

**PARISH COUNCIL NEWS**

**Council Tax 2004** The Parish Council carefully considered its budget for 2004/05 at its last meeting, and resolved to keep the Council tax figure for the parish the same as last year, at £28,000. It is planned to use some of this money to provide a better safety surface under the skale swing in the play area, and to give grants to village organisations and projects. The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 does grant the power to Parish Council to pay basic allowances to their members. The members of Marcham Parish Council however decided some while ago to continue working voluntarily for the parish and not to claim allowances, thus helping to cap the parish element of the council tax.

**Best Kept Garden Competition 2004** As mentioned in the Autumn edition of MAD News, just for a change, this year's competition will be held in Spring rather than the Summer. The preliminary first round of judging will take place during the Week 16th April to 22nd April. The final round of judging will be during the week commencing 26th April. No entry forms will be required and judges will assess gardens from the roadside without the need for entering properties.

**Bus Services** The service Oxford / Wantage no. X31 and 31 bus which serves the village is essentially a commercial service and does not receive much subsidy from the County Council. A subsidy is given however for the Sunday and Bank Holiday services. The County Council is looking at ways of reducing its financial input particularly as the public transport subsidy budget is already overspent for the current financial year 2003/04. A suggestion has been made that the Sunday evening services in both directions be withdrawn in addition to the first bus on a Sunday morning. This would leave an hourly Sunday service between approximately 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The Parish Council will be considering the impact of this suggestion at its meeting on 11th February and will be making comments to the County Council. If anyone would be affected by this proposal or has views on the reduction of Sunday bus services then please contact the Clerk prior to the meeting.

**Thames Valley Police – Update on Non-Emergency Call Handling** The Police have now employed an extra 16 operators to work in the Police Enquiry Centre. The number of abandoned calls to the Centre has fallen significantly and the number of calls answered within 20 seconds by their switchboard staff has increased. Thames Valley Police receives 30,000 non-emergency calls every week. They have also issued every operational officer in Thames Valley with a mobile phone. This, combined with voicemail, enables messages from the public to be passed to officers much more quickly. A new single telephone number for non-emergency calls has just been introduced. This will run in parallel with other non-emergency numbers on a trial basis for one year. Anyone wishing to bring a non urgent item to the attention of the Police can now telephone **0845 8 505505**. If anyone has any concerns about the quality of service from the Police, the call handling or response times, then these can

be brought to the attention of “The Quality of Service Unit” at Thames Valley Police HQ, Oxford Road, Kidlington, OX5 2NX, tel 01865 846319 or by e-mailing [valerie.copping@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:valerie.copping@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk).

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 11th February, 2004 at 7.30 p.m. in the residents' lounge Duffield Place. The guest speaker will be from the Rural Housing Trust, and the Council will be continuing its investigations into affordable village housing.

**Clerk:** Mrs. L. Martin, 90 Howard Cornish Road, Marcham Tel: 01865 391833

**MARCHAM WI**

Hello and a belated Happy New Year and welcome to our new editor. What's your idea of the WI? Is it 'Jam and Jerusalem'? Yes, we do sell jam, and cakes and homegrown vegetables, and other fresh produce at our markets. Yes, we do sing Jerusalem at our National meetings. But if you have seen the film 'Calendar Girls', you will know that we are passionate about issues which affect us all. Yes, we do have fun, go on outings, go on courses at Denman College such as watercolour painting, icing cakes, etc. But we care for our community. We 'drop everything' to raise money for cancer charities. We lobby the Government on such things as GM food and farming; children's diets, exercise and health; care of older people, and lots more.

If you would 'like to make a difference' then come and join us on the third Thursday of each month. You will be most welcome. Contact May on 391867, or Christine on 391270 or Jackie on 01235 813530. Coming events: February 19 A House in France; March 18 AGM and Desert Island Choice of Art; April 15 Hanging Baskets and Tubs. Look forward to seeing you.

**JACKIE OWSNETT**

**SUNSHINE CLUB – JANUARY**

This month due to illness, it was decided not to hold our “Social Afternoon” but will be back on track next month, February. Not much news this time, so will take the opportunity to once again mention the club. We now hold our Monday meetings in the afternoon from 2.30 till 4pm. Members are happy about this as it means not turning out in the dark. Our social afternoons are held on the 1st Thursday in the month. This is when we hold our “Sale Table” and have a finger buffet tea and we always have a raffle end of each meeting. If anyone is interested we would be pleased to see you, not a limited age group. If you would like more information you could phone me on 391-695, plus we have outings later. This month we had 2 members with special birthdays. Each had a card and plant from the club, we hope they enjoyed their day. Our donation this month went to the Heart Foundation.

Committee meeting will be Monday 2nd Feb. Social meeting – Thursday 5th 2.30pm. We would like to wish everyone a “Happy and Healthy New Year” 2004.

**JOY CROOK**