

MARCHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

This meeting, held on 20 May, was attended by approximately 50 people including members of the Parish Council, County and District Councillors, Headteacher of Marcham School, residents and an invited guest from the Vale, Nick Burroughs.

The first item on the agenda was the presentation of the Parishioner of the Year Award. Pamela and Eddie Shirras were the recipients this year (see cover photo) and the citation reads:

Marcham Parish Council wishes to recognise and honour the achievements and contribution to the life and well being of Marcham made by Eddie and Pamela Shirras. Through their strong professional dedication, leadership and enthusiasm, together with a sincere love of the community, Eddie and Pamela were able to reinvigorate Marcham's confidence in the church.

In the course of their ministries at All Saints', they were particularly successful in the involvement of newcomers and children through family services, clubs and a range of seasonal activities, into the family of the church and the community at large.

Their tireless commitment enabled them also to develop close and most welcome links with Marcham Church of England Primary School, which brought great benefits to the growing number of pupils, parents, staff and governors alike.

Mr Burroughs, from the Vale, talked about the new "Local Development Framework" which has replaced the Local Plan. This is now made up of separate sections which can be updated more easily if circumstances (political, financial or environmental etc) dictate. It also looks ahead to 2026 instead of the shorter term as before. The presentation was very interesting as this new framework allows the Vale to be "visionary" ie suggesting plans that may or may not be achievable by the Vale but are considered as desirable ... like the Marcham bypass, as well as developments for housing, business and roads that are likely to go ahead. The Vale have to find space for over 2000 new houses and are considering developments to the west of Didcot (just in to the Vale area), south west of Abingdon and North east of Wantage. The policy for larger villages in rural areas, such as Marcham, is for developments of up to 15 houses on suitable sites, of which 40% should be "affordable" as in the Longfields development. The detailed "Managing Development Document" which is part of the draft framework, is due to be put out for consultation on 27 May but there is only a 6-week period to give our comments. The Parish Council will consider a response but individuals may also comment by contacting the Vale directly. Call 01235 520202 or go to the Vale website and search on "Local Development Framework".

Malcolm Denton, Chair of the Marcham Parish Council, reported on the activities of the Council during the year and highlighted the improved recycling area in Howard Cornish Road, the improvements to the Burial Ground, a grant to buy sandbags and a flood warning device and an investigation to create a footpath on the south side of the A415. They are also representing our interests to Stagecoach as to the proposed reduction in the 31 bus service and to the Highways Department for weed control and pothole repairs. The Council hopes that as soon as arrangements have been completed, a temporary Post Office service would be available in the village. The Council members read a lot of reports, planning applications and attend meetings on our behalf and you can learn what they do by reading the regular column in MADNews and / or attending the meetings held every month in Duffield Place. See page 3 for details.

Jane Hanna, our district councillor, reported on the new recycling arrangements which will start in 2010 – they will include plastics collection on a 2-weekly basis and continuation of the weekly un-June 2009

recyclable rubbish collection. The Vale hopes to increase recycling to 50% of the total and save £350,000 in this joint venture with South Oxfordshire. Jane, as well as the Parish Council, will have to respond in due course to the Vale District Council on any Anson Trust proposals and has established a working group to consider how best to consult with the village and make sure that the village's views are represented when plans are made for new facilities. She has also worked to ensure the pharmacy at Marcham Road Hospital remains open.

Iain Brown, our county councillor, also reported on the reservoir plans which have been put back as Thames Water's case for the need for the water has not been proved to either the Vale or Oxfordshire's satisfaction. He has lobbied for weed-control funds to be given direct to Parish Councils to use as necessary, trying to keep the bus services intact; putting forward recommendations that the A415 must be upgraded, Abingdon should have another river crossing and Marcham should have a bypass. He will be standing for a second 4-year term in the June elections representing "*such a diverse and rural area in a beautiful part of the world*" with an attendance record of 96% - 24 out of 25 meetings.

Viv Hutchinson gave us news that the school had been judged "Satisfactory" by Ofsted last October with 100% of Year 6 children achieving level 4 or above in the national tests – for those of us not up to date with current education-speak – that is a GOOD THING! The school is currently undergoing more building with a new classroom to cope with the expanding numbers of children attending. They are also enjoying a lot of new "taster" activities including Flamenco, Origami, French, Board Games and Gardening, they would also like to try bike maintenance and photography. All villagers are invited to contact Viv if they can offer skills to expand what the school can offer as extra activities. As mentioned on page 11, the school is also reorganising the library and if you have any "borrowed" books, you are encouraged to give them back!

Malcolm and Neighbourhood Specialist Officer Jimmy May, gave a short update on Neighbourhood Policing and NAG. Laura Schmid is our local Police Community Support Officer and makes regular visits to Marcham leading cycling proficiency classes at the school, speaking to groups, doing general policing work. If you would like her to come and speak to you about a personal concern or to a group eg Lunch Club, you can contact her through the general Abingdon Police Station Number 0845 8 505 505.

After the main presentations had been given, a number of people asked about Anson Trust plans – see page 5 for the latest update from the Directors. Colin Bough explained that negotiations were still ongoing for the purchase of land behind Hyde Copse and also with the sale / development of up to half of the Anson Field. Any commercial contracts needed to be completed before public consultations would start. He reiterated that any developer who bought the Anson Field land would have to get planning permission from the Vale before any houses were built and people would have a chance to view the plans and either object or agree at that stage. He confirmed that the Anson Trust does not consider the present Institute building suitable and so it will not be refurbished.

The meeting closed with the usual very welcome drinks and nibbles. Our thanks to all those who organised, reported and took time to attend.

I have tried to check the facts given above in the time available before publication, but apologise for any inaccuracies that may have crept in. ML

ED VAIZEY WRITES...

At the time of writing, the controversy over the Gurkhas is still very much in mind. It is the first time in living memory that the Government has lost to an opposition motion (in fairness, a Lib Dem one, not a Conservative one), and only the second time that this Government has lost a vote (the other one being 42 days detention without trial). The reason I am bringing it up is not to