

Dear MADNews

**Happy 30th Birthday MADNews!**

For the first time since my 'retirement' as your editor 6 years ago, I thought I would write a few words of congratulations to the MADNews. This is not to the editor, distributors, advertisers or even the parish council, who are of course such a vital part of the news sheet in so many ways, but to the publication itself that has for a long time had a life and a personality of its own. Going way back towards the start of my editorship, there was a parish council survey and on the question 'What would you pay to keep in the village', MADNews came out top. I am confident that it will still be here long after most of us, providing there are people dedicated enough to devote their time and they uphold its quality and principles.

So why is such a small monthly 'home made' publication so important to so many villagers? The same survey also found that there were many who did not read the entire news sheet and some who (shock horror) did not read it at all! I was slightly taken aback by that, naively expecting everyone to read everything my wife, Ros, had diligently typed in and that I had printed. On reflection, however, I came to the conclusion that MADNews is a local facility that people relied on to be there for them when they wanted it. You may not always go into the Crown when you pass it but you know it is there for the odd celebration.

When our family moved into the village, MADNews was still very new and was building up its advertisers and reports. We found it an invaluable source for finding local organisations and tradesmen. It also gave us the feeling that we had chosen the right village. Most villages have some form of news sheet now but back then there were very few. Sadly, as we well know, we can lose local facilities so easily these days. So how does MADNews buck the trend? It is now that I get to the editor, distributors, advertisers and supporters. It is their duty each in their own way to maintain the MADNews for future generations.

I have no doubt that I chose well in my succeeding editor even though it took a year to find her, and that she in turn will also know when, and to whom, to pass on the mantle. Speaking personally, I sincerely hope she is able to continue for many years before she also has to 'retire'. Maybe aim for the 50th Birthday, Meriel?

**MARTIN THORNE**

*Is that when MADNews is 50 or when I am 50??! (No prizes for guessing which one comes first!) Ed*

Dear Editor

I was born in Marcham, but left the village when I got married. I returned to live in this lovely village four years ago, only to find that it has been the subject of one disaster after another – our beautiful institute has closed, there are plans to build on the cricket field in the heart of the village and now we could lose our shop and post office, which survived the government closure.

We need some younger blood to lead the village in a new direction – but not destroying all we hold dear.

*Who will step forward?*

**JOHN AND BARBARA KINCHIN**

**FAREWELL BARN DANCE FOR EDDIE AND PAMELA**

Marcham School Hall played host to a packed evening of music, dance, and not a little mayhem, as more than 150 villagers – including dozens of Friday Club children – turned out to say goodbye and good luck, to Eddie and Pamela Shirras. Fuelled by baked potatoes, a plethora of fantastic puddings, and the odd glass of wine or two, the evening gave Strictly Come Dancing a run for its money with some energetic if, at times, slightly chaotic, Barn Dancing presided over with great patience and humour by Caller Mike Courthold and his band.

Eddie and Pamela have been an integral part of our village since their arrival 7 years ago and the event gave the village the chance to celebrate their love and generosity and to say a huge thank you. A big thanks also goes to speakers Parish Council Chairman, Malcolm Denton and school Head Viv Hutchinson, who shared some of the children's favourite memories of Eddie (in particular, his deep voice!). The couple were presented with a garden seat as a small token of thanks. They will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

**CLARE HOLT**

Dear All

We were quite delighted by the number of people from the parish who joined in our Farewell Event on Friday 30 January in Marcham School. It was an evening full of fun, dancing and lots of food to enjoy, all so thoughtfully planned and involving lots of help. Thank you to everyone who made it such a memorable evening.

We were presented with the gift of a Garden seat (for two!) and our thanks go to all who contributed to that and to the pastel picture of St Luke's Church and a painting of All Saints'. More gifts included a Slow Cooker, four large plant pots signed, decorated and planted by the children at Friday Club and a brilliant model of the All Saints' church building made by the older boys and girls at Marcham School. Lots of things for us to enjoy, thank you.

We have been very happy to live in Marcham, to share in the ministry of the churches and to get to know so many people. We had never lived in a village before and it has been great to be here, knowing the boys and girls at Marcham School has been part of the fun. Thank you for all your friendship and support.

**EDDIE AND PAMELA**

**ED VAIZEY WRITES...**

At the beginning of every parliamentary session a ballot is held in the House of Commons. MPs that win the ballot are given the opportunity to propose a piece of legislation of their own, known as a Private Member's Bill. These Bills are then debated on one of 13 special Fridays that are set aside specifically for this purpose. However, making one of these Bills an actual law is far from easy. For these Bills to get through the Westminster process, they must bear a pummelling far worse than the usual scrutiny to which Government business is subject. These Bills, for example, are not whipped, so MPs are actually free to voice their own opinion. There is no in-built Government majority to see them through. At least 100 MPs have to back the Bill. Also, Westminster on Fridays is like a ghost town, as MPs usually go to their constituencies. Only the armed policemen and chiming of Big Ben interrupts the eerie silence. But despite all this every session about one of these Bills does gain the support needed to make it through.

This time I'm hoping it will be the Autism Bill. On Friday the 27th February one of the ballot winners, Cheryl Gillan MP, will bring forward a Bill originally brought forward last year by Angela Browning, when it did indeed fail. The two of them have been working non-stop with the National Autistic Society to make a useful piece of legislation and the first ever one about autism. The bill aims to 'recognise the numbers of people with autism, to provide effective transition from child to adult services, and to ensure appropriate support and services thereafter' and I have been answering a torrent of emails from the good people of this constituency asking me to support it. The provisions for integration of child and adult services is the most important part of this bill because all the evidence tells us that autistic children need routine and familiarity, so such a substantial change of people and routine can often cause massive setbacks in the progress of a child into adulthood.

The bill also aims to strengthen information about autism cases in local areas. Though this doesn't seem like an important step it will bring the whole problem to the surface meaning governments (local and national) will know the numbers and needs of those with this condition and be forced to take action. More than 4 in 5 local councils say that such information would help them with long term planning.

So, on the 27th I shall be doing my best to be in the House to support it before I race back to Didcot for my evening surgery.

**ED VAIZEY**, MP Wantage (Con)