

CHAR CHAT

Char Valley Parish Council Newsletter

Whitchurch Canonorum, Stanton St Gabriel, Wootton Fitzpaine

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Emergency Plan

The Parish Council is to develop an Emergency Plan for the area to cover matters such as flooding, power cuts, severe weather etc. and other matters particular to the area, such as the closure of the A35.

A report will be included in the next issue.



Award for Clerk to the Parish Council

Our Clerk, Charlotte Hughes has just been awarded a Certificate of Achievement: "Working with your Council" by the Society of Local Council Clerks. This involved working long hours to complete a large portfolio detailing the legal framework, accounting procedures and day to day business of running a parish council. Charlotte has now started on the University of Gloucester "Certificate in Local Council Administration" which will give her a clerk's professional qualification. Well done Charlotte!

The Well House Whitchurch Canonorum

The well can be found a short distance from the drive to Candida House, near the Church. The well is housed in a square natural stone building with a domed brick roof. Inside on the wall facing the door is a stone plaque on which is written GOD IS LOVE BE YE THANKFUL JULY 1856 C.J.W.

It seems that the well was originally dug in an attempt to alleviate the water shortages that the village of Whitchurch Canonorum had experienced for generations. The well digger suddenly came upon the water, which started to rise rapidly. He had to abandon his tools and scamper quickly up his ladder to safety. Unfortunately, when the water was tested later it was found to be salty and unsuitable for human consumption. In fact, water shortages continued right into the 20th Century until mains water came to the village in the 1960s.

One wonders - who was C.J.W? These were not the initials of the local vicar at the time (Sir William Palmer). Did the initials stand for the church warden/parish clerk who organised the building of the Well House, or did they belong to the well digger who found the water? Is there anyone in the Vale who has a great- or great-great-grandfather with the initials C.J.W.? If so, we would like to hear from you.

Note from the Parish Council

The first stage of repairs - re-pointing of the exterior wall - to the Well House has been completed. The second stage is to put in a new door to replace the old one, which is now rotten. The Parish Council will be asking for designs and quotes from local craftsmen for a door with ventilation and glass so that people can see the plaque. As the Well House is a Grade I Listed Building, Listed Building permission will have to be sought for all designs.

A35 Pedestrian Crossing

The Parish Council is continuing to press for a pedestrian crossing on the A35 at Morcombelake. The next move we are considering is to join with other local councils to campaign for better safety on the stretch between Miles Cross and Morcombelake. This will include pressing for speed limits and crossings.

Road Maintenance Programme

Our County Councillor Colonel Brierley OBE has organised that Dorset County Council Western Area Highways Office will send an officer to discuss with Parish Councillors the state of the roads and drains and necessary re-surfacing work for the 2006 Maintenance Programme. Update in next issue.

Reclaiming our Rural Highways

'A scoping report on issues affecting the character of roads and streets in rural Dorset'

The Dorset AONB Partnership has recently issued a report with the above title. We give here a summary of most of the issues it discusses. The full report can be obtained at www.dorsetaonb.org.uk

Setting the scene. Dorset's high quality environment is under threat from several sources. One of these is increasing traffic volume - at 2.5% per annum - caused by the county's rapid population growth and public awareness of new tourist attractions. The traditional solution in narrow, unimproved roads has been to widen and straighten them. This approach has often led to undesirable clusters of signs and road markings, and sometimes to damage to Dorset's distinctive ecology and archaeology. Another unintended effect has been an increase in traffic speeds to the detriment of walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Local authorities and others have a statutory duty of care to AONBs and must '*have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.*' However, the guidance available to the authorities is often blurred: is it based on a legal obligation, established engineering practice or the desire to avoid litigation? Conventional engineering solutions are considered easier to defend in court, should a claim be made against an authority.

Evaluation of solutions. *Cluttering of signs.* The '*cumulative result of numbers of uncoordinated interventions.*' Three solutions are suggested 1) Removal. The simplest solution. This has been adopted as local policy in many parts of the country 2) Amalgamation. Signs can be placed on existing street furniture. 3) Improved design.

Speeding traffic and excessive road markings. There is guidance to suggest that coloured markings should be used sparingly and that the effect of all markings is anyway negated in wet weather. Historically, traffic calming in rural areas has been applied only to major roads through villages and is uncommon on minor roads. In Dorset, measures are limited to road markings, gateway features and signage. This is deemed '*urban traffic calming with light modification.*' Surveys in large Dorset villages have found that the installation of '*high visibility speed limit signs*' made no perceptible change in most areas. 'Dragon's teeth' countdown markers on roads have little speed-reducing effect. Surrey University has found that lanes with grass along the centre produce slowest driving speeds, while white line markings along the sides of roads increase speeds. Guidance from several areas suggests that removal of white lines from the **centre** of roads helps retain local character and encourages drivers to take greater care. White line removal is being tested in 13 areas across the country as an experiment in reducing accident rates. National policy on 20 mph limits is that they should be used sparingly, as they are costly and the signs have severe environmental effects. 30 mph limits are viewed as a suitable norm in villages.

Research into the effect of speed cameras is inconclusive and opinion heavily divided. Their installation is '*an admission that standard traffic engineering has failed.*' Vehicle activated signs are used to help enforce speed limits and warn of hazards. They have been found to reduce accident rates and reduce traffic speeds by up to 9 mph.

Recommendations. The Report's recommendations include 1. The Local Transport Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development frameworks should contain policies to promote the sensitive treatment of rural roads, particularly in the AONB. 2. There should be a '*single road hierarchy or classification system*' to deal with the movement of large vehicles, destination signing and speed limit setting. 3. All proposals to alter the highway should be assessed against an environmental checklist. 4. A '*clutter audit*' should be tested in two environments - one in a village or town street and another in open countryside - to demonstrate the three de-cluttering methods mentioned above. 5. Parish Councils should have a greater involvement in rural road management issues. 6. A joint guidance document should be prepared to address all the issues mentioned above. Planning authorities are urged to take part in its production and to adopt it as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister supports the idea of 'design codes' applied to building projects. They have not yet been applied to rural road design, but they may indicate the government's approval of the use of strict guidelines in such matters.

Admiral Sir George Somers Day and Parade



This year 2005 marked a significant milestone in the Admiral Sir George Somers Commemoration Parade. This was the 25th anniversary. It was inaugurated by the late Major Bob Burns M.C. ED., the town crier of St Georges, Bermuda. It was his enthusiasm for the historic links between Lyme Regis and St. Georges that culminated in the official twinning of the two towns in 1996.

You might well be asking, what is this to do with us? Well, Admiral Sir George Somers was born in Lyme Regis in 1554, and became a sailor. After being shipwrecked, he and his crew made landfall and founded the colony of Bermuda. As he became prosperous he bought property, including

Berne Manor at Whitchurch Canonicorum. He died while returning to Bermuda in 1610 and although his heart is buried in Bermuda, his body was brought back to the Cobb at Lyme Regis, and then to Whitchurch Canonicorum for burial. A full account of his life and exploits is in a small booklet written by Richard J. Fox MBE.

So back to the parade. This year I was proud to take up the invitation from the Lyme Regis - St Georges Twinning Association on behalf of the Char Valley Parish Council.

We met for coffee at the Alexandra Hotel and afterwards formed up for the Parade. The leaders of the Parade - the Mayor of Lyme Regis and her town crier, the Mayor of St Georges and his town crier, the Mayor of Hamilton, Bermuda and his town crier - were all done up in their colourful regalia. Led by the Lyme Regis Junior Band, we made our way through the town to the Cobb for the Proclamations and raising of the flags. Then back to the Marine Parade for the Mayoral Address to the RNLI as it was lifeboat week. Then to lunch at the Pilot Boat Inn with short speeches and toasts of Dark and Stormy (rum and ginger beer!).

That done, it was then on to Berne Manor Farm, the site of Berne Manor which was destroyed by fire. Mr Richard Legg welcomed us here and we were invited to sign the visitors' book. And so it was on to the church of St. Candida and the Holy Cross for a short service, and the laying of posies at the George Somers Plaque. Finally the annual cry at the village cross (war memorial) by the town crier of St. Georges, Mr David Frith, and a goodwill cry by the town crier of Hamilton, Mr Ed Christopher.

This was to me a very interesting and rewarding day following Admiral Sir George Somers from his birthplace of Lyme Regis to his later home at Berne Manor, and to his final resting place at Whitchurch Canonicorum church.

Vincent Diment

New Licensee for The Ship Inn

The Ship Inn at Morcombelake is under new management. Steve, Emma, Hannah, Archie, Freddie and Sonny (the dog) have taken over from the Harding family. We welcome them to our community.

Tetra Mast Update

The planning department has granted temporary permission for 12 months for the Mast to remain in Stonebarrow Lane. The temporary permission has been granted in order that Charmouth has Emergency Services cover while further negotiations continue over a site for one mast to cover both Lyme Regis and Charmouth.

Report from the James Hargreaves Community Hall

Refurbishment

After the demolition of the old chapel in January of this year, work started on the badly needed internal refurbishment. The old rotting windows, possibly the originals, have been replaced with new so the years of struggling with draughty, insect and weed infested windows are over.

The wooden floor had suffered damage from many years of contact with condensation from the walls. This has all been repaired by villagers using wooden blocks lifted mainly from under the old stage area.

We have recently begun competitive tendering for replacing the hall roof and for building the new kitchen and toilets.

The hall will be re-wired in early October and the old and rusty 1KW electric heaters will be replaced by new 3KW equivalents.

New hall committee

At our AGM in July, three members resigned and three new members joined the management committee. The new management committee is: -

David Crosby (chair), Jenny Crosby (vice-chair), Maureen Rosbrook (secretary), Trevor Chambers (treasurer), Sheila Chambers, Phyllis Diment, Nicky Forrest, Graham Knight, Martin Legg, Myra Neaves. Councillor Clive Richards represents the hall on the Char Valley Parish Council.

Report from Whitchurch Village Hall

The redecoration is continuing and plans are in hand for improved heating facilities to be installed. More lightweight tables have been purchased and the hall can now seat 100 guests.

Future events include a joint grand draw with the James Hargreaves Hall. The draw will take place at the Whitchurch hall - a twinned event organised by both halls - on Saturday 19th November with what promises to be an excellent buffet and bar with dancing to "One Night stand". It looks like a great evening with funds being shared by the two halls. Other events include a Victorian buffet dinner with entertainment on Saturday 17th December.

Our AGM is at 7.30pm on Thursday 24th November.