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Culham's Newsletter No 333 Village Diary – February 2012

3rd Mobile Library - The Glebe, 1.40 to 1.50 pm

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- 11th Valentine's Barn Dance Clifton Hampden, 7.30 pm
- 12th Family Communion St Paul's Church, 10 am
- 13th Police "Have Your Say" Meeting Clifton Hampden, 5-5.30 pm
- 13th Parish Council Meeting The School, 7.30 pm
- 15th DEADLINE FOR MARCH'S MOUTHPIECE
- 17th Mobile Library The Glebe, 1.40 1.50 pm
- 19th Evening Prayer St Paul's Church, 6 pm
- 27th "Community Building" Meeting The School, 7.30 pm

## FEBRUARY'S CHURCH SERVICES

DATE	TIME	PLACE	SERVICE
		SERVICES AT CULHAM	
Sunday 12th Sunday 19th	10 am 6 pm	Culham …	Family Communion Evening Prayer
welcome.	ormal prayers w	Sunday morning services vith Revd Anne IIsley at C	s at Culham Church! All ulham Church on Thursday
	:	SERVICES ELSEWHERE	
Sunday 5th	8 am 10 am	Clifton Hampden Long Wittenham	Holy Communion Family Service
Sunday 12th	8 am 10 am 6 pm	Long Wittenham Clifton Hampden Long Wittenham	Holy Communion Holy Communion Evening Prayer
Tuesday 14th	10.30am	Long Wittenham	Home Communion
Sunday 19th	10 am	Long Wittenham	Holy Communion
Wednesday 22nd	9.30am 7.30pm	Little Wittenham Berinsfield	Ash Wednesday Services
Sunday 26th (1st in Lent)	8.30 am 10 am 10 am	Little Wittenham Clifton Hampden Long Wittenham	Holy Communion Family Communion Holy Communion

## **Village News**

#### Christmas at St Paul's - Culham PCC

We were delighted to see so many people at our Christmas Services. Special thanks are due to Andrew Churchill Stone's superb choir for adding a special touch to the Carol Service.

Every January we have to tell the Diocese how many people attended our services throughout the previous year. We're pleased that there was a substantial increase in numbers over 2010. Thank you to those who supported our 'extras' such as the Choral Evensong and Harvest Supper. If you enjoyed these, why not try a 'normal' service? You'd receive a warm welcome!

An even warmer welcome awaits those who offer to help. It would be great to have someone extra to open the church and prepare it for each service: then we could, possibly, have a rota. If you could help, please contact Brian Bracher on 525885 or Charles Reichardt on 520534.

#### **Carol Singing**

Many of us enjoyed hearing the Ladies of Culham - and their families – Carol Singing around the village just before Christmas. Hopefully, this will become an annual event.

#### Lost Property in Church - Boy's Jacket

This was found in Church around Christmas: a boy's black 'leather-look' jacket, age 3-4, with white stripes on sleeves. Label inside reads 'REBEL', with 'SPEEDWAYS RBL' logo, plus a small blue & white metal badge, on the front. Owner please ring 525885 or call at 25 High Street.

### Church Flowers & Cleaning – Ingrid Reichardt & Janet Bracher

We'd like to say a big 'Thank You' to all of you who helped to keep the church looking so 'spick & span' during the past year. Thank you also to those who provided flowers and arranged them so beautifully. A new rota for the coming year is going round now, and anyone who would like to add their name is very welcome. If you can help, please contact Ingrid (01235 520534 or Janet (01235 525885).

#### Christmas at the Railway Inn

Just before Christmas, Pauline Davidson offered a free Christmas Lunch for Culham's senior citizens at The Railway Inn. A good number of us enjoyed a delicious four-course turkey dinner, a visit from Santa Claus, live music and some games. We would like to thank Pauline and her staff for their splendid efforts, and also both her customers and The Culham Poor Trust who jointly funded this generous event. We had a great time!

### Memories of Culham – The Mouthpiece

Charlotte Franklin has provided an article on Culham in the 1980s and John Storrs has passed on another article describing childhood memories by Frank Mouldey (1911-2003), written by his daughter. This may be found on the Village Web Site. Charlotte's article can be found below.

If you have any interesting memories of Culham, why not share them with us?

## Culham Pre-School – Lea Allmond

The pre-school children have been looking at the theme of transport for this term. They have explored cars, motorbikes, buses and also rockets, taking imaginary trips to the moon!! We have all enjoyed making cakes, biscuits and sandwiches in the shapes of different vehicles.

This term has also given us the opportunity to look at the different types of weather: the children are eagerly awaiting the snow - although I feel the adults are not quite so enthusiastic!

# Culham Parish Council Notes - Andrew Steele

### **December 2011 Meeting**

CPC is awaiting a response from the OCC about the drain clearance on the A415 just north of the Burycroft turn.

A delivery of salt has been made but was simply dumped on Jon Woodley-Shead's driveway. CPC is waiting for it to be moved to the location we originally requested for it. There is no sign of the salt bin being delivered.

Material for the stabilisation of the Burial Ground slope has been identified and will be ordered soon. A meeting to further the Community Building project will be held in January.

Information from OCC is that all libraries in the County will stay open, with some being staffed 2/3 – 1/3 professional/volunteer staff and others at the 50/50 rate.

Berinsfield school has been passed into 'special measures', being designated one of the worst 200 in the country. It is likely that a new Board of Goverors will be appointed and possibly a Federation with another school.

A final decision on the minerals and waste plan will be made on 17 January.

### January 2012 Meeting

Sam Casey-Rerhaye has recently joined the Parish Council. There is currently a further vacancy on the Council if anyone would like to join. Please contact the Clerk or any Parish Councillor – details are on the back of the Mouthpiece.

This year the CPC has kept its Council Tax precept the same as last year and news from the SODC is that their part of the Tax will be 1.0-1.5% <u>lower</u> this year than last. As yet the other parts of the make up are unknown i.e. Police and OCC.

CPC will ask OCC about monitoring the speed of traffic at and through the lights at the Waggon and Horses with a view to installing speed control devices.

The ground stabilisation material for the Burial Ground slope will be ordered and installed in February or March, just prior to the (normal) growing season. This will allow the grass to quickly cover and infill the matting.

On MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY at the school (7:30 pm) there will be a meeting convened by members of CPC to discuss further the plans for the proposed Community Building. Volunteers for the committee of this project are needed so please come along. Even if you do not intend to join the committee, please come and hear/make your views known. CPC and the building committee (CBC?) hope to apply for funding from SODC and OCC but the SODC grants for this year have not yet been set, hence the need for some detailed planning.

### Next meeting: Monday 13 February 2012 at 19:30 at the school.

# **Talking Point - Revd David Haylett**

It is never particularly easy to write something "topical" a month before it is likely to be read! That is especially true when I am sitting writing this on January 5<sup>th</sup> at the start of a New Year when commentators are picking over the entrails of the year just ended and making predictions about the coming year. I sometimes wish commentators were confronted with their predictions at the end of the year so we could see just how accurate they were.

This week has seen the first of the caucuses which have the task of selecting the Republican candidate for the US Presidential election in November.

I think that what really concerns me about the American Presidential candidate selection process is the prominence of the "Religious Right" in US politics. There are those who advance the view that religion should keep out of politics. I am not one of those, I firmly believe that religious belief does have something to say to the world of politics, something about justice, mercy and compassion, our attitudes to the poor and needy and the outcasts of society and our love for our neighbour. I support the right of Church leaders to offer support for, or arguments against, Government policy even if I do not necessarily support the view they express.

I can remember taking a holiday in the USA in 1998 when we toured some of the East Coast and were driving through North and South Carolina. It was August and it was hot. Town after town had its "First Baptist Church". Most of these had huge advertising style billboards outside. One in particular stuck in my mind, I have forgotten where it was, but not its message, it proclaimed "If you think it's hot now, wait till you get to Hell". Is that really the message of Christianity? Is that what you want to proclaim to passing non-believers? Where is the welcome in that message? Where is the notion that "God so loved the world that he sent his Son" in that attitude?

It is this (as I would see it) distorted version of Christianity which seems to me to be so prevalent in some American politicians, and it really scares me. Candidates who are aiming to be the most powerful person in the Western World, possibly in the World, advocating policies which are aggressive and intolerant of any view except their own, views which are so often based on distorted interpretations of scripture. My prayer is that someone of wisdom, maturity, and dare I say it, sanity, is elected as the next President of the United States.

## Local Police – Rebekah Kent

Here are some extracts from the latest Benson & Berinsfield neighbourhood report by PCSOs Rebekah Kent and Sarah Talbot. Culham itself seems to be relatively crime-free.

**Fly-tipping.** We have been working closely with SODC and the Verdant Street Cleansing team to clear fly-tipping in the area. If you witness fly-tipping or wish to report materials fly-tipped, please

contact the waste team at SODC on 03000 610 610 or email <u>admin.southoxford@verdant-</u> group.co.uk. For more information please visit: <u>www.southoxon.gov.uk/flytipping</u>

**Dog Fouling.** We have had reports of dog fouling - if we see a dog walker not picking up the dog foul we can issue a warning first of all and then, if they are seen repeating the offence, an £80 fine can be given. So PLEASE pick it up!

**'Have Your Say'.** The nearest Meeting in **February** is on **Monday 13<sup>th</sup>** at the Village Hall Car Park, Clifton Hampden from 1700 to 1730 hrs.

Since November 2011 callers have been able to use the new national non-emergency number 101 to call Thames Valley Police. This replaces the old 08458 505505 number.

### Newington Nurseries: 'Mellow Yellow' - Anne Hendry

Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) is a thoroughly generous plant, producing an abundance of bright yellow flowers from juicy pink buds. These emerge mid-winter along the vibrant green, twiggy branches. This slender, deciduous shrub is robust enough to survive cold British winters (including 2011) and rewards dormant gardens with a welcome burst of golden yellow on the gloomiest of days. This hardy and prolific plant was brought to the UK from northern China in 1844 by the renowned plant hunter Robert Fortune. It was named for its flowers which appear before its leaves, *nudiflorum* meaning naked flower.

The name 'jasmine' is derived from the Persian 'yasmin' meaning 'a gift from God'. Recent research has found that the sweet smell of jasmine is as effective as Valium for calming the nerves. Interestingly, essential oils of jasmine are a key ingredient in an iconic brand of French perfume which may go some way to explain its enduring popularity. Winter Jasmine however is much less fragrant and has been described as smelling slightly mossy.

Unlike other less hardy jasmines, Winter Jasmine does not twine and therefore needs training if vertical growth is required. Although not actually a climber, the arching, rambling stems of this beautiful plant can grow up to 5 metres in length. It looks amazing when trailing down from a high retaining wall or rock ledge. Alternatively, it can be trained up a trellis or pergola or be grown as a shrub albeit a bit lax in habit. Because it readily roots, Winter Jasmine is often used as a soil stabilizer on steep banks.

Winter Jasmine succeeds in any well-drained soil but also tolerates a variety of poor conditions, whether they be acid or alkaline, including clay. It's fast growing and tolerant of sunny sites, shady situations, woodland settings, even north-facing walls. It's also an ideal plant for the urban environment, putting up with pollution of all sorts yet giving a cheerful display of green and yellow amidst a concrete jungle.

A vigorous plant, it's easy to maintain and responds well to severe pruning every three to four years. Left unpruned, plants tend to become woody and matted with dead stems so some maintenance is required. Otherwise, lightly prune every year immediately after blooming to ensure flowers emerge the following spring.

Flowers can be damaged in very severe winters but new flowers are usually produced once the weather warms up. Help it along with a regular feed of fertilizer such as Fish Blood & Bone. It will repay in winter when little else is in flower in the garden. Winter Jasmine is hardy to -15°C, probably more, and is really a tough yet very forgiving plant. An all round winner really.

Newington Nurseries, Newington, Nr Stadhampton (on the A329), OX10 7AW Tel 01865 400533 - **www.newington-nurseries.co.uk** 



# Out & About

### Bridge Group of Churches - 2012 Lent Soup Lunches

Come and enjoy a simple lunch of home-made soup, bread and cheese, Fairtrade biscuits and coffee or tea at various venues between **12 noon** and **2pm** 

Wednesday 22 February (Ash Wednesday): The Pool Room at The Manor House, Little Wittenham, home of Sir Martin and Lady Wood (Please park behind the church)

Wednesday 29 February: The Old Farmhouse, High Street, Long Wittenham home of Ruth McCreight (opposite The Plough)

#### More lunches will take place every Wednesday in March i.e. on the 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th.

There is a minimum **donation of £4** (which can be gift-aided). All the proceeds will go to our chosen charities: **Ragalla Aid** which helps families in Sri Lanka with a Long Wittenham connection through Helen Monaghan and **Headway**, a nationwide charity providing therapy and support to people affected by brain injury or disease. The Oxford branch is based in Kennington and helps over 400 people, some from our Bridge Group villages. **Contact** Anne Walsh 01865 407249 or Janet Haylett 01865 407382 for more information

#### Valentine's Barn Dance

A Barn Dance will be held in Clifton Hampden Village Hall on **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February** from **7.30 pm**. There will be a live Band and Caller. Tickets, to include Supper, cost £12 and are available from Maxine Ford – 01865 408533, Madeline Matthews, 01865 408045, Anne Ilsley, 01865 407605 or James & Sue Colman, 01865 407639. Proceeds to Clifton Hampden Church Council.

## Culham in the I980's - Charlotte Franklin

Culham is insulted or neglected in the guidebooks. Everyone is told to admire Sutton Courtenay and the weirs, hurry on up to Abingdon, 'Queen of the Thames' (de Mare) or hurry down to picturesque Clifton with its thatch and Gilbert Scott bridge and then yet further to Sinodon Hills and magnificent Dorchester. The guide books are right to recommend our neighbouring towns and villages and have probably been helpful in a certain amount of self consciousness to help preserve the Thames Valley character. But Culham is well worth a visit of discovery in its own right.

Start with the green. You have the fine Victorian Lion pub from which to look around at a genuine unspoiled, lived in village. The old timbered shop, a little below the modem street level, has an amazing range of goods, and indeed service. Fishing tackle is a speciality, sensible in a Thames side village. The Culham shop gets highest ratings for service and kindliness, keeping people in touch: the very opposite of efficient, impersonal super markets, and highly recommended for a visit.

The group of cottages from the shop to the back of the church are most pleasing in their natural placing and pride of gardens. The Victorian church is a solid act of faith and sound craftsmanship, surrounded by its gravevard. It may not have the mediaeval this and that, but it has peace and beauty, and should be entered and appreciated. Culham Manor, opposite the church, delights all visitors in its neglected, decayed Tudor majesty. The present tenants are most generous in showing people round. The unmodernised kitchen, with no window for the non existent servants to look out of, is perhaps even more fascinating for the modem visitor than all the Tudor panelling, stonework and glass. At the end of the old kitchen garden stands the seventeenth century dovecote with so many pigeon holes inside that no one as yet has been known to have the patience and concentration to count them correctly. Ivy has climbed so high that at present the date carved into the stone is obliterated. This is one of the scheduled buildings of Culham. It does not need more imagination than most of us can manage (unlike some castle wall ruins) to fill these tall buildings with ceaseless fluttering, cooing, feathers and droppings. And to remember that the rich man's doves would raid the countryside of the poor man's allotments. Good eating in the winter in the days when most meat was killed in the autumn. The small Manor garden on the south side, the river side, is laid out in the Tudor manner as a series of garden rooms with box hedges, and a herb garden.

Back to the pub, past the reedy pond, and fine red brick honest-to-goodness barns. The Lion is the center for the fishermen, an active club with many fine cups to be won. Occasionally you will be lucky to see a display of local skills at Aunt Sally. Opposite the Lion are the great wrought iron gates of Culham House, and the nice tall Georgian brick house can be admired, with well kept lawn and rose drive. The house was built by the royal carpenter Phillips in days when it was good to be a royal carpenter. There are older people in the village who remember the haughty bearing of the last Miss Phillips, who would ask the teacher to cane the boys if they did not take their hats off, in respect. The girls of course had to curtsey.

Culham lies a mile and a half down and across the river from fast growing Abingdon. The river was for centuries a great barrier, Culham was in Oxfordshire, Abingdon in Berkshire. No development has been allowed on the Oxfordshire side so there are green water meadows all the way if you walk down the tow path from the stone bridge of Abingdon. It's a particularly lovely walk at all seasons of the year, past swans and tall reeds and rich river flowers, across a Japanese style footbridge, where children of Culham like to swim off the sandy bank. One of the nicest approaches to Culham must be coming up from the river by the path which brings you out by the Lion Pub.

The view of warm red varied brick and some mellowed Cotswold stone cannot have changed much since the beginning of the century when the pub was built. This pub is at the corner of the village green: not a show piece village green like Marsh Baldon, but very pleasing with its mixture of warm local red brick houses, long walls, nice Cotswold stone manor house, church and walls round the grave yard at the far end. Traditional old yew trees by the church are a fine sight, not to be achieved by modem instant container-grown gardening. They say yew trees were grown in church yards for many reasons, not only the longevity of these trees but also for making longbows when our national defence against the French depended on our superior skill in archery.

The Green, the pub, the church, the manor, and the cottages - that is one heart of the old village.

Next consider the river. Culham is so lucky. The river is not hogged by private landlords but is there to be walked by everyone. The younger generation may not know that the tow path was used by horses, big heavy farm horses slowly towing barges on long ropes. Now many of the gates have been turned into stiles. The horses would not be able to get through, but the footpath is a joy. There used to be ferries on the Thames, to take you across when the path went from one bank to the other. These have all ceased. The old path is blessedly on the Culham side a good way both up and down the river. Actually the weirs by Sutton are nearer to us than to most people living in that long and straggly village of Sutton Courtenay. Then there is the island created by the lock cut and the river which can be walked round. A marvellous variety of angles and views, faster and slower water, and all the wild life that goes with it.

Culham lock is the second deepest on the Thames. It was modernised (i.e. mechanised) just a few years ago, and when you see the amount of traffic passing though from Easter onwards it seems incredible that the lock keeper was ever able to cope in the old manual days when he unwound the sluice gates with big spiky wheels. It's always fun to watch the pleasure craft, people's joy in their own or hired craft, their feeling of freedom, holiday and fantasies of seamanship. It's good to see the skill of the lock keeper and his wife, safely able to cram in the maximum number of craft. The Thames Conservancy, which has looked after the river, the banks and the locks, used to run garden competitions, so every lock garden was an oasis of cultivation, has just ceased to exist. Probably the lock keepers will continue to take pride and joy in their gardens whatever the new authority.

We now have an ugly and necessary car park of asphalt – but as yet no conveniences. The village children enjoy this large playground for racing cycles. Over the lock bridge, and down from the lock, there can still be seen the rapidly dwindling old brick chimney of the old brick kiln. Brick was made here within living memory. Clifton Bridge was made of Culham brick (floated down the river in barges pulled by horses). The foreman's cottage just on the bank nearby and many other buildings were built with this nice warm 'hand made' red brick. Again a good safe bank, facing due south, where Culham children enjoy splashing about. Luckily now swimming is included as part of every child's education at primary level, so parents need not be too anxious once this skill has been achieved. River swimming is pretty safe. You can always reach a bank, and there are no dangerous currents. May the Thames always be kept clean enough for us to enjoy for swimming - as well as the chlorinated, confined and controlled, opening and shutting and all the necessary palaver of the municipal swimming pools.

Swimming under the old Sutton bridge, you can really admire the perfect proportions of the arches, and the fine stone work. This bridge is now being restored with cement blocks. Shame! Sutton bridge was a toll bridge. The remnants of the toll gate cottage can be seen jutting out on the left hand side. The ground floor was regularly flooded every year. Two of the daughters of the last tollgate keeper still live just across in the cottages on the Sutton side. The toll paid for the building of the bridge.

Most of the older buildings in Culham have changed usage and have been restored and modernised. The vicar lives in a modem house though the triple bay fronted old vicarage can be seen from the road and is a scheduled building. The Home Farm is no longer a farm, no huntsmen ride to the Huntsmen' *s* Cottage, or horses at Stable cottage, and the clock has stopped on the Clock House. But a building from 1850 which is very much alive is the old school. Here again Culham has been lucky having a thriving, happy village school for about thirty children – a tremendous amenity. All you need see is the children as a family group in play time and compare this with some of the prison yard exercise grounds, behind high wires which is so usual in our cities. The village has had a seven year project for playing fields, collecting the money, fencing, levelling the land, getting gang mowers and so on. This is now a reality and the first football match has been played and won. The playground end under the old turkey oak trees again gives scope to the children for play. You approach the fields through the Glebe housing estate - a small friendly circle of houses with some new old people's flats at the village street end.

The community of Culham goes beyond the High Street. Culham College, a teacher training College whose future is being discussed started in 1855 as a College for Church of England School meters. The solid stone buildings facing the main road and all the old Victorian buildings are very much in taste today. It had a tradition for teaching rural studies and the garden shows this skill. In fact the beautiful Nuneham Courtenay gardens are managed from Culham. The college is a lively asset of teachers and students and the village benefits with music and art festivals, even a book shop and a weekly youth club. The Waggon and Horses is the pub on the main road and the College pub among others. It has a delightful corn dolly model of its name. You can get a meal here.

Between the Waggon and the Bridge, on the same side of the road (the non pavement side) is the most amazing reclamation of an old clay pit into a rose garden and rose nursery. This has been the spare time hobby of Mr. Broad, who has lived in Culham all his life and remembers the Phillips family and the days when Morells the Lords of the Manor would take blankets round to the cottagers. His rose garden is a haven of peace and fragrance, an inspiration of perseverance and his roses sell out early in the year.

Most of old Culham has now been stopped from decay. Our church tower needs expensive repair and of course the Manor and dovecote ought to be saved before it's too late. Quite lately the little tiny roadside house on the Burycroft has been modernized. The railway station with our name is rather far along the road and the trains not very frequent. Nevertheless we hope it will stay open.

Perhaps my neighbours will not bless me for singing the praises of our village. We like it quiet. We benefit a lot from the neighborhood of Abingdon, Oxford and Didcot. Townsfolk enjoy a day in the country, by the river especially. One great request to any friendly tourist: "Please help to keep the village free of litter". Indeed if you walk along the river, and find some nasty jetsam of plastic bottle or other indestructible rubbish, please pick it up. It would be nice to make our walks even more pleasant.

There are some fine trees in the village, a rather mutilated cedar at Culham house, sequoia, hornbeam, monkey puzzle, a few odd walnuts, holm oak over the village street from the garden of the east Wing, just worth looking out and enjoying the variety apart from the truly local elms and willows. The old apple orchards, neglected from pruning and spraying, now that they have been divided among several owners, are a delight to the eye in the spring and a haven for birds, rabbits and moles. Pheasants, bred for shooting at the back of the Morell land, seem to have strayed to the safety of the neglected orchards and it is often difficult to avoid running them over.

If you are a rural district, near to good communications, what do you get?

Well, you get promised a prison, you have a large coal-fired power station spreading its silent spider's web of wires on pylons across the fields. You get a laboratory of distinguished researchers, maybe even an EEC laboratory. Two farms will have shut by the end of the year. We still have some cows grazing the water meadows, a lively community, growing, changing from ancient to modern; a village with a green, the church, school, shop and pubs and our ancient river, the Thames.

*Editor's note*. Since then, we seem to have lost a shop and a pub, but the prison never materialised. How many other changes have you noticed?

## Endpiece

Please note that any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors.

Contributions to the MARCH issue of The Mouthpiece by FEBRUARY 15th please, to: Brian Bracher, 25 High Street, 01235 525885 or email: <u>brian@thebrachers.com</u> John Mason, 20 High Street, 01235 527440 or email: <u>johnu.mason@gmail.com</u>

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