

# Flood Relief

## In Ascott-under-Wychwood

On Friday 15th January the Environment Agency held an event to recognise communities who had completed significant flood-relief works. The event was the idea of the Rt. Hon David Cameron and nine communities from Wilts, Oxon and Glos were invited to give a five minute presentation of their work. Ascott-under-Wychwood was chosen as one such community and, having had close dealings with the EA for more than two years, I was asked to give the presentation.

### At Least 20 Significant Projects



It soon became obvious that it was impossible to knock all Ascott's achievements into five minutes! The community has much to be proud of as more than 20 significant projects have been completed so far. I have lost count of the people who need to be thanked. We have had resident working parties clearing the flood plain, removing debris from the river, stabilising banks and sowing seed. Within the village, landowners have dredged ditches and culverts and OCC has rebuilt two culverts and cleaned drains. All the river riparian owners have pollarded or removed trees and cleared the channel of vegetation, debris and slipped banks. And if all our wonderful

work fails to keep the water at bay, the PC has developed a Parish Emergency Plan which they hope to perfect with a 'dry' run this spring.

### Chippy Bridge

However, it was the work on the river that the EA wanted to trumpet and particularly the clearing around the Chipping Norton road bridge and the railway bridge. The flood arches of the Chippy Bridge were badly blocked and to achieve the clearance we needed a remarkable example of a partnership project. Ultimately four landowners, two tenants, Cornbury, OCC, the EA, Ascott Village Charity and a working party of residents contributed to uncovering a very handsome road bridge in full working order! We hope that, with more water passing under the bridge, there will be



less on the floodplain, which includes the Chippy Road.

Many of you will know that Ascott residents had battled to persuade Network Rail to clear the river of a derelict cart track under the railway bridge. This is not a minor project as the cart track had formed part of the foundations of the bridge wall. Residents could never

*Continued on page 17*

understand why NR did not hurry to do this work. AT LAST, after much political lobbying, contractors started at the end of the summer and by October discovered



that the scouring of the bridge wall *had* allowed water to pass into the embankment. (Residents were not surprised!) After much scratching of heads the wall is now properly anchored but the delay has meant that the project will not be complete until the river level drops again. Once finished, the bank will be re-profiled and stabilised with piling and the derelict track removed, thereby increasing the channel capacity by 10%. In addition, the EA has worked alongside NR to raise land in two places for the

protection of vulnerable properties and to increase the floodplain capacity with a flood channel. This channel is not yet complete but did come into action when the river flooded due to the sudden snowmelt. (much to the relief of the EA!).

### **Building on Success**

The event gave communities the opportunity to share ideas which could be useful to Ascott in the future. However, while the EA wanted to ‘celebrate’ achievements, most of the nine communities were cautious.

Many, including Ascott, praised the way that the community had learnt to work together; they talked of co-operation, friendship, pride in achievements so far and optimism.

All parties recognised that funds are now scarce and David Cameron called for lateral thinking and good partnership between residents, landowners and agencies. We recognise that our work will be tested and we shall note failure and build on our successes. So far so good! Well done!

**Philippa Carter**

## **Ravens Cheerleaders**



Now into their 6<sup>th</sup> year, the Ravens meet every Friday during term time to practise their cheerleading and baton twirling. Catering for all ages from 5 years upwards, and parents are welcome to stay and watch. The action takes place at the Baptist Church Hall, Milton High Street, from 5:30 - 7:00pm. Membership is just £5 per term or £2 per session.

**Ros Harrison**

## **Heather Collects**

**For Charity.** Old **mobile phones** and **inkjets** for McMillan Nurses. **Used postage stamps** for a donkey sanctuary. **Old broken jewellery, odd ear-rings** for Diabetes research. Please leave at Southfield, Leafield Road or Milton Deli. **Heather Derkacz**