

Dear Editor

Marcham Institute

As you are aware from the October issue of the MADNews, the Anson Trust have obtained Planning Permission, subject to certain conditions, for the development of the Car Park to the rear of the Institute. A small note on one of the pages of the Plans reads "End of building removed and new end constructed".

What exactly do those words mean to you? They mean the demolition of the old outside Toilet Block, the demolition of the sloping roof extension, part of the old Boiler House, and most importantly some 15 foot off the rear end of this 100-plus-year-old Institute. The total demolition, as far as can be ascertained, will be to the rear of the Stage. The Plans mentioned in the October MADNews have yet to be seen by the Parish Council or the Vale of White Horse. The ground space gained by this demolition will provide a new Car Park for 17 vehicles as shown in the Plans, the existing one has spaces for at least 34.

The new Main Entrance to the Institute will be through this new Car Park. Scant regard has been shown for the safety of pedestrians using this entrance, up to a possible 175 the maximum Institute capacity. Young and fit, mobility impaired or those with wheelchairs or pushchairs, all will take their chances negotiating the sloping drive with no footpath. And bear in mind that there will be traffic from the new 6 houses sharing that drive with you.

It is very difficult to understand how the Planning Application could be presented to the Development Control Committee of the Vale of the White Horse and these points not be mentioned at the hearing, let alone discussed, without the Detailed Plan mentioned above being available. The Application was "Resolved" by 17 votes to Nil.

MARCHAM EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB

Dear Editor

Since my last letter on the Institute I have met with the Ex-Service Men (14/10) and have mediated a meeting between the Anson Trust and the Ex-Service Men (20/11). I have been in contact with the Vale planners and have been informed that I will be consulted on the Planning application on the Institute shortly. This right to be consulted before approval, which I won by speaking at the Planning meeting on August 31st, includes "access to the site, parking, design, materials and details of the rear (elevation) of the Institute building" which are still awaited.

I am sorry that the Ex Service Men consider that their concerns were not adequately represented at the Planning Committee but they would have been better advised to contact me before that meeting to tell me of their specific concerns. I understand that instead they had been advised that the planning application would fail. It was apparent to me that under planning law the application had a very good chance of success and therefore it was important that I, as local member, be consulted on much of the detail so that as far as is possible the

various concerns which villagers had about the scheme could be resolved.

Specifically: The issue of the number of parking spaces is clear. As a matter of Planning Policy guidelines require a set number of spaces to be provided for village halls. For the capacity of the Institute 17 spaces is within these guidelines.

The plans lodged for approval clearly show a reduction in the length of the Institute and removal of outbuildings and this is what was approved. What remains outstanding is the detailed plans of the rear elevation which is among the conditions for final approval. Regrettably, interior plans for the Institute are not a planning matter, although I am aware that these are very important for village groups.

Access and traffic safety matters, both for local residents and users, remains a concern for me which is why I felt it important that this be delegated rather than simply being approved on the night of the Planning meeting. I was also perturbed to learn subsequently that access to the building from the existing front doors may be lost and this is one of the many issues I have already taken up with planning officers.

I remain more than happy to hear from villagers or village groups to inform my representations to the Vale or any discussions with the Anson Trust.

JANE HANNA

District Councillor for Marcham and Shippon.

Dear Editor

Sorry, but I really cannot let you get away with the statement on the front page of last month's issue that the first UK newspaper came out in November 1655. As a historian of the seventeenth century, I often read papers from much earlier than that, and very interesting they can be. In fact, 1655 was when the military regime of Oliver Cromwell decided to clamp down on press freedom and only two titles of the many that had existed before then were permitted. Ten years later, with the start of the London Gazette, the number was down to one.

We do not actually know when newspapers started in England, but the regular waggon services that distributed them were beginning by about 1600. At first they were hand-written and copied out by teams of clerks. A subscriber might specify the kind of news he was most interested in, and receive a personalised version. It was only in the 1640s, under the impetus of the Civil War, that printed papers really took off. Most of these are instantly recognisable as newspapers, with mastheads, datelines, and often a leading article, but others take the format of a book coming out by instalments and it is their content that shows them for what they are.

Some developments were remarkably early. One was the hack journalist, writing persuasively in favour of whoever was paying him at the time. Another was the distinction between intellectual 'broadsheets' and more popular 'tabloids'. From a Marcham point of view, one of the important tabloids was the

semi-pornographic 'Parliament of Ladies' written and put out by Henry Neville, who was a friend of our MP, Henry Marten of Longworth, and who was himself MP for Abingdon from 1648 to 1653. This detailed the sexual transgressions of the great and the good with a freedom that some present-day editors (not including yourself, I am sure!) might well envy. So far as it is possible to verify the stories, they seem to be quite well-founded. Marten and Neville were republicans, and the rather nasty point they were making was that political leaders who couldn't control their womenfolk were not likely to do much better running a divided and rebellious country.

So I hope you don't mind my pointing out that MADnews has an even longer pedigree than you had believed, and that some of its predecessors provided a very different, and much more racy, kind of reading matter than that which you produce.

MANFRED BROD

BBOWT NEW RESERVE – CHIMNEY MEADOWS

This very large and recently purchased reserve near Bampton already has a wealth of birds, wild life and plants. It adjoins a smaller existing BBOWT reserve.

Volunteer work parties are being held throughout this winter, if you are interested in joining a tea to do physical work and hedge-planting, contact Lisa Lane, Chimney Meadow Project Officer on 01865 775476. There will be other opportunities for volunteers as the reserve develops.



Help a child to read with confidence and enjoyment!

"The contribution of the reading helpers is huge! They have time to really interact with the children which boosts their self-esteem and reading ability"

Oxfordshire teacher

Work in a local primary school with three children who are struggling with their reading. They need half an hour each, twice a week.

Volunteer Reading Help will give you:

- Initial training
- Continuing training and support
- Travel expenses
- The satisfaction of making a difference to children's lives

Contact Hilary Burr on 0845 4500329, oxfordshire@vrh.org.uk, or VRH, Oxford Community School, Glanville Road, Oxford OX4 2AU