

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

We had a very useful meeting with the new chairman of the Environment Agency, Lord (Chris) Smith, at the beginning of December. A variety of topics were covered, in particular the reservoir and the 2007 floods.

On the reservoir, Lord Smith made it clear that the Environment Agency feels that the case is very far from proved, which was very interesting. Thames Water also turned up, and said that they would be happy for a public enquiry, which strengthens the case for a full hearing of the arguments. On floods, the news was much less encouraging. It turns out that the Environment agency no longer has the resources it had twenty years ago to actually walk all the tributaries of the Thames and keep them clear. This is a huge worry, and a huge admission, and something that I will take back to Parliament. We had a very good presentation from the Hanney Flood Group, who spent months trying to get to grips with the Environment Agency bureaucracy, and I very much hope Chris Smith takes on board their points and provides a simpler structure for people to liaise with.

Parliament opened for a new session at the beginning of December as well. Parliament always opens with a heckle by Dennis Skinner, the famous Beast of Bolsover. He shouts it out just as Black Rod (the managing director, if you like, of the House of Lords) arrives in the Chamber of the House of Commons to command the Speaker to come and hear the Queen give her speech. Black Rod is dressed in all his eighteenth century finery, and Dennis's finest heckle was "I bet he drinks Carling Black Label!" This year it was "Is there a Tory mole in Buckingham Palace as well?" This referred to the arrest of my MP colleague Damian Green, whose office was searched by the Police. No MP is above the law, but many MPs from all parties feel this was an assault on the freedom of Parliament, which is actually an attack on all our freedoms. If MPs can be arrested for receiving documents that are in the public interest, even if they are not authorised to do so, then we are all in trouble.

It will be a very light session of Parliament, the lightest since the war, and I am not clear why. I assume it is because the Government wants the freedom to call an early election, but there were many non-controversial bills, including one on heritage, that have been dropped for no apparent reason.

Happy New Year!

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage (Con)

MP'S SURGERY WITH ED VAIZEY

5.30-7.00pm, unless stated otherwise

9 Jan	Wallingford, Town Hall
23 Jan	Faringdon, Corn Exchange
Contact Ed Vaizey by	
Post	The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
E-mail	vaizeye@parliament.uk
Web	www.vaizey.com
Tel	0207 219 6350

MARCHAM CRICKET CLUB

Graham Hill kindly represented the Club at the AGM of the Oxfordshire Cricket Association. Fixtures for the 2009 season were made available at the AGM; the opening match at Marcham is a 1st XI game against Westbury on 2 May.

Information relating to Marcham CC (including playing for, or umpiring on behalf of the Club) may be obtained from Graham Hill (391415) or Terry Whittaker (391317).

CSB



MIKE SOPER

Some people will remember Mike Soper who lived from the 1950s to the 1980s in the cottage behind Marcham Baptist Church in Packhorse Lane, after which he moved to the Wallingford area. Sadly, he died recently, aged in his nineties. A special thanksgiving service was held for him in Wallingford at the beginning of December.



Mr Sager was a leading academic in agriculture at the University of Oxford who sometimes appeared on BBC TV's weekend farming programmes the precursor of Countryfile. He was at once cultured and classless, warm and witty, with a fund of funny stories. He used to park his latest Morris Minor (and there were many over the years!) in our timber yard whenever he wasn't gadding about the country giving lectures or whizzing down to Cornwall for sailing weekends. Long after leaving Marcham, he would dash over to us every Christmas Eve afternoon with a box of chocs and a selection of anecdotes, delivered with kindness and a smile. Christmas Eve won't be quite the same without Mr Soper's smile.

JANE MANDER née Pointer

NOVEMBER CROSSWORD BY ALISA

ACROSS

- 1 Plimsoll (3.4)
- 5 Short (5)
- 8 Denman residents (2)
- 9 In the wrong direction (6)
- 12 Ragged imp (6)
- 13 Telephone box (5)
- 14 Fragile intentions (11)
- 15 Indian washerman (5)
- 17 Abrupt (6)
- 19 Hope (6)
- 20 Hospital (2)
- 23 Warning (5)
- 24 Young bird (7)

DOWN

- 1 Garment for a don (4)
- 2 Redcaps (2)
- 3 Inventive cartoonist (5.8)
- 4 Putting out (13)
- 5 Oxford district (9.4)
- 6 Poem by Kipling (2)
- 7 Lively (6)
- 10 Liberty (7)
- 11 Plastic token (7)
- 15 Ideas of perfection (6)
- 18 Reptile (4)
- 21 British Rail (2)
- 23 US soldier (2)

MARCHAM PLAYERS

Two dates for your diary in the New Year! Friday 13 February 2009 – 7.30pm start – the committee are presenting another in the popular series of reading evenings entitled "With Great Pleasure". The theme this time is around "humour" so do



come along and enjoy an evening with a difference! Also in February – this time it's Friday 19 Feb at 7.30pm in the Church – we will be holding our Annual General Meeting. Its also the time to renew subscriptions and enjoy a chat with fellow members, the business part of the evening usually starts around 8.00pm. If you are not yet a member of Marcham Players do consider joining – family subscription is only £10 and gives you access to our wide ranging programme of productions, play readings and theatre trips throughout the year.

On Friday 12 December 2008 we held our Animal Christmas supper in the Board Room at Manor Farm. The event was well attended – some 24 members – and a change from our usual routine in that this year Joey and her team produced a splendid meal which was much appreciated by all present. Our thanks to Will and Janey Cumber for the use of the Board Room.

Any enquiries about us will be willingly answered either by our Secretary, Joey, on 01865 391242 or myself, Dave Hutchinson on 01865 391964.