

Never mind your daughters, the message of the season is lock up your sheds: as PC Chris Griffin reports in this issue, a recent spate of break ins in East Oxford have been carried out by burglars using garden tools to force rear doors and windows.

While you're in the garden, remember that there's a hosepipe ban in force. But it's not all bad news: Gardener's Question Time the other week reassured us that it's okay to water your lawn or plants with 'grey water' from your bath or kitchen sink, as long as it doesn't contain too many chemicals. So that hosepipe could come in useful after all: one end in the bath, suck the other one and you're away. Well, in theory: we'll let you know next issue if it works!

Your newsletter contributions are always welcome: please contact **Sandy Ruxton** (sandy.ruxton@ntlworld.com) or **Jo Lyon** (lyon.jo@gmail.com) with any ideas.

DRARA events: dates for your diary

Sunday 21st May 1 till 5 pm: 'Room in the Street' *Southfield Rd (Minster Road to Hill Top Road)*

Not to be missed! Residents will be bringing their living rooms into the street and providing music, refreshments and activities. See what your neighbours *really* do on a Sunday afternoon... we hear someone might even be taking a bath!

If you would like to do something on the day please contact Tess Ward on 249924 or Rebecca Philipson on 421000.

Sunday 11th June: Boule Competition *South Park*

If you want to warm up for your holiday in France, or just learn how to play this wonderful game, come along to the playground at the top of South Park on Sunday 11 June.

Bring your own refreshments and, if possible, boules. To find out more please contact Pete Ward on 249924 or at peter.ward@kcl.ac.uk

Saturday 8th July 6.30-11pm: 'Meal in the Street' *Divinity Road (Warneford Road to Minster Road)*

DRARA's most popular event, Meal in the Street will be held on Divinity Road again this year. Put it in your diary now. For more information, contact Andy Roscoe on 241214.

Saturday 16th September: 'Film in The Street' *Divinity Rd*

Film tbc

If you are interested in getting involved or helping with any of these events the hard working DRARA events team would love to hear from you! Please contact Judith FitzGerald on 728741 or at gfitz@farmersweekly.net

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www.drara.org.uk



On the streets

On yer bike!

Madonna, Chris Martin, Boris Johnson, even David Cameron – they're all cycling now, so don't get left behind! The evenings are getting longer and it's time to dust off those bikes. Get out and enjoy Oxfordshire on two wheels.

Cyclox, the cycling campaign for Oxford, has just started a programme of easy-paced evening cycle rides from the city out into the countryside. Whether you've ridden for ages or have just got back into the saddle, the rides suit riders of all ages and abilities.

The guided rides follow short-cuts, lightly-trafficked roads and hidden cycle routes to a country pub with a garden to enjoy a swift lemonade. The rides leave every Wednesday evening from April until the end of October. Meet at 5.15 pm for a 5.30 start by the Martyrs' Memorial in St Giles. Rides are about 45 minutes each way, they take a variety of novel routes – and they're free! Bring lights just in case.

For more details, contact me on contact@cyclox.org or 07792 375423. **James Styring**

20's Plenty – should we join the campaign?

To follow-up last year's highly successful campaign, another '20's Plenty' Day of Action is planned for 22 November. The main aim is to get the government to change the rules and make it easier for local authorities to create 20 mph zones in residential streets – such as ours.

Last year's '20's Plenty' day was well supported across Oxford and is clearly an issue which everyone in DRARA ought to consider. It has become particularly relevant since a 20 mph limit was introduced in Cowley Road and yet once drivers turn into side-streets, they can legally increase their speed to 30 mph.

Do you think we should support the Day of Action on 22 November? Email your views to Roger Clarke at rclarke@brookes.ac.uk and make sure you put the word DRARA in the heading of your email please.

We will also be contacting Cheney School as many of their pupils use our streets either as a cycle route or a way to walk to school.

There are many ways we can support the campaign, either through simply displaying posters or setting up a road blockade – although this will require police permission. Please email us with your views. **Lynne Trenergy**

Rat run numbers

Over the next few weeks we are hoping to monitor the quantity of traffic which uses our streets as 'rat runs', ie in peak hours and for journeys to work or to drop children at school. The plan is to start building a factual case as to the number of drivers who don't live in the area and use the roads regularly.

DRARA members will be noting all registration numbers entering and exiting the roads at the five entry/exit points and this exercise will be carried out at two key times of the day, between 8am and 9am and 4.30pm through to 6pm. **Lynne Trener**

SS Mary & John churchyard

Spring has arrived in the SS Mary & John Churchyard and the tasks for volunteers multiply!

The spring flowers in the churchyard herald a new season of activity as we try and maintain the churchyard as 'a place for wildlife and natural beauty and a space for remembering and reflecting'. But we are short of volunteers! We meet every Saturday from 2-4pm, and every Wednesday from 5.30-7.30pm.

Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy our 'green gym' – for details please contact me on 723085. **Ruth Conway**

Changes afoot on the beat

The community police teams in Oxford and Oxfordshire are being restructured. This will have an impact on the policing of St Clements and East Oxford and other Oxford city areas.

The teams will be organised into neighbourhood policing teams, involving existing police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs). These officers, working in partnership, will police in line with electoral boundaries (St Mary's and St Clements wards, for example).

Four PCSO officers are already in place on Blackbird Leys – you may have heard about them via the Oxford Mail. We do not yet know how many will be allocated to St Clements and East Oxford, but this information should be available later in the year.

I have moved across to the role of Community and Race Relations Officer, which is a monitoring role for Oxford City concerning community issues and racist and homophobic hate crimes. I am still playing an active role in St Clements and East Oxford, but PC David Stares, the current Community Officer for St Clements, will be retiring at the end of the year after 30 years' service. There will therefore be some new faces on patrol, and I will keep DRARA notified.

The St Clements and East Oxford area has suffered a series of house burglaries recently. Entry has been gained to houses at the rear, and garden tools have been used to open doors and windows. These tools, mainly spades and garden forks, have been taken from the garden shed. Please ensure that side gates

are locked – and if you do not have a side gate it is advisable to have one fitted.

As summer approaches, all residents should take extra care not to leave windows open with laptops and other valuable items on display, as these will undoubtedly be targeted by criminals.

Finally, it's worth keeping an eye on the Neighbourhood Watch signs: one or two in the area have recently been broken or removed.

If you are new to the area and house security is a concern, then our crime reduction officers at Cowley police station can offer security advice: you can reach them on 0845 8 505 505. **PC Chris Griffin**

Latest from our Councillors

Warneford Meadow

As you may recall, attempts by the Greens to remove the Warneford Meadow from the recently adopted local plan failed after we were unable to convince the other parties of the case for protecting the area. Some sort of development on the site now seems inevitable but we were still shocked by the size of the development proposed by the NHS as revealed in the Oxford Mail at the end of March.

Oxfordshire Mental Healthcare NHS Trust has set out proposals to build on 75 per cent of the sensitive open grassland site. It also says the development on the two sites (Warneford Meadow and Park Hospital) could include 460 new homes, 300 retirement homes and accommodation for 3,400 students.

These proposals have not yet been submitted for planning permission – although it seems likely they will be. As people will have heard, the cash-strapped NHS is under Government pressure to maximise the use of all its 'assets'.

Cowley Road changes

Informal feedback on the Cowley Road changes has been generally positive although the official monitoring period has not yet ended (the County officers have committed to producing a six-month monitoring report for the May or June East Area Parliament). As part of this appraisal process we have raised several issues which we are asking the officers to deal with as a matter of urgency:

1. Cycle safety in the central area around Tesco – we have asked them to investigate better signage and further awareness training for bus drivers.
2. The bus stop opposite Tesco needs moving – most likely back to Leon Close.
3. There are several areas suffering from drainage problems – the County have actually refused to make the final payment to the contractors until this problem is sorted.
4. More needs to be done to make the edge of the road/pavement line clearer where the road and pavement are at the same level. At the moment

bollards are being knocked over and there is too much pavement cycling.

Recycling Scheme

You may have heard about a new recycling scheme being planned for introduction later this year. The scheme will add cardboard, garden waste, cartons (tetrapaks) and plastic to the materials currently collected.

The aim is to raise performance from a paltry 18% to a much more respectable 40% (which will put Oxford up amongst the best recyclers in the country). After winning some concessions from the ruling Labour Group, the Green Group have backed the scheme.

Our main concern (now addressed) was the compulsion to use wheelie bins. Residents will now have the option of either large or small wheelie bin or hessian sack. Some shift towards wheelie bins is desirable as it will reduce injuries amongst collection staff (who lift around 7 tonnes each day!).

The scheme may still be scrapped or delayed depending on the outcome of the elections on May 4.

Post Office

We have received some concerned calls about the loss of the post office at the bottom of Divinity Road, and added to this, the Cowley Road post office has also closed.

The East Area Parliament did write to the Post Office when the sub-post office at Londis first closed and were reassured that the closure was temporary and due to an inability to recruit anyone to run the franchise. Now that the future of Londis is (as we understand it) uncertain, the East Area Parliament has offered to help the Post Office search for alternative premises.

One piece of good news is that the Cowley Road Post Office closure is not permanent. The PO is reopening in larger premises opposite.

The old Bingo Hall

... is now back in use (if only for the occasional event). The City is still engaged in discussions with the new owner – with the support of local Councillors – to see whether some community use of the space is possible.

SS Mary and John frontage improvements

We have been backing efforts by the Church to make improvements to the church grounds and the East Area Parliament has backed various funding applications and even helped foot some of the costs of lowering the boundary walls.

Solar lights

Finally, the new solar-powered lighting in Manzil way playground is operational. Apologies for the long lead time in getting this installed, but we decided to stick to our guns and insist on demonstrating the feasibility

and viability of solar lighting for such applications. These are the first such lights in Oxford and – inevitably – it took time to convince officers and the police that we were not talking about the sort of £5 solar garden lights you get from B&Q!

Farmers and Community Market

Anyone interested? The EAP has given its backing to plans to explore the opening of a new farmers and community market in East Oxford.

We have hosted several meetings on the subject – including one well-attended public meeting at the Magic Café. The feedback has been positive and we are planning to support a trial market on 2nd July to coincide with the Cowley Road Festival.

As always....

Any issues, please contact your local Councillors. Tel: 01865 202257 or email east@greenoxford.com
Keep up to date with what we are doing on www.greenoxford.com, and see you at the Cowley Road Festival...

Craig Simmons (County), Mary Jane Sareva (City), Larry Sanders (County)

Anglo-Asian Association for Friendship in East Oxford

At a meeting of 12 members on March 28th, relatively well balanced in terms of gender and range of interests, if not so well in terms of race or of ages, we found ourselves strongly committed to pursuing the goals of the Anglo-Asian Association in 2006 despite a couple of poorly attended meetings in the last few months.

In particular we envisaged finding ways of arranging not just sit-and-listen evening meetings so much as afternoon events with a number of different things on offer that different people and age groups can share in. Our central purpose is that of getting people together beyond the barriers of language and culture. One possibility that we have in mind is a summer Sunday afternoon when people will be invited to meet in some fairly central place, and then go in mixed groups to visit somewhere in East Oxford where they have never been before – perhaps the Central Mosque, the Zodiac or the Tibetan Buddhists in Magdalen Road.

Other gleams in the mind include a session with the City's energy experts to explain to a mixed company how we can best play our parts in looking after our houses so as to give off the least amount of greenhouse gases and to make the best possible uses of renewable energy sources.

Another is for a three-or four-culture event where, say, the Welsh, the Chinese, the Bangladeshis and the Palestinians in East Oxford could each put forward some outstanding features of their specific

culture in say 20 minutes – food, art, singing, dancing, folk stories, or whatever.

And would any reader be interested in helping with a set of four Sunday afternoons in the summer when teenagers from our varied communities could play football together in one of the parks?

All suggestions and offers welcome! Please contact me on Oxford 723085 or by email at martinconway@abelian.net **Martin Conway**

Multi-occupancy in the DRARA area

DRARA convened a very useful public forum in February to consider multi-occupancy and its impact on the local community in the light of evolving legislation.

Issues that may be associated with high concentrations of HMOs include: late night street noise and disturbances; problems with waste/refuse collection; neglected appearance of housing; dumping of house clearance material, mainly at the end of university terms; higher burglary rates; and increased parking demand.

Residents were faced with an impressive line-up of speakers: Andrew Smith MP outlined steps that the government has taken to improve standards at national level through the Housing Act of 2004 and, more recently, through the planning process; Cllr Ed Tanner, OCC Executive Member with responsibility for Planning and Housing, summarised the council's position and explained some of the potentially conflicting policies that it has to adopt and somehow reconcile; Craig Simmons spoke about the work that ward councillors have been doing to improve the local situation; Andy Lewis, OCC Planning Officer, outlined his Department's role in dealing with applications for the development of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs); and Anne Ashley explained Oxford Brookes's strategy for managing 130 student houses across Oxford.

Probably the evening's most notable speaker was Gail Siddall who, as an OCC Environmental Health Officer, has special responsibility for HMOs. Gail explained how her department is working to improve the 1000 HMOs in Oxford by refining and extending the government's licensing requirements. OCC do not consider these go far enough to address the problem and Gail said that she would very much like to work with DRARA and residents on this issue.

This approach was welcomed and appreciated by residents and DRARA will be taking up this invitation.

Mark Norman

DRARA Website

DRARA has been refused grant funding by the East Area Parliament after we submitted an application for funds to help develop a website.

When we asked why we had been refused, we were told that our 'Report & Accounts' showed we had the capacity to fund the project ourselves. If we did, this would leave us with very little money – and mean we would struggle to fund other projects we are committed to.

There are other sources of funding available and we are currently exploring these. **Lynne Trenergy**

DRARA smalls

Dog walker and/or sitter required for friendly young golden retriever - 1/2 days Monday-Wednesday, during the day, from mid-May. Contact Sandy or Claire on 432647.

Trainers sought for cycling proficiency course for children aged 9-11 at SS Mary & John school. Help need to run four or five 1½ hour sessions during school hours in mid May. Email Ubaid.Ansari@mail.com for further details.

Useful contacts:

City Councillors, St. Clement Ward:

Claire Palmer (Green), tel 0775 698549 or claire@greenoxford.com

Mary Jane Sareva (Green), tel 07776 075250 or cllrmjsareva@oxford.gov.uk

County Councillor: Craig Simmons (Green), tel 202257 or craig@greenoxford.com

Oxford City Council Environmental Officer: Alex Solaja, tel 252821.

Brookes Community Liaison: Anne Ashley, tel 484451 or amashley@brookes.ac.uk

Cowley Road Police Station (non-emergency): tel 335138. Local beat officers are PC 798 David Stares and PC 1299 Chris Griffin (david.stares@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or chris.griffin@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk).

Sinnet Court:

Amanda Green, Manager: 202377, or amanda.green@dominionhg.co.uk.

The office is staffed from 8am-6pm Monday-Friday. For out of hours incidents requiring immediate action call 07796 962015: this will reach a student warden (24 hours).

DRARA: For more information, contact Mark Norman on 240146 or email (mark.norman@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)