

The Oxhill News



December 2005

December 31

Is New Year's Eve. Start thinking about your resolutions now. It is also the Feast day of Saints Silvester I, pope, Melania the Younger, and Columba of Sens.

It was the day in 1687 when the first Huguenots set sail from France for the Cape of Good Hope, where they would later create the South African wine industry with the vines they took with them on the voyage. Good for the Huguenots, I say. In 1695 the window tax was imposed in Britain, which resulted in many being bricked up, and in 1711 the Duke of Marlborough was dismissed as commander-in-chief. New York's new Immigration Depot was opened at Ellis Island in 1891, to provide improved facilities for the massive numbers of poor huddled masses. The chimes of Big Ben were first broadcast by the BBC in 1923, and the farthing coin, which had been in use in Great Britain since the 13th century, ceased to be legal tender in 1960. Shame.

Charles Edward Stuart, aka the Young Pretender, was born in 1720 and Henri Matisse in 1869. Anthony Hopkins was born in 1937, Ben Kingsley in 1943, and Donna Summer in 1948.

Noteable deaths on 31st December are a little thin on the ground. John Flamsteed (first Astronomer Royal) died in 1719 and Malcolm Campbell in 1948. Maxim Litvinov, leader of Soviet Russia, died in 1951. My ignorance of Modern History (surely a contradiction in terms) is such that I have never heard of Maxim Litvinov.

Editor

January issue

Please could I have all copy for the January issue by Midnight on Thursday, 22nd December? If you normally prepare your material using a computer, it would make my life easier if you could submit your offering in electronic form, though paper is, of course, fine. If you do use electronic form, the best would be a Word file with the page size set to A5 and margins of 1.5 cm all round. The font size should in general be 10 point.

My 'official' e-mail address is **news-editor@oxhill.org.uk** if you wish to send me stuff that way.

George Adams, 680286

Cover Photo

December seems the most suitable month for this shot of the Christmas Market in the Marienplatz in Munich, kindly provided by Mike Collins.

Editor

TYSOE MARIONETTE GROUP



On Sunday 6th, TMG hosted the November meeting of the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, which brings together national practitioners in the art of Puppetry in all its forms. So the Barn Theatre was full of professionals who had come from all points of the compass, as far away as Leicester, Worthing and Bridgenorth.

BPMTG members were very kind and helpful, witnessing a Preview (really our dress rehearsal) of "Love of Seven Dolls". But it was a somewhat nerve-racking experience for us! The Guild Chairman, Peter Charlton, considered that our Group deserved the highest award for bravery! Well, that's one way of putting it! Valuable comments to help us perfect techniques were received and have since been implemented for our fund-raising shows in November. Puppetry, particularly in performances combining glove puppets with string marionettes, is technically most demanding, more so if one's character has to descend stairs or play a guitar whilst driving a veteran model Renault! But it can also be most fascinating.

We thank all those who have helped the Group on its way to national recognition and who continue to make it possible for us to stage performances raising funds for charity.

Jon & Ann Beeny

Visit www.PuppeteersUK.com & www.warkcom.net

CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Sunday 4th	9.30	Holy Communion
Sunday 11th	9.30	Holy Communion
Sunday 18th	10.30	Christingle
Wednesday 21st	7.30	Carol Service
Sunday 25th	10.00	Holy Communion

CHURCH SERVICES ADVANCE WARNING

Please note that there will be no evensong on the third Sunday of January or February. The service that day will be Holy Communion at 9.30 a.m.

Oxhill Festival Choir

Once again we will be singing at Christmas for the Carols by Candlelight, which this year is Wednesday, December 21st at 7.30pm.

Because of the pressures on my time at the moment there will be just three practices:

- Friday, December 2nd
- Friday, December 9th
- Friday, December 16th,

in each case at 7.30 p.m. at The Old House.

There will possibly be an additional rehearsal in Church on Tuesday, 20th December, but this has to be confirmed. Please do come along and join us.

Jill Tucker, 680663

Village Hall News

Next Event:

Monday 12th December 2005 – SENIOR CITIZEN'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Invitations have now been sent out. If we have made a mistake or have not invited you, please ring Ray on 680850.

Your help and support would be much appreciated to make this event a success. If you are able to provide food or help at any stage through the lunch, please contact **Ray on 680850**.

The red tables at the hall have now been replaced. They will remain outside for a short while in case anybody would like them; please help yourselves. However they will be removed before the 12th December.

We have now replaced the lock on the hall door. Please ring Ray if you require access or if this causes you or your club an issue.

We have been kindly donated some amazing quality curtains fully lined complete with all the hanging hooks, tie backs, pelmets etc. Looking at the length and quantity they would be perfect to cover the windows throughout the hall. We are trying to make the hall look as welcoming as we can and I believe the curtains will be a huge benefit.

However, I have absolutely no skill when it comes to sewing, alterations, hanging curtains etc. Would any kind soul be able to spare some time to come and give some expert advice and help. Please let me know, I would be much appreciative.

Another appeal – does anybody have a floor standing lamp or spot light that they no longer require. If you can help please let me know.

Many thanks as always

Linda - 680850

Nature Notes for December

The word “winter” is of Old English origin. It is thought to be related to the word “wet” probably with reference to its weather as it is the coldest and darkest time of the year. Astronomically winter is the period from the winter solstice to the vernal equinox, around 22 December to 21 March. A pagan festival celebrated the winter solstice and was known as Yule or Yuletide which more or less covered the twelve days relating to what we know as Christmas. Traditionally a Yule log was ceremoniously dragged in from the woods on 24 December to provide warmth and light for the festive season and was kept burning for twelve days and nights – one for each month of the year. Greenery, usually holly and ivy was also brought in as a symbol of good luck for the growth of new green in the following year.

A beast of some sort, usually a wild boar or deer, was hunted and slaughtered for festive feast and carried back by the men of the family, its blood staining the snow on the ground and the hunter’s coats a deep scarlet. This was nature’s “gift” of plenty, a symbol of the life force believed to contain a share of divine energy or, more commonly, the spirit of the individual creature. Tradition has it that the blood and snow is the red and white of Christmas, not the red and white costume of Santa Claus, which was actually an advertising campaign dreamed up by Coca Cola in 1931 and painted by the American artist Haddon Sundblom.

While driving home some weeks ago between Honington and Whatcote, a Merlin flew out of the hedge just ahead of me, and seemingly unaware that a vehicle was behind it, it continued to fly just a couple of feet above the road for some 200 years before making an erratic twist and turn and vanishing over the hedge. As it was flying only about ten feet in front of me I was able to make a good identification. I had seen what I thought was a Merlin some months ago near Blackwell, but was unable to make a positive identification. It is a rare sighting in this area, being more a bird of western and northern Britain and usually seen quartering moorland. The male is the smallest European raptor, the female being larger and can easily be confused with a Sparrowhawk. Merlins are compact birds with a relatively short, square-cut tail and small broad-based pointed wings that are shorter than other falcons. It is a bold and dashing little falcon with fast wing beats interrupted by brief glides. It is more active, aggressive and determined in flight than larger species, soaring less and often flying low, straight and purposefully when hunting, but is also capable of amazing twists and turns when in pursuit. The bird I saw was the male, little bigger than a mistle thrush, it had blue-grey upper parts with a black tail band. The female and young of both sexes look brown from above and all are a reddish brown on the underparts. During the Middle Ages falconry lore listed the Merlin as a lady’s bird and as such was much valued.

During the early and mid 1900s Merlins were heavily persecuted by gamekeepers, and by 1970 there were probably only about 600 pairs left in Britain. Fortunately the pressure has largely lifted, and estimates put the figure at about 1400 breeding pairs.

Apologies for missing last month's nature notes, but thankfully Old Muckraker stood in very ably, and I wish him and all the readers a very happy and merry Yuletide. But be careful of how much chocolate you eat:

The confection made of Cacao called Chocolate or Chocoletto, which may be had in divers places in London at reasonable rates, is of wonderful efficacy for the procreation of children: for it not only vehemently incited to Venus, but causeth Conception in women, and besides that it preserves health for it makes such as take it often to become fat and corpulent, fair and amiable. William Coles *Adam in Eden* 1657.

Grenville Moore

Christmas Greetings

The very best of good wishes for Christmas and the New Year to everyone in Oxhill who still remembers us. And to those who don't, come to that.

Carol, Joanie and James (Clark)

THANKS A MILLION

Can I, through the News, say a big thank you to all my committee for their hard work over the last year. Many thanks to Rosemary, Ann, Diana, Joy, Helen, Shirley, Posy, Carol, Doreen, and Janet.

I cannot leave out John, Bill, David, Graham, Tom and Charles. Without their help we could not function.

It has been a lot of work, but well worth it.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL

Lilian

NOTES OF A MEETING OF OXHILL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 8th NOVEMBER 2005 AT 8.00 P.M. IN THE VILLAGE HALL

All Councillors were present.

MATTERS DISCUSSED

Refuse Collection – Christmas & New Year period

NO refuse, recyclables or green waste, will be collected from Oxhill during the week commencing 26th December. Refuse will be collected as normal Tuesday 3rd January 2006.

Planning

Permission granted to fell juniper tree – Meadow Cottage.

Permission granted to fell birch and conifer trees – Auchneiven House.

Permission granted to change glazed frames from softwood to hardwood – Church Leaze Barn.

No objection to revised position of quarantine block, offices and changing room – Church Farm.

Financial

With effect from 1st April 2006 Stratford District Council will charge Parish Councils for any Parish Elections held.

Road Signs

Warwickshire County Council to be contacted to clean signs, in particular the “Halt” sign at the approach to the A422 from Kineton. The position of the Oxhill sign and 30 mph sign on the approach to the village from Whatcote will be questioned with a view to moving it nearer Green Lane.

Age Concern

Age concern provide Information and Advice Services, especially for older people, their families, friends and carers, e.g. Pension Surgery, Legal Advice Clinic, Community Care, Health, Consumer Issues and most other things that affect older people’s quality of life. Their Head Office is at Leamington Spa 01926 458100.

Business Start Up Service – Shipston-on-Stour and surrounding villages

This service will open its doors to local people in January 2006 and is aimed at local people from Shipston and surrounding villages. The project will offer the following services FREE to businesses who take part in the programme:

1-2-1 mentoring support and advice and guidance in setting up a business

Access to IT facilities in Shipston connected to Coventry University through a broadband connection

Training and education in starting a business, including finance, marketing and business planning

Assistance and support in registering a business.

An Open Day will be held on 2nd December between 13.00 and 18.00 hrs at the Stratford District Council Offices on Telegraph Street in Shipston. This would be of interest to anyone who has just started up a business, or is about to do so.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 10th January 2006 at 8.00 p.m. in the Village Hall.

Angela Kean, Clerk

Thank you

I'd like to offer a very sincere thank you to everyone who helped in any way to make my final service so memorable. The cheque was enormous (!) and the other gifts were great. It was very good also to share the harvest festival with a good full church. Thank you also to everyone who sent cards and e-mails but couldn't be in church on that occasion.

The church council and churchwardens have my very best wishes as they take over the running of the Church of St. Lawrence, and begin the process – with the Bishop – of choosing my successor.

David Knight

HOLLY WREATHS

Grave and door wreaths made to order.

Please let me know, or give me a ring, if you want one.

Lilian Welsby

Whatcote Christmas Puddings

If you haven't ordered your Christmas Pudding yet there is still time.

Large (2lb) puddings are £8.50 and small (1lb) puddings are £5.00.

Delivery can be arranged.

Orders by December 9th to June Wreford, telephone 01295 680294

Twenty-five Years Ago

Issue No. 103 carried a whole page on the Meaning of Christmas, by Douglas Jephson, then Rector. And a jolly good Rector he was too. Carol singing round the village was planned for the fifteenth, with a wassail bowl at Ann Hale's to start with and coffee afterwards at Gwyn Adams'. Anyone doing carol singing this year?

The Children's Christmas Party was announced for Sunday 20th, with tickets to cost no more than 50p. Was this the year that snow stopped "The Entertainer" getting through and Geoff Evans put on an impromptu and highly successful conjuring act?

Tickets for the Adults' Christmas Party had all been sold by press day. Pantomime or Christmas character dress. I remember freezing as Aladdin, or possibly the genie of the lamp. I also remember Christmas Tree and the powdered glass baubles that covered the Village Hall floor. And her friend Christmas Cracker who was, reasonably enough, pulled at midnight. But perhaps that was another year. Old men forget.

Other items in The News included the Christmas Entertainment for Senior Citizens and news of the sponsored silence undertaken by the Brownies. Silence by children is always a Good Idea, sponsored or not. Grumpy Old Man speaking.

Editor

Poetry Corner

Twelve Things I Don't Want to Hear

Assemble this in eight straightforward steps.
Start with a fish stock, made the day before.
The driver has arrived but, sadly, drunk.
We'll need some disinfectant for the floor.

Ensure all surfaces are clean and dry.
There's been a problem, Madam, I'm afraid.
We'd better have the manhole cover up.
Apologies, the doctor's been delayed.

I'd love to bring a friend, he's so depressed.
They've put you on the camp bed in the hall.
There's just one table left, perhaps you'd share?
I know it's midnight, but I had to call.

Connie Bensley

The Comic

Children demand the tale as told before,
The slightest alteration they deplore.
The comic, by the time he is the rage,
Has learned the night-club patron's mental age.
So, infinite variety is dead,
And repetition rules the roost instead.
Reaching the Copa from less opulent climes
Now one man in his part plays many times.

Ogden Nash

What's On in Oxhill

December

Fri 9th	6.00	The Square, Shipston – Tree of Light
Sunday 11th	3.30	Holycombe, Whichford – Children's Show "Growing, Growing, Gone". Contact Sally Birtwell on 01608 684239
Monday 12th		Village Hall - Senior Citizen's Christmas Lunch
Saturday 17th	7.30	Shipston Senior School – Christmas Concert. Tickets at £10 per head from David Squires on 01608 664065

May

Sunday 14th	10.00	Ettington Community Centre – Spring Into Action. A guided walk followed by a barbeque. Contact Gilda Gardner on 01789 740083 for details
Saturday 20th	10.00-12.00	Townsend Hall, Shipston on Stour – Plant Sale

NEWS PAYMENTS

The Oxhill News is provided to residents of Oxhill with payment being met by the Oxhill Parish Council.

Will those readers who do not live in the Parish but still receive their own copy of The News please continue to make their own payment of £2.00 per year. The simplest way to make this payment would probably be to put an envelope containing the appropriate coins, labelled with your name, through the letterbox at Karibu or to hand it to your deliverer.

Thank you, Editor.

Envoi

Last night, at a show by Ken Dodd,
The usherette said "Oh my God!
He'll go on for years.
He's bound to sing *Tears*.
When he finishes, give us a prod."