

**Minutes of the Sibford Gower Annual Parish Meeting
held in Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School
on 8th May 2008**

Present

Parish Cllrs Peter Abbott, Muriel Chandler, Martin Layer and Robin Spicer (Chairman).
PC Phil Morris (Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, Thames Valley Police), Mr Ralph Grant (Area Engineer, Oxfordshire Highways), Fourteen local residents and the Clerk.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Eric Payne who was in a Residential Home for the time being, County & District Cllr George Reynolds who had previously arranged Parish Council Meetings, and local residents Mrs Charlotte Bird, Mr & Mrs David Soden and Mrs Kathleen Winter who had previous engagements and Mrs Eileen Haynes prevented from attending by a broken leg bone and back problems.

Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th May 2007 were read by the Clerk. They were approved and signed by the Chairman

Police Report

PC Phil Morris advised that the village scored extremely low on reported burglaries but that should not lead to complacency and constant attention should always be given with regard to house, garage and shed security. Should a resident require security advice, contact should be made with the Crime Reduction Advisor at Banbury Police Station (Tel:0845 8 505 505). He referred to the quite recently formed Neighbourhood Action Group, on which the Parish Council has a representative, meeting every two months at Banbury Police Station where topics, in order of priority, are discussed. The Chairman thanked PC Morris for attending and the information provided.

Highway Matters

The Chairman said that the Parish Council handles any complaints that may arise and, when necessary, deals with Oxfordshire Highways which is always very co-operative and wherever possible takes remedial action within the financial constraints that are imposed on it.

He went on to say that pot holes in roads receive attention when required and verge protection posts have been installed at Burdrop Corner and to protect the footpath almost opposite the Doctors Surgery. Drainage problems receive prompt attention. Any such matters can be raised by residents at the Parish Council Meetings or any Member of the Parish Council or the Clerk may be contacted.

Mr Ralph Grant – Area Enginner (North), Oxfordshire Highways – gave a brief presentation explaining how his department operates. All calls are recorded and there is a follow up mechanism to ensure that all enquiries receive attention. He went on to specify the areas for which his department is responsible.

To enable Mr Grant to depart to attend another engagement, the Chairman invited comments and questions. Mr Fred Inns questioned the quality of work sometimes carried out by contractors and he referred especially to gully clearance in Colony Road carried out some years ago. Mr Grant said that this was now too long ago to refer back to the contractors. However, contractors work is now checked upon pending payment. On the matter of gully clearance, the target is to carry out work annually and keep a record of those that may require more frequent emptying. Mrs Ann Spicer enquired as to whether some kerbs in High Meadow might be lowered to facilitate the use of prams, walking frames and invalid carriages. Mr Grant said that this is certainly possible and the Clerk was instructed to write to Oxfordshire Highways in this regard. Mr Fred Inns referred to the parking problems in the Village Pond area and he suggested that the land in front of The Old Rectory be reconverted to the former road layout. Local resident Mrs Glennis Hardman referred to the erosion of the grass verge adjacent to the Village Pond caused by parked cars. Mr Grant suggested either protective wooden posts or kerbing. The Parish Council is to place the matter on the agenda of the next Parish Council Meeting.

To 686



Footpath Matters

The Chairman reported that complaints from residents are acted upon and local action taken when appropriate. In other cases, contact is made with the Sarah Aldous, the Rights of Way Officer, Oxfordshire County Council. She is always prepared to make site visits and do whatever is required, within the financial constraints placed on her.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman welcomed and thanked all present for attending including Mr Ralph Grant (Area Engineer, Oxfordshire Highways), PC Phil Morris (Neighbourhood Specialist Officer, Thames Valley Police), Mrs Jean White (Town Estate Charity), and Cllr Muriel Chandler (to give Village Hall report).

He referred to the death of Mr John Mulley who had been the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and conveyed the Meetings condolences and sympathy to Mrs Mollie Mulley and the family. He spoke of the recent death of Colonel Colin Frith who had been Clerk to the Parish Council for many years. Sympathy was extended to Mrs Tina Frith. He went on to say that the Parish Council had met seven times since the previous year's Annual Parish Meeting. During that period twenty five planning applications had been considered. Regular contact had been maintained with Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council especially with regard to Highway and Footpath matters and in respect of which the Clerk was very grateful for the help and cooperation that had been received. The Annual Litterblitz took place on 5th April and thanks were extended to all those who took part. The Parish Council is very appreciative of the Town Estates Charity for funding the fortnightly free bus service which is much welcomed by the residents who use it. Thanks were extended to Julie Goodlake for her involvement with the Miriam Tebb's land and to Cedric Brown for the maintenance work that he carries out there. Grateful thanks were due to Mrs Eileen Haines and the Bishop Blaize Support Group for the vigilant watch they are keeping regarding any activity (or non activity) which takes place and keeping in contact with Cherwell District Council in this regard. Turning to the Parish Council Meetings, the Councillors very much appreciated and thanked County and District Councillor George Reynolds for the advice he gives when he attends as many of the Meetings that he can bearing in mind his very busy schedule. As usual, he extended a warm invitation to all residents to attend the Parish Council Meetings, which are always advertised, and take advantage of the Public Participation part of the Meeting to express views and opinions. Reference was made to his and his wife's personal involvement with a small and impoverished village in Thailand and arrangement are being made here for functions to raise financial support. Finally he thanked his fellow Parish Councillors and the Clerk for their involvement in the knowledge that they all have busy lives.

Clerk's and Responsible Financial Officer's Report

The clerk reported that during the financial year ended 31st March 2008, Income totalled £4,690 comprising mainly a Precept figure of £3,000, a contribution of £161 from Holy Trinity Church towards the cost of repairs between Churchyard and Burial Ground, VAT refunds and pro-rata contributions by Sibford Ferris Parish Council in respect of the new Burial Ground and more on this is referred to in the report on that part of the Meeting devoted to the Burial Ground (see below). The balance of the income figure came from bank interest. Expenditure totalled £6,558 comprising £2,215 in respect of the Burial Ground, £875 in respect of the Churchyard, £91 in respect of the Village Pond, £305 in respect of the maintenance of the Miriam Tebb's land, £470 in respect of grants to the Village Hall, the Sibford Scene and Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School, £2,317 in respect of administration (including the Clerk's salary, insurance and audit costs, stationery and postage), £232 in respect of memberships and subscriptions. The balance comprised sundry payments. The accounts for 2007 have been audited without qualification and copies are always available on demand from the Clerk. Thanks were extended to Mr David Soden for once again carrying out the duties of Internal Auditor and to the Parish Councillors for making the life of the Clerk very tolerable.

The Town Estates Charity

The Report for the year 2006-7 was presented by Mrs Jean White and a copy is attached to these minutes. The Chairman thanked Mrs White and said the village much appreciated the benefits contributed to it by The Town Estates Charity.

To 687



Neighbourhood Watch

Mr Ian Warden kindly spoke in the absence of Mr John Mulley and endorsed the views expressed earlier by PC Phil Morris. It is absolutely imperative that security precautions are taken at all times and that suspicious activity is reported to the police.

Village Hall

The Village Hall report had been prepared by Mrs Joan Broady and was presented by Cllr Muriel Chandler. A copy is attached to these Minutes. The Chairman thanked Cllr Muriel Chandler.

The Bishop Blaize

In the absence of Mrs Eileen Haynes, caused by suffering from a broken leg and a back complaint, her report was read by Cllr Martin Layer. A copy of the report is attached to these Minutes. The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin Layer and asked Mr Tony Haynes to convey the Meeting's thanks to Eileen and the Committee with best wishes for her speedy recovery.

New Burial Ground

The Clerk informed the Meeting that since last year's Annual Parish Meeting work has continued with regard to the preparation of the Burial Ground which, as reported at the previous Meeting, was purchased to allow for use when no more space is available in the Churchyard. During the financial year ended 31st March 2008 the Parish Council received Precept earmarked for the purpose, VAT refunds of £510, pro-rata contribution from Sibford Ferris Parish Council of £343 (with a further sum to come). Expenditure was £752 for ground levelling and seeding, £750 for building and repairing stonewalls and £128 reimbursed to Sibford Ferris Parish Council in respect of VAT Refunds. It is hoped that metal fencing will be installed quite soon at a cost of some £4,000 but a large proportion of this will be funded by a very generous local benefactor. The balance is to be shared, prop-rata with Sibford Ferris Parish Council, Presently, the Parish Council has just £85 earmarked for the Burial Ground but the Precept for the current financial year includes £1,000 earmarked for the purpose. The matter of maintenance will, of course, be ongoing.

Holy Trinity Churchyard

The Clerk reported that in 2007, the Parish Council decided to financially assist Holy Trinity Church with regard to maintenance of the Churchyard in the knowledge that the Church's financial resources are very fully stretched and that Local Government Act 1972 gives Parish Councils the legal power to do so. To date, the sum of £675 had been paid to Mr Cedric Brown in respect of ground maintenance and £200 paid to Mr George Hall in respect of repairs to the stonewalls. The Parish Council is very grateful to the two gentlemen for carrying out the work. Presently, £1,225 is available for future work and £1,000 has been earmarked with regard to the Precept for the year ending 31st march 2009. An estimate in the sum of £2,000 has been received for ground maintenance during the coming financial year.

The Village Pond

Cllr Martin Layer gave a report on the current situation with regard to the Village Pond and a copy is attached to these minutes. He paid tribute to the work of the Pond Action Team led by Mrs Glennis Hardman. The Chairman thanked Cllr Martin Layer.

Opportunities for Play & Children

Cllr Muriel Chandler spoke of her regret that a play area and, perhaps, some facilities for exercise by the not so young, in the village do not exist. Enquiries in the past with regard to the desire for a play area have brought disappointing results. The matter will be kept under review. A copy of her presentation is attached to these Minutes.

Any Other Business.

Mr Tony Haynes enquired as to whether the benefactor in respect of the seat installed at Burdrop Hill had been thanked. The Clerk confirm that this had been done by the Parish Council.

Mr Fred Inns enquired as to whether the wooden arch between the road and the garden at a property in Bonds End Lane met with planning approval. The Clerk was instructed to make enquiries.

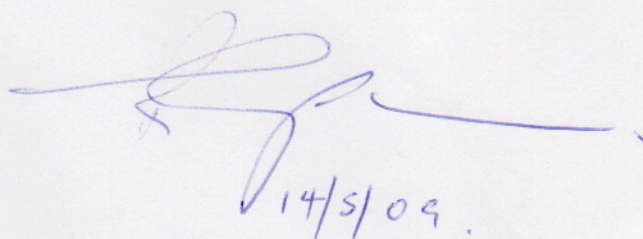
To 688

Mr Fred Inns again raised the danger factor of a gate to a property at Burdrop Corner which from time to time swings into the road creating a danger to passing vehicles. The Clerk will once more take up the matter with Cherwell District Council.

Mr Fred Inns referred to the problem of parking in the Village Pond area and made suggestions as to what might be done with the land in front of The Old Rectory. The Clerk was instructed to seek facts regarding the background of the current use of the land.

Mrs Mollie Mulley spoke of a recent inconsiderate action by a motorist who attempted to move her car that had been parked momentarily in the road whilst she opened her garage door.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked all present for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.35pm.



14/5/09.

VILLAGE HALL REPORT FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING on 8TH. MAY 2008

During the past year Sibford Village Hall has been well supported by regular hirers, which combined with our own fund raising events and private hires has enabled us to keep pace with the day to day running costs. However the escalating heating costs may cause an increase in charges during the coming year.

Under Cherwell District Councils Arts at Large programme we held three events. Salsa dancing evening in December, an evening of laughter and music with the Cosmic Sausages in January and The Juniper Tree, a Children's Play which was supported by Sibford Primary School. All events played to a full house!

We have also held two Quiz Evenings which have proved very popular, with Canon Timothy Wimbush and son James as most able quizmasters.

Sibford Village Hall annual Fayre in June was a huge success, thanks to the support of The Sibford Society re-enacting Sibford Club Day, and the organising skills of Ginny Bennett. The Day was rounded off with Ken Follett's Damn right I've got the Blues Band offered to us by Anthony Harwood of Leasowe House.

We had a change of Chairman during the past year, with Terry Young leaving the village, and Joan Broady taking over the role.

With the help of Sibford Horticultural Club the garden will be returned to former glory, and a work party is planned to remove the ivy and elder from the car park wall. Repair work has been carried out to the guttering and windows, paid for with money from the Town Estates Charity. With this the appearance of the Village Hall should be improved

Looking forward to the coming year we have two events in June. The Damn right I've got the Blues Band is returning on the 7th. And our annual Fayre on the 21st. we intend to hold Quiz evenings, and hopefully an event to include children. The Arts programme now comes under the Live and Local - Oxfordshire get—together title, and through this we will have possibly two shows.

There are grants available to Village Hall's, and they are always pursued when alterations and improvements are planned

We are always looking for people who would be willing to come onto the Village Hall Committee, and thank those who continue to give us their support.

HNAH

Report for Bower Parish Meeting 8/5/08.

This is the edited version of the report for the Annual Parish Meetings. Les will be at the Ferris meeting on Wednesday evening, and will do the report for me. Thanks, Les

"The Bishop Blaize"

What has been happening since I spoke to you last May at the Annual Meeting? I hope that people have been keeping an eye on the monthly reports at the parish meetings, and in our excellent magazine, The Sibford Scene. There is still an amazing amount of support amongst the villagers, and very many people would like to see it open as a pub again. This is not beyond the realms of possibility if we all stick together, and keep up the pressure.

This time last year we were awaiting the result of the second planning application for 'change of use to a private dwelling'. The first such application had been refused by Cherwell District Council Planning Dept. on 5th. Oct. 2006, and it was resoundingly refused a second time on 28th. June 2007. It was refused on the grounds that "it would be contrary to the policies in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011, which seeks to prevent the loss of existing facilities which serve the local community". The pub's owners, Mr. & Mrs. Noquet had threatened to appeal against this decision, but in the event, did not.

As you all know, the "Bishop Blaize" closed on 9th. March last year, with the managers, Rob & Diane staying on until the end of July. On 14th. August, the Noquet family moved back into the building, having told a local councillor that they were going to make a new life in the village, and that the daughter would be attending the Warriner School. We checked with the Planning Dept. at Cherwell DC to see if they were allowed to use it as private accomodation, and were told it was OK as long as they did not live in the downstairs bar area, or they would be contravening the planning permission. As we were fairly certain that they would contravene, we decided to keep a 'log'.

In the next few weeks, all the "Bishop Blaize" signs were taken down, including the brown highways sign, and across the white front door was painted in black "BISHOP'S END". Their 2 dogs were allowed to roam free around the village, causing problems to cars and cyclists, worrying sheep, and fouling footpaths. This was brought to the attention of the Dog Warden, who promised to keep an eye on it. A large horse-box was parked diagonally across the car-park entrance for no apparent reason other than to spoil the view. On 13th. Sept. a load of fencing was delivered to Mr. Noquet, and by the following day, 6-foot gates had been erected across the car-park entrance, obliterating the view completely. We phoned the planning dept. at CDC to see whether this was legal, to be told that it would require planning permission, and to date, no planning application has been made. On further enquiries, it would seem that a planning application had never been made as regards a butane-gas tank, installed by the Noquets in the spring of 2006.

On Monday 1st. Oct. we noticed that all 3 cars had disappeared from the car-park (visible from the rear of the premises). After several days, we realised that they had left, and they have not been seen since, apart from 2 overnight stays on 13th. Nov. and 2nd. Feb., and we now believe them to be living abroad. The mail was delivered through a hastily-cut letter-box in a barn door, and the volume was so great that it started to poke out of the bottom. At this point Mrs. Noquet returned on 2nd. Feb., and was seen sorting through an enormous pile of mail. Obviously they had not seen any post for ages.

We have noticed in the last few months, several bailiffs trying to gain access to the Bishop Blaize all to no avail. Although the pub looks as though nothing is being done regarding its eventual re-use as a Public House we are doing everything possible to keep the authorities informed on the day-to-day happenings at the premises. While we cannot predict what the Noquets will do next with the Bishop Blaize, the appearance of Court Bailiffs could indicate that their options are becoming limited and a change is imminent. As long as we stick together and do not allow the 'change of use' we can even-

tually win. The recent Horton campaign proves that the public can make themselves heard if they keep up the pressure! SAVE THE BLAIZE!

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Please let me have your comments & suggestions by Monday. Thanks.
Regards, Eileen.

Eileen Hayes.

Bring Back the Camp.

THE TOWN ESTATES CHARITY

SIBFORD GOWER AND BURDROP

CHARITY NO 253440

REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL ON ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR 2006-7

This year has again been busy. As a result of a revaluation of all Trust properties there have been several changes to tenancy agreements and serious and on-going deliberations on future policy. It was discovered that sale documents for Wheathills incorrectly show the boundary as being beyond the brook but on investigation land registry title deeds have shown that the brook is the boundary.

The Sibford Heath farm has again consumed a large amount of the yearly income with much needed maintenance expenditure of £27,000 to date and still more to come.

Clearance work in Epwell woods has been agreed but yet to be carried out. The roadside hedge at Wheathills has been replanted where it was not possible to lay a hedge. Consideration was given to the unavoidable churning of the field caused by the need to use the current entry gate but this has not been pursued.

A donation of £10,000 was made to the Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School towards the recent building project on the infants block. A sum of £2000 is promised to the Village Hall for decorating costs. A sum of £250 was paid to the Parochial Church Council for the repair of the Church wall and a further amount has been promised to pay for a ramp for disabled access into the Church. The Trust has continued to pay half the coach costs for the Friendship Club outings and continues to pay the Village Hall rent of £2816 for the Playgroup. A grant of £400 was made to the 1st The Sibfords Scouts to help towards costs to the Jamboree in Holland.

Several elderly residents continue to benefit from chiropody services and provision of personal alarms paid for by the Trust. Grants have been made to other individuals for specific causes. The Christmas special bus went to Leamington this year and the free bus continues to run to Chipping Norton on the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

The accounts for the year show income from rents, interest on investment and wayleaves totalled £26,614. From this sum payments were made for the maintenance, insurance and other expenses and the total distributions under the mandatory categories was:

Relief in Need	£3606	General Benefit	£4051	School	£10,100
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The Trust now benefits from the accountancy skills of Michael Lewis following the resignation of Michael Lovatt. Mike Lewis has also agreed to be a Trustee/Governor replacing Graham Wealsby who has served the community well in this capacity for many years. Graham continues as a Trustee.

Jean White

Secretary

May 2008

START

Village pond

I am once again very pleased to be able to report on the Village Pond.

A major issue raised last year was the concern that the changes in the management of the village pond by the Pond Action Team might present increased hazards to those visiting the pond. Specifically it was felt that the accumulation of silt and organic debris on the floor of the pond might cause difficulties for a child should they fall in to the water.

As reported last year all matters of health and safety are taken seriously by the Parish Council and it was agreed to carry out a health and safety risk assessment to identify the hazards presented by the pond and its immediate surroundings; to assess the risks associated with these hazards and to identify measures for removing or reducing the risks. Information and advice available through RoSPA was drawn upon in the risk assessment together with comparable assessments carried out by schools.

The risk assessment identified a wide range of possible hazards; it made an assessment of the likelihood that they might occur, the groups of people most at risk and the level of seriousness should they occur. It also made suggestions as to how the risks might be managed. A draft risk assessment was circulated to parish councillors and to all those on the Pond Action Team for comment.

Following this consultation changes were made and the formal risk assessment was tabled and subsequently approved by the Parish Council. It was clear that young children and the elderly were the most vulnerable groups but that the shallow water and the relative small size of the pond meant that a wading rescue would always be possible. This conclusion meant that it was not necessary to install equipment such as lifebuoys or reach poles and this decision was welcomed by participants in the process.

It was very widely agreed that the preferred and most effective course of action was to inform and educate and to try and ensure that all visitors to the pond were aware of the associated risks. To this end common sense guidelines were been drawn up and

published in the Sibford Scene. Also letters with these guidelines have been sent to a number of village organisations which fall in to the category of most vulnerable groups. The risk assessment is a dynamic process and can be reviewed at any time if there are changes which are significant. A formal review of the assessment will be carried out annually.

The risk assessment aside the many members of the Pond Action Team under the guidance of Glennis Hardman have been progressively implementing the management plan prepared by Pond Conservation as part of the Ponds for People Project.

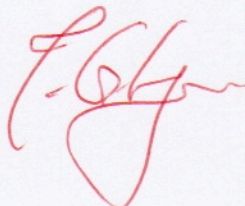
As many of you will have seen the water is clear, the marginal planting is slowly becoming established and the wildflowers are beginning to appear. So far there hasn't been any bloom of algae or weed and the organic matter on the base of the pond which is so important to sustain the ecology of the pond is gradually building up. Unfortunately in and around the Sibfords, frogs and newts are in much reduced numbers and this shortage has also been seen in the village pond where there hasn't been any spawn this year. Ongoing maintenance of the pond is essential and the team are currently clearing the outlet twice a day and addressing other issues nearby which have an impact on the pond and its surroundings.

All in all the team are well satisfied with progress though it is acknowledged that there is a long way to go. The Pond Action Team remains enthusiastic and committed to enhancing the wildlife value of the pond.

As an aside there was a press release on 1st May concerning the role that ponds may play in addressing climate change. Research carried out by a US and European team has found that ponds constructed on farmland trap carbon at a rate some 20 to 50 times greater than the carbon take up of trees. Evidently small waterbodies such as ponds are more effective than larger lakes and that the combined effect of ponds globally is that they may be burying more carbon than the worlds oceans.

Its good to think that the Village Pond could be doing its bit to offset the effects of climate change for future generations in the Gower.

END



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY AND CHILDREN:

HAVING A LARGE FIELD AT THE BACK OF THE VILLAGE HALL, HARDLY EVER USED AND NOW WE ARE MAKING AN EFFORT TO KEEP IT REGULARLY MOWED, I RAISED AN INTEREST IN PLAY EQUIPMENT AND HAVE SINCE BEEN BOMBARDED WITH LITERATURE ON THIS. THERE IS LITTLE TO DO IN OUR VILLAGES FOR YOUNG TEENAGERS AND EVEN CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL IN THEIR ARTS SCHEME GAVE UP ON TEENAGERS. THERE IS NO YOUTH CLUB AND NO-ONE INTERESTED IN RUNNING ONE. ALTHOUGH THERE IS A STRONG SCOUTING GROUP, THIS IS NOT FOR EVERYONE. AT ONE STAGE I THOUGHT A "YOUTH COMMITTEE" AT THE VILLAGE HALL RUN BY OLDER TEENAGERS, WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA AND SPOKE TO A FEW OF THEM WHO AGREED BUT NO-ONE ACTUALLY CAME FORWARD.

PERHAPS WE COULD SEE WHAT LOCAL RESIDENTS THOUGHT OF THE IDEA OF PUTTING PLAY EQUIPMENT IN THE FIELD AT THE HALL, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAVE CHILDREN.

CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL HAVE AN OUTDOOR PLAY FORUM AT DEDDINGTON ON 10th JUNE. OXFORDSHIRE PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION PRODUCE A REGULAR NEWSLETTER, HAVE A WEBSITE AND ALSO HAVE FOUR ROADSHOWS IN OXFORDSHIRE IN JUNE, ON MANAGING, MAINTAINING AND INSPECTING A CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND.

MANY FIRMS NOW PRODUCE PLAY EQUIPMENT AND SHELTERS FROM TODDLERS TO ADULTS – PERHAPS WE COULD START WITH A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT FOR EARLY TEENAGERS, THEN PERHAPS ONE FOR ADULTS – MOST OF US WANT TO GET FITTER!

OPEN SPACES ARE A GREAT ASSET IN A COMMUNITY IN GENERAL AND FOR CHILDREN IN PARTICULAR. PLAY EQUIPMENT HAS TO PASS VERY STRICT STANDARDS.

A GREAT MANY GRANTS AND FUNDING IS AVAILABLE AND THE RISKS OF HAVING SUCH A PLAYGROUND HAVE NOT, I AM TOLD, INCREASED. I FOUND OXFORDSHIRE PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION VERY HELPFUL WHEN ADVICE WAS NEEDED FOR THE VILLAGE HALL.

IS ANYONE INTERESTED AND WOULD ANYONE BE PREPARED TO ASSIST?

M Chandler.
9th May, 2008.