

WINTER 2008

CHRIST CHURCH

WEST WIMBLEDON



Parish Magazine

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Welcome

Many years ago, I attended an excellent day conference on the subject of 'Science and Religion'. Some pretty heavyweight contributors from both sides of the argument – and it was an argument in those days – were present.

Today, Professor Dawkins notwithstanding, the two academic disciplines are a good deal more open to exploration and mutual listening. But as late as the 1980s there was still reluctance for the two 'sides' to talk to each other. Many on either side of the debate thought they had as complete a picture of the truth as they needed thank you very much. At the conference, one contributor with a less than sympathetic view of religion, opined that science was too complicated for all but trained scientific minds. He suggested that the common herd (not his words!) couldn't grasp the complexities of scientific knowledge and that it was really best left to the experts. Scientists were of a higher order than the rest of us, for they were the holders of knowledge. For a non-believer he offered a very high view of the (scientific) priesthood!

I was reminded of this conference recently by the turmoil in the financial markets. I have to confess that after metres and metres of newspaper column space given over to the various disasters that have befallen the banks, markets and various associated businesses in the last six months, I'm still pretty much in the dark as to what 'short selling' really is, why everything has seemed to implode so radically or whether that can really have been everyone's favourite neo-con

George Bush Jnr throwing \$700 billion of public money at the difficulties after ten minutes thought and with a three page plan.

I realise how alienated I am from the headlines by my lack of knowledge. It doesn't keep me awake at night – I'm pretty much the same when it comes to the workings of my car or the mental processes of 10 and 15 year old boys – but I do recognise a problem. It really isn't good for us to be in the dark about things that matter. Thank God for Christmas then.

If there is a tendency for science, the world banking system, mechanical things and our children to leave otherwise intelligent, serious newspaper reading citizens feeling like Homer Simpson having an off-day, then religion and the religious, have frequently, through the centuries, been guilty of the mistake my scientist made all those years ago. Too often we have allowed the



impression to be given that God is for the experts, that faith is complicated, involves years of study before you can have anything worthwhile to say about it and that actually, the whole thing is probably best left to clever people like priests and the odd strange lay person who goes in for that sort of thing. For the rest of you.... we clever ones will let you know all you need to know...

Christmas de-bunks the experts, scraps the reading list and sends the Holy Joes to the back of the line. As we approach another season of festival, celebration and thanksgiving, we do so because God at Christmas comes and stands next to us. The books of rules and practices are pushed to one side in favour of the reassurance that we are loved. Experts we may not be, filled with questions, doubts uncertainties, objections most of us usually are, but Christmas frees us

from the need for expertise. Or rather reminds us that we are all more than adequately endowed with the necessary qualifications for being close to God: we all have GCSEs, Degrees, and Doctorates in what it is to be human. After the poverty stricken family limp into Bethlehem and have their baby in a cow shed, God is with every single person who looks for him as absolutely and as completely as he or she is ever going to need.

There are lots of times when we need expertly qualified people to help us in our lives but times when we need God are not among them. Christmas is God's gift of himself to us. Just ask and the gift is given.

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PCC News

Brenda Clark gives us an update of the recent work of Christ Church's PCC

Much of the work of the PCC concerns the administration of church affairs, such as building repairs and maintenance, upgrading office equipment and other practical matters. It is part of the work of the churchwardens to monitor these issues, and at the PCC meeting in September it was reported that quotes have been obtained for repair of the west window and a new printer for the office.

The main item for discussion on the agenda was teaching, mission and communication work. We looked at those activities already happening at Christ Church – for example, the Friday morning Bible Study Group, Lent and Advent courses, and the new “Christian Basics” course. The latter has been well attended and similar courses may be set up in future to look at topical theological issues.

There was also a lively debate on the merits of chat rooms and a Christ Church “blog” to improve communication within the parish!

As far as finance goes it was reported that stewardship income had shown a welcome increase as members had reviewed their commitments at the beginning of the year.

Bishop Wilson Sitshebo of Matabeleland, pictured here with Celia Thomson on a visit to London in 2001, will be sadly missed



The investment portfolio has been reviewed in the light of the current financial storm. The church will inevitably suffer large losses, but it was felt that the existing investment policy is suitable for the long-term.

Plans for the 150th anniversary of Christ Church were reviewed, as they will be at each PCC meeting from now on. It was agreed that more publicity was need to encourage people to sign up to help with the organisation of each event, and a list for each event will be put up in church. We want it to be a celebratory year for everyone to enjoy.

A letter of condolence has been sent from the PCC to Bishop Wilson's widow. The Bishop worked in our link diocese in the Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe, and has made several visits to our parish. He is remembered with affection by many members of the congregation.

Harvest Festival

On the Saturday before our Harvest Festival, the Christ Church bakers gathered at St Matthew's Hall with friends from St Matthew's and St Mary's to make our Harvest loaves. Inspired by our lovely bread in years past, bakers from the other churches gathered to learn from the Christ Church experts how it was done. Many skills and stories were shared over the dough!

The photo below shows the Portesham Jug, which has now been used at Christ Church Harvest Celebrations since 1996. During the service it was placed on the altar beside the harvest loaf.

This jug, which dates from about 1850, is blue with yellow and white embossed sheaves of corn around the sides, and gilding at the top and over the handle. Originally it was used at the Harvest Festival communion held at St Peter's Church in Portesham, Dorset. It was given to Christ Church by Elizabeth Fleming, a member of our congregation, whose great grandfather had been a churchwarden at St Peter's and farmed at Portesham.



The bakers of Christ Church share their skills

Going for Green

...with Nick Robins



Operation Noah

We know from the turmoil in global financial markets that it is not just the Third World that has a 'debt crisis', but ourselves too. And just as banks have found themselves over-leveraged so too is the planet itself, with our consumption depleting its stores of precious natural capital.

Fortunately, we can kill two birds with one stone – reducing our dependence on debt, while diminishing our pressure on the planet. As we enter Advent, Operation Noah, the church's climate change campaign, has launched a new initiative to Reclaim Christmas (www.operationnoah.org). The aim is to help us all to experience Advent as a period of quiet reflection and eager anticipation for the birth of Christ, rather than a time to buy and consume more than we and our earth can afford. The simple message is – Pray Now, Buy Later.

Operation Noah quotes Father Christopher Jamison: *“Advent is the traditional month of preparation before Christmas... a time of... prayer... of eager expectation... a time to celebrate waiting as a normal part of human experience, when the Christian tradition invites us to wait for the birth of a child. In Advent we rejoice that we are waiting, that there is still time to prepare a way for the Lord and we celebrate the virtue of patience. By contrast, the consumer world tells us not to wait but to ‘buy now.’ Greed cannot wait, so to learn to wait is a simple antidote to greed.”*



Fundraising

Make a date in your diary now for some exciting future events says **Martin Evans**

Christ Church welcomed autumn with a Michaelmas quiz and supper on 27 September when sixty members of the congregation and their friends gathered at the hall with wits sharpened and appetites whetted.

The culinary skills of Celia Berwick were once more to the fore as she supervised the kitchen, ably assisted by her fellow Social & Fund Raising Committee members.

Suitably sustained by a delicious goulash with noodles and meringues with berry compote, contestants then had their knowledge comprehensively challenged by quiz questions composed by Sharon Mawhinney and read out by Churchwarden Mark Adams.

It was good to see new faces during the evening, an illustration of how such entertaining events extend our outreach into the local community.

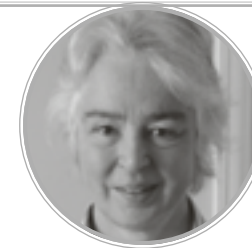
The Jigsaw Players continue with their superb monthly concerts of

classical chamber music at Christ Church, with audience numbers growing as word gets round about the high quality musicianship of these talented young professional musicians. Forthcoming concerts include "A Candlelight Concert" on Saturday 20th December and a special Christ Church Birthday Concert on Saturday 17th January 2009. For more details log on to www.jigsawplayers.com

Plans also develop apace for the Christ Church Sesquicentennial celebrations in 2009, including the gala dinner on Saturday 13 June 2009. Make a date in diary or personal organiser now!



Food for thought! Celia and her team (L-R, Dee Babar, Wendy Hamilton, Celia and her daughter Bridget) work their magic



Charitable Giving

Jenny Tomlinson gives an update on the causes Christ Church is supporting

During Advent and over Christmas collections at Christ Church will go to a number of charities. We will be collecting for Faith in Action – a local Merton charity. Our Christingle Service collection will go to the Children's Society, and our Crib Service to Christian Care. Christ Church supports one local and one international charity at its Christmas collections – this year we've chosen Merton Carers' Support and Biblelands.

Biblelands is a UK Christian charity working through some 50 Christian Project Partners in Israel and the Occupied Territories, Lebanon and Egypt. All these countries face very serious problems. In Israel and the Occupied Territories there are very high levels of unemployment, deep poverty, interruptions to education and a shortage of basic necessities. Lebanon is slowly rebuilding after years of devastating civil war. Many Egyptians are desperately poor and resources have been

further stretched by the arrival of many refugees from Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Biblelands makes grants to further work in education, social and medical care, vocational training and refugee care. Education is given great importance and schools are supported in Cairo, Jerusalem, Bethany, Bethlehem, Hebron, Beirut and the Bekaa Valley. They provide good quality Christian-based education for children whose families could not otherwise afford it, including specialist education for children with special needs and disabilities. It supports people of any faith or none. Religious instruction differs according to Faith.

Other projects provide social care for orphans across the region. There are projects providing specialist medical care and local healthcare where travel to specialised centres would be difficult. Training to degree level for nurses is also supported as well as other vocational and rehabilitation facilities for young people.





Parish Personage

This Issue
LYNDA COLEMAN

Lynnda and her husband Tom live in Arterberry Road and their daughter Bess was christened at Christ Church.

• She is a fan of David Suchet as Poirot, and enjoys detective stories and historical biography. Her current good read is William Hague's biography of William Wilberforce. She enjoys the theatre and loves the spectacle of opera.

• She helps with the South Ridgway Residents Association and the local committee of the National Trust.

• Lynda has done the rounds of jobs at Christ Church. In the past, she's helped with our Sunday School and though she doesn't like being on a rota she's always happy to help. As Gift Aid Recorder, Lynda recovers income tax, a task which gives her a "certain satisfaction".

• She serves on the Hall Committee and looks after the regular bookings. She is a member of the Pastoral Team which organises the Thursday Teas and helps the older members of the congregation. And then there is also the PCC!

• Lynda has been a member of the Friday Bible Study Group for many years and values the support and fellowship she has received from it. She loves Christ Church for all sorts of reasons. Many of the congregation come from outside the parish. They make a positive choice to join our diverse, liberal and welcoming community. There are no cabals and there is a younger element.

• Looking to the future, Lynda wants to explore ways to integrate the young families who come to the Lifelines Service with the rest of the congregation.

Lynda talked to Bruce Burnham

Focus in the Community

Dorothy Burnham talks to

Paul Hart of Wimbledon Beaumont Care Home

Wimbledon Beaumont is a 42 bedroom nursing home and has 21 assisted living apartments which can be purchased on lease and include care and support. There are about 60 staff and the home has been there for a good 20 years of which Paul Hart has been General Manager for the last two. It is part of Barchester Healthcare Homes which has about 175 homes in the group.

The home is surrounded by gardens and has wonderful views, situated as it is towards the top of the hill on Arterberry Road. Its motto 'Retire in Style in Wimbledon' is certainly reflected in the elegance and charm of the buildings and décor. A recent inspection by CSCI (www.csci.org.uk) has given the care home three stars, which means that – in the opinion of their draft report – the people who use the service experience excellent quality outcomes.

I was impressed by the way in which the residents are seen as the centre of activity at the Beaumont. Mr Hart doesn't accept that the old and frail can't take part in modern pastimes! Activities on offer are diverse, ranging from an internet café with email and photographic

support to art classes! The aim is to stimulate and involve residents – to enhance their quality of life.

The menu is like that of a 5 star hotel, and had I been eating there for lunch on the day I visited I would have had Crab Stick Marie Rose, followed by Pork chop with barbecue sauce and vegetables and for dessert Osborne Pudding with butterscotch sauce!

Mr Hart places the residents and their friends and relatives at the heart of any initiatives for improvement, saying that he relied heavily on dialogue and feedback. IT is at the centre of new resources and I was impressed that the residents are offered digital TV.

Mr. Hart was very positive in his response to new regulations saying that they improved the quality of care offered. He felt that nowadays the market was more competitive because the general public was more aware and demanded a high quality as a result. Wimbledon Beaumont relies on recommendations and professional referral and has no direct advertising, which is a recommendation in itself.

Links with local

churches, schools (whose choirs visit the home), the Wimbledon Theatre (which offers shortened versions of its shows to the residents) and the fact that there is a full-time activities manager, all help illustrate the level of activity in this 'retirement' home.

The proximity of parks such as Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park means that the residents can be taken by minibus to enjoy their surroundings.

Mr Hart feels that 'involvement' defines a community and I feel that in this beautiful home on Wimbledon Hill – in what is perceived by the residents as a safe, affluent community supporting innumerable charities – one would be involved to the full.

Residents at the Beaumont enjoy 5 star meals and an internet café





View from the Pews



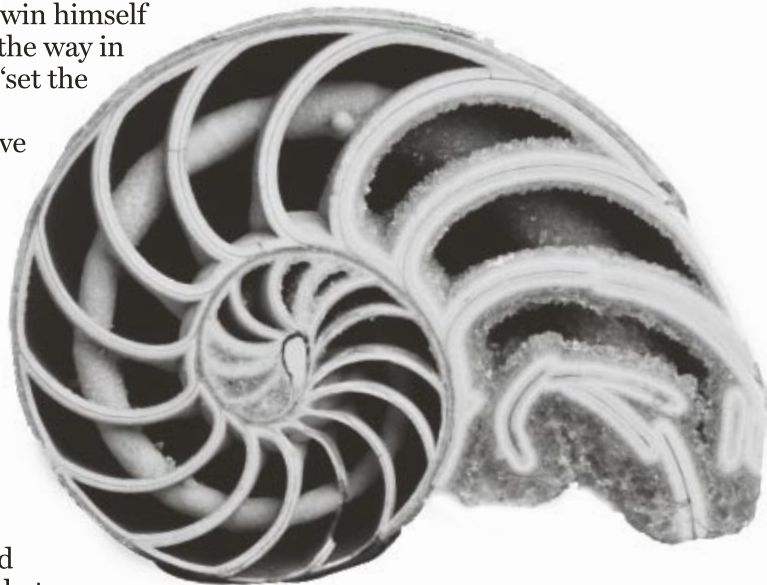
Darwin and Dogma

On its website the Church of England has recently apologised to Charles Darwin for rejecting his theory of evolution 150 years ago. Such penance is unnecessary. Admittedly Thomas Huxley, ‘Darwin’s bulldog’, provoked Bishop Wilberforce into memorable retorts about monkeys during the famous Oxford Union debate, but it is now agreed that: ‘With few exceptions the leading Christian thinkers in Britain and America came to terms quite easily with Darwinism and evolution.’ Darwin himself described as ‘base’ the way in which reviews had ‘set the Priests at me.’

The desire to drive a wedge between science and religion has blazed anew with the forced resignation of the Reverend Professor Michael Reiss from his post as director of education of the Royal Society. He had said in a public lecture that

his experience as a biology teacher had led him to believe it was better to treat creationism as a ‘world view’ than to dismiss it out of hand.

It was self-defeating to ignore the 10 per cent of pupils in our multi-cultural society who believed the literal biblical story of creation. If they asked questions about creationism in science classes, teachers should answer them, explaining why creationism has no scientific basis. It was not enough to leave the matter to RE teachers who lacked scientific expertise. “If one simply gives the impression that



such children are wrong, then they are not likely to learn much about science. Simply banging on about evolution and natural science didn’t lead some pupils to change their minds. Teachers needed to take time to explain how science works and why creationism has no scientific basis.” Discussing creationism as a world view is not the same as lending it scientific credibility.

Such views might seem uncontroversial but they were instantly seized upon as fresh evidence of the expansion of creationist teaching in maintained schools. *The Guardian* crassly misrepresented Professor Reiss’s distinction between discussion and teaching: “Creationism and intelligent design should be taught in school science lessons, according to a leading expert in science education.”

Leaders of the teacher unions thundered into print. Relying on these reports and fearing for their reputation, the good and the great at the Royal Society described the lecture as dangerous and outrageous. Richard Dawkins claimed it was a sketch from Monty Python to have a clergyman in charge of education in the country’s leading scientific organisation. Under such obloquy, Michael Reiss resigned.

Thomas Huxley was determined

to divorce the scientific world from clerical control. There may well be some such motive among the perpetrators of this witch-hunt, perhaps that science lessons should become a place for promoting hard-line atheism, as Professor Peter Atkins alarmingly suggested on the Sunday programme. More likely is the anxiety that the extremes of U.S fundamentalism will be replicated here.

As to Darwinism and belief in a Creator God, Charles Darwin himself quoted with approval the words of Charles Kingsley: “It is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other... forms” as to believe that each creature required a fresh act of creation.

The Bishop of Chester in a recent article on the dispute concludes: “It is better to think of God’s creative hand embracing the whole of the evolutionary process, and harnessing purely natural aspects, such as random genetic mutations, and subsequent testing by natural selection. But the assertion that such forces are all that are at work is far from a proven theory, despite the dogmatic claims of some scientific secularists.”

Colin Holloway



The Wide Angle Lens



Ian Christie on the part world religions can play in tackling climate change

For the past few months the political world and bewildered citizens have been transfixed by the convulsions in the global financial system. The ‘meltdown’ of banking and the prospect of a new Depression have dominated the headlines.

However, all the while greenhouse gases have continued to accumulate in the atmosphere, threatening serious destabilisation of the climate. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has just warned that loss of habitat, human pressures and climate change are contributing to rapid decline in animal populations. IUCN argues that the damage is such that a huge proportion of species - perhaps a third - could become extinct by 2050. How much of Nature can we eliminate before we do irreparable harm? We don’t know, but are well on the way to finding out.

These crises are profound: they dwarf the economic turmoil, but command a fraction of the attention. Business, governments and voters are fixated on economic issues. Sure, governments around the world recognise the looming environmental crisis, but necessary action remains woefully inade-

quate. If we are to take ecological challenges seriously, demand for action needs to come from movements calling for changes in values and behaviour that can help us live ‘lightly’ and sustainably on Earth. This is where the great religions, and inter-faith cooperation, come in.

Recently the Environment Agency asked environmental experts, most presumably atheists or agnostics, what the top 50 tasks were for making a sustainable world. Top was reducing energy demand. To the surprise of the Agency, the second most important was for the world’s religious communities to lead in demanding environmental action, and in exemplifying the changes needed.

The Faiths are responding. For many years Patriarch Bartholomew of the Greek Orthodox Church has been a pioneer in raising awareness of ecological risks and values. The Church of England has begun to take action, for example via the initiative Shrinking the Footprint. The Roman Catholic Church is stirring: a Papal Encyclical on climate change is widely expected in 2009. And in September the Churches in the UK dedicated a month to ‘prayer for the protection

of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles’.

Most striking, the main Faiths are collaborating on statements of values and action concerning climate change, fair development and biodiversity. These will be presented at the November 2009 Copenhagen summit where governments will try to forge a new global deal on climate. The big religions will have a major role, and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (www.arcworld.org) is coordinating their contributions.

Sceptics might ask: where’s the beef? It is all very well for Faiths to write new Green prayers or issue anxious statements, but what can they really offer? Several features stand out. First, we need to hear from organisations concerned with more than just economic growth: the religions are pre-eminent among bodies willing to speak of personal ethics, ultimate values and duties towards Creation.

Second, the Faiths need to find common causes that can unite them internally and provide ground for collaboration between them and secular agencies: the environment stands out as such a potential ‘space’ for cooperation, and especially where conflicts over resources

threaten to get worse.

Third, the Faiths’ own huge amounts of property: making as many as possible of these buildings energy- and water-efficient would be a powerful signal to others, and a stimulus to eco-friendly business.

Fourth, the Faiths are the largest producers of mass media in the world and together have a bigger potential audience than any political party or corporation. Finally, the Faiths are big investors, in pension funds, social enterprises and the stock market: in alliance with other ‘sustainable investors’, they could help shift the world’s dysfunctional financial markets towards sane low-carbon development.

So, there is much to play for as well as to pray for. The task of creating a sustainable economy and society is too big to be left to just business and governments, and it demands changes in values and behaviour as well as in technology. There is growing interest from the secular world in what the Faiths can do for the planet, individually and in new collaborations. Can they rise above internal and mutual quarrels to meet this challenge? Our chances for a sustainable future could depend on it.

Religious Education



Richard Lane on the role of education at Christ Church

At a recent meeting of the PCC, we took Education as our topic for discussion and reviewed our current practice.

There are a wide variety of opportunities for people at Christ Church to learn more about their faith and the teaching of the church. Perhaps most obviously there are Sunday morning sermons.

Sermons should always preach the gospel Jesus taught and should help us to develop our sense of relationship with God and inform our journey toward God.

They will not always be 'lessons' in a school or college sense, nor will they always be academic.

In fact if I'm preaching they aren't likely to be as I don't see a sermon as a place for that sort of expository didacticism. This is better located in one of our autumn discussion groups, Christian Basics courses or Confirmation and First Holy Communion groups – each of which exist to help people at different stages of their journey to become better informed.

We offer a Friday morning

discussion group and during Lent and Advent groups gather to prepare for Easter and Christmas respectively. These groups all offer a mixture of 'straight' education with the opportunity for prayer, discussion and reflection.

We try to inform the congregation about forthcoming events around us in Wimbledon and more widely in other parts of the

city and recognize the value of this magazine as a place to share ideas and aspects of our faith.

In the near future we intend to begin a monthly group that will meet

to learn about and to discuss significant contemporary issues of faith, practice and theology for Christians - matters from and concerning society and also matters to do with the church.

There was a discussion about setting up of a church blog or chatroom – a modern way of communication. Ideas for this will be discussed with KFH – our youth group and the appropriate Diocesan Adviser. Members of the congregation will be encouraged to lead or share the leading of discussion groups, and events such as the

'Drop Richard a line with your comments or ideas'

Pastoral care Christ Church

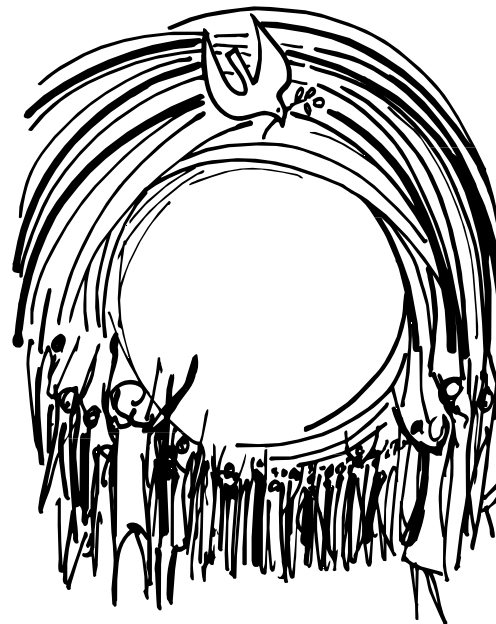
We regard pastoral care of the congregation and of the wider parish as a core aspect of our life and work at Christ Church.

Again and again I hear people say to me that one of the reasons they like coming to church is that we are friendly and bothered about each other. This won't be a universal experience and we are not the perfect church; but it is true that the atmosphere of care and concern at Christ Church is a defining feature of this community. We need to check up on ourselves from time to time to make sure that our pastoral care is effective and widespread.

The Pastoral Team exists to work with and help any member of the congregation that needs pastoral care and is always happy to welcome new members to their number.

We have recently welcomed Sarah Castle to the office of SPA (Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary) at Christ Church and Sarah is doing valuable work visiting and co-ordinating our care of the bereaved. Care of those whom we serve in the parish and care of one another is a crucial part of who we are and what we do as a church.

Please be in touch with Richard in the first instance if there are ways you can see to make that care more effective.





Common Talk

Conservator, **Diana de Coverly Veale** on encouraging more people to visit the Common...

Natural England recently announced that one of their priorities is to encourage more people to visit and enjoy country areas of natural beauty. This ties in with one of the aims of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators.

For the past three years the WPCCC Natural History Sub-Committee has been negotiating with The Environment Agency as to the possibility and methodology required to construct a 'scallop' on the west bank of the Beverley Brook that runs through the piece of grassland near to Brook Cottage (known as The Scout Field).

In years gone by it was a regular venue for annual visits of various scout groups who would either pitch camp for a few days or enjoy picnics in the summer.

We have been anxious to recreate this facility to make the area more popular with visitors. To this end we have persuaded our Clerk and Ranger, Gordon Vincent, to set aside funds for its development. The plan is to make the descent to the river less precipitous, allowing easier access to the level of the water. At the same time we shall be making a shallow scoop into the

bank which will create an area protected from the current. Here we shall plant indigenous plants and hope to encourage fish and other water dwellers into a tranquil resting area.

We have had lengthy correspondence over this development. Anything affecting the banks and the course of the river must be done with the approval of the Environment Agency. We await their final 'go ahead' which has still not arrived despite our repeated reminders. However, we hope to hear soon.

We need to make a start in order that our development is ready to tempt people to visit it and the fish to inhabit it when the fine weather comes in the Spring and Summer of 2009. Meanwhile if you can, do please pay a visit or two to see how we are progressing.

The west bank of the Beverley Brook where we hope to construct a 'scallop'

