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The reality can be rather different! One new villager was heard to

complain that the cows mooed too loudly, another asked the farmer to keep his pheasants out of her garden! But our villages are not a theme park, one of their great delights is that they are "real" communities not picture book fantasies. The challenge is how to provide continuity with the past, whilst adapting to the changing requirements of the new millennium.

Our sense of community is precious but quite fragile. It depends on the diversity of people in the villages. Diversity means that our community is totally unlike a suburban street of like-minded commuters, or a block of flats in Bournemouth. We have all ages, all kinds of occupations. No one label can be attached to us. We are a rich smorgasbord of all sorts: some eccentric and much loved "characters", some wealthy, others hard up, some commuters, farmers, retired diplomats, entrepreneurs, curmudgeons, people born and bred in these villages. We are not all made out of



ticky-tacky and we don't all look the same! Vive la difference! Our sense of community also depends on a rural setting. Even though so many farms have been sold, we are still surrounded by open country, and it still intrudes into the villages. We see deer in our garden, pheasants appear under bird-tables, pairs of courting ducks insist on living dangerously on the road verges, the rough bark of foxes can still be heard summoning their cubs for a kill.

The moment the Wychwoods become part of a suburban sprawl of identikit little boxes, linking Witney with Chipping Norton is the moment we say goodbye to a village way of life.

Liz Clarke-Watson

What are your thoughts on what makes the Wychwoods special? Let us know. Call Liz Clarke-Watson on 01993 830368 or, e-mail ; l.clarke@cranfield.ac.uk

NEWS FROM FIFIELD

Ending the Year in fine style

The year ended in fine style with a carol evening - carols sung at various points in the village followed by more carols, mulled wine and mince pies in Village Hall. Bob Forster and Ron Curtis were both in good voice and led the singing, and people gave generously towards our donation to the Wychwood Day Centre.

As always at this time of the year,

the Committee likes to express its appreciation to everyone who so enthusiastically and loyally supported its efforts during 2002.

We already have some dates in mind for 2003 - and perhaps a few new ideas; so watch this space!

Happy New Year to you all.

Pat Yaxley