

THE OXHILL NEWS



JANUARY 2006

Editorial

I have been getting a little bored with the appearance of the News recently, and January seems a pretty good month in which to make a few changes. Not too many, you understand, just a little tinkering round the edges. So you might notice that this edition looks a little different. Or then again you might not. If I get strident complaints I will consider going back.

Apart from the fire at the village hall, which effectively occupies one third of this issue, little of great import seems to have happened in Oxhill this last month. Judging by the thinness of the 'What's On' section, it looks as though precious little is due to happen in the New Year either. If you know of any upcoming events, please let me know. Preferably before the month in which they happen.

During the course of a year there are many people who contribute greatly to the Oxhill News, and I would like to take this opportunity of offering my thanks to all of them for the help they have given me over the last twelve months. It is difficult, not to say dangerous, to mention names; there is always the danger of offending someone by accidentally leaving them out. So please excuse me if I chicken out and simply thank all the contributors for the last year, the stalwart band of deliverers, now no longer Joy's Ladies (Gwyn's Girls?), the Parish Council for picking up the tab and, of course, that vital ingredient – the proof-reader. You have no idea what an error-strewn rag you would have without the latter!

A Happy New Year to all our readers.

George Adams

February issue

Please could I have all copy for the February issue by Midnight on Thursday, 26th January? 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 News is currently set in Garamond 10 pt, with headings in Lucida Sans Unicode 14 pt bold. This may, of course, change, possibly without warning.

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

George Adams, 680286

ST. LAWRENCE, OXHILL

CHURCH SERVICES FOR JANUARY

Sunday 1st	10.50	United Service in Whatcote
Sunday 8th	9.30	Holy Communion
Sunday 15th	9.30	Holy Communion
Sunday 22nd	9.30	Matins
Sunday 29th	10.45	United Service in Tysoe

Candlelit Carol Service

The service of nine lessons on Wednesday 21st December once again provided a great start to the celebration of Christmas. The choir led a full church of very enthusiastic participants, and everyone enjoyed a mince pie and some mulled wine after the service. The collection from both this service and the Christingle service are being donated to the Helen House Children's Hospice, Oxford, and the Thomas House Hospice for teenagers and young adults.

Di Harper

Christingle Service

The Christingle service, held on Sunday 18th December in a seasonally decorated church, was a beautiful event in which our talented children performed to a full congregation. During the service the Christingle was distributed by the children. Coffee and mince pies provided by the parents were enjoyed by all after the service.

Di Harper

COVER PICTURES

This month we feature scenes of the organised chaos at the village hall, kindly provided by Myrtle Knight, Julia Seabridge and Geoff Stewart. I trust Mick Shephard will accept my apologies for the non-appearance of his shots of Oxhill in the snow earlier in December. They were somewhat overtaken by events.

Editor

NATURE NOTES FOR JANUARY

It is said that “as the day lengthens, the cold strengthens”, and January is usually the coldest month of the year. For those who pay heed to weather lore, however, frost and snow are not unwelcome at this time – mild weather in any of the winter months, especially January, is an ill omen: “Summer in winter and a summer’s flood, never boded England good”; “If January’s calends be summerly gay, ’twill be wintering till the calends of May”; “A January spring is good for nothing”.

During my early morning dog walks, it is interesting to note that apart from owls, the first birds to stir and take to the wing (even in the dark) are the corvids: the crow, rook and jackdaw.

As I walked back from Church meadow the other morning in complete darkness, passing under the tall tree opposite the church gate I heard the familiar hooting of a tawny owl which appeared to come from just above my head. I switched on my torch and shone it up into the branches, and there on one of the lowest branches, right above me was a large tawny owl, and as I watched, he gave the typical three syllable hoo-hoo-hoo. Now, I have never before seen an owl hoot, and for those of you who have watched a cockerel or a cock pheasant crow, then the owl’s head movements were exactly the same. He did this twice before becoming aware that he was in the “spotlight”. His head swivelled 180° and he gazed down at me with those large dark eyes and a look as if to say “Yes is there something I can do for you?”

I switched off my torch and left him in peace. Whenever you go to post a letter in the post box by the church, take the time to stand and look up into the fir or chestnut tree. I have often during the day seen tawny owls roost here; they sit on a branch and usually press themselves up against the main trunk. Take your time and let your eyes scan slowly (the birds are well camouflaged) and you could be rewarded.

The 14th of January is celebrated in All Souls College, Oxford, by a great merrymaking, in commemoration of the finding of an overgrown mallard in a drain when they were digging foundations for part of the college buildings in 1437. The boisterous torch-lit duck hunt that formerly took place on Mallard Day is now restricted to the first year of every century. In other years the occasion is now celebrated in a more subdued manner. It is thought that the original “mallard” may simply have been the seal of a certain clerk names William Mallard, found by medieval workmen at the site. Any excuse for a party!

At the end of January listen for the mistle thrush, also called Holly Cock, Stormcock or Jeremy (January) Joy, who sings loudly at this season, even, or especially in rough and tempestuous weather – which its song is said to presage.

TYSOE MARIONETTE GROUP



November saw five performances of **“Love of Seven Dolls”**, bringing to fruition 16 months of preparation from dramatisation, through construction and rehearsal to final polishing. Thanks to generous audiences, totalling some 140 people, £700 was raised for four named charities: St Mary’s Bell Fund, Tysoe Village Hall, St George’s Brailes and the MIND “Nature’s Way” Allotment Project in Leamington Spa.

In all 30 individuals brought their diverse talents to realise this interesting theatrical production in miniature. Scenery artists were Anne Cole & Roy McLeod; Costumes-Belinda Keep, Irene Haynes and group members; Makeup-Sheila Jones; Vintage car-Rob Batley; Model bicycle-Steve Clarke; Sound recording-Peter Britton; Lighting & Sound-Liam and Kay Medlin. Voices were Bethany, Esther & Derek Rush, Paul Dowler, Cynthia Evans, Nick Gunn, Mike Heapy, Wilfrid Olivier, Brian Rider & Mike Taylor. Our puppeteers were Jane Daniell & Chris Beeny. Marionettists were-Mary Dowler, Ruth Daniell, Marifa Heapy & Sheila Jones. Ann Beeny combined stage management with business and Jon Beeny directed. O’Brien Puppets of Ettington kindly acted as our professional advisers. We also had valuable suggestions from fellow members of the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild. Thanks go to all concerned that we are able to keep this traditional form of entertainment very much alive and well.

It is planned to give a few more performances of “Love of Seven Dolls” in the Spring before starting work on our next production - yet to be decided.

Suggestions for charities that might next be supported are welcome, as also are volunteers to join our team.

Jon & Ann Beeny 01295 680431

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

SENIOR CITIZENS' CHRISTMAS LUNCH

From the Committee

Many thanks to those people who attended the village hall on the Sunday to decorate the hall and tables for the Monday lunch; we had no idea what was about to happen! All started well with the dinner arriving and cooking happening (thanks to all those who cooked and prepared the food), carols were playing, sherry was being served. And then the power disappeared. I hasten to add that this was not the fault of the cooks.

Upon looking into the problem we found that the village hall was on fire! A hasty and well-ordered evacuation took place under the guidance and instruction of the urbane Chairman of the Parish Council and the fire brigade was summoned. Four appliances arrived, with Shipston (20 minutes) beating Wellesbourne (25 minutes) and Stratford (30 minutes) to the punch. A water bowser arrived from Stratford a few minutes later, with the head honcho with the white helmet in close pursuit. Apparently the rules are that for fires in public buildings a minimum of three appliances have to attend, and the village hall is of course a public building. The Shipston contingent rapidly dealt with the fire, Wellesbourne and Stratford looking on with admiration.

It was very clear that the original Lunch in the hall had become a non-starter, or at least a non-finisher. Although fire damage as such was confined to the lobby area there was no light, no heat, and the inside of the hall was covered with a fine layer of greasy sooty debris. In true Oxhill fashion Oxhillians came to the rescue. Many many thanks must go to Diana Cronin, who opened her home to provide warmth and comfort (and apparently Christmas cheer – see later articles) to those chilled by standing outside the hall watching events unfurl.

Many prospective diners (lunchers?) naturally enough went home, and Jill Tucker arrived to invite those who gritted their teeth and stuck it out to the Old House. There turkey and pork baps (fortunately never exposed to the air inside the hall, so still perfectly edible) were served, along with suitable liquid refreshment, to about a quarter of the original contingent. Contrary to views stated elsewhere in this publication the servers did not outnumber the diners, though it was a pretty close-run thing.

May I conclude by also thanking all those people that cooked, came to help on the day to work in the village hall, and who donated food, crackers and wine.

Heard during the fire, "At last the village hall is serving red wine at room temperature". You can't keep Oxhill down for long.

Keith Seabridge

From some Senior Citizens

This was the day that pensioners looked forward to, for a happy get-together and a turkey dinner in a congenial Christmas atmosphere in the village hall.

Arriving there I found everyone assembled outside, plus at least two fire engines; the village hall had a fire! Disaster! No lunch!

We were quickly invited to Oxhill House, where we were offered drinks by Diane Cronin while we awaited events, but it soon became apparent that our lunch in the hall was well and truly off.

But help was at hand. We were all invited next to the Old House, to find Jill Tucker plus helpers ready to give us a welcome lunch, magnificently if not hurriedly prepared. We all had a very happy time, eating, drinking and chattering; it certainly was a lunch with a difference.

Many thanks to all who helped to make the occasion a very happy and memorable one.

Doris Roll

Yes, it really was a day to remember. **THREE** fire engines and one water tender to put out the fire!

Our sympathy goes out to the many people who worked so hard to make the lunch a success, and yet it was disastrous – almost!

Some of us were fortunate enough to be invited to Oxhill House for some liquid refreshment. Following this we were invited to the Old House to partake of what was rescued from the fire. I think we almost ended up with one helper to one guest!

Thank you everyone who helped in any way to make such a jolly event, and certainly one to be entered in the Oxhill memoirs.

Janet Gardner

Update from the Chairman

As I am sure this edition will be full of articles about the fire in the hall, I will confine myself to a progress report.

Industrial cleaners have been appointed and they have cleaned the hall, literally from the roof to the floor. The annexe has been cleaned, but requires extensive work on the roof. The offending fuse box has been forensically examined and has been removed.

There is obviously no lighting or heating in the hall and therefore the hall is closed until further notice. Our insurers hope to complete the remaining work by the end of January 2006 and I will keep you informed of the progress.

Finally, our sincere apologies to all our guests and our profound thanks for their generosity. Thanks also to Jill Tucker and Diana Cronin for hosting alternative venues at such short notice and to all those who helped clear some food out so at least some of you were able to be fed and watered.

Ray Dagg

W. I. REPORT – DECEMBER 2005

The Village Hall looked festive for our Christmas meeting, and our President, Ann Beeneey, welcomed all the members and guests with a glass of mulled wine.

After a short business session, the President handed over to our guest entertainer, Ms Margot McClearly of “Velvet Glove” who entertained us with some very witty monologues and sketches in performance. One rendition was of a Committee Meeting from a “ladies organisation” (could this possibly have been the WI?), which was very funny.

Light refreshments were then served, after which the Christmas raffle was held, with members and guests choosing their own prizes.

The meeting closed at 10.00 p.m. Don't forget that Keep Fit will be in the Village Hall on Thursdays at 10.30 a.m. All welcome.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the WI to wish everyone a Very Happy New Year.

J. BATCHELOR

Wanted to Rent

1. Covered storage for dog agility equipment, sheep hurdles, fencing etc. + small trailer. Access (by vehicle) required, say, weekly.
2. 2+ acres pasture for grazing small number of sheep and sheepdog training. Would consider purchase.

If 1. & 2. were linked, that would be ideal!

Douglas Netherclef Tel. 680041

Kineton Oil Consortium Reminder

The next order for oil will be placed in mid-January. Please order your requirements by January 15th, by 6.00 p.m. at the latest.

I am not able to give you a price until after all the orders are in. Be assured that they search for the best discount.

If I have the information in time I will try to circulate the price per litre and the company that will deliver the oil.

Di Harper

Mrs Vera Tompkins (nee Groves)

Sylvia Groves has told me of the recent death of her aunt, Mrs Vera Vickery Tompkins (nee Groves), at the grand age of 102. Mrs Tompkins grew up at Hardwick Farm, and remembered when, as a child during the First World War, she had to lead the plough horses while the farm men were away in the trenches. In 1935 she was married in our village church from Oxhill House to Harry Tompkins, and the couple went to farm at Home Farm Arlescote. Mrs Tompkins lived most of the rest of her long life in Arlescote, although latterly she had moved to Haven House Residential Home in Kineton.

Mrs Tompkins left Oxhill many years ago, but her family's links here are still strong, and many people will remember when the Groves family lived at Oxhill House.

Ann Hale

New Acquisitions for Compton Verney

Three new acquisitions, bought at Sotheby's *European Sculpture* and *Continental Furniture* sale last week, will join Compton Verney's Naples and British Portraits Collection, when the gallery opens again to the public on 31st March 2006.

The items are the *Bust of Charles I* (17th century), after the portrait by Gianlorenzo Bernini, (previously the property of Warwick Castle), and two enamelled gold immaculata pendants entitled *Kingdom of the Two Sicilies* (c. 1700), and a Sicilian gilt-copper mounted coral and mother-of-pearl frame mirror (c.1680).

The Naples and British Portraits collection form part of six permanent displays at Compton Verney, which also includes the most significant display of Chinese bronzes outside London; the largest collection of British Folk Art in the country; German medieval paintings and sculpture, and the Marx-Lambert Collection of Popular Art.

Compton Verney has a season ticket scheme, which includes free admission to all the collections and temporary exhibitions in 2006, in addition to the special themed weekends which have become so popular. These are priced at £20 (individual); £37.50 (joint); £45.00 (family).

Ina Cole, Communications Manager, Compton Verney, 01926 645540

UK YEAR of the VOLUNTEER 2005

Helpers are needed by these very worthy local groups:

- **The Depot (Youth Work)** – urgently needs a Treasurer & Trustees, also Helpers to deliver advice and support to young people across the district.
- **Carers Support Service (South Warks)- SWCSS (Helping those who are carers)** - needs Befrienders to spend time talking with and listening to the carer. May occasionally sit with the cared for person.
- **British Heart Foundation (Fights heart disease)** - needs Research co-ord -help raise profile of BHF including recruitment of more contacts and volunteers (requires research and uses local knowledge).
- **Contact the Elderly (Taking elderly isolated people out the Sunday afternoon tea in small parties.)** - needs Sunday afternoon rota drivers (to take elderly people to tea parties) and semi-annual hosts for those parties (of up to 14 people twice a year).
- **Cancer Relief- Macmillan Fund (Helping those with cancer and their families to live better lives)** - needs Fundraising Committee Members, helpers for street collections, event organisers, raffle ticket sellers.
- **WE URGENTLY NEED VOLUNTEER DRIVERS TO HELP US WITH OUR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEME, (40P PER MILE ALLOWANCE PAID).**

Call us if you are interested, or, if you can get on the web, www.stratfordvbx.org.uk, check out our web site for all the latest opportunities for volunteering.

Volunteer Centre Stratford-on-Avon District Phone: 01789 262886

Bell ringing

There are certain festivals and other occasions throughout the year when it would be nice to hear St. Lawrence's church bells ring. Thanks to a lot of hard work by a small group of villagers in the relatively recent past, the bells and bell tower are in good order.

As a newcomer to Oxhill (only 3 years of residency) and new, too, to bell ringing, I feel somewhat diffident about floating the idea of re-forming a band. If anyone should be interested in such a project, however, please contact me.

Douglas Nethercleft Tel. 680041

WHAT'S ON IN OXHILL

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

TWENTYFIVE YEARS AGO

Issue ninety-two reported the success of the carol singing round the village. 2005 was the first year for many a year when this did not happen. Perhaps someone will please tcome forward and volunteer to reinstate it for 2006?

The Church announced its plans for a Shrove-tide Supper in February and a Curry Lunch in June. Both of these formerly annual events seem to have vanished over the last few years, rather like the carol singing.

The Playgroup announced its Jumble Sale for January 31st, and Una Hill thanked those who had helped her with the two children's parties, and also announced that she was handing over to Gwyn Adams.

The Youth Club proudly stated that a team of its members had won the Warwickshire section of a general knowledge quiz by a margin of landslide proportions and would be representing the county in the national finals.

Finally, the Editors of the day thanked those who had helped in the production of the News during the year. They had more courage than I do; they thanked everyone by name!

Editor

HEAVENLY BODIES

Before we leave Christmas behind for another year, may I remind readers that the team pulling Santa's sleigh at such a breakneck spread was Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

Rudolph was not there to do any heavy work; his was purely an illuminatory post, a sort of red headlamp. They would never have passed the M.O.T. test like that, showing red to the front.

Editor

