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**NEWS BITES**

**Cycle hire plan**

AN 18-MONTH pilot cycle scheme has been given the green light by Oxfordshire County Council. The scheme, which is set to cost around £130,000, would see around 90 bikes being made available for use at 'hubs' such as Oxford railway station and the city centre for the public to ride and return. The bikes could be unlocked using swipe-card technology.

Similar schemes already operate in Europe, Cheltenham, Reading and Bristol.

Oxfordshire County Council cabinet member for transport Ian Hudspeth said: "The possibility of bringing a cycle hire scheme to Oxford is something we have been keen to explore for a while now. We believe a large number of residents, regular visitors, tourists and city workers could reap the benefits of a well-organised and user-friendly scheme."

The scheme could be up and running by mid-2010 if funding is secured.

**Knockout date**

A DINNER to fund a new gymnasium is being held by Abingdon Town Amateur Boxing Club.

The club is trying to raise cash to build its own facilities for training. The event will be at the Guildhall, in Abbey Close, on Friday, May 22, from 7pm to midnight. Tickets cost £35. For more information, call Robert Southey on 01235 525492.

**Day of prayer**

WOMEN from Didcot are to take part in Women's World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 6.

The annual event, which is recognised by all denominations, is celebrated worldwide. Services will be held at St Peter's Church, Newlands Avenue, at 10am and at the Baptist Church Centre in Wantage at 7.30pm.

**Branch AGM**

THE annual meeting of the Witney branch of the Royal Air Forces Association takes place at the Windrush Club in High Street at 7.45pm on Tuesday, March 3.

**For sporty kids**

A NEW running and cycling club for young people has been set up in Rose Hill, Oxford. For more information, call Adam French on 01865 749971.

# Ambulance's mercy call - to Mongolia!

## Four-man team prepare for 10,000-mile fundraising drive



AN AMBULANCE that has seen a decade of service in Oxfordshire is setting off on a 10,000-mile journey to its new home in Mongolia.

Two Oxford men have joined a four-man team which will set off from London in the Mongol Rally this summer to raise money for Oxford's Douglas House Hospice. Nick Hawkins, from North Oxford, George Crowther, from Headington, Matt Davis, from Southampton, all 24, and Dave Andrews, 25, from London, will donate the ambulance to a hospital in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, once the epic adventure is complete.

The rally goes through countries including Turkey, Iran,

• Matt Davis and Nick Hawkins are embarking on a magical mystery tour to Mongolia in a ten-year-old ambulance

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
by ANDREA PANTELIC

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Russia, and the intrepid travellers will be among 500 vehicles taking part in the annual event, which is organised by the Adventurists.

The ambulance was donated to the team by South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SCAS), and the four hope to raise £10,000 for Douglas House Hospice in Magdalen Road, which provides respite, emergency and end-of-life care for young adults, by the time they return home.

Nick Hawkins told the Journal that the fearless foursome do not know what sort of terrain or roads they will be facing and will have only old maps that are not in English.

"I can read the red lines and blue lines, but not much else," he admitted.

As team captain, Nick has claimed the stretcher inside the ambulance as his bed. The others will be left to sleep in chairs or on the floor.

The trust's chief executive, William Hancock, said: "When our vehicles reach the end of their useful life they are usually disposed of through the used vehicle trade as scrap. Their value is very low. We are delighted to be able to make this vehicle available for the Mongol Rally, especially since it also a way of supporting a very worthy Oxford charity."

# Iconic Le Mans race in the frame



MOTOR racing enthusiasts from across the UK will flock to Oxfordshire next month for a film festival dedicated to the history of the iconic Le Mans 24-hour race.

Jackie Oliver, former Formula One racing driver and one-time owner of Leaffield-based team Arrows, will be among a host of guest speakers and will be talking about his experiences as a top driver, including how it felt to win at Le Mans in 1969.

The Legends of Le Mans Film Festival takes place on Saturday, March 7, at Eynsham Hall near Witney, and will include rare film footage of the world-famous event, mainly focusing on 1955 to 1975.

The Le Mans endurance race first took place in 1923. The car that travels the furthest during 24 hours is the winner.

Archive colour film recently acquired by Wallingford-based Aston Martin Heritage

Trust and specially digitised for the event will be among the highlights of the three-hour show.

The event is organised by Witney-based motor racing author and journalist Michael Oliver, who said: "Le Mans is one of the most evocative motor sport events in the world and British cars and drivers have a strong affinity with the race."

"Each year, thousands of British enthusiasts flock there to soak up the great atmosphere."

"Now, we are bringing a bit of that to Oxfordshire."

For more information about the event and to book tickets, visit [www.legendsfilmfestivals.com](http://www.legendsfilmfestivals.com) or telephone 01993 200331.

• ABOVE: Jackie Oliver, winner of the Le Mans 24 hour race in 1969 driving a Ford GT40, is appearing at the Legends of Le Mans Film Festival in Witney.

• BELOW: Festival organiser and journalist Michael Oliver



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