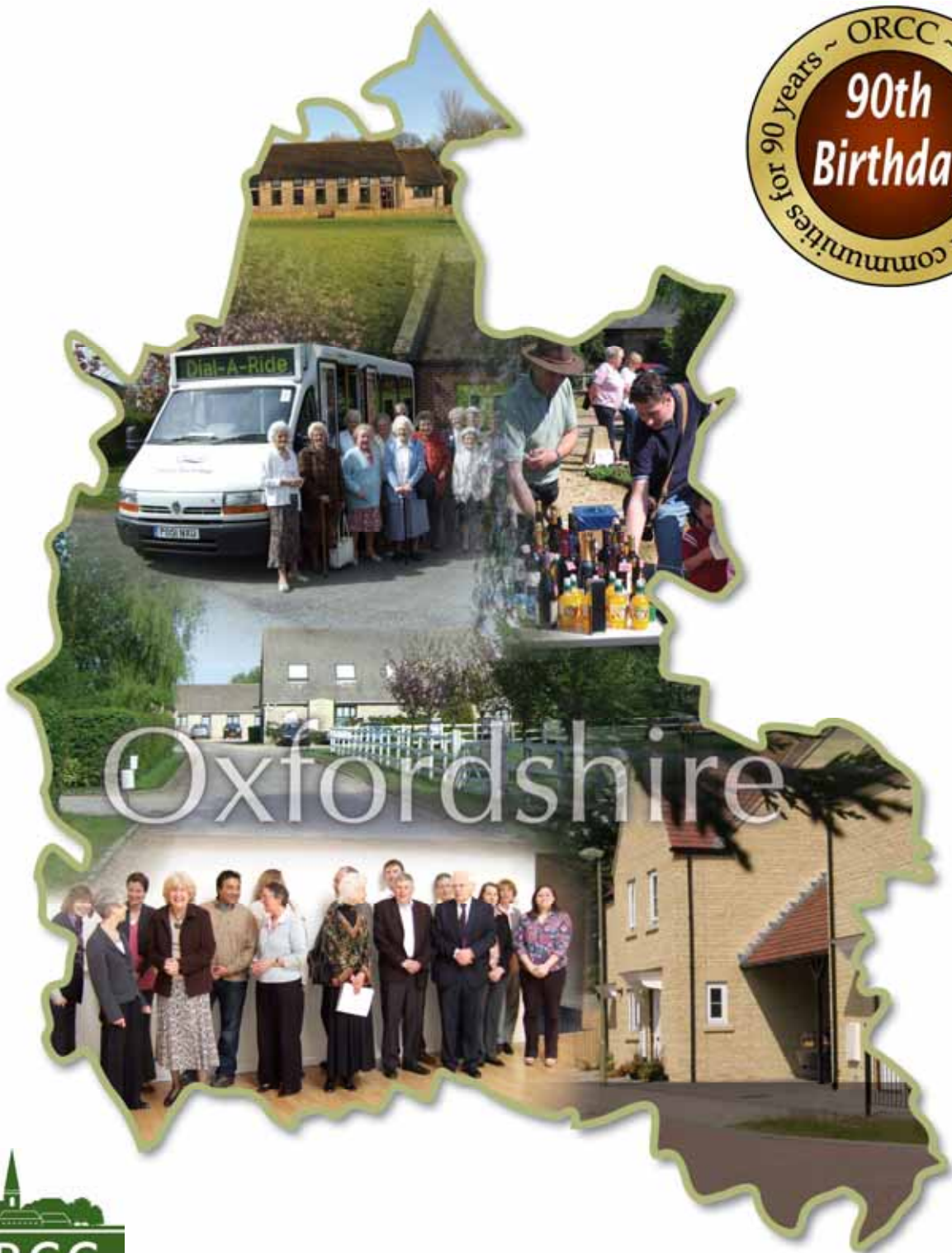


Celebrating Community Life in Rural Oxfordshire

OXFORDSHIRE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



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For a large print version, please contact ORCC by email:
orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk or phone on 01865 883488.



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Introduction

This publication has been produced in 2010 with two celebrations in mind: the 90th anniversary of ORCC – the oldest Rural Community Council in the country and first of what is now a national network – and the continuing success of countless small rural communities across our beautiful county. We like to think the two are inextricably linked and hope you will enjoy finding plenty to celebrate between these pages.

ORCC was set up in 1920, in the wake of the First World War. A small group of Oxford University academics was concerned at the limits of rural life – no access to books, lectures, drama, learning, skill development - and no community action to make a difference to people's lives. There was also precious little in the way of rural services, while housing was both hard to come by and quite likely to be in poor condition. Most homes had no electricity, while many did not even have running water.

90 years later, how life has changed! While communities are still without local services (a feature that has got worse instead of better) and houses are mostly in good habitable condition (even if prohibitively expensive), resourceful communities continue to find ways of enriching the lives of their residents. Family ties have undoubtedly changed, as generations find themselves spread over wide areas, and lengthy commutes mean many rural residents seem seldom to be found in their own homes. But as a result, *local* social networks have an especially strong role to play in 21st century rural life, providing much needed mutual help and support for everyone from babies (and their parents!) to the most elderly in the community.

It is this tradition of self-help that is at the heart of ORCC's work. Throughout the decades, ORCC has consistently taken the same approach: giving communities the skills and knowledge to help themselves.

Over the years, ORCC has found many ways of helping communities to share their best ideas. Various competitions have come and gone – the most recent being the Oxfordshire Villages of the Year – and it's always been a revelation to see the sheer scale of local endeavour. There are some truly inspirational individuals and communities out there.

This year, in order to highlight good examples of local community initiatives, we wrote to all parish and town councils and parish meetings asking them to tell us about at least one feature of their community, which they think makes a special or significant contribution to the quality of community life. This could be a community-run activity, service, facility or other feature or a particular community champion who stands out because they are making something happen.



Introduction

This publication includes all the contributions received in response. We are grateful to all those who have helped us in this way and have taken time and trouble to tell us about their particular community success.

We hope that this publication will help to give a flavour of some of the very best that exists in our rural county and that readers will use it as a source of good ideas. After all, if they can do it, so can you! If you want to find out more about any of the community initiatives featured here, contact ORCC and we will aim to put you in touch with a local contact.

Our staff team here at Jericho Farm are an exceptionally able and committed group of people, with whom it is a pleasure to work. The staff and trustees share a deep pride in ORCC and regard working with communities across rural Oxfordshire as a great privilege. We hope that you will continue to call upon us if you need help; for our part we will do the best we can to support rural Oxfordshire with a top quality service that continues to meet its changing needs. Let's hope that over the next nine decades ORCC and rural Oxfordshire will continue to be in good heart.

Dr. John Sharp (Chair of ORCC Trustees)

Linda Watson (ORCC Chief Executive)





Foreword by the Lord Lieutenant

As Lord Lieutenant I am in a prime position to be aware of the vast amount of dedicated time and energy that members of communities of all types and sizes around the county are putting into running local activities and services for the benefit of their neighbours.

I am delighted to contribute a foreword to this special publication, which marks 90 years of invaluable and visionary work – by community members and by ORCC - to achieve and maintain vibrant and sustainable rural communities in Oxfordshire.

The entries which follow are just a few examples of what is being achieved, highlighted as special by the contributing communities. Thanks are due to the authors of these entries, who have taken time and trouble to get local efforts recognised and celebrated.

There are a huge number and range of other commendable manifestations of community vibrancy, initiative and care for others spread across all our villages, hamlets and market towns, which have not been submitted for publication but which nonetheless are highly valued in each locality.

Congratulations are due to all the community members working hard to take their communities forward into a positive and sustainable future and to ORCC for its efforts to support local initiatives. Keep up the good work. I look forward to reading the 100th Birthday edition of this publication!

Tim Stevenson OBE





Foreword by the Chief Executive, ACRE

ORCC is the first member of the national Rural Community Action Network to be able to demonstrate 90 years of sterling support for rural communities. As Chief Executive of Action with Communities in Rural England, the national body of the network, I offer sincere congratulations. I am very pleased to be asked to contribute to this anniversary publication and to commend all the enterprising community initiatives that are reflected in it.

At a time when rural communities are taking on more and more responsibility for meeting challenges in maintaining services and quality of life for all, the support provided by ORCC is increasingly important. I am aware of the innovative work ORCC is now undertaking on tackling major issues such as economic uncertainty, climate change and environmental sustainability. This mirrors national initiatives across the country, showing how, with the help and support provided by our members, local people are benefiting from working together to solve problems, becoming more self reliant and sustaining the tremendous community spirit on which rural communities rely.

I am especially pleased to mark this milestone in ORCC's history as they are the first of our members to achieve a significant landmark in demonstrating the quality of their work. ORCC has recently been accredited at Level 3 of the ACRE revised Good Practice Standards, which are officially endorsed by the Charity Commission. This is a well earned award and a fitting tribute to ORCC's effectiveness in the work they do with and on behalf of rural communities in Oxfordshire.

Sylvia Brown OBE





Oxfordshire Villages of the Year

From 1997 the Calor Oxfordshire Village of the Year Competition has been championed and led by ORCC in partnership with Calor Gas as its main sponsor. The Competition aims to reward pro-active approaches to care and wellbeing, community activities, enterprise, access and communication as well as the environmental aspects of village life. From 2006 we intensified our efforts to promote the Competition and over the next four years close to sixty different villages have taken part and numerous village volunteers have given their time to proudly share how their communities are caring and inclusive places to live.

In 2010 Calor's sponsorship ended and we have taken a break from organizing the Competition as annual event to give us time to review its future as a means of sharing good ideas and good practice and of celebrating and rewarding community self-help. This celebratory publication was devised in part as a successor, recognising that, in their own way, each village in the county is a Village of the Year, given all the vibrant activity that goes on.

Goring-on-Thames—Going for Gold

When ORCC encouraged Oxfordshire villages to enter the Calor Villages of the Year competition, we really didn't know what we were letting ourselves in for! ORCC helped us through the initial stages of the process and we formed a team of three and decided to go for it. Although Goring is an attractive village in a beautiful location, the judges simply wanted to know what the community did with what it had. After months of analysing what we felt made Goring special we were delighted to hear, live on BBC Radio Oxford, that we had won the Oxfordshire Villages of the Year title. From that point, we had about six weeks to prepare the community to receive the national judges for one of five regional titles. The whole village responded wonderfully to the challenge and the judges were evidently impressed with their two-hour tour of our many village amenities and projects. There was a grand musical finale in the village hall, when our 150 local clubs and organisations paraded past the judges in their colourful and imaginative costumes. The announcement that we had won the South of England title, 'the silver', was a credit to the whole community who pulled together to achieve this accolade. We were pipped at the post by a village in North Yorkshire, so gold eluded us on this occasion. The journey, however, was very rewarding and thanks to ORCC for its support all along the way.





Community Halls and Meeting Places

There are over 280 village halls in Oxfordshire, all varying in size and age. Most are managed by a local management committee of volunteers, with representation from user organisations and the general public. Community buildings make a key contribution to community life and environmental sustainability through providing local activities and services. These save car journeys, create sustainable caring communities and financially sustainable halls.

Aston and Cote Village Hall

In 1966, a cow field and a football pitch were given over for village use and the Village Community Trust was established. In 1985, with much help from ORCC, the new Village Hall opened on the site, replacing a derelict building elsewhere in the village. Improvements since then have mirrored the energy of our parish population of 1300: sports changing rooms, an additional meeting room, disabled WCs, mains drainage, a stage and a drama store. On the playing field, the children's outdoor play area has recently been improved with some exciting and challenging play equipment. None of this could be termed unique, unusual or distinctive, but if man-hours were paid hours, our community would generate far more wealth than Bill Gates!

Benson Community Halls

The well-used Parish Hall was opened in 1988; it offers a large main hall with stage, storage cupboards, a well-equipped kitchen, and doors that open out on to the Sunnyside Recreation Field. There is also a pleasant lounge and an upstairs committee room used for Parish Council meetings and a range of other activities including art and yoga. Elsewhere in the village, the Youth Hall provides a facility for Toddler Group, Pre-school, Youth Club, karate and other activities for children and young people. Plans are being drawn up to improve this facility with a more energy-efficient structure.

Chilton Village Hall

In this 1000-strong community on the Downs, the Village Hall is a valued feature in daily use by villagers, young and old. Run by volunteers, the Hall hosts regular groups including an Art Group, Bowls Club, Country Dance Club, Evergreens, Scout/Cub Group, Age Concern Lunch Club, WI, Toddlers Group and Sunday School. It is also used regularly for family celebrations, parish council meetings, dances and summer fetes. In other words, it enters



Community Halls and Meeting Places

into every part of community life. ORCC provide valued advice, helping the management committee volunteers to ensure the Hall is fit to fulfil its busy community role. The community loves their pub and their Church, but especially their Hall!

Combe Reading Room

Built in 1890 from funds raised by Adela Brooke of Combe House, the Combe Temperance Reading Room and Coffee House, formally opened in August 1892, continues to hold a special place in village life. Within a year of opening, the Reading Room had 120 members: village men and older boys used the games room, reading room, library, skittle alley and kitchen; ladies could attend entertainment evenings. The Reading Room soon became the hub of village life. Now run by a committee of local volunteers, the building is regularly used by all villagers for events ranging from Golden Leaves get-togethers and WI gatherings to summer cream teas, fund-raising events and children's parties.



Fifield Parish Hall (West Oxfordshire)

Early in the 20th century the Matthews Family (of flour milling fame) gave the closed Primitive Methodist Chapel in Fifield to be the Parish Hall. By the end of the 20th century the building needed refurbishment. Holes appeared in the floor, mould grew on the walls, the kitchen and WCs required strong stomachs. Builders quoted £55,000 to £75,000 for the work. Good as this small community is at supporting local activities; even the stoutest hearts quailed; it seemed closure was inevitable.

To the rescue came ORCC's Village Halls Adviser and the Trustees took her advice. Through fund-raising, donations and grants from the District and County Councils, TOE, Garfield Weston Foundation, Doris Field Charitable Trust, Grass Roots and the Co-operative, funds were raised. The work, including problems discovered on the way, was done.

On 19 February 2010 our MP, the Rt Hon David Cameron, re-opened the transformed hall. It is now a village centre, used for public and private social events, meetings, classes and local clubs. The Trustees will always be incredibly grateful to all who made the work possible, but without ORCC Fifield Parish Hall would now be closed.



Community Halls and Meeting Places

Freeland—a New Village Hall

Freeland Village Hall, built in 1965 of wood and brick, has gradually deteriorated to the point where it is no longer economic to maintain. An upwelling of village opinion in 2009 led the Parish Council to set up a working group to design and seek funding for a new hall and sports facility. With a substantial WODC grant, a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, and many contributions from village organisations and individuals, funding is now in place and building work is set to begin in 2010. Fund raising for the sports facility is ongoing.

Fulbrook

A Village Appraisal in the late 1990s identified a need for a meeting place, but no suitable site could be found. Step forward the Parochial Church Council with a plan to remove pews at the back of the Church and install a kitchen and lavatory. After successful fundraising and with Parish Council support, the work was completed in 2008. The Church has become the focal point of village life with keep-fit classes, coffee mornings and the lunch club, as well as one-off events such as gala dinners, wine-tastings, concerts, quizzes and the popular Village Pig Roast and Dance ... the dancing is in the church and the pig is roasted in the churchyard! This project has made an enormous difference to the quality of life in our thriving, special village.

Kirtlington Village Hall

Kirtlington has many community activities, often aided by ORCC advice, but the fundraising, building and use of our village hall are of particular note. An outsider once said, "In our village there isn't enough community spirit to organise such a hall". But in Kirtlington the hall fundraising activities, especially running the 'Oxfordshire Triathlon' each year, have brought the community together; such projects *cause* communal effort. The main hall is booked every weekday evening and at weekends; it doubles as a badminton court and a place for bowls, Morris dancing and exercise groups, while other rooms are used for meetings.

Moulsford Pavilion—At the Heart of Village Life!

A dedicated group worked hard to encourage a sense of community in Moulsford, organising activities at the crumbling village Pavilion. The Parish Council recognised that the demise of the Pavilion would be a major loss to community life and a public meeting in 2006 produced a



Community Halls and Meeting Places

vision of a larger, new, multi-use community building. A small project team raised funds, applied for grants, consulted user groups and sought advice from ORCC, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and South Oxfordshire District Council, always keeping villagers up to date with progress! The new pavilion should become a reality by late 2010, providing a vital community asset at the heart of the village where people of all ages can be part of a thriving community for generations to come!

Nettlebed School and Community Centre

The most important village project in recent years has been the Nettlebed School and Community Centre (NSCC), officially opened by Boris Johnson in March 2006 after seven years of planning. The Nettlebed community set up the 'Nettlebed Village Forum' (NVF), representing all local groups, to incorporate into the build a community hall, a floodlit all-weather sports pitch and a Pre-school for hire to the community out of school hours. The NVF steered the project through planning and an application for an South Oxfordshire District Council grant, which was matched by community fund-raising. A small housing development with three 'affordable' homes is being built on the former school site.

North Leigh Memorial Hall (NLMH)

The original Hall was built just after World War I in memory of the sacrifice made by men of North Leigh. By the late 1990s, the building was on its last legs, so the village decided to replace it with a new hall worthy of their memory. After over eight years of planning, fund raising, grant seeking and many hours of volunteering by numerous villagers, the Hall was reopened in 2007. ORCC provided advice and pointed out any pitfalls. All that community effort has resulted in a model example of a modern Village Hall, including a main hall, kitchen, bar, storage, committee room, a Post Office with small shop, a Library and a Youth Centre. The Hall is used every day, the hub of village activity.

Pyrton Village Hall

Pyrton Village Hall re-opened in October 2009 following £35,000 worth of improvements, including a lowered and insulated ceiling, lighting, replacement windows and a beautiful wood floor. The aim of increasing its use and promoting local community events, classes and functions is being realised; bookings are up and the hall regularly hosts pub evenings and other gatherings. Generous funding from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment,



Community Halls and Meeting Places

Oxfordshire County Council, and the Doris Field Charitable Trust, plus funds raised by local events made it all possible. The improvements, carried out by local trades people, have restored the old Victorian School Building to its former glory.

Project Inspire, Fernham

This small, vibrant community first supported the idea of creating a village hall within St. John's Church in 2002, in response to a village survey. In 2005/2006 a team of volunteers started the charitable trust, Project Inspire, aiming to convert the church to provide a comfortable environment for worship and a flexible community space. Successful grant applications, donations and fund-raising activities in 2006/2007 raised more than £250,000. The Diocese gave its approval in July 2008 and work was completed by September 2009. St. John's and Fernham Village Hall is now used for church services and a range of community activities. As one villager said after her son's birthday party, "Everybody loved the hall/church and thought it was a great space!".



Sibford Village Hall

This Village Hall, held in trust for local use, is central to village life in Sibford Gower, Burdrop and Sibford Ferris. It has a large hall, a small hall, well-designed large and small kitchens and a room used entirely as an archive room. There are also store rooms, a stage, up-to-date toilet facilities, three garages (two of which are used by the local scouting group and pre-school), a large car park, and a field at the rear which includes a fenced in play area. The Hall is used for many varied purposes.

Shrivenham

No visitor to Shrivenham can fail to notice the Memorial Hall, a local landmark built in 1926. With its magnificent hammer beam echoing St George's Chapel, Windsor, the Hall is the focus for a wide variety of community activities. From nursery school to ballet and exercise



Community Halls and Meeting Places

classes together with club and society meetings, it is in constant use. The Shrivenham Amateur Dramatic Society puts on two productions a year, including a highly successful pantomime. During the summer the Hall doubles as a cricket pavilion for the Cricket Club which has an excellent first team and several youth teams.

Spelsbury Memorial Hall

Steeped in history, this beautiful village goes about its business in a quiet country way. Ditchley Park has been the thread running through the rich tapestry of Spelsbury life since 1583 when Sir Henry Lee bought the House. The names of the great Dillon and Litchfield families occur time and again in the Spelsbury Parish records. The Memorial Hall is the hub of village life, with activities such as playgroups, pilates, whist drives and social functions. Built in 1920 to commemorate village men who died in the Great War, the Hall underwent a major overhaul in 2004, thanks to the hard work of local people and the Village Hall Committee under the dedicated chairmanship of Helen Datson.

Wootton & Dry Sandford Community Centre

2010 saw the re-opening of the Wootton & Dry Sandford Community Centre after a £930,000 redevelopment. The Community Centre hosts a wide range of activities for everyone in the community, but particularly for the young, with a pre-school and youth club, and for the elderly. Specialist interests such as history and drama are well catered for, as are sports such as football, indoor bowls, badminton, netball and karate. New users are rushing to book the redeveloped centre that is now heralded by all as a magnificent facility. Funding was made available by the Big Lottery, local councils, and over £80,000 by the local community.

Support from ORCC

For many years ORCC has been actively involved with the sterling work of village hall management committees, supporting their excellent efforts across the county and providing a comprehensive information and advice service. Our Village Halls Adviser helps committees with everything from effective marketing ideas to energy saving, from legal requirements to funding opportunities. Regular newsletters, briefings and area networking meetings help volunteers to keep up to date. Our Adviser is also available to answer individual queries and to make site visits, where necessary.



A Place to Play

The importance of good quality local sports and play facilities has long been recognised by local communities and the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA). The following examples are typical of the determination of local people to ensure traditional village sports are available on hundreds of attractive well-maintained playing fields throughout the county. As well as sporting opportunities, a wide range of facilities for children feature prominently in Oxfordshire villages. From safe, enclosed play areas for younger children to more modern facilities such as skateparks and open spaces with challenging 'natural' equipment for older children, there is no shortage of places to play in Oxfordshire.

Islip

In 2005, Islip celebrated the Millennium of the birth of Edward the Confessor with a year long festival of events resulting in over £3000 being raised for a community project. It was decided unanimously that the village playground should be redeveloped, linked to the festival by a Viking Long Ship to sit prominently in the middle of the new playground. Early in 2009 the playground became a reality, with a fantastic opening ceremony complete with a Viking re-enactment group and hundreds of local people keen to enjoy their wonderful, locally designed and constructed playground that now attracts visitors from miles around.

Lewknor

In spring 2009, three local mums recognised the need for a place for children, young people and their families to play and socialise within Lewknor Parish. After gaining support from the community they applied for grants to create a new play area, "Red Kite Park", built next to the Village Hall. A landscape architect helped design and create an adventurous and natural space based on input from local primary school children, who took part in tree planting as the play area was built. Red Kite Park opened in May 2010; children and adults alike are delighted with the outcome.



Steeple Aston

After sixteen years of extensive use, the existing play area was showing signs of wear, so a working party was formed in early 2009 to apply for Playbuilder funds to create a play space



A Place to Play

that included an element of managed risk. Consultation was the key, with questionnaires sent to all the village children and those in neighbouring villages. The outcome is one of the best-located and most attractively designed play spaces in Oxfordshire, with plenty of fun places to explore and lots of healthy risk taking! This project was a prime example of good community involvement, featuring a dedicated working party and the always-enthusiastic children. Local people are proud to say that they live in Steeple Aston.



Watlington

When the Parish Council decided to regenerate the recreation ground in 2007, a series of good community consultations lead to an ambitious plan being put forward to create an area as a place for children's play and adult sports and the focus of recreation for the whole community. The completely revitalised and refurbished open space now features a very well-used, attractive and exciting playground catering for all ages of children, a new fitness trail, and outdoor gym equipment that perfectly complement the existing sunken concrete bowl and metal half pipe for those preferring more modern sport and play activities.

Support from ORCC

The ORCC supports community efforts to provide outdoor sport and play facilities for all ages by providing its partner organisation, the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA), which is a separate charity, with low-cost accommodation and staff time to deal with management and administration. This enables OPFA to provide its specialist information and advice service to local organisations cost-effectively and with the benefit of close liaison with ORCC staff working in the same communities.



Involving Young People

Young people often have a significantly visible presence in our generally ageing rural communities - in the play park, getting on and off the school bus, taking part in the village fete. Very often Oxfordshire's Community Led Plans identify 'Things for young people to do' as an issue that needs to be tackled and many communities are involving young people in youth clubs and a range of other activities.

Many villages are also recognising that young residents have a valuable and active role to play in the sustainability of their communities and are engaging young people in decision-making to help to plan for the short and long-term future of the village and its residents.

Carterton Youth Council

Carterton Youth Council is made up of 24 young people drawn from local primary and secondary schools, the church, the Guiding Association, the local youth centre and other youth organisations. Regular meetings are held at Carterton Town Hall. The Youth Council gives young people between the ages of 11 and 18 a say in the running of the town's affairs, encouraging them to contribute positively to the life of the town. It also helps to develop understanding between all the residents of the town. Young people can raise issues of concern and make them known to local decision makers. The Youth Council also acts as a forum for local service providers and allows young people to contribute to the design and delivery of local services.

DAMASCUS Youth Project

This registered charity was founded in 1999 to work with young people (ages 11 to 18 and a few up to 25) across the parishes of **D**rayton, **A**ppleford, **M**ilton, **S**utton **C**ourtenay and **S**teventon. Rooted in these villages, volunteers and young youth workers with street credibility empower young people through positive engagement, promoting a shared sense of belonging and real ability to effect change, so they can make a difference in their personal lives and in their communities. As a result, young people are taking leadership roles within their villages, becoming active role models to the next generation and organising village events to promote community cohesion. Damascus is managed by trustees drawn from these five contiguous rural communities. They work with ORCC, sharing good practice across other rural communities.



Involving Young People

Project Hailey

Project Hailey, supported by the Parish Council, looks after the provision of youth and children's facilities in the community. Recent projects include a skatepark and BMX track, both well received by the young people who put them to good use. Project Hailey is now turning its sights on facilities for the increasing number of toddlers in the village. Although there is no youth club in the village, the Project organises a number of activities specifically for young people. They are also involved in organising various sports events, including an annual fundraising rounders match and other family oriented activities.

Radley Youth Club

This vibrant organisation for 8 to 16 year olds meets every Monday evening during term time. It offers a large range of activities, and has received substantial financial support from Oxfordshire Community Foundation in 2005 and the Youth Opportunity Fund in 2009. This funding has allowed the Club to continue, to update equipment, and to become involved in a community project to create an art mural that sets out the various organisations in the Parish and that now hangs on the wall of the Village Hall. Mr Chris Gasson has been leading the Youth Club for almost eleven years, assisted by his wife, and this facility is very much appreciated by the youth in the Parish.

Support from ORCC

Our support for Community Led Planning is featured in a later section and we strongly encourage the engagement and involvement of young people in each local Plan process. We keep in touch with organisations and networks working with and for young people in the county, raising rural needs and issues with policy makers, when necessary.



DAMASCUS Youth Project



Individual Contributions to Community Life

We all know that no community project or activity would be achieved without active committed people willing to put time and effort into making things happen. A few communities have chosen to name particular individuals who are making or have made a significant contribution to the life of their village. Others have recognised the achievements of volunteers generally spread across a range of local activity. Oxfordshire is fortunate in being able to benefit from a huge, often hidden, resource of local volunteers contributing individual and collective vision and enterprise for the benefit of community life.

Berinsfield

Berinsfield is a new village of about 4,000 people. Originally a Second World War American Air Force base, the military Nissan huts later became home to the first residents of the new village of Berinsfield. A Community Association was soon established, providing activities and events, and helping residents to integrate and form friendships. The Community Association still supports other village organisations by running fund raising events, sports days and fun days.

Councillor Ken Hall, a Parish Councillor for over 40 years is always willing to assist residents with problems or concerns. He helps at the Berinsfield Volunteer Day Centre, transporting elderly residents to day centres across the county, and is also involved with the Community Association and Berinsfield Amateur Boxing Club. In recent years the Boxing Club has acquired its own gymnasium, producing some successful boxers, thanks to the commitment of Chief Coach, Mel Corrigan. Mel works full time, but devotes his spare time to the Club, training young people, taking them to competitions and running tournaments. Mel's wife assists him with this work and they are highly thought of in the village. Berinsfield does not have the history associated with many Oxfordshire villages or thatched cottages around a village green, but it has plenty of community spirit. It is the residents that make the village the success story that it is today.

Charney Bassett - Parish Council Clerk

The Parish Council gained Quality Status in 2007; to achieve this, Peter Davies (who died in February 2010) became a fully qualified Clerk. Peter was a driving force behind numerous initiatives in the village, including the creation of the Charney Hall and Field Trust charity, the purchase of the Field, and the installation of children's play equipment. He was also instrumental in the transfer of Charney Mill to the village, co-founding the Village College,



Individual Contributions to Community Life

establishing the Village website and *Charney Chatter* newsletter, the Village Hall modernisation project, founding the Charney Army to maintain paths, woodland and watercourses, and forming Project CHAFFINCH after the 2007 floods.

Churchill - The Chequers Pub, the Village Hall Committee and the Events Committee

People from far and wide, say “I know The Chequers pub in Churchill”. Whether you eat there every day or just pop in occasionally for a coffee, there is always a welcome from Assumpta Golding and her husband Peter. When they took over the pub about seven years ago, it was run down, but thanks to their efforts it is now a wonderful place to eat, drink and socialise.

Stuart Cole took over as Village Hall Chairman in 2004, working tirelessly to organise regular entertainment such as jazz nights, monthly films, quiz nights and summer Teas-on-the-Green. These events bring in valuable funds to improve the Hall, thus making it a desirable venue to hire.

Thanks to Dave Chambers and the Events Committee, the village has a Summer Festival on the Village Green each June, a Vintage & Classic Car Show every two years, and a traditional fete in the intervening year. The ten Car Shows to date have raised £100,000 for various charities. The Fete offers a cornucopia of pleasures, including a dog show and car boot sale, with all profits going to charity.



Upton Village Volunteers

Volunteers make a huge contribution to community life in Upton. The recent Village Hall extension was possible thanks to donations of money and equipment and fund raising events. A Community First Responder Group was set up in July 2009; eight parishioners underwent training and now provide an emergency service to Upton and the surrounding villages. Volunteers maintain the Recreation Ground and the Children’s Play Area. A team improves the environment by clearing streams, repairing fences, laying paving stones and cutting back bushes and undergrowth. Five volunteers regularly walk out with litter picking sticks to keep



Individual Contributions to Community Life

the village free of litter, and others participate in an annual litter pick along the roads and footpaths.

Yarnton Volunteer Committees

This vibrant rural community has volunteer committees providing facilities and activities such as the Village Hall, Village News (monthly), Playing Fields, Welcome to Yarnton Booklet, Gardening Club, Senior Folks Group, Short Matt Bowling, WI, History Society, Silver Band, Bell Ringers, Scout Group, Cubs and Explorers, Guides and Brownies, Men's and Youths' Football Club, Netball, Playgroup, Toddler Group, Drama Group, and Neighbourhood Watch. There is also a very active Care Committee which provides transport, community lunches and much more.

When tasks become too substantial or too time-consuming for a volunteer to undertake, a community might consider creating a paid position.

Woodcote Village Facilities Manager

In 2001, the Woodcote Community Centre and Village Hall struggled to find volunteers to do the day to day running. In consultation with ORCC, the Parish Council decided to employ a Facilities Manager to undertake daily maintenance of both facilities and a cleaner to carry out general cleaning duties. The PC employed both individuals, with Facilities Manager costs met by the Council, and cleaning costs 'cross charged' to the Village Hall and Community Centre committees. This arrangement has eased the burden on both Management Committees, and saved thousands of pounds in cleaning contractor costs. The broader community has benefited, as other routine tasks throughout the village are now dealt with on a daily basis.



Community Led Plans

A Community Led Plan is a good way to get people in the local community together to talk about what is needed in the village and how these ideas might be turned into practical action. Fifty Community Led Plans have been completed in Oxfordshire with countless hours of volunteer time devoted to involving as many people as possible in the process. Many communities say they think community spirit and cohesion has improved as a result of engaging their village in a Community Led Plan. In Oxfordshire, the volunteer effort generated by the Community Led Planning process has led to many actions being achieved.

Appleton with Eaton Community Plan

The Appleton with Eaton Community Plan process began with consultations in the parish, culminating in a Village Event last May. From the various suggestions, a questionnaire was compiled on the most important issues; this was distributed to every household and answered by over 600 people of all ages from 10 upwards. The results were analysed, reported back to the parish and then an action plan was compiled. Through the efforts of local residents, many issues have already seen progress, in particular a playground, broadband, flooding, road safety, litter, and the Paddle-and-Rymer weir. Thanks to ORCC for all their help.

Cropredy

In 2007, with the endorsement of the Parish Council, Cropredy's community embarked on producing its own Community Led Plan. They enjoyed strong support and guidance from ORCC through all the stages, including the initial launch event, compiling and analysing the community consultation in 2008, and publication of the Village Plan in March 2009. One year on, they have made substantial progress with implementing the plan and have published an updated progress report on its action points. Village Plan Steering Group members wish to express their thanks for the ongoing support and advice offered by ORCC.

Support from ORCC

ORCC's Community Development Workers help the volunteers on local Community Led Plan steering groups to design and achieve successful, inclusive and action-focussed Plans in consultation with local residents. The CDWs provide information and guidance, community visits and training events to help community members to develop the skills they need. They also work closely with statutory partners, such as the local authorities, to achieve a mutually beneficial 'bridge' between each community and its Plan and the partner's own strategies, policies and service plans.



Natural Communities

Rural communities are defined not only by people, buildings and facilities but also by their green and wild spaces. How can communities ensure that their villages are pleasant and healthy places to live, with wildlife on the doorstep? How can they be sure their children can grow up with access to green places to play and explore? Since autumn 2006, all local authorities, including Parish Councils, have been required under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. Many communities now have Local Environment Groups working in partnership with Parish Councils to help protect and improve local patches of wildlife habitat.

Drayton (near Abingdon)

The suggestion for a Millennium Green came from the Parish Council but the reins were taken up by a Trust that still raises money (largely from the PC) and manages the Green. Six acres of land were purchased in 1998 from the National Trust then landscaped to create a community orchard, a pond and a small area of woodland. Walnut trees (a Drayton speciality) and daffodils were planted and a sundial was made. The field that had been crossed by just one public path is now generally accessible and enjoyed by walkers, dogs and their owners, and children of all ages.

Ewelme Watercress Beds and Local Nature Reserve

Ewelme is famous for its once thriving watercress beds running through the centre of the village. The Chiltern Society owns the 2.5 ha (6.5 acre) site, now restored by volunteers for its heritage, wildlife, and landscape value. Many local people take part in regular workdays. The Information Centre is open on the first Sunday of every month and guided walks take place from October to April at 10.30 am. Open afternoons (2-5 pm) are held from May until September when teas are served. A DVD of the old watercress industry in the 1960s is shown and there is a display of photographs and tools.

Old Field, Great Milton

In 1896, a four-acre field was passed to Great Milton Parish Council as an area for exercise and informal recreation, and this ideology remains today. Since 1985 the Old Field Management Committee has worked to establish a peaceful, rural area for the enjoyment of local people whilst allowing an increasing





Natural Communities

diversity of wildlife to flourish. The area includes established woodland of oak, ash and hazel, a pond and newly planted trees funded by a tree sponsorship scheme. Indigenous wild flower bulbs have been planted and bird, bat and owl boxes have been positioned to encourage the biodiversity of wildlife.

Great Rollright

The village is proud of the local wildlife area they have created from wasteland for the benefit of school children and villagers. In the 18th century the land was the village pound, where local farmers rested animals on their long walk to market. When it was no longer required, the site became overgrown. In 2009, Parish Councillor and Cotswold Warden, Kevin Myhill, persuaded the Cotswold Wardens to manage the site as a nature area for the local community. Wardens, Councillors and villagers turned out in force to clear and fence the land and plant hundreds of native trees. Picnic tables and bird and bat boxes will arrive in 2010 and it is hoped that the local school will include visits in their regular activities.

Sonning Common Village Gardeners

This group of fifteen residents is committed to improving the village environment. They have planted 1300 daffodils and 2000 snowdrops. They have scrubbed the bus stop shelter twice and weeded every footpath and every building surround in the village centre. They have replanted the beds and window boxes at the library and they grow bedding plants for the summer. They plan to sow some wild flowers and eventually plant some trees. They have ambitious plans for a "Village Day" in September, when everyone will be invited to plant bulbs at the village entrances. They meet twice a month to chat, laugh and work; bringing the community together doesn't need to be hard work and it can be jolly good fun!





Natural Communities

Souldern

In 1986, the opening of Nancy Bowles Wood attracted much publicity as one of Oxfordshire's first community woodlands. Contractors did the main planting but Nancy Bowles planted the biggest oak tree and other villagers also helped. Over the years the original committee has dwindled, but in 2008 a new Management Group was established with Romney Summers as chairman. They sought advice from David Rees of the Oxfordshire Woodland Project and held village workdays to prune and thin the woodland and repair dilapidated benches. They have erected information boards, signs and a new entrance gate and fence. They have planted saplings and wildflowers and added bird and bat boxes. Money was raised for a picnic table with a plaque in honour of the people who set up the wood, now prospering under the watchful eye of the new Management Group.

Sunningwell's Glebe Lands

The Glebe is a twelve-acre field surrounded by hedgerows and trees in the centre of the village. During the 1990s the site was the subject of a protracted court case that went to the Houses of Parliament, but the result was its registration as a village green. With its attractive setting on a gentle hillside and its rich and varied biodiversity, this site is a real community asset. The community is currently planning how to protect and make best use of this site in the future, with plans for the restoration of grazing, the management of the hedgerows, the creation of a pond and putting up bird and bat boxes.

The Woodcote Conservation Group

Woodcote carried out its third Village Appraisal in 1999. One particularly positive outcome was a new Conservation Group. Their tasks were to monitor and manage two rare, ancient ponds on common land at the edge of the village, to carry out various practical conservation tasks, and to encourage local people to learn about their natural surroundings. The WCG now has nearly 100 paid members, the largest group of its kind in Oxfordshire. There are regular practical task days, wildlife talks, bird walks, bat detection evenings, and much more. The group has just initiated a village Environmental Audit, an outcome from the recent Parish Plan that was supported by ORCC, and will be linking with local schools and other community groups.



Natural Communities

Support from ORCC

The ORCC has been supporting community efforts to protect and improve the local natural environment indirectly, by providing its partner organisation, the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), with low-cost office accommodation and staff time to deal with management and administration. This has enabled TOE to provide vital grants for a wide range of local projects with the benefit of close liaison with ORCC staff working in the same communities. Due to funding changes TOE will cease to operate at the end of the financial year. ORCC is now working hard with interested local partners to achieve the handing over of the TOE 'baton' to a successor organisation with the aim of continuing to promote and support local environmental action.





Local Events: Combining Entertainment with Fundraising

In many communities a desire to bring residents together through social and other events combines very successfully with a need to generate funds to support local community facilities, activities and other good causes. As we are sure is the case with the examples which follow, it is now impossible to say whether these events are more important as entertainments or as income generators and they have become accepted as an established part of village life.

Binfield Heath - something for everyone

Residents of Binfield Heath, population just 650, enjoy a spectrum of social activities that cater for everyone, old and young. The Flower Show is a big annual event held over three days in August, run by villagers and friends from other local parishes and incorporating a jazz evening and barn dance. It has been running for 40 years. The Village Society is an umbrella organisation for small activity groups, holding an annual village day in June at the popular village playground and organising carol singing at Christmas. It also supports the Monday Club which organised regular meetings and lunches for the over 60s.

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

During a decade that began with planting the Millennium Wood, included publication of the Parish Plan in 2004 and will terminate with the opening of the new Community Stores in July 2010, the Community Association has always been at the very heart of village life. The Association, launched in 1977, organises events, such as the fete, village quiz and various entertainments, disbursing funds generated to support parish initiatives such as hampers for the elderly at Christmas and nets for the Junior Cricket Club. Major projects benefiting include the Pre-school building, the Village Hall, the Jubilee Pavilion and St. Agatha's Church and, of course, the much needed Community Store.

Charlbury Street Fair

For about 60 years Charlbury Street Fair has been an important aspect of the community's social calendar. Organised by volunteers, it brings together residents and visitors to enjoy a wide range of stalls and amusements and gives local organisations the opportunity to publicise their aims. The main event includes themed fancy dress and floats, and ancillary events include egg throwing, fun runs and street dancing. Much needed funds are raised for



Local Events: Combining Entertainment with Fundraising

local community facilities, such as the Corner House and Memorial Hall which are utilised by the 60 or so local clubs and societies. The Fair attracts visitors to the area and represents an excellent example of community spirit and cooperation.

Cholsey and Kodumela - CHOKO

CHOKO is a local voluntary group set up with local churches to raise funds to address the social needs in Kodumela, a rural area in South Africa. Linked to this community through World Vision, CHOKO had raised over £54,000 by 2010. These funds supported the building and equipping of a Special Needs centre and a rainwater-harvesting project. Cholsey villagers have visited Kodumela to see the effects of this sustainable development work. Cholsey Primary School is linked to Mamokaile School in Kodumela, an opportunity to learn about each other's cultures.



East Hendred Entertains

East Hendred Entertains was formed in 2008 by four people keen to bring the community together through local events. They opened a Thrift Shop one afternoon a week in a tin hut lent by the Church to raise funds to plough back into the community, via clubs, societies, churches, schools and social events. EHE has entered Village of the Year, twice winning in the District, enabling them to purchase a Donnington painting of the village and nativity figurines. They have fundraised to clean the war memorial and created a monthly newsletter, called the Hoot, to keep the community informed.

Horton-cum-Studley - The Otmoor Challenge

Colonel Shephard moved to the village in 1978. On joining the playing field committee, he suggested working with the army to organise a fund raising half marathon round Otmoor. The Army supplied equipment and manpower, but withdrew its support after several years owing to increasing commitments. A few villagers wished to continue and the Otmoor Challenge Association was formed. This annual Challenge draws runners from across the country to run or walk the course, which starts and finishes on the playing field where a fete is held and the WI serve excellent refreshments. Many thousands of pounds have been raised for a wide



Local Events: Combining Entertainment with Fundraising

range of charities including the village church, Millennium Hall, Almshouses and village clubs. The event is a wonderful opportunity for the whole village to come together and work towards a most successful day.

Islip - Dr South's School Tercentenary Celebrations

Dr Robert South, Rector of Islip, founded the village school in 1710. During 2010 there has been a cross-curricular focus on the 18th century, in the classroom and through local visits. Traditional May Day celebrations included a reunion of all surviving school May Queens, 18th-century music and dance, and the traditional maypole dancing and crowning of the new May Queen. The anniversary year will culminate in a village-wide event in July, including a Village Trail (organised by the village Archive Group), traditional music and dancing, displays of local crafts, a play based on the life of Dr South performed by pupils, and a village dance and hog roast. The 300th birthday celebrations are a wonderful opportunity for the community to join together in an exciting village-wide project.

Stanford in the Vale Village Thrift Shop

Launched in the year 2000 to raise funds towards a community hall, this project rewards both sellers and buyers. It is housed in what was a very tall single story United Reform Chapel; the building now has two stories with the chapel upstairs and a Millennium Hall downstairs with kitchen and toilet. The Thrift shop meets on the last Saturday of the month and is a drop-in centre providing free beverages and biscuits. A percentage of sales contribute to repaying the loan for the building's conversion and to assist with running costs. The venture helps anyone in need whenever possible.

Sydenham and its Fayre

Sydenham Fayre has been held on the first Saturday of June for as long as anyone can remember, providing traditional attractions and amusements for residents and neighbouring villagers, while raising money for local good causes. Pictures exist of its predecessor, the village club day, which used to be held in the village in June, and included a band parade from the vicarage to the village clubhouse at the Four Horseshoes pub. This was apparently followed by a feast, all in aid of the club, which supported those villagers who were ill or unable to work – long before the welfare state!



Local Events: Combining Entertainment with Fundraising

Woodcote Windmill Sales

Woodcote has been running recycling sales for children's nearly new toys, games and nursery equipment for the past 20 years. Held quarterly, vendors contribute outgrown or unwanted items, receiving 75% of the price asked and 25% is used to help a cause or organisation within Woodcote. Almost £50,000 has been given to the village and support offered to a wide spectrum of organisations. Special projects have included funding a Youth Worker, setting up and paying for the administration of the Citizen's Advice Bureau and provision of a Welcome Pack, full of helpful information given to all new residents to Woodcote.



Charlbury Street Fair



Local Shops

Village shops and post offices are an important part of village life and vital ingredients in sustaining rural communities. Not only do they allow residents to purchase supplies and access banking and postal services without having to travel outside the village, they are also great places to share information, meet with friends and neighbours and catch up on village issues. A wide cross section of the community can benefit from these services – local businesses; people working from home; carers and parents; elderly people; young people; and all of us when weather conditions prevent us from leaving the village!

Whilst over 160 village shops and post offices still survive in rural Oxfordshire, their existence continues to be threatened by a variety of factors. Where the loss of service does occur, several communities have taken on the task of owning and running their own local shop, determined to do something positive to safeguard this vital amenity.

Appleton Community Shop

Formed in May 2000 and replacing the privately owned shop, Appleton's Community Shop has become a focal point of the community. It is where people meet – children shop for their sweets and learn to understand the use of money while older people meet to talk. Oh yes ... and villagers shop too – luckily increasingly so. The 2010 snow proved how vital the shop can be in offering basic provisions! Without the Community Shop the community would be less of a cohesive unit – and our thanks to ORCC for their support over the years.



Café De La Post, Chadlington

Small businesses face closure when the Post Office cancels their franchise. After consultation with staff and residents, this particular business has a new lease of life as Café de la Post. Soups, snacks and pastries are available along with a wide variety of excellent teas, coffees and chocolates to compliment the continued provision of newspapers, bread, groceries, dry cleaning and local produce. Off-sales alcoholic drinks were supplemented by wine tastings that proved so successful that an off-licence has recently been granted. Café culture is now available in the Cotswolds to residents and visitors alike!



Local Shops

Chadlington Quality Foods

Chadlington Quality Foods was formed in 2001 to prevent the closure of our Village Shop. Funds were raised from the sale of shares to local residents, and a committee purchased the shop on behalf of the village, with support from ORCC and ViRSA. This flourishing shop provides an extensive range of home cooking, delicatessen goods, cheeses and fresh produce alongside every-day groceries. It provides employment for eight local people and has generously funded new apparatus for Chadlington children's playground. It won the 2009 Countryside Alliance award for 'Best Village Shop' for the South of England.



Deddington Farmers' Market

This market was revived in 2002 (the first since the 1820s) to help local farmers in the wake of Foot and Mouth. With 60 approved stallholders and a satellite market in the church, it attracts around 4000 shoppers monthly. It is Oxfordshire's first FARMA (National Farmers' Retail and Market Association) certified Farmers' Market and has also received national recognition. Run by volunteers as a non-profit organisation, surplus funds support local activities. Market day is a high social point in each month, bringing a special atmosphere, new visitors, and benefits to local businesses. The market has saved food miles, provided environmentally friendly shopping bags, and provided a base for other community events.

East Hagbourne Community Shop

Like many communities, East Hagbourne has seen shops and services dwindle over the years; the last commercial shop closed its doors in 2001, leaving the local Post Office without a home. An enthusiastic group of villagers got together to rent a room and open a community shop and post office. The shop provides a valuable village amenity, offering a surprising range of products in a rather small area, including food, sweets, ice cream, stationery, greeting cards, a laundry service and of course the Post Office, which survived the recent cuts. It offers quality and value, and is entirely self-supporting. All this is thanks to the volunteers who run the shop as a service and meeting place for our community.



Local Shops

Adams Stores, Enstone

In August 1997, Will and Hazell Taylor arrived in Enstone to take over the Post Office. In December 1998, they took over the local shop, moving the Post Office with them. From the very beginning they entered into the life of the community. They have introduced many new services of benefit to their customers and have always been willing to help out when needed. The shop has become the hub of the parish; villagers can shop, browse the notices and even the odd petition, exchange news with friends, and even sit and drink coffee!

Ewelme Village Store

Ewelme Village Store, located centrally near the Village Hall and opposite the King's Pool, opened in May 2009. This not-for-profit community initiative is run and operated by a paid manager and local volunteers. It is open every day, selling fresh local produce, wherever possible, together with a range of basic, competitively priced foodstuffs and hot and cold drinks, as well as bacon rolls and home made cakes, served in the tea room or outside in the courtyard. The manager and volunteers were delighted to be judged the winner of ORCC's 2009 Community Shop of the Year competition and were complimented on their 'bright, clean, fresh looking store'.



Great Rollright Village Market

The shop was the heart of village life so everyone was very disappointed when Government policy closed the Post Office and the shop was no longer viable. The pub had been derelict for more than twenty years, so there was no longer a village centre. Villagers devised a plan for meeting each other at a monthly village market. This has been a great success; traders and shoppers come from around the area and it has become like a covered farmers' market. It sells food, books, hand-made greetings cards, silk flowers and much more. Good has come out of bad but we sorely miss our shop and Post Office.



Local Shops

Islip Village Shop

Set up in 2001, after the closure of the last commercial shop in the village, the Community Shop has become a lynchpin of village life. Run entirely by volunteers and managed by Maralynn Smith, a percentage of profits is donated to community organisations. As well as selling supermarket staples (it stocks more than 400 lines), the shop stocks a huge range of local produce (meat, bread, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables, cards, gifts and souvenirs) and is always looking for new suppliers. It also offers postal services, dry cleaning and photocopying. There is a free delivery service for villagers who are unable to get to the shop.

Little Milton

The most remarkable achievement in Little Milton is the Community Shop and Post Office. In 2000 the Post Office was closed by Royal Mail but was resurrected in a room of a private house, remaining there until September 2009. The village, through the help of ORCC, set up an Industrial and Provident Society and now has a thriving Community Shop and Post Office in a new building attached to the Village Hall. The village of Little Milton has shown that sustaining a small community is possible through the vision and energy of its residents.

Radley Village Shop

This is a well-run, well-stocked village shop that looks after the needs of its community. From the start it has received the help and support of the ORCC's Village Shops Development Worker and she continues to help the Management Committee. Local village organisations have asked the Parish Council to nominate the shop as a significant contribution to the quality of community life in Radley. It won third place in the Community-owned category of the Oxfordshire Village Shop of the Year 2009 competition organised by the ORCC, only two years after it opened. Plans for the future include the purchase of the freehold of the building.





Local Shops

Wootton Community Shop Association - Customer Mailing Service

We provide a DIY mailing service by being both a retailer of stamps and having a business user account with Royal Mail. The latter allows us to have on-site collection and to process special services such as Recorded Delivery and Special Delivery via Royal Mail register books.

Selling stamps is both an important service to customers and a vital source of gross profit to offset the cost of daily on-site mail collection. While the margin on stamps varies by type, a typical sales mix will not normally yield much more than 5%, so to cover Royal Mail's annual £500 collection cost takes around £10,000 worth of stamp sales. Minimum equipment requirement comprises appropriate weight scales, an approved letter format template, domestic and international Royal Mail tariffs, stamps retailing folder, secure on-site postbox, plus Royal Mail stationery.

The service must be designated customer self-service because, unlike official Post Offices, we cannot be agents or representatives of Royal Mail. However, this is not a major issue in our small rural community, where most customers are local and support the community shop ethic.

Support from ORCC

Our Village Shops Development Worker provides a support service for rural shopkeepers running independent businesses and for the management committees and staff of community-owned shops. The service includes advice on business development, regular fact sheets and newsletters and information about grants and other help to improve shop facilities.

Villages that have lost their shop are helped to explore options such as community-run enterprises. Volunteers already involved in running community shops are provided with regular opportunities to meet up with one another to share their experiences.



Drop Ins and Lunch Clubs

Another example of a successful combination of mutually supportive aims and outcomes is the many manifestations of socialising over coffee, lunch or other food-related occasions. These include lunch clubs with a set membership, which are usually targeted at older people. There is an increasing number of 'drop-ins' where it is 'open house' for anyone of any age who wants to join in, either regularly or on an occasional basis. While lunch clubs and drop-ins appear to focus on the provision of a low-cost good quality meal or snack and a drink, they are just as important for offering opportunities to meet people and benefit from social interaction. Drop-ins are a helpful way of providing such opportunities without requiring membership of a particular organisation or club. This is becoming increasingly important, as opportunities to 'bump into' other people at the shop, the Post Office, the pub and in the street have become scarcer in our mobile society with diminishing locally-based services.

Clanfield Drop-in for Lunch

In 2004, the Anglican and Methodist churches discussed how to engage people in community life. In January 2005, supported by a start up donation of £500 from a local benefactor, the Monday 'drop-in' lunches began, serving home-made soup, rolls and butter, tea, coffee and biscuits free of charge with good company, friendship and the opportunity to catch up on village news. The first luncheon attracted two visitors and six helpers; there are now 60 'regulars' with an average weekly attendance of 20 or 30 including mums and babies, children and teachers from our local primary school, and folk of all ages through to 90 years plus. The team of soup makers and other willing helpers make all this possible and weekly donations from appreciative diners support local charities.

East Hendred - The Downs Golden Age Club

This lively club was founded in 1966 and currently has 70 members aged 55 plus. A modest annual subscription covers monthly meetings with a variety of speakers, six summertime teas, four wintertime lunches, a Summer Luncheon with guests, and a Christmas lunch with Father Christmas and St Amand's School choir leading the carols. Funds raised from three Bridge Drives subsidise several extra events during the year, including coach trips to the seaside, theatre, and river cruises. Extra monies have even allowed donations to other needy village organisations. The most important aspect is that we all have fun!



Drop Ins and Lunch Clubs

The Dorchester-on-Thames Lunch Club

Since 1977, the Lunch Club has provided meals for village pensioners who live alone. It started in the Dorchester Abbey Guest House with twelve 'customers' who paid 50 pence each. The Club later moved to the Village Hall and now over 35 people attend, paying £3 for a two course home-cooked meal followed by tea or coffee with chocolates. Catering is done by three teams in rotation, each team consisting of a 'meat lady', a 'veggie lady' and a 'pudding lady'. Two volunteer car drivers collect members who require transport. The Lunch Club provides a social meeting place as well as excellent meals on Wednesdays from October through to the end of March.



Hampton Poyle - The Saturday Club

When the pub closed it looked as if this hamlet of just 50 homes would become little more than a cluster of commuter occupied houses without community spirit. However, everyone was determined this would not happen, so each Saturday evening someone, a different volunteer each week, would open their home for the 'Saturday Club'. The only criterion for membership was to bring a bottle, alcoholic or otherwise. The club worked well for two and a half years; then a local businessman converted the derelict pub into a thriving gastro-pub with a village bar. But without the 'Saturday Club' the community spirit of the village would have been lost; they continue to meet in the pub each Saturday.

Coffee Time in Long Hanborough

Frail, confused, lonely and housebound in Hanborough? Not on a Wednesday when there is fun, music and chat at the Hanborough Day Centre while enjoying a delicious meal. No wonder Social Services arrange transport and provide a grant - the atmosphere in the Recreation Hall is buoyant and energising. Helpers keep age at bay providing coffee, activities and companionship here. On Tuesdays there is coffee and cake at Christ Church, or refreshments and speakers at Evergreens. Home-cooked lunch is served twice a month at



Drop Ins and Lunch Clubs

Christ Church on Wednesdays and mums and toddlers enjoy the coffee shop at the Methodist Church Welcome Room on Fridays. And in between, look out for the other coffee mornings, get-togethers and sales in halls or homes in Hanborough, a long village linked with many activity groups.

Yarnton Lunch Club

Yarnton Lunch Club makes a significant contribution to the quality of community life, its continued success due in particular to the dedication of Mrs Brenda Louch and her team of cheerful volunteer cooks, helpers and drivers. They purchase the ingredients and cook a wholesome meal of main course, sweet and tea or coffee for about 30 diners for the price of £3, and also include a raffle for the diners' entertainment. This all takes place on a Wednesday in Yarnton Village Hall, giving participants a wonderful opportunity to meet with friends and make new ones, talk, have a good laugh and enjoy a good meal.





Local Affordable Housing

Rural Housing Enablers, part of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership, have been working at ORCC since 2003, helping to provide over 250 new affordable homes across rural Oxfordshire. Because priority is given to those in housing need with a local connection, we have helped 250 individuals and families to stay in or return to the communities they want to live in. Parish Councils will tell you that providing new affordable housing is not a quick or smooth journey but hopefully they all agree that it is definitely worthwhile. These residents certainly do!

“We all know each other. Most of us have grown up together. We are a close community through friendships”.

“The boys will be the 13th generation to live in this village. They enjoy the sense of belonging”.

“Decent housing helps to give people a sense of dignity and pride. We feel very lucky”.

Crays Pond

Eight affordable homes were completed in an expensive corner of South Oxfordshire in early 2006, through close partnership working and the gracious donation of land. This mix of one, two and three bedroom houses for rent and shared ownership aims to help halt the exodus of local people forced to move outside the area by escalating house prices and rents. Funding for the homes, all of which are occupied by families with strong local connections to the area, was provided by the (then) Housing Corporation and Sovereign Housing Group. Dorothy Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing, said at the official opening of the scheme in August 2006, *“The Council is committed to providing affordable housing across South Oxfordshire. These properties are a wonderful example of how hard the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership has worked to design a scheme that is not only beneficial to the local community but is aesthetically pleasing as well”.*

Great Milton

Eight new, much needed affordable homes were built on the site of former sheltered accommodation. By agreement between members of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership and the Parish Council, priority was given to applicants with a local connection. Great Milton is a





Local Affordable Housing

Conservation Area, so the architects took extra care with the appearance of the properties, incorporating features such as timber window frames and stonewalls, not normally associated with affordable housing. The demolition of the old building had to be postponed for several months because of roosting bats! Bat boxes have been built in to the new gables so that, having been temporarily relocated under license from Natural England, the bats have the chance to return to their former home. Opening the scheme in summer 2009, John Howell, MP, said, *“This kind and size of village IS rural South Oxfordshire. It’s marvellous to see new affordable housing bringing life into sustaining our area”*.

Shrivenham

The fourteen new affordable homes for local people in housing need in Shrivenham were the first to be built (by the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership) on land owned by the Oxford Diocese. The Bishop of Reading gave a stirring address at the official opening of the scheme, noting that *“(We need)*

affordable houses for local people so that people growing up in the communities where their families are, where their friends are, very often where their jobs are, can afford to carry on living in what is their own community”.

Colin Holman, Chairman of Shrivenham Parish Council, added, *“It has taken us ten years and seemingly endless meetings, but when someone says that this is not only a wonderful place to live but they already know most of the people that live here, it brings the term*

‘local connection’ to life and makes all the hard work and troubled waters that we had to sail through to get here, worthwhile. We are already starting to think about the next scheme”.

Shrivenham Parish Council is considering the wording of a survey specifically designed to collect information about the housing needs of older people in response to a potential need identified in their recently completed Community Plan.





Local Affordable Housing

Stonesfield

Stonesfield Community Trust was registered as a charity in 1983 by three friends concerned about the narrowing influence that the property market was having on the age-range and social and economic diversity of the village population. Endowed with a quarter acre of land and raising all costs from bank loans, gifts, donations and private loans from ethical investors, three two-bedroom houses and three flats were built. The Trust was the first group in the area to build affordable housing in a rural community. In 1993 the Trust built another five houses. Today, all loans have been paid off and the Trust now owns fourteen homes, let at 40% below market value to people on normal working incomes who would otherwise be forced to move out of the community.

Watlington

Watlington residents packed the Town Hall for the 2002 Annual Parish Meeting launching 'Suggestions for a Better Watlington', a Parish Plan exercise. Affordable housing was the top suggestion; five years later 18 new homes were occupied, 17 by people with local connections. SODC helped the Parish Council with the choice of both Sovereign Housing and the actual 'exception site', after confidential discussions about sites on the edge of the town. The local knowledge and concerns of neighbours, who were involved once the site was chosen, were significant in the development. Traffic calming proved essential. It would have been helpful for potential occupants to have clear information about prices, shared ownership and renting earlier in the process.

Support from ORCC

Our Rural Housing Enablers work with parish councils and other local groups to promote affordable housing schemes: usually small schemes on 'exception sites', where special rules mean that houses will always be given to people with a local connection. We help with housing need surveys, finding possible sites for new affordable housing, linking with planning officers and generally 'troubleshooting' when there are any hold-ups in the process.



Learning and Culture

A major thrust of ORCC's work in its early days was to enable members of rural communities (then truly 'cultural deserts') to experience the stimulation offered by a programme of talks and arts events. The aim was to inspire them to go on to organise their own amateur music and drama activities, with ORCC and its offices in Oxford acting as a hub of learning and good practice. This aim was successfully achieved and Oxfordshire became alive with active local groups. Nowadays ORCC's support is mainly through our work to help community hall committees to provide the best possible local venues for cultural activities and events.

The Baldon Players

This current incarnation of treading the (local) boards was established in about 2000. The Players have a number of regular members drawn from the Baldons villages and Nuneham Courtenay (with a few from further afield). The age range is from eight to eighty (actually a little older!). They all share a desire to get up on stage to give themselves, and the local community, a few evenings of enjoyable and sometimes thought-provoking entertainment. They aim to produce two plays or musicals a year and they always get excellent reviews – if only in the Parish Newsletter! Nuneham Courtenay Village Hall provides a good flexible space, with a stage, and the Village Hall Committee are tolerant of the group's activities.

Great Coxwell Arts Celebration

For over six years Great Coxwell villagers have organised a two-weekend celebration of the arts with around fourteen artists showing their work in six different venues. A trail map of the village shows visitors the location of the venues. There is a café in the Reading Room serving lunches and teas, as well as plant and book sales. There are classical and rock concerts in the evening. There is also an art workshop for the village children.

Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor

In early 2009, the village agreed to help a local author turn his screenplay into a feature film on a shoestring budget. For six hectic summer weeks, villagers fed and housed cast and crew while others performed in minor roles or as extras. Behind the scenes volunteers provided project and financial management, transport, hair and make-up, props and costumes and help with providing locations. Local business support included use of the 'Wagon and Horses' for several scenes, and the Village Fete and Kingston House were central to the action. In December 2009, more than 300 villagers, cast and crew attended a preview of this romantic comedy, 'Tortoise in Love', before its global promotion.



Local Sustainability

Sustainability and sustainable development; these ideas have been a growing part of society's discourse since the Earth Summit in 1992. Environmental awareness has strengthened too, driven by an ever-hardening and growing scientific consensus that carbon emissions from human activities are a key cause of global warming. Community action brings the environmental and the sustainable together, with Oxfordshire leading the way towards a locally rooted and low-carbon future. Swap shops, 'buy local' guides, Transition Towns, energy reduction clinics, alternative energy schemes, community orchards... the sheer range of community-led initiatives is impressive and inspiring - truly sustainable development in action.

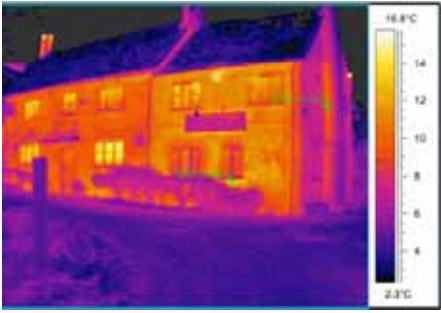
Sustainable Blewbury

Since 1993, the Blewbury Village Society Environment Group has been active in the study and conservation of local natural habitats, amenity spaces and village fabric. In 2010 they evolved into Sustainable Blewbury and became part of a growing movement of communities in Oxfordshire (together with thousands of other transition movements around the world) who are taking actions aimed at using less fossil fuel and encouraging a lower carbon way of living. They are taking forward their ideas under five themes: energy; travel and transport; food and farming; waste and recycling; natural environment and heritage.

The Dorchester Carbon Project

The Dorchester Carbon Project (DCP) has no formal membership and anyone in the village can participate and propose projects. Its work is firmly rooted in the community; for example, last December a free calendar was delivered to all households listing community events, and giving advice on reducing waste and improving energy efficiency. This summer they are raising funds for the school eco-garden by holding a village fete. Dorchester was selected as one of six national 'Towards Zero Waste Places',





Local Sustainability

funded by DEFRA, as a result of the DCP's waste reduction initiatives. It was also selected as one of the Energy Saving Trust's 'Green Communities'.

Faringdon's Eco-week

In June 2008, Faringdon's Eco-week began with a Swap Shop, an Eco-fair and Eco-veg (allotments). During the week there were Eco-talks by celebrity speakers, an Eco-tour around energy-from-waste facilities in Swindon, Eco-open days at Friar's Court and Venn Mill, a screening of the film 'An Inconvenient Truth', an Eco-trail, and a bird and farm walk. On Midsummer Day, the Eco-bikes set off round the fourteen local organic farms, stopping off for Eco-butties and finishing at Eco-wind, Westmill Farm Open Day, where more than 3000 people broke the wind-turbine hugging world record. The week was organised by the Ecumenical Justice and Peace Group and supported by local organisations and the people of Faringdon and surrounding villages.



Support from ORCC

Our Community Development Worker (Climate Change) works with ClimateXchange to encourage more local groups to take action to improve their community's carbon footprint, and to help meet the challenge of climate change and to conserve resources.



Local History

Having worked hard to stimulate and support good governance, initiative, self-help and self-expression in rural communities so that they could create a more stimulating and vibrant 'present' for themselves, ORCC went on to encourage communities to have an interest in their past. The Oxfordshire Local History Association was set up in the 1980s to bring together and support the growing number of local history groups around the county. A lively interest in learning about and celebrating features of their community's history is still stimulating groups and initiatives in most of our villages and towns; here are a few examples.

Ramsden

In 1997, Ramsden Parish Council asked villagers how they wished to mark the Millennium; one proposal suggested investigating village history. The Ramsden Parish Domesday Project was formed as a Parish Council sub-committee. After obtaining information and guidance from various bodies including ORCC, they obtained a £5000 grant from the 'Awards for All' Millennium Fund to put on '20 Centuries, XX Lives', an exhibition that ran for 10 days in June 2000, attracting over 1000 visitors. The next project was to produce a Domesday Book in 2003, tracing the history of every house in the Parish; residents answered questionnaires, lent their deeds and provided photographs. The final project will be to publish a history of the village in 2010/2011.



Shrivenham Heritage Centre

Bits and pieces of archive material had been stored in various places over many years until a dedicated band of volunteers retrieved them and, with the assistance of the Parish Council, found them a permanent home. Professor Richard Holmes opened the Shrivenham Heritage Centre in the Memorial Hall in 2009. The aim of the centre is to collect, archive and display documents, artefacts and images relating to Shrivenham and the surrounding area as well as to organise a programme of lectures and to encourage the study of local history.



Local History

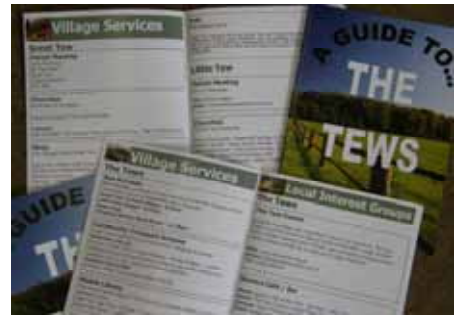
Uffington - Tom Brown's School Museum

This small museum, originally built in 1617 as a schoolroom for '12 worthy boys', is a Grade II listed building. It is described in the opening chapters of Thomas Hughes' book 'Tom Brown's School Days'. The village is fortunate in having a showcase to promote the understanding of Uffington's local history and heritage, achieved by collecting, recording and conserving a range of material. The Museum organises exhibitions, participates in community events and makes material available for study and research. Run by volunteers, the Museum is entirely self-sufficient and offers free entry to visitors.



Wroxton's Guide Post

One of Wroxton's treasures is a beautifully crafted ironstone Guide Post or Pillar of national significance. Built in 1686, this is one of the earliest waymarkers, indicating the ancient salt way to London from Wales used by salt merchants. As part of its ongoing conservation programme the Wroxton and Balscote Parish Council recently cleaned and refurbished the Guide Post; it now looks in good shape, ready to face a world very different from that of its builder.



Communications

Well-pinned notice boards, catch-ups in the village shop, and e-bulletins are just some of the ways villages across Oxfordshire spread the word about what's happening in the local community. Word of mouth can be one of the most cost effective ways of letting people know what's going on while websites and e-mails have enabled local information to freely reach a global audience. The efforts of volunteers and local donations mean that many villages are able to offer free newsletters, open days, welcome packs and information to every household in the village, especially useful for those who have not yet ventured into the virtual world offered by the internet or are not able to make that daily trip to a village shop.

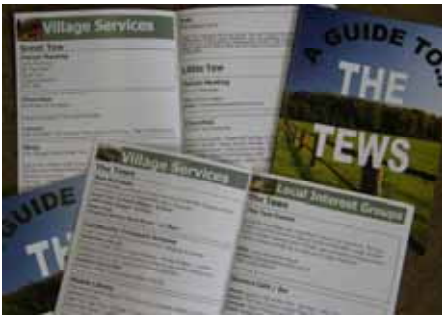
The Claydon and Clattercote Courier

A team of ten villagers publishes this independent monthly village newsletter, which was launched in 2007. Many other villagers provide ideas and content for the publication. *The Courier* provides truly local news and is delivered through every door in the Parish. It is funded by local business sponsors and the proceeds of village events run by the Courier team. Hard copies are printed in black and white. A full colour version is available on the village website and has attracted comments from as far away as the USA and Australia!

Crawley E-mail Group

Parish Councils deal with many day-to-day issues that affect residents, but how are residents to become engaged in these matters? An increasing number of households are now online, and in Crawley there is a growing database of residents wishing to be kept informed of Parish Council matters by e-mail. The Clerk can communicate more easily with Councillors on the wide variety of information sent to the Council. It is also a great way to keep residents informed of issues that might impact on village life, which proved very useful in the recent floods. Specific individuals or groups can be kept informed, and their opinions sought, about matters that directly affect them.

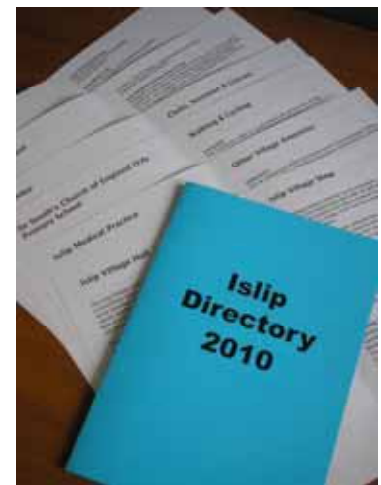




Communications

Islip Directory 2010

For many years Islip Parish Council produced a list of useful contacts for newcomers to the village. In 2010 they decided to produce a proper booklet, to be delivered to every house in the village and given to all new residents as part of a welcome pack. The directory includes information about village history, a calendar of annual events, and lists of businesses, organisations, amenities, clubs and societies. It was produced with input from across the community: every household was consulted, and every entry was sent to the appropriate person for approval before going to press. A new edition will be published every 2–3 years.



Launton Lines

Following a Village Appraisal back in the mid 1990s, a village magazine was started which continues to thrive to this day, attracting both advertisers and regular contributions from residents. *The Lines* is delivered free to every household by volunteers and has reported on all key village events for over 15 years, engendering community spirit by keeping residents aware of happenings and giving them a voice. Special praise is due to Mrs Pat Tucker and Bryan Mooney who have, for many years, been the driving force behind *The Lines*'

Sydenham Information Kiosk

The information in the Kiosk covers village history, including such items as 'The proximity of Sydenham to the Icknield Way had disastrous consequences in 1065 when northern rebels devastated it with other villages between Wallingford and Bledlow...' as well as a map of the bridleways and footpaths. There are also contact details of most of the village organisations, including Sydenham Cricket Club, St Mary's Church, The Old School Room, Ladybird Pre-School, Munday's Charity, The Parish Council and Sydenham Women's Institute.

Support from ORCC

We maintain a directory of village newsletter editors and provide them with regular mailings of useful information for onward transmission to local readers.



Sport and Recreation

The wide diversity of sports facilities in the county reflects the interests of the local community, with an obvious emphasis on traditional sports. Many Oxfordshire villages boast a range of other sporting and recreational opportunities for young and old alike to enjoy and practise. Blewbury, for instance, has a thriving croquet club; the traditional French pastime of boules is played at Aston Tirrold; and archery, both indoors and outdoors, is regularly enjoyed at Bampton. The essential role sport plays in creating good communities has never been overlooked in rural Oxfordshire as the following examples clearly illustrate.

Buckland Swimming Pool

An open-air swimming pool was built in the 1960s, a place where people could mix and mingle and enjoy village life. It was heated and enclosed within a building with changing rooms in the 1970s. The pool has always been self-supporting and run by volunteers with huge support from the community for fundraising swimming events. Last year the Swimathon was reinstated and, along with fun swims, raised money towards the pool roof. The pool is open to everyone and is used by Buckland School, toddler groups, swimming classes and a venue for children's swimming parties, a wonderful facility for everyone in the village.

Chadlington Sports and Social Club

Since 1912, the Club has been at the heart of village life, offering adult football, cricket, darts, dominoes and Aunt Sally. More recently the Committee has worked tirelessly to expand the range of sporting and social activities offered. Most importantly, a successful junior section has been developed; there are now around 75 juniors playing in competitive and friendly football and cricket games, with weekly coaching sessions run by volunteer, qualified coaches from the village. In 2009 the Club was awarded an FA Charter and ECB Clubmark status. The social side of the Club has also become much more active with regular village events for all the community.

Chipping Norton Lido

The Lido is Chipping Norton's 'day at the seaside', testament to the independent spirit for which the town is renowned. Built in 1970, following seven years of public fundraising, the pool has been run as a charity by local people since 2004. The Lido, a 'pool with a social conscience', plays a central role in the social, sporting and recreational life of the town and surrounding villages, and attracts visitors from further afield. In 2009 trustees and supporters



Sport and Recreation

raised funds to replace elderly equipment with renewable energy technology, reducing costs and carbon emissions. The Lido is recognised nationally as a model of community ownership of public assets and provides advice to other pools whose future is threatened.



East and West Hendred Cricket Club

First formed in 1862, the club has used Mill Lane Sports Ground since 1924, when the land was effectively donated to the village. The ground and facilities have been steadily developed, particularly since 1978. A new pavilion was built, complete with a well-appointed social area. The cricket 'square' is recognised as one of the best in the county. In recent years, the club hosted trial matches for the Oxfordshire Under 16s and 17s. The first adult county match was played there in 2009, when Oxfordshire Women played Gloucestershire Women. There is a flourishing youth section, with evening and weekend matches and practice sessions for about 80 children, run by senior club members with appropriate clearance and training.

North Leigh Football Club

One of the founding members of the Witney and District Football Leagues, North Leigh Football Club celebrated its centenary in 2008-2009. Now based at Eynsham Park, along with the Cricket Club, they moved up into the Hellenic League in 1990 and started additional teams for men, boys and girls, no mean feat for a village of fewer than 2000 people. Today the club has nine teams and an excellent enclosed ground with floodlights, spectator stands and modern dressing rooms together with a second pitch and clubhouse. In providing sporting opportunity for all ages the club is recognised as a force for good in the local community.



Sport and Recreation

Otmoor Riding Group

Otmoor Riding Group (ORGanise) was formed in 2004 by local riders in Horton-cum-Studley because of concerns about the quality and safety of local off-road riding. This British Horse Society-affiliated voluntary group of riders from several Otmoor villages works in co-operation with local landowners and other relevant parties to improve local bridleways. They help to clear bridleways and have obtained grants for small-scale improvements to gates and surfaces. Members also have interests in wider issues, such as road safety and combating the local ragwort problem. They also hold horse-centred and social activities, including riding clinics, educational talks, quizzes and barbecues.

Sonning Common Green Gym

This innovative scheme inspires people to improve both their health and the natural environment. Based on a concept by Dr. William Bird from the Sonning Common Health Centre, the first group was set up in Sonning Common in 1998. There are now over 100 Green Gyms throughout the UK and three in Australia, with many more being planned. The half-day work sessions include practical conservation activities



such as hedge-laying, tree-planting, fence-building, scrub clearance and pond work. Independent evaluation by Oxford Brookes University's Healthcare Research Department shows that participating in Green Gyms improves strength and stamina, and some activities can burn more calories than a step aerobics class. There are also benefits for mental health and self-confidence through learning new skills. And above all the Green Gym is great fun!

Support from ORCC

The ORCC supports community efforts to provide outdoor sport and play facilities for all ages by providing its partner organisation, the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association (OPFA), which is a separate charity, with low-cost accommodation and staff time to deal with management and administration. This enables OPFA to provide its specialist information and advice service to local organisations cost-effectively and with the benefit of close liaison with ORCC staff working in the same communities.



Community Transport

There are a staggering 68 community transport schemes in Oxfordshire. It is thanks to these schemes that many people in rural communities who cannot use or do not have access to conventional public and private transport are able to access essential services. The truly remarkable aspect of the various community transport schemes is the number of volunteers that run them. Over 60 of the schemes are run either completely or mostly by local volunteers. The following examples illustrate the work involved in running a community transport scheme and the benefits they provide to numerous, isolated people in both rural and urban Oxfordshire.



Courtesy of The Henley Standard

Watlington

The Watlington Voluntary Drivers (WVDs) is a new voluntary car scheme set up in 2010. The WVDs is a perfect example of how Community Led Planning can bring change for the better. In 'Watlington Speaks', a Community Led Plan questionnaire, access to services such as getting to hospital appointments, to the dentist and even to the shops was identified as difficult for a number of residents, and especially for older people. This finding, among others, was fed back to the community, with a hope that some individual or group would take up the challenge. And someone did! In fact four individuals came together in December and began planning the WVDs. The eight volunteer drivers are already receiving calls from the community for lifts to an osteopath and to the Churchill Hospital.

Wantage - Independent Advice Centre (IAC)

The IAC transport scheme was founded in 1971; some 30 years later, there are 40 volunteer drivers, transporting over 5000 people more than 76,000 miles a year. A typical week will include drives to Oxford hospitals, local GP surgeries, shopping and even bringing clients to the IAC! Care homes such as St Katharine's and the new retirement village at Letcombe Regis provide a steady stream of appreciative clients as well as those who, through illness or other circumstances, can no longer cope with driving or public transport. The drivers are so much more than just a means of transport; they are a source of human contact, a friendly face getting to know regular clients, helping to relieve the isolation that can often be felt by people in rural communities who don't have transport. Of course, more volunteer drivers are always welcome!



Community Transport

Witney - Volunteer Link-up (VLU)

The VLU, based in Witney, run a well-used car scheme with volunteer drivers in most of West Oxfordshire. The scheme has been running for nearly 30 years and is a great success. However, in 2009 VLU identified an unmet need in the Chipping Norton area, where there were no volunteer drivers. They employed a worker to be based in Chipping Norton for 1½ days a week to drum up volunteers and publicise a new befriending group. Several months on and the effects have been very positive; VLU has recruited a good number of volunteers and connected with the individuals that have been isolated and lonely in Chipping Norton. The positive work continues so watch this space.



Faringdon Community Bus Ltd (FCB)

Faringdon is a market town with a difference and FCB is the difference! The community bus, which runs a scheduled service within Faringdon and Great Coxwell every weekday morning, has helped many of the residents who need to access basic services, for example, shops, banks, GPs etc. FCB was initiated in 2001 and has been going strong ever since; they have just successfully obtained funding for a new bus. The community bus scheme is run completely by local volunteers, who all passed their Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training in 2009, under the watchful eye of ORCC's Disability Transport Adviser/Trainer.

Yarnton Care Committee Car Scheme

The car scheme offers transport to hospital and doctor appointments for residents in Yarnton who don't have any other means of transport. The scheme, which also holds lunch clubs and good neighbourliness activities, has been running since the early 1970s and is co-ordinated by Mrs Judith Mitchell. Similar to the schemes above, Mrs Mitchell relies on volunteers from the community to continue to carry out the good work. The care scheme is highly regarded and has really helped older, isolated individuals to continue to live independently.

Goring & District Voluntary Car Scheme

Ken Tollet, the main coordinator for this scheme has taken a 'day in the life of...' approach to describe the sometimes difficult tasks of running a car scheme.



Community Transport

“It was a typical morning at the Transport Office in the Community Centre: clients telephoning for help to get to medical appointments, the Controller taking the calls and organising drivers to accommodate the request. On this particular occasion, a request was received to take two elderly, marginally infirm people (husband and wife) to the Royal Berks Hospital in Reading on a due date. Then a sequence of events kicked in! The controller telephoned Mary who was out. Details of the task were left on the answerphone. At close of business, and no response from Mary, Bill was contacted to see if he could help. He could, hence client informed.

On the due date, Bill arrived at the client’s home and got no reply. He telephoned using his mobile and, although he could hear the phone ringing out, still no response from within. He reasoned that a spare key might be held by a neighbour (he was quite concerned at this stage for the clients’ safety). The neighbour did have a key and they entered the house together, expecting the worst. Thankfully they found everything in order, but no inhabitants! Bill reported back to the Centre; Mary had taken the answerphone message as an instruction, and had failed to confirm to the Controller that she would fulfil the task, and had in fact collected the clients minutes before Bill arrived.

So, full marks to Bill for his concern and initiative in establishing that the couple were not at home and not in some sort of difficulty and marks also to Mary for her driving effort, successfully completed. This is just a small example of a day in the life of a voluntary transport organisation! .

Support from ORCC

ORCC has a team of 3 staff working on transport. The Community Transport Adviser helps local people to set up and manage community transport schemes and to carry out transport needs surveys, which help local authorities and bus operators to better understand what is needed. The Disability Transport Adviser/Trainer provides accredited training for local voluntary sector organisations running community transport services for local people including people with mobility impairments. The Community Transport and Accessibility Officer engages in strategic development work with policy makers and transport and other service providers above the community level, including promotion and facilitation of partnership working and advocating new approaches.

The team also keep under review transport needs and issues in rural or marginalized / isolated communities and communities of interest, and draw these to the attention of policy makers and transport providers nationally and locally.

About ORCC...



ORCC works to improve the quality of life for all who live or work in rural Oxfordshire. Equality of opportunity is central to all our activities.

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council is an independent charity founded in 1920 and is registered as a non-profit company limited by guarantee. Our funding relies heavily on grants and donations from several agencies including:

Oxfordshire's Environment. We also have close links with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, and are a member of the national RCAN network.

If you would like to support the work of ORCC, you can join our membership scheme.



We can...

- Provide you with free advice on a wide range of rural issues.
- Keep you informed on the problems facing rural communities.
- Send you details of ORCC events and a copy of our news and information sheets.

We have two partner organisations who share our Jericho Farm premises – the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association and the Trust for

ORCC Website

www.oxonrcc.org.uk

Find out who we are and what we do by visiting our website for news and events, publications, funding information and links to other useful organisations.

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Registered office:

Jericho Farm, Worton, Witney,
Oxon OX29 4SZ

Tel: 01865 883 488

Fax: 01865 883 191

Email: orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk

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