plains, or against EA advice, to be called in by central government.

In addition, I am supporting the Vale Council's call for grants for homeowners who wish to install flood protection to their homes. I would also like a scheme to be considered to enlist local farmers in the important work of clearing ditches and brooks.

It is quite clear the EA is stretched to the limit. It even had its maintenance grant cut last

year. In the future, resources will be concentrated in urban areas like Oxford, Witney and Abingdon. The villages may end up getting less protection. The Government should urgently consider a scheme to allow farmers, who already get grants for environmental work, to apply for grants to clear ditches and brooks in villages.

The prospect of thousands of more homes being built and their impact on flooding could be severe. Despite assurances from the EA, I still believe the huge developments being planned in Didcot, Grove and east of Swindon could increase flood risk. If these developments are imposed against the wishes of the EA, I hope the Government will call them in. I will be waiting to see the Flood Risk Assessments for each.

Next local surgery is at Mill Hall House, Old School Lane, Grove on September 7th, 5.30 – 7.00 p.m.

I can be contacted at any time at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA, 0207 219 6350 or vaizeye@parliament.uk.

---

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

Neighbourhood policing is a Government initiative which is being rolled out across the country and it's coming to Charney Bassett.

The basic idea is to narrow the gap between public perception and government demands on the police to ensure that what local people want from the police is communicated to them so that they can prioritise their activities. One key requirement is to increase the visibility of the police in villages and this is already happening by appointing Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to support local beat officers. The plan is to have 160 PCSOs in Oxfordshire by March 2008, 120 of whom are already in post, 25 of them in the Vale

area. They have been spotted walking through the village on a number of occasions.

Charney will be covered by the Faringdon East NAG9 and at an inaugural meeting on August 23rd, Dave Sibbert and Peter Davies represented the village. A number of actions were decided by the meeting including a pilot scheme in the Hanneys to canvass public opinion on the issues you want the police to deal with. There will be a lot of publicity about the scheme in the coming months in Charney Chatter, the village web site and elsewhere and your views will be sought. If you'd like to learn more, contact Dave on 868734 or Peter on 868646.

Visit [www.charneybassettpc.org.uk](http://www.charneybassettpc.org.uk) for the very latest village news