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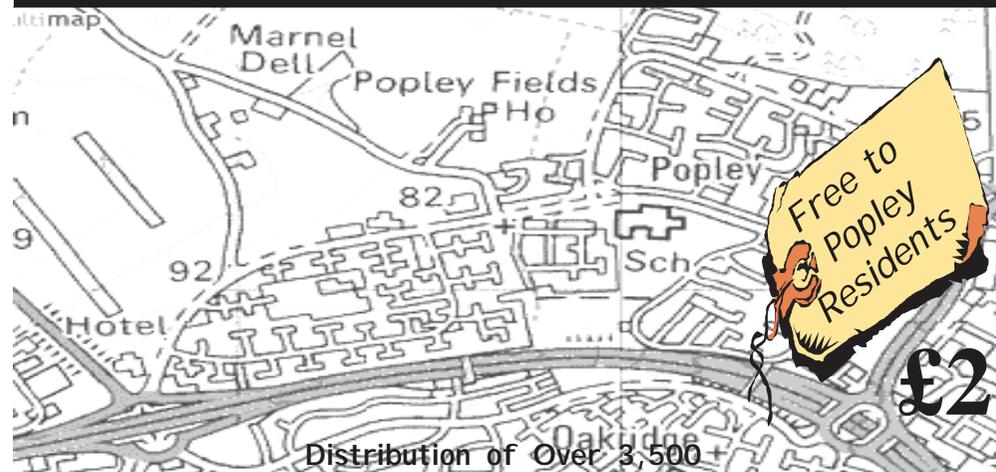
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POPLEY MATTERS

OVER TWELVE YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

February 2006

Issue 48



FULL OF LOCAL NEWS AND VIEWS

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www.popleymatters.org.uk

Closing date to submit articles & Adverts (20-02-06)

Message From the Editor:- Nearly Valentines Day already, have you got plans to do something romantic? We forget sometimes to do something wonderful and spontaneous like saying it with a bunch of flowers or dinner for two. You could even get someone else to cook or get a take away, a couple of romantic candles on the table and remember your happy courting days. This year my husband Ken and I celebrate 40 years of marriage, like most couples we have had our highs and lows but somehow we have survived and are happy.

There is change all around us and there may be some irritations but I just try to remember the joy when we got our first house, this one, after living in an upstairs maisonette and struggling up flights of stairs with pram, baby and shopping. It was so wonderful and a garden too. With 5000 people and families on the waiting list it will be fantastic to see hundreds get a place to call their very own home. I just can't be selfish and moan about a couple of minutes held up in traffic temporarily. We will have about 12 shops, community facilities, play areas and a new school for our future generations.

I have been looking at the future for our children and their children and the fact we are mortals who hopefully pass on a good future. My dear dad is 90 and was so ill over Christmas that he was not expected to see Christmas day well he is a fighter and an old soldier and he is still fighting and getting stronger. To see my Dad barely recognizable because he was so thin and pale was traumatic. After 28 years of working in the hospital I thought I could not get shocked, but it was devastating. Dad is in a residential home in Lincolnshire where my family come from. I have seen some amazing carers and salute all the wonderful people that look after us when we need them.

I hope you find this Popley Matters interesting. We would like to have your comments so call me on 01256 819924 email jane@popleymatters.org.uk we have a web site too www.popleymatters.org.uk why not visit it and let us know what you think. You can also write to 405 Abbey Road or Melrose Hall We would love to hear from you. **Jane Frankum Editor**

Hits on popley.matters.org.uk website for month of January 559

To pass back ideas, comments, suggestions, articles or to offer help please write to:- Popley Matters, 405 Abbey Road, Basingstoke.RG24 9EL email editor@popleymatters.org.uk The views in this publication are not necessarily the views of the Editorial Team. Or the members of the committee of Popley Forum/Matters.

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Letters to The Editor



Dear Editor; While delivering the Popley Matters to the Flats in Melrose Walk, I was surprised to find so many copies of the Basingstoke Gazette and other freebie publications which are “delivered” to the flats just dumped on the stairs or just inside the door of the foyer. If you are the distributor for these publications then please put them through the door as dumping them just causes a fire risk, and you are paid to deliver to the individual letterboxes. Mrs W Abbey Road

Editor's reply; This is a problem in other areas in Popley and I know for certain Winklebury too, anywhere there are flats with a security system. You would think it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Gazette and others could get round the problem. We have had some serious fires and it has been proved more than once that the fire was started using paper and rubbish that has been left around the area. The papers and leaflets get blown around the estate and make it untidy and can cause a danger. Another complaint I have voiced to deliverers is asking them to ensure that the items have been pushed right through the letter box and not to leave them sticking out. There are several reasons why:- it lets the cold in in the winter; if it is raining the part sticking out gets sodden; and most worrying is that it sends the message that no one is home and you could have an unwelcome visitor. I have on several occasions phoned the Gazette to point

out my concerns and they assure me that they instruct the people who deliver to make sure they push them through the door!

Dear Editor; After the excesses of Christmas I would like to lose a few pounds but can not afford the fees that organized slimming clubs charge. Have you or your readers any ideas for me please? Ms K Tintern Close

Editor's reply; If you keep meaning to get fit, become a distributor for Popley Matters. In Falkland Road There are 193 properties or Pershore Road with 173 properties and you will walk 2km per route and its cheaper than joining a gym. If you fancy a more challenging route then there's Melrose Walk with it's mix of houses and flats or Faroe & Lundy Closes which have many flats. Why get bored of standing on a stepper machine or running on a treadmill you can be out in the fresh air, delivering to the blocks of flats. Give Iris King our distribution manager a call 01256 411113 Any more ideas from you readers please.

Editors Note We look forward to reading your letters on all sorts of subjects. We do not print your name or address if you wish us not to but of course we can not accept letters that are sent anonymously.

Please send your letters to :
The Editor, Popley Matters,
405 Abbey Rd, RG24 9EL or
email:
editor@popleymatters.org.uk



2006 is going to be a great year of development and change in Popley. We are now seeing the construction of *The Everest Community College*, the replacement John Hunt school to the north of Popley Way. There are also visible signs of the new David Wilson Homes' *Marnel Park* development, and the *Merton Rise* development was launched by Hampshire County Council at the end of last year. Changes and developments which have been in the pipeline for many years are becoming visible.

This gives us a great opportunity to raise the standard of living in Popley. It's for this reason we are launching a new Community Gardening Project in the spring. We are looking to enhance some areas of public space which have become a little downtrodden. We will have community gardening days when we will hopefully make some significant improvements. For this, we will be seeking out those 'green fingered' residents from the community who will be willing to commit a little time to making this project happen. If you would be willing to volunteer in this way, please give us a call or speak to us when we're out and about.

One great highlight for this year is going to be the Proud of Popley award ceremony which will be held on Friday 4th August. Between now and then, we will be on the lookout for those special people who help to make Popley a place to be proud of. If you have anyone you would like to nominate for an award, please contact us and we'll get a nomination form to you.

Please can we take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped us in making the Magic of Christmas event happen, and a special thanks to the staff at Popley Fields Community Centre. Without the hard work of so many people from the community, it wouldn't have been the great event it was.

Please remember to keep safe and look after yourself. If you have anything concerning you, call us and we'll try and help. Our number is 01256 845508.

Please also take care to dispose of all your waste in a responsible manner. Any refuse which does not fit into your wheelie bin will not be taken with your weekly collection. It must be kept inside your property until you can dispose of it legally and appropriately. The dumping of waste, even if it's outside your own back gate, is a criminal offence and can lead to prosecution.

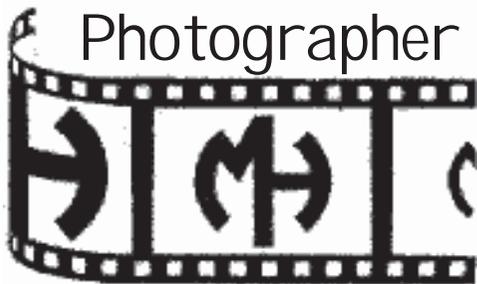
Any furniture which is in reasonable condition can be collected free of charge by the Community Furniture Project, who can be contacted on 01256 320700.

We look forward to seeing you in the near future, and kind regards

Stephen Bate and Sarah Ratcliff
Community Wardens for Popley



Michael Herod
Photographer



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ST GABRIEL'S CHURCH

Tewkesbury Close, off Popley Way
Wednesday 15th March at 7.30pm

Call 324734 for a free invitation or pop into the church and pick one up!



DO YOU OWN A SATELITE NAVAGATION SYSTEM?

Popley has recently suffered from lots of thefts from cars. The vehicles that are being targeted are those which contain satellite navigation systems.

Please remove the unit from the car every time you leave the vehicle unoccupied.

Burglaries from Garages are sadly still happening and again I would ask garage users to ensure that an additional lock is fitted to your garage door. Even if your garage only contains your car, these garages doors are still being forced open.

Witness appeal.

Recently a "scrambler" type motorbike was ridden through the John Hunt of Everest School field at a very fast speed as the pupils were leaving school for the day. This was extremely dangerous and I would ask all residents to report any off road scramblers that are seen riding in the area. I am particularly interested in a scrambler with a large racing number on side. This rider needs identifying before somebody is seriously hurt. If you have suspicions or have seen a bike being taken into an address then please let us know.

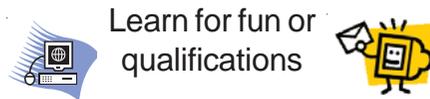
Despite numerous appeals by ourselves some parents have still purchased mini motorcycles for their loved ones this Christmas. If you have one then a polite reminder that this cannot be ridden on any paths, fields, car parks, public grassed or open spaces. If you have seen this happening then please let me know and action will be taken.

Information can passed either by leaving a contact number via the main switchboard 0845 045 45 45 or Anonymously via crime stoppers 0800 555 111.

Community Beat Officers
Popley West – PC3126 Matt Deery
matthew.deery@hampshire.pnn.police.uk
Popley East – PC23234 Paul Thorne
Paul.thorne@hampshire.pnn.police.uk



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Dear Friends,

Why is December 21st one of my favourite dates? Because it's the winter solstice; that is, it's the shortest day of the year. After that date it starts to get lighter by a couple of minutes each day and to me it feels as though we've turned a corner. New Year's Eve into New Year's Day is another turning point. We leave the old year behind and welcome the new with all its possibilities for our expectations, hopes and dreams. It's been a pretty intense start to the New Year for me. In the past week I've taken two funerals at St Gabriel's. The first for Fred Herbert, the husband of one of our congregation, and the second for a lady called Debbie Ridgers.

Fred was in his eightieth year and had been struggling with ill health over the past year; Debbie was just fifty and worked for many years at Merton Infant School. For both services the church was full and it was a real testament to the kind of people that Fred and Debbie were that so many gathered to remember them with such love and affection. For me it's one of the greatest privileges I have to be with families at such a time and to listen to the tributes both during and after the service. Neither Fred nor Debbie left behind vast amounts of wealth, property or possessions; they left behind a legacy that will endure much longer than any of these, that is to say, the relationships with families and friends and the lives they touched, however briefly, and in whatever way. Not so much of "what's in your wallet?" but "what's in your heart?"

For Fred and Debbie's families and friends the edge will have been taken off the Christmas and New Year celebrations and greatly dulled and perhaps for many of us it is already only a dim and distant memory and yet the legacy of Christmas, the life of Jesus Christ, lives on in the hearts of 1.2 billion Christians around the world and in their relationship with Him who was born to die and yet be raised again to eternal life for each and every one of us!

I know that many of you received our Christmas leaflet inviting you to one of our services over the holiday period. I know too, that many of you responded. All our services were well attended this year. Many of you also picked up on the advert for our forthcoming Alpha course on the back of the leaflet and have been asking for further details.

The Alpha Course is an opportunity to find out about the Christian faith in an informal atmosphere. We begin with a meal and then a talk and then break into small groups, individually led, for the chance to talk and ask any questions. There is absolutely no pressure and better still – no cost involved – at least, not to your wallet. At the end of the course it's entirely up to you to make up your own mind; there are no follow up phone calls or visits. Perhaps this is the opportunity for you to turn a corner? The Alpha Course starts on Wednesday 29th March. If you want to know more, please call me or check out our ad elsewhere in Popley Matters.

Yours In Christ
Arthur

The Cutting Edge

From

Popley Conservation Volunteers

As you know from previous articles in Popley Matters, Popley is the home of the Great Crested Newt, a European protected species. Protection of this species is taken very seriously. When work on site recently threatened the safety of these amphibians, the contractors of Marnel Park development, Hampshire Wildlife Crimes Officer, DEFRA and others were called to a meeting on site to resolve the problem.

It is good to know that protection of this species is written into the development of Marnel Park. It is known that many of the newts used to spend much of their terrestrial life in the field which is now destined for new



Construction of the first newt underpass

housing. In order to mitigate against the loss of this habitat, areas of land around the development have already been planted with trees and shrubs and new ponds have been excavated. All this work is to enhance the habitat for these amphibians. However it is known that the newts migrated north from Popley Ponds towards Spiers Copse in Basing Forest. With the building of a new estate this migration route will now be denied.

Therefore a new corridor is being created to aid the migration. This consists of a corridor along the side of Carpenters Down road. A problem arises at the points where access roads are being constructed into the new estate. Newts do not travel quickly and stand a good chance of being squashed if they have to migrate across roads. To overcome this, newt underpasses are being constructed under the access roads. These constructions as far as is known, have never been used before. So in this respect, Popley is at the cutting edge of conservation. Lets hope the underpasses work.

Popley Conservation Volunteers always welcome people who want to contribute towards environmental conservation in and around Popley.

If you feel you are able to help please contact Lee Roth at Lee.roth@networkrail.co.uk or Phone 01256 330738

Basingstoke Air Scout Group



Beaver scout section (for boy and girls aged from 6 to 8 years)

Meetings: Tuesday 5.30 - 6.45 p.m. Base 2000 Carpenters Down

Leader: 'Yellow Beaver' Eve Alexander 73 Falkland Road, Popley 346510

The spring session started on 13th January with a meeting about the solar system and attempting to make scale model - great fun! The full programme for the spring has yet to be finalised but will probably include the Friendship Challenge (to find out about children in other countries), concluding work on Faith Badge and Experimenting. We still have a fairly full colony but anyone wishing to place a child on the waiting list should contact Eve Alexander as above. We regret that regulations do not permit us to admit any child under the age of 6 years.



Cub scout section (for boys and girls aged from 8 to 10½ years)

Meetings: Tuesday 6.30 - 8.00 p.m. Base 2000 Carpenters Down

Leader: Elaine Devenport 87 Saffron Close, Chineham 323453

The trip to the ice skating rink at the end of December was great fun and only a few bumps and bruises (mainly to the adults!) to show for it! The spring session started on 13th January. New recruits welcome – contact Akela on 323453



Scout section (for boys and girls aged from 10½ - 14 years)

Meetings: Monday 7 - 9 p.m. Base 2000 Carpenters Down

Leader: Colin Karlake 14 Gilbert Close, Popley 410559

Two new recruits are to be invested this month. Both have joined us from the cub section. We hope they will enjoy some of the more challenging experiences of the scout section. Nominations for 21st World Jamboree in 2007 have now closed.

Enquiries: Pat Brown, Group Scout Leader 07716 855474

Basingstoke Gang Show returns to the Haymarket Theatre from 9th – 18th February. Tickets on sale priced from £6 and selling fast. Ring the Box Office on 0870 770 1088 to make your reservations. Matinee performances Saturday 11th and 18th March.

Our first Boot Sale on the year was held on a gloomy wet Sunday so response was somewhat less than usual. Hope for better weather next time! 'Sunday Boot Sales' happen every Sunday at John Hunt of Everest School continue with each sale run by a volunteers from a local Popley charity and (weather permitting) are always well supported by 'booters' and buyers alike. 'Booters' are reminded that they must not obstruct the highway at any time and must remove any unsold goods, boxes and litter before leaving their 'pitch'.

I am anxious to expand our merry band of leaders especially for the Beaver Section. If you enjoy working with young children and planning activities, please get in touch. All prospective leaders will be required to complete a Criminal Records Bureau clearance form before being allowed to work within the sections.



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Mon–Fri 9:15am–11:45am
Mon & Thurs 12:30pm–3:00pm

Councillors Page

Roadworks: *yes we've seen quite a bit of them recently, but you ain't seen nothing yet! Work is due to start putting in traffic lights on the A33/ringway roundabout and the A33/Popley Way junction later on this year. The Popley Way work is to cater for the new build and is designed to take the extra traffic away from Carpenters Down. The A33 roundabout is so busy it needs lights to cope with the rush hour queues, plus it has had 43 accidents in the last 3 years, the second worst rate in Hampshire. At least we will have some tangible improvements, unlike the complete farce at Brighton Hill roundabout, but nevertheless expect considerable delays for several months when the works go ahead...you have been warned!*

Marnel Park: you will have noticed the return of the one-way traffic lights in Carpenters Down after the Xmas break. Work is starting on the second access road, and more drainage works are planned which will also affect Carpenters Down. A Planning Application has been submitted for Phase 2 of the build: it's much the same as Phase 1, which has already been granted permission. Construction of Phase 1 should begin in the springtime. I'm in contact with the project manager and hope to keep you updated via my web site.

Longfellow Parade: Sentinel expect to hear back from the Housing Corporation on their grant application some time in March 2006. We can expect a detailed Planning Application to be submitted some time afterwards. I'll keep you posted of events and for latest developments see my web site.

Schools: By the time you read this John Hunt will have received another kicking in the press over league tables. They give far too simplistic a picture of what goes on in our schools and should be abolished. Work will soon start on the new John Hunt site as the new school is expected to open in September 2007. It will be a fantastic school with good public access sports facilities on offer including a proper floodlit running track, provided the NIMBY's in Sherborne St John don't cry foul. We could do with the new sports facilities as most of the existing ones are in the south of the town.

Sure Start Children's Centres: at long last it looks as if we will get one in Popley! Sure Start Children's Centres have been very successful in other parts of the country in raising the attainments of our schoolchildren by providing them and their parents with much needed support in the first few years of life. We should have had one in Popley years ago: it will make a very real difference to our schools.

Popley Festival: 4 months to go! This will be the last on the current site and we intend to make it even better than last year when we had 15000 visitors.

London Marathon: this year I will be running in aid of the British Heart Foundation. I will be doing a lot of promotional work in the local press and with local schools, if anyone wishes to sponsor me, please let me know.

Cllr Andrew McCormick

T: 01256 419376 (eve/weekends)

M: 07879 436985 (day)

E: cllr.a.mccormick@basingstoke.gov.uk

W: <http://www.councillor.info/amccormick>

Basingstoke & District Railway Society

The Basingstoke & District Railway Society, which has just celebrated its 30th anniversary, recently held two meetings which reflected its interests in recent railway history. At its first December meeting they were entertained by a speaker from the Railway Ramblers who described the activities of the association and showed a selection of walks along former lines, whilst a fortnight later the members enjoyed a selection of cine films rescued from the British Transport Commission Film archives. The Society normally meets on the second and fourth Wednesday in each month at the Wote Street Club, New Road, Basingstoke from 20.00 hrs. to about 22.15 hrs. The programme includes film and slide shows given by guest speakers and Society members, as well as the occasional competition.

There is an annual subscription charge (currently £6), and attendance at meetings costs a further £1 per evening. This gives full Society benefits including the monthly *Newsletter* and advantageous prices for Society visits.

Forthcoming meetings include: -

25th January – The Cromford and High Peak Railway

8th February – Society member David Cable reports on his travels in 2005

22nd February – The Swanage Line, past and present

If you would like to share our interest, do please come along, or contact either the Membership Secretary, John Priest on 01962 890872 or the Secretary, Peter Tran on 01256 326096.



At the January meeting of the Popley Partnership it was agreed that they would lead on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Popley, under the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy for the Borough. This would be the first of its kind in the borough, and it will guide the development of future neighbourhood plans in other areas. This is a very positive move, and will mean that a comprehensive 10 year plan will be drawn up.

The aim is to use all the existing information on Popley, gathered through previous consultation exercises and various national and local statistics, to develop a plan which will identify all the issues, set targets and aim to ensure that improvements are made across a variety of areas including education, skills and training, community safety, and the environment. Everybody will have the chance to influence what is to be covered in the Plan..... so watch this space for further information over the coming months! There are exciting times ahead, with a real opportunity to influence community development in Popley.

Diaries from The old codger

Well it's 2006, another year has passed, the old grey hair is even thinner. We had the problem yet again too much eating and drinking over Christmas.

A new section of road was built along Popley Way and the ground work for the new school started. These are some of the good positive points of 2005. Do I have bad points? The answer to that is yes and that is poor work of contractors on our roads and paths and the utility services. Yes, the Old Codger knows they need to do the work but the way they leave it in after they fill in the holes and trenches is not fair on our councils that have to go and put it right. Then I came across three men working on a new bit of path after a tree in the middle of pavement was taken out where there was a dropped kerb. On talking to them I said "could you make the slope a bit less of an incline"? There was no problem, they made a wonderful job of it and had a well deserved cup of tea to boot. It just goes to show how people can communicate and get things right. In 2005 we saw for ourselves that bombs in public places like Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan can do so much carnage. It causes in the name of what I ask? It can't be any God! As no God would ever preach or want anything like this. No God would welcome any suicide bomber after what they have done to innocent people. Should he forgive them is the question? That will be on people's minds and on the minds of all the poor people that were attacked in London, also the rescue crews that braved the elements to help the injured. Again we saw floods and tornados in the U.S.A, earthquakes in Asian countries, and the looters of peoples' property when something like this happens. It's strange how you can always remember bad things as the good is pushed to one side. Now look at our little community. We had a great day at Popley Festival, some of the schools that I saw art work in for Popley Dell, the wonderful new church being built, I have a thing about churches as I was a mosaic layer/artist and put in some wonderful murals around the country when I was fit. I could stand back and look at a bit of mosaic art and say I did that and it will be here long after I have gone. Some one asked me did I ever sign any work? You were not allowed to, but if you lift a few bits of mosaic in the corner that I had done and looked under I did sign the work. Her in doors has taken me to the sales this month and they are not over yet, I think on the last count she had fifteen Christmas presents for 2006.

"Look dear that shirt is nice do you want it"? "**No I have hundreds of shirts**". So I let her in doors get on with it. "Look what I got reduced to ex/ pounds"! To me as a good old cockney I always say "for that price I could get six up Rathbone Market". A lot of people would not know what I was talking about but a few of you will. We had Petticoat Lane, Dagenham and Barking Road markets that is just a few. Then we were off to Festival Place with her in doors wanting to go into Next, (I will say this very quietly in case she hears what I am saying, nothing in Next is big enough for her) well she left me out side by the bench on that steep slope. I don't know what she had in mind by doing that but I had my foot down and both brakes on I was not going from that spot. It is a bit awkward as you have a seating area out side the shop it was all men I noted sitting on the benches, so like me you know where the other half was. Now let me get to the point that I want to make, I am beginning to sound like Ronnie Corbett. That is that inconsiderate people, a group walking down from the top of the slope and another walking up all stopped, including three baby buggies opposite me, they blocked the whole area off for a chin wag. People were trying to get past my wheelchair and them, the old nogging was being knocked from behind as people pushed past. I felt I was being used as a punch bag, did this group move? **No**. In the end I let the brakes off and chair went down the slope I grabbed hold of the end post to swing out of the way. I already have enough brain damage without all the people banging me on the back of the head, and they still kept on talking.

I do hope your year will be full of happiness and you all stay safe. I have a full year ahead so I know the computer has a lot of hard work. I have children's stories unfinished to do, plus if I am up in our office her in doors won't keep on asking me to go to town. After the Sales yes, I will go then. Mind you sales are now on all year round as far as I can see. Oh by the way her in doors did get stuff in Next but it was for our lovely new grand daughter born just before Christmas! *The old codger*

Popley's own Marnel Football Club u8's

Dear readers,

I have been trying to start a youth football team up for some many months now and did not realise how difficult it would be to get things started. After taking my son to other teams I was getting so frustrated with the managers, as I did not think they were going the right way about it. So I put the word about to see if I could get any interest from parents and to see what they thought about starting a football team in Popley and the response was very good. Anyway that was nearly 2months ago and we now have 10 to 12 players regularly, turning up for training each week.

We are in the process of getting insurances {personal protection and public liability} we cannot get police checks until April until we are affiliated with the Hampshire FA and we will be joining the Peter Houseman League this season coming.

I would like to thank FASTFARE for sponsoring us for the kit, Mrs. Cole for agreeing to let us train and play our matches on Marnel playing field, SENTINEL for donating £150 to help us with training equipment or to put towards paying for insurances, joining the FA or the cost of police checks. (We haven't decided as yet I will let you know what it will go towards). Also a big thanks to Dave Wombwell Decorators of Chineham Park Court for sponsoring us £80 to buy training tops and bags for the kids, plus Dave is also a trainer and the treasurer. We are really lucky to have as a new member to the team Marvin White who is studying sports and coaching at Queen Mary's College and he has come to us at just the right time as the team gets bigger each week, If you want to know any more about the team, please ring me any time on 07811167791 or 01256332124 for any donations of kit, time, or money to the club, the children would be most grateful.

Yours sincerely
LEE AUSTEN. Manager





John Hunt of Everest Community School

It has been a busy start to the term, there has been a lot of interest in the family learning courses and enquiries are still coming in. It is not too late we still have places on the aerobics, self-defence and dance courses. We have managed to secure funding to run another FREE Cook and EAT, the families on the previous course thoroughly enjoyed cooking and then tasting the fruits of their labour, even I got in on the tasting. If you are interested the course will start on Thursday 23rd February at 3.30pm and will run for 6 weeks.

In conjunction with the Hospital and to celebrate International Women's day (Wednesday 8th March from 5.30-7.30pm) we are running a evening centred around health issues, come along and find out about quitting smoking, breast care, calculate your fitness index and taste some unusual foods.

March 2nd is the date for the third conference on the Rights, Respect and Responsibilities agenda, this time the focus will be to get our young people and the community talking and coming up with some solutions for Popley, look out for your invitation.

The Community office is busy planning the activities for the February half term (13th-17th); we will be having dance every morning also trampoling, badminton and T-shirt printing in the afternoon. All activities are free and are open to 11-16 year olds. A big plea on behalf of the Popley Festival Planning Committee, we really do need more volunteers on the day (Sunday 21st May) even if you can spare only an hour or two it will be greatly appreciated. The festival has grown from strength to strength and now really needs more people to get involved.

The JHE student school council is meeting regularly and are writing weekly articles in the school's section of the Basingstoke Gazette, so keep a look out. The Council have agreed to run two fundraising events this term, the proceeds of which will go to the Children's Ward of the North Hampshire Hospital, we hope you will be able to support this worthy cause.

Many of you may be aware of the school's very successful Mentoring scheme where people from the community and local businesses (Sony, Corgi and AWE) give up time to work individually with some our students, if you are interested in working with young people and have half an hour to spare every fortnight then we would love to hear from you.

January saw the start of the 3rd round of our very successful project with the Bison Ice Hockey team; over 30 families from Marnel and Chineham Park Junior Schools are involved this time. Dan Green and John Wheaton have been visiting the schools and working with the children and their parents on literacy and numeracy activities.

For any further information on any of the above please contact: Suki Binning, School Community Manager on 338725 or via e-mail on suki.binning@johnhunt.hants.sch.uk.



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Regular users of the building include groups of Rainbows, Brownie Guides, Guides, Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Wiggins Teape Pensioners and Melrose Christian Fellowship. CMA Kick Boxing use the building on Wednesday evenings from 7.15 p.m. for a Ladies Keep-Fit group.

The Princes Trust, sponsored jointly by the Hampshire Fire Service, YMCA and Hampshire Constabulary, start of a new course on 6th February. Anyone aged between 16 and 25 years out-of-work and wanting help to get a job is welcome to make an application to join but there is a selection process as courses are often oversubscribed. The programme includes a residential course, a community project and out-of-doors challenges as well as work experience. For more information ring 01256 335341, 07766 550 635, 02380 626 706

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Go for it phone now



Our inaugural AGM was held on the 14th December 2005 at the Ark Conference Centre, which was very well attended, it is great to report that the following officers were elected. Chairman; Maurice.Lay... Vice-Chairman; Mavis Titheradge.. Treasurer; John Bonner...Secretary; Gerald. Merritt A resolution was passed that there will be a yearly membership fee of £5 single..£8 couple (good value in this day and age),each member will receive a membership card.(at the moment in the design stage)and notified of all open forum meetings. The Over 55's Forum is continuing to grow rapidly and since the AGM 22 persons have shown interest and wish to become members, now making our total in excess of 300.

The next Open Forum meeting will be held on Wednesday 15th February 2006. Time 10.30am to 1.00pm.Venue to be decided. Due to the tremendous growth rate we have to look for a bigger venue, so I would ask everybody to watch the local press and Kestrel Radio for the announcement of the venue.

Further Open Forums will be Wednesday 19th April 2006 afternoon event called "Trickster".

The Over 55's Forum Committee would look forward to meeting you at one of our future meetings.

Gerald.L.Merritt (Secretary)



The Basingstoke Amateur Operatic Society is getting ready to bring its latest show stopper to the stage of the Haymarket Theatre in Basingstoke.

Following on from last year's success of 'The Mikado' this year the society is staging the Cole Porter classic, 'Anything Goes' and no corner is being left unexplored to make sure it captures every ounce of glamour, finesse and sassy attitude that optimises the action on board the SS American. The story follows the confused romantic lives of sassy Reno Sweeney, the young debutante Hope Harcourt, hopeless romantic Billy Crocker and the pompous Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. And with Moonface Martin, ditsy Erma and Elisha Whitney not to mention some well-loved musical numbers including 'I get a Kick Out Of You', 'It's De-lovely' and the infamous title track thrown in for good measure we guarantee that life at sea is never dull!

So get your dancing shoes on and book your tickets now. The show runs From 20th till 25th March with a matinee performance on Saturday. For tickets telephone The Haymarket Theatre box office on 01256 46 55 66. Concessions available, why not bring a group of friends!

For more information about BAOS log onto our website www.baos.co.uk



MELROSE HALL NEWS

Don't forget our Boot Sales at John Hunt of Everest Community School every Sunday throughout 2006 entry at 9am. Sales starts at 9:30am.

Melrose Coffee morning is now called The Friendly Cafe and it is open to all residents of Popley. Every Monday 9.30 - 12.00 and every Thursday 9.30 - 12.00. They serve Teas, Coffees, Biscuits, Bacon Rolls etc, at very good prices. They also have weekly raffles, board and card games, occasional outings and a foot clinic twice a month.

Alert! Alert! New Childrens Group "Socatots" starts Thursday February 23rd from 9.30 to 12.30 frn 6 months to 5 years old. Special equipment, qualified staff, educational and fun confact Justain 07951698309

At the last committee meeting it was discussed what sort of fundraising events we could organise during 2006.

It's you the public that make these events a success.

So let us have your ideas, drop the committee a note, post it through our letterbox at the hall, marking the envelope "events". We will discuss the suggestions at the next meeting and who knows you may end up attending the event you suggested later in the year

	MORNING	AFTERNOON
MONDAY	9.30 -12PM The Friendly Cafe	7.30 - 10.30 Healing & Holistics
TUESDAY	9.30am - 11.30am TINY ACORNS CHILDMINDERS	4-8.30 PM PETITE SCHOOL OF DANCE OF DANCE
WEDNESDAY	9.30 -11.30 PARENT & TODDLER GROUP 9-45AM-11-30 STOP SMOKING CLINIC	12PM - 2PM OASIS LUNCH CLUB
THURSDAY	9.30-12PM The Friendly Cafe	7PM-8.30PM WEIGHT WATCHERS
FRIDAY	10AM 3PM LODDON ALLIANCE	6.30PM YOUTH CLUB
SATURDAY	9AM -1PM PETITE SCHOOL OF DANCE	
SUNDAY	10AM MELROSE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP	6.30PM MELROSE CHRISTAN FELLOWSHIP

For information on any type of booking please call, we apologise that you may get a answerphone reply until we employ a new administrator, applications are invited. Call 01256 420676 for information or booking or Email melrosehall@tiscali.co.uk

Gospel Music at Popley Fields

In the summer of 2005 some of the members of our Church, which meets in Popley Fields Community centre each Sunday, went to see the Aria International Gospel Choir at the Haymarket Theatre. We enjoyed it so much that we decided that we would book them for a concert here in Popley.

The concert took place on 7th January 2006 and once again, the choir were excellent. Philip Hatto from Kestrel FM was in the audience so we asked him what he thought, this is what he said:

Aria International Gospel Choir had been recommended to me as an evening to remember, and as I had a real love of that type of music, I looked forward to being entertained not knowing that it would be a wholly different experience.

Ten members who are perfectly matched voices all get to present a varied and interesting example of music that is inspired from the soul. Solo singers who not only introduce the songs they sing and allow their personality to shine through but also add the extra edge of passing on the 'message' contained in the words.

A balance of both female and male voices bring the 'word of God' to life, involving the audience with hand clapping, and even dancing in the aisles, the most conservative of listeners will not fail to be moved in some way. Just watch the feet that tap their way through the performance of the choir.

Music alone lifts the soul of the listener but The Aria Choir members add an extra ingredient that I was not aware of but welcomed with open arms, that of Ministry. They blend beautiful music with the uplifting and often funny presentation that works its way through the evening at refreshing the innermost part of the mind and heart.

After an evening that frankly could have gone on forever as far as the majority felt, was that it? – NO. The members of the Choir were available to talk, minister and impart the Way of Life that encourages and drives them to bring their form of God's Word to the people, wherever any people will listen.

Was I entertained? Yes.

Was I uplifted? Yes

Would I recommend others to see them next time? Definitely Yes

Don't miss them and an opportunity that will refresh, revitalise and awaken the best in you, and bring as many of your friends as you can to share the experience with.

We are currently planning for the choir to return on Saturday 13th May 2006 so if you want to enjoy an evening out with a difference make a note in your diaries.

Graham Owen (Pastor – New Testament Church of God)

Merton Rise and Everest Community College - Project Update

2006 will see an increase in activity on the Merton Rise site compared with previous years where lots of progress has been made "behind the scenes" in terms of securing planning approvals and funding the replacement school but physical evidence of progress has been rather less obvious.

The Main Contract for the replacement school has now begun in earnest with further ground works and foundations being progressed. As part of these works, Sherborne Road will again be closed (from Monday 30th January) to allow for safe movements of vehicles to complete the preparatory work for the playing fields for the school. On the basis of good and continued progress the new school is programmed to be completed Summer 07 in time for an opening in September 2007.

The second contract to implement the required advance servicing works, which will involve the introduction of traffic lights to the junction of Sherborne Road with Popley Way and the construction of the Spine Road between Sherborne Road and Chineham Lane, is due to commence in May 06 to provide access and servicing for both the school and the first 2 phases of housing proposed on the Merton Rise site.

Further archaeological investigations are currently being undertaken on the land between Sherborne Road and the A340 to the west and the remainder of the ridgeline planting is due to be undertaken shortly to complete this important area of structural planting.

Following the Community Launch of the Merton Rise site before Christmas, the Launch for the first phase of land on the Merton Rise site was held on Friday 20th January. This event was attended by prospective purchasers (developers) and their design teams and there has been a very encouraging response to the design-led strategy proposed for the Merton Rise site. The outcome of the marketing exercise will not be known for several months, but it is proposed that another community event will be held involving the selected purchaser(s) to share their proposals with local residents - probably in the Autumn.

Finally, once the contract 2 works are completed (c. January 2007) it is proposed that the new road will be open for public use. The road will of course need a name at it is proposed that the name could be selected through a consultation process similar to that held for the naming of the replacement school last year. I am in discussions with Steve Bate from the Popley Warden team to see how we might do this as part of the forthcoming Popley Festival event where it is likely that the County Council will have a stall to provide an update on the project. *Louise Hague Merton Rise Project Manager*

Phone: 01256 414494

Fax: 01256 418529



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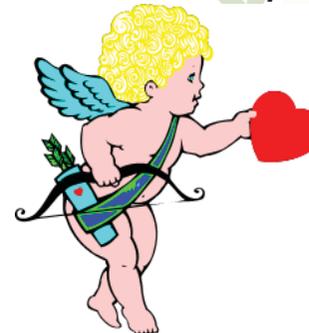
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Reg No 1052133



Malawi

Going to Africa is a very humbling experience. People live on an average wage of 50p a day: a benefit claimant in Britain would be considered rich in comparison. Many aspects of life have not changed since Dr Livingstone was in Malawi: I still saw villagers drawing water from a pump just like we would have done in Victorian Britain. Some of the mud hut villages I visited had no roads.

People remain in very high spirits, in spite of the many things that can go wrong like illness, starvation, and the depressingly high infant mortality (seeing a funeral procession Soweto-style with a 3ft coffin at the front was particularly poignant).

Steve, an old mate from Uni, had gone back out to Malawi to teach. He had done a stint with VSO for 2 years before deciding to go back to England and study for a Post Graduate Certificate of Education. After 2 years of the National Curriculum and dealing with problem parents he had enough with teaching in England and wanted to go back overseas again as it was more rewarding.

Malawi is relatively well off: it has a relatively stable economy and its government is reasonably well behaved (unlike neighbouring Zimbabwe). People talk of corruption in Africa – I saw very little evidence of it but I did see incompetence on a grand scale, like the Government selling off the maize reserves to Zimbabwe, then realising the rains had failed in the north of the country and people risked going without food. This was reported as “famine” in the western press, before they got bored with the story and started talking trivia about celebrities.

Very little works, and things are best in the cities, where they have running water (still advisable to boil it before drinking) and electricity (most of the time).

Blantyre, the main city, has a population of about 2 million, but no motorways or underground system like a Western city of that size would have. Few people own cars – at 60p a litre, petrol costs more than a day’s wages. Most people walk everywhere, some even walk for days across country to neighbouring towns. Most of the streetlights don’t work: people tend to steal the wires, someone even tried selling them back to the electricity company.

For those who don’t want to walk there are the bicycle taxis – popular in rural areas. The buses are Toyota camper vans filled with about 20 people or big smoky 50-year old things with 100 people with luggage (and occasionally people) piled on the roof. There are no timetables as such, they leave when they are full. The fares are not publicised and depend on the distance and popularity of the route – and police roadblocks. These are set up to stop gun running. I encountered one on the road to Mulanje near the Mozambique border. It looked as if the police were going to strip the vehicle but the Conductor (a man in a removal coat with “conductor” written on it) took the policeman behind the bus and handed him a few notes.

The local currency in Malawi is the Kwacha and there are about 225 of these to the pound. My wallet was filled with 500 Kwacha notes – I had about 4 inches worth stashed in various places. For those of you who watch Eastenders, it looks a bit like 10 grand in fifties – and probably is worth the equivalent to an average Malawian.

It goes without saying you have to be careful when going out after dark in downtown Blantyre – as a “rich person”, the risk of mugging is very real but it is a very quiet city compared with

foreign ones like Nairobi and Addis Ababa. Of greater risk during the day is being mobbed by street traders. I parted with £18 for a rucksack full of carvings from 6 people but there must have been another 20 waiting.

Beer costs about 80p in Western bars and a bottle of wine costs the equivalent of a month’s wages. The local beer is only a fifth the price but is undrinkable. Most Westerners drive everywhere, even to the pub after dark. Nobody cared about drinking and driving: a bit like Britain in the early 1970’s.

Westerners and middle class Malawians make up less than 1% of the population of Blantyre and there is a small community feel as a result. Steve and his friend Raye host a show on national radio and I was asked to appear as a guest.

We spent a few days on safari in Liwonde National Park, staying in a lodge with no electricity, and camped out in mosquito-proof tents. The wildlife is astonishing and we saw plenty of impala, waterbuck, warthogs, some elephants and a baby hippo on night safari. There were only two rhinos in the park and we didn’t get to see them.

Christmas day was spent on the Mulanje massif – a mountain range near the Mozambique border. Its average height is 7,000ft above sea level, so it is much cooler. There were also no mosquitoes (no need to sleep under a net, sheer bliss!). We had a spectacular thunderstorm when we were up there, it caught us on a day trip before we could reach the safety of the mountain hut and we got soaked in minutes. Lightning hit the plain we were walking on just a few minutes after we made it back inside. The mountain guide we hired for 1000 Kwacha a day predicted the storm because he heard the chameleons singing.

Most people go to Lake Malawi, but unfortunately I couldn’t make it for various reasons, not least having to wait 2 days for my luggage to arrive from Nairobi. I was lucky to get on the Air Malawi flight in the first place as they only have one jet plane – the other one had a bird fly into its engines - and when I arrived in Nairobi at 11pm, despite reconfirming I was not booked on the flight the next morning, I had to wait to 630am to sort it out. Little did I know that the plane stopped at Dubai first and the passengers had filled the hold with TVs, microwave ovens, and the like.

Steve teaches in Blantyre at a “posh” school – it has glass in the windows for a start. Pupils sometimes have riots, and most schools are too poor to make repairs.

Steve has two servants whom he pays about £1 a day. This is good money, and he has been criticised for paying them too much. When he leaves, they will struggle to find jobs which pay as well. This can really screw up the economy if repeated across the ex-pat community. When the South African Shop Rite supermarket opened in a posh shopping mall designed for rich people like Steve, they offered hourly rates better than daily wages for many other jobs. People must have jumped at the chance.

If anything is going to change in Africa, it will not come about through the traditional Western means of “helping out”. Raye is a veteran of Ethiopia and has very few kind words to say about Bob Geldof and Bono. We give them food and steal their doctors and nurses, give them debt relief and screw them in other ways. The best hope will be that the new generation who have been to Uni in the West will come back and run things. Many are doing very well running broadband services and mobile phones, which are owned by more people as land lines are so expensive. Maybe there’s hope for Malawi and Africa yet. *Andrew McCormick*