

ED VAIZEY WRITES... continued

score points. Of the many national issues that my constituents write to me about, I received most in the shortest space of time on this issue. Dozens of people e-mailed and wrote to me, in the space of just 24 hours. In fact, it was also the first political issue my mum has ever lobbied me on!

The British sense of fair play triumphed on this issue. I am sure there are all sorts of technical and rational reasons why you could argue that Gurkhas should not have the automatic right to stay in the UK. There is also the cost to consider. But at the end of the day, the Great British Public decided that, if people were prepared to fight and die for our country, then those same people should have the right to stay here. My wife's great grandfather served with the Gurkhas, so I also had a (tenuous) family connection, and I was proud to vote for the motion saying the Gurkhas should stay here.

Elsewhere in Parliament, we have put forward a motion to freeze the television licence fee. This may seem like small beer (only £3 a year) but in our view it is a start in stopping the relentless rise in charges and costs of everything in the public sector. Because of the recession, the BBC now has more money than ITV, Channel 4 and Five put together, and I am sure it can make savings. I know that, like me, most of my constituents are fans of the BBC, though I get a few letters a year complaining about the heavy-handed letters from TV licensing.

A few days ago, I put together a fascinating day at Didcot Power station, with many small companies engaged in climate change and energy work. There was a building company that could halve emissions from our homes using organic building material; a company that manufactures high-temperature thermometers that cut fuel costs; and quite a few others. In the end, we talked more about money than energy. We contrasted the situation in the US, where hi-tech companies have much better access to financing than in the UK - a real problem which explains why we often lag behind in this area. We have the ideas, but not the investment climate to see them through.

ED VAIZEY, MP Wantage (Con)

MARCHAM SOCIETY REPORT

Gardens of the Radcliffe Observatory

On 30 April, a group of Marcham Society members braved the rain to visit the Radcliffe Observatory, next to the old Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. Our guide was Michael Pirie, who cares for the gardens single-handedly.

He led us along winding paths, brightened by flowerbeds packed with colourful blooms and shaded by many varieties of shrubs. The original Observatory was housed in the Temple of the Four Winds, where we climbed to the top floor to admire the views across Oxford. This beautifully-restored building now houses the dining and common rooms of Green Templeton College.

On 7 May, Michael gave a talk to the Marcham Society about the history of the site. The original Observatory was funded by the trustees of Dr John Radcliffe, a wealthy doctor who had been physician to Queen Anne. It was not begun until the Infirmary was finished and took many years to complete, as the trustees released funding gradually on an annual basis. A house for the Observer and his family was linked to the Observatory by a curved corridor. To the north there were no other buildings on the road to Woodstock until the 1850s. In the 1890s, the Observer complained that the windows of the men's ward at the Infirmary were left open and "ward paraphernalia" could be seen. He also insisted on passing trams having rubber wheels to cut down noise.

By the 1920s, the Observatory had moved to South Africa and there was a proposal to clear the site for housing development. Lord Nuffield stepped in and bought it, with the stipulation that medical research must be carried out there. Green College was for medical students and part of the site was gradually taken over by the Infirmary. Green College merged with Templeton College in 2008. **JF**

June 2009



Marcham WI
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Summer is almost here and our attention is drawn to our gardens and the planning for future colour and produce. At our meeting this month our speaker Pricilla Frost will talk about the National Garden Scheme which organises and encourages keen gardeners to open their gardens to the general public. She will illustrate her talk with slides.

The postponed "Celebration of Ninety Years" of the Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes was held on 24th. April at Christchurch Cathedral. It was a perfect warm Spring sunny day and hundreds of members across the County attended. Each Institute processed their colourful banners before a moving and thoughtful service. Marcham was well represented (see cover) and Stephen Hacket, the Principal of Denman College, gave an interesting reading with an account of the formation of the college at Marcham over sixty years ago.

Members of Marcham WI also enjoyed attending three educational cascade days at Denman College, last month, which covered women's health, gardening and healthy eating.

Future Events

- June 3 AGM in the Albert Hall
- June 11 OFWI 90th Birthday tea party
- June 15 Come to Africa
- June 16 Private opening of Hatfield House
- July 2 BBQ Supper at Millets Farm with scarecrows
- July 15 Visit to hidden London and Regent's Canal

NEXT MEETING

7.30pm Thursday 21 May

National Garden Scheme

Priscilla Frost

Competition - Best garden photograph

Denman College: Teaching Block

Visitors welcome - £3 voluntary contribution

Contacts for: Sonia Edwards 01865 391442
more information Christine Whild 01865 391270

SENIOR CITIZENS' CLUB

At our April meeting we were entertained by a singing duo, who soon had us tapping our feet and joining in the singing of well-known songs. Everyone seemed to enjoy it. We finished the afternoon with our tea, biscuits and raffle.

An outing has been arranged to have lunch at the Windmill Restaurant and a visit to Lechlade Garden Centre afterwards on 5 June, 11.15am from Duffield Place, returning 4.15pm approx.

JOYCE PARRY

MARCHAM SOCIETY MIDWEEK WALK

Thursday 4th June

Our June walk will explore the valley of the river Evenlode between Finstock and Stonesfield. We meet at The Plough Inn (Map Ref SP362162) in Finstock at 12.30pm for lunch. Please note that the walk starting at 1.30 will be a little longer than usual at just over 5 miles, but more than a mile can be cut from the distance by waiting at a pleasant spot by the river for the rest of the party to return.

New walkers are very welcome. Members free, non-members £1. Ring Eric Dunford on 391439 for lifts and details.