

**PARISH COUNCIL NEWS****Possible Changes in the boundaries of the County Council Divisions**

At the moment Marcham parish is represented by Cllr. Andrew Crawford on the County Council. The Boundary Committee is proposing changes that would put Marcham with the parishes of Fyfield and Tubney, Frilford, Lyford, Garford, East/West Hanney, Steventon, Milton Heights, East/West Hendred, Ardington and Lockinge. These villages would be represented by one County Councillor. The Parish Council discussed the proposed changes at its recent meeting and raised no objections. The Boundary Committee will consider all representations and will issue a final report in due course.

**Best Kept Garden Competition 2004**

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. The Council hopes residents remembered to plant their bulbs in readiness for this year's Spring competition.

**Best Kept Village Competition**

In addition to organising the garden competition the Council has decided to enter the Best Kept Village Competition for Oxfordshire. The village has entered in the past, and has on several occasions been fortunate to be runners up in the relevant category. It has received Certificates of commendation for its work in conservation, in particular, the living churchyard project. Judging for this competition will take place in May, so look out for further information in future issues.

**Oxfordshire County: Council - Review of Bus Services**

The Parish Council has lodged an objection with the County Council to any cut in the bus service to the village. (The proposal was to reduce the County Council's subsidy by cutting some of the Sunday services). The Council has been advised, however, of a new bus service starting in July which will run from Berinsfield, via Abingdon then Marcham to Witney. The proposed route is along the A415. The service will also stop at Millets Farm.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday 10th March, 2004 at 7.30 p.m. in the residents' lounge Duffield Place.

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

**VILLAGE FACILITIES PROJECT**

The Anson Trustees are pleased to report that good progress has been made since they last provided an update on the project.

By early April the Trustees are hopeful that planning permission will have been finalised for the development of seven cottages on the car park of the Institute site, and that they will also have been granted a certificate from the Charity Commission allowing the scheme to proceed.

Due to possible delays in marketing the Institute car park site for development by a builder, the Trustees have decided to firstly proceed with the reduction and refurbishment of the Institute. This will be followed by the housing development, the building of the new sports and community centre on the Anson Field, and lastly, by the upgrading of the footpath which will run between the new facility and the Institute site.

The Trustees intend to start the work on the Institute by 1 September this year, and are currently in negotiations with architects and builders for this part of the project. They are also continuing discussions with current user groups with regards to alternative accommodation during the refurbishment. The Trustees very much hope to have detailed plans to show by the end of April.

**COMMUNITY MINIBUS**

I am sure most of you are now aware that we have our very own "Community Minibus". This has come about by receiving a very generous single donation, together with donations from various organizations within the village, for which we are very grateful. Many thanks must go to the school for their generosity in allowing us to park the Minibus in their carport.

The Minibus has its own bank account which is at present managed by Mr. Ian Gresham, 1 Chancel Way, Marcham and he would be more than pleased to allow anyone to see them if requested. Many thanks must go to him for this chore.

The Minibus is for the use of the whole community. You may well ask who can drive it. The answer is: If you have a full licence with entitlement to drive cars before 1st July 1996 on old style licences or Category B and D1 on a new style licence you will be able to drive the minibus under the new regulations providing you are (21 is the law) over 25 as covered by our insurance.

We obviously cannot hire the Minibus to you for insurance purposes, but we would ask for a donation towards the running costs.

Since we purchased the Minibus it has been used mainly by the cubs and guides for various outings and summer camp, by the youth club for outings and a trip to Blackpool, and for the school football team. It has also been used by one or two members of the parish for personal trips. However, I felt that it should really be used more widely within the community to include all age groups, so in November of last year I asked residents of Duffield Place to let me know if they were interested in a trip into Abingdon Market on a Monday morning, to pick them up from Duffield Place at 10.00am and return from Abingdon at 12 noon. The response was so good, we started to do this trip. We now do it on a regular basis, and the residents of Duffield Place really look forward to their Monday morning trip. This week we had to go the back way to Abingdon, through Shippon, because of the road works in Abingdon, and it was amazing to hear my passengers say that they hadn't been round that way for the last 20 or so years!!!!!! They enjoyed the country ride so much I think this will have to now be our main route.

We do still have a few places vacant on the bus, so I feel we could extend it to include any senior citizens in the village who would like to join us on a Monday morning. It would be best if you could get to Duffield Place, but if not, please give me a ring, and I will try to pick you up.

One little request whilst I am writing. Is there anyone out there who is qualified to drive the Minibus and would perhaps like to share the trips with me. It would be nice if I could get three other drivers so that we could be doing it once a month each.

If you are interested in using the Minibus at anytime, I hold the diary, so please give me a ring, and if it is free you would be more than welcome to use it.

**CHRIS RICKETTS 391329**

**Dear Editor**

The Parish Council is going to carry out another survey on housing needs in Marcham. They wish to find out whether there is still a demand for more affordable housing within the village for people with a local connection who cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market. Such housing may either be for rent or for purchase on a shared-equity basis. It always remains affordable, and for local people. A questionnaire, professionally produced by the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, should be coming through every door in the parish around the middle of March. Please will everyone look out for this, and fill it in and return it, even if there is no housing need in your family. The bigger the response we get the more meaningful the results will be when they are analysed. May I reassure people that the questionnaires are anonymous, and only a summary of the results will be made available to the Parish Council. This parish was one of the pioneers in providing new affordable housing, and the Council is keen to continue to be proactive in providing for the needs of our village.

**WILL CUMBER**