

**Examples of protected sites (see right)**

- Chilterns Beechwoods SAC
- South West London Water Bodies SPA
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA
- Kennet & Lambourn floodplain SAC
- Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill SSSI
- Thames Valley Park East on the western borders of Sonning is a Local Wildlife Site

**Sonning Eye distributor required**

Barry Luther has very kindly distributed *Bridge* for the Society in Sonning Eye for a number of years. However he would welcome being able to pass on the baton. Please contact Lesley Heaney on 0118 969 7231 if you would be willing to help out four times a year.

**Berkshire Gardens Trust lecture**

BGT's Spring Lecture on 21 March will be held in Saint John's Hall, West End Road, Mortimer, RG7 3TF at 8pm.

In "Exploring Kensington Gardens & Brompton Cemetery", Park Manager, Andy Williams, will give a brief overview of these two sites, present some of the contemporary challenges they face and reveal some of the opportunities currently being progressed.

**Berkshire Family History Society meetings**

The Reading branch of the BFHS meets monthly. On Thursday 30 March at 7.45pm Meryl Catty will discuss "Will power". This friendly group meets at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 280 Meadway, Tilehurst RG30 4PE. Entry is free but donations are welcome. Full details can be found on the website [www.berksfhs.org.uk](http://www.berksfhs.org.uk).

The editor wishes the new team luck! :-)



**Future Events**

**Protecting wildlife sites**

Nature Notes by Alastair Driver

Unravelling European legislation is one of the biggest challenges facing the UK government over the next two years; this includes a suite of environmental regulations related to protected sites and species. The highest European nature conservation site designations are **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** designated under the Habitats Directive and **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** designated under the Birds Directive. Currently no development or land use change proposal may have an adverse effect on the ecological integrity of these sites. The only exception to this ruling is when there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which is decided by the Secretary of State.



A representative selection of wildlife sites of national importance are designated as **Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSIs)**. These nationally important sites do not have absolute protection, but local planning authorities (LPAs) are required to have policies in their local plans to protect them and to consult the statutory conservation body (e.g. Natural England) when planning proposals may affect them. It is unclear yet as to whether the cream of these SSSIs will be given some higher status post-Brexit to match their current European protected status, but that would certainly be my hope.

There is also a long list of **European Protected Species** for which it is an offence to recklessly kill or damage their habitat. This list includes the Great Crested Newt for which the UK holds approx. 30% of the world's population and for which we in Sonning are custodians of a

strong 1000+ population. Most of these species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and so will still have some form of legal protection after we have left Europe.

Moving down the scale we come to **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** which must be in public authority ownership and are designated for both their wildlife and for their amenity and/or educational value to local communities.

In Sonning we have an award-winning example in the form of Ali's Pond LNR, owned by SPC and designated as an LNR in 2001. LNRs are afforded a small degree of protection

from development in that they are clearly identified as being important to local communities. However they are not sacrosanct by any means and there are examples where LPAs have allowed LNRs to be built on. We in Sonning are fortunate that our LNR has added legal protection thanks to the presence of Great Crested Newts.

At the bottom end are non-statutory **County or Local Wildlife Sites**. LPAs have a duty to take account of the value of the sites in their planning decisions.

We are lucky to have a strong hierarchy of nature conservation designations in the UK and good data to back that up, but if I had one plea for this aspect of the Brexit process, it would be that we ensure we keep the best of the protection rules we already have, whilst seizing the opportunity to streamline some of the complex planning and permissions processes related to protected species.

*Examples of different types of protected sites locally are listed in Bridge Ends (left).*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES	
<b>14 June 2017</b>	Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7.00pm
<b>16 August 2017</b>	Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7.00pm
<b>8-11 September 2017</b>	Heritage Open Days Weekend - events to be confirmed
<b>16 September 2017</b>	Village Show held at Sonning CofE Primary School 2.00 - 5.00pm

bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

**Green energy in Eye**

Mike Hart, Chairman

Tucked out of sight on the east bank of the backwater channel in Sonning Eye is a new hydropower station under construction by specialist contractor Greenford Ltd. for Pridewater Estates. Pridewater owns 4 marina and caravan sites around the country and is developing this green energy facility to offset its carbon footprint.

The hydropower station is located just downstream of Sonning weir and utilizes the hydraulic head across the weir to generate electricity. Some of



the flow that currently passes over the weir is routed through an Archimedes Screw which can be seen in the photo above, taken in January from the opposite bank. The amount of water that is passed through the facility rather than flowing over the weir is carefully controlled by the Environment Agency.

The diverted water falls down a concrete chute and turns the Archimedes screw which generates the energy via a 99kW generator located in the powerhouse behind. The Archimedes screw is 4.2 metres in diameter, weighs 25 tons and can pass 8,000 litres of water per second to generate up to 2,000kWh of energy per day, enough to supply 150 domestic households.

The energy so generated will be sold into the national grid and the annual

energy produced (some 730,000 kWh per year) will offset almost twice the energy used by Pridewater in their marina and caravan sites so making them carbon neutral. Apart from the production of green energy, other environmental features include a fish pass. Readers may be familiar with

other Archimedes screw installations constructed by Greenford at Mapledurham and Blenheim Palace.

At 99kW this project is somewhat smaller than

the projects that I am involved with in Mozambique (2,000 MW), Tajikistan (240 MW) and Liberia (88 MW), but the principles are the same: water is used to generate electricity by turning a rotor attached to a generator. The amount of energy that a hydropower station can generate depends on the "volume" of water (that is how big is the river) and the "head" (that is the height that the water falls). Because we don't have massive rivers in UK, most of the big hydropower projects are high head facilities located either in Scotland or Wales but smaller mini-hydro facilities such as the Pridewater facility in Sonning are being built for environmental reasons and because the grid is nowadays able to accept small inputs of energy.

**»Eye on Sonning View from the Bridge**

Mike Hart, Chairman

In her front page article in the last edition, Diana Coulter explained the process by which *Bridge* gets from being an idea to the hard copy on your doormat. Diana has been the mastermind behind every one of the 50 issues of *Bridge* that have been published since the Society was founded. She told us a year ago that she wanted to hand over the editorial responsibility after 50 editions and that time has now come!

Diana is a hard act to follow and in the absence of a single volunteer to take over from her we have formed an editorial sub-committee which will manage production from the Summer edition onwards. On a rotating basis one member of the sub-committee will take overall responsibility for each issue, assisted by other members as necessary. The editor for the upcoming issue will shadow the editor for the current edition, and so on.

As Chairman I have drawn the short straw (or been the lucky one!) to edit the Summer issue, and I have shadowed Diana in the production of this edition. Other than myself the editorial sub-committee comprises Jeremy Gilmore (IT), Lesley Heaney (distribution), Pauline Simmonds, Annabella Marks, Bob Hine, Andy Bell and Joyce Reed. You can contact any of us or send an email to [bridge@sonning.org.uk](mailto:bridge@sonning.org.uk).

We hope to keep up the high standard that Diana set - I'm sure you will let us know if we fail!

Bridge: Newsletter of the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society  
 Education & Social Panel  
 email: [bridge@sonning.org.uk](mailto:bridge@sonning.org.uk)  
 web: [www.sonning.org.uk](http://www.sonning.org.uk)

# »Executive Committee & Panels: breaking news

Andy Bell, Patrick Hamblin and Pauline Simmonds

## Co-options onto the Executive 2016/17

At its meeting in December 2016, the Executive co-opted Jeremy Gilmore onto the Committee.

## Planning applications

The Planning & Traffic Panel continues to meet monthly. 13 applications have been reviewed since the last edition.

Our objections to the proposed development of Little Tudor, Duffield Road were sent to WBC. We have subsequently learned that WBC refused the application.

We submitted comments to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) relating to the proposed development of a site for 245 houses in Eye & Dunsden Parish. This would no doubt lead to many more cars making their way through Sonning to reach the A4.

Comments have been sent to the Planning Inspectorate following an appeal against the refusal of change of use to a caravan site on land adjacent to Model Farm Cottages, Bath Road, Sonning.

The Society submitted a letter of support to SODC relating to the proposed alterations to The Mill at Sonning.

## SPC Planning Committee meetings

The Society has observed all the above meetings since the last edition.

## Cycle racks

A cycle rack is to be installed in St George's playing field shortly.

## Traffic issues

The joint working group comprising S&SES and SPC representatives have held discussions with local businesses and others. As noted previously, whilst we have made a good deal of progress in identifying the problematic areas, we realise that finding solutions will take much longer. Once again we would like to ask your help by inviting you to:

1. Describe instances where you have experienced difficulties (e.g. inconsiderate parking, on pavements).
2. Comment on how you feel the problems of parking should be tackled.

Feel free to contact Patrick Hamblin (patrick.hamblin@btinternet.com) or Bob Hine (bob.hine@btinternet.com).

## Local Plan Update:

As noted previously, WBC has published a list of sites for updating the local plan that will guide development in the Borough for the next 20 years and also the gypsy and traveller local plan. There are seven sites listed in Sonning. The list of submitted sites is available on the WBC website. It is understood that an initial assessment of the sites would be undertaken by WBC, which would form part of the Preferred Options consultation that is planned to start in June 2017. It is also understood this is a lengthy process and that completion of the Local Plan is not expected before May 2019. A link to the pages on the WBC website is below:

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-update/#>

The Society is continuing to monitor the list and has also been represented at a meeting of the Northern Parishes on the issues relating to the local plan. Following this meeting a letter from the combined Northern Parishes was sent to WBC highlighting various problems if further development should take place in the area of the Northern Parishes.

# Exclusive museum visit

Pauline Simmonds



Many of you drive past the Royal Berkshire Hospital or visit the wards but have you been to their Medical Museum? It contains a fascinating collection of objects and memorabilia – illustrating the extraordinary developments in medicine during the past 150 years. The Hospital opened in 1839 and many of its first patients were casualties from Sonning Cutting as the new G W Railway expanded westwards.

A private visit has been organised for Society members starting at 2 pm on Sunday 23 April. Parking should not be a problem and transport or car sharing can

be arranged.

Tea will be available at the second venue, the Museum of English Rural Life in Redlands Road. It re-opened in October after a major refit, funded by the Heritage Lottery so you will be able to explore some of their exciting new displays, interactive galleries and archive collections. It promises to be a great afternoon!

Entrance is free but the Hospital Museum welcomes a donation. Numbers are limited so contact Pauline Simmonds (Tel. 0118 969 7033) for more details or to book a place.



## » Membership news

A warm welcome is extended to:

- Mr and Mrs Simmonds
- Mr & Mrs Walker

Welcome packs for new residents are available from Lesley Heaney, the Membership Secretary, on 0118 969 7231.

Finally a reminder that this will be the last edition of *Bridge* you will receive if you have not yet renewed your subscription. If you would like to re-join, it would be appreciated if you could do so promptly. Please contact Lesley as above.

# Not one but two Red House Cottages

Brian O'Callaghan



Soon after we moved into Red House Cottage in December 1995 we were informed by our neighbour, Armine Edmonds (of North Lodge), that our house was so named because it had once been the home of the gardener at The Red House in Thames Street. The original Conveyance dated 8 September 1913 is a hand-written parchment document recording the sale of a parcel of land by Clement Williams of Shelvingstone (Armine's father) to George Alfred Sainte Croix Rose of The Red House. The land at the corner of what we now call Pearson Road and Sonning Lane was adjacent to land (now Old Walls) owned by the South Berkshire

Syndicate Ltd and land retained by Clement Williams (now Groveside). The South Berkshire Syndicate had bought a large part of the Holme Park estate. The land is identified on a 1783 map as "Skittle Ground belonging to Alehouse opposite", owner Mr Rich, tenant James Patey (now Rich's Cottage and Turpins). The price paid was £170. The land was to be used for "...a cottage costing not less than £200 or a cottage and a motor garage."

"The said cottage to be constructed and completed according to plans and elevations to be first approved by the South Berkshire Syndicate Limited, the intention being that no building which is unsightly in its exterior shall be erected. Any dispute or difference touching the same which may arise shall be referred to the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects or [an RIBA member]

nominated by the said President whose decision shall be final."

There are in fact two cottages on the site: Red House Cottage and Nine Pins. A shared rainwater head is dated 1914.

Two further legal documents survive that relate to Nine Pins. These indicate that G.A. Ste Croix Rose died at Appletrees in 1926; under the terms of his will Alfred Norcutt, the occupant of the cottage then known either as 2 Red-house Cottages or Norcutt's Cottage, retained the right to live there until

his death. Alfred Norcutt must have been a valued worker at The Red House. He died in December 1944 and the cottage was then sold to Victor Johnson, a tobacconist, for £2,500. On his death (1962) his widow sold it to Sidney Paddock for £3,500. The name was at this stage changed to Nine Pins.

The architectural style of the two cottages is early twentieth-century Arts and Crafts. The materials and skills deployed on the buildings is of a very high order, perhaps reflecting the condition stipulated in the 1913 indenture.

The walls were constructed of handmade bricks. The original pointing, preserved in sheltered areas, is skilfully ruled in a technique called penny-struck pointing. The brick arches over the windows are in soft red bricks, the same bricks are laid at a 45 degree angle between the timber trusses in the gable ends. Other details include a course of tiles above the ground floor windows and the stepped-out brickwork at the corners supporting the roof timbers. The wooden casements have rectangular leaded glazing. Perhaps the most striking feature of the buildings are the elaborate chimneys which imitate the sixteenth century chimney on Turpins

opposite. Another notable feature is the large semi-detached brick-built sheds in the back garden, probably at least in part, used for storing coal.

At Red House Cottage an Art Deco bath and a double-garage (recently demolished) indicates that improvements were made in the 1930s, probably when an existing tenant moved out. The sky-blue Formica kitchen units and hardboard pinned over the original panel doors were indicative of improvements made in 1964 when Robert and

Sharon Hillier briefly moved in before Harold and Ivy Rowe purchased the house in 1966.

This brief look at two unexceptional cottages reveals that heritage values

can be found in unlisted and relatively humble buildings. These buildings preserve in their fabric the histories of former occupants and the skilled designers and craftsmen who built them. A great deal of history can be extracted from simple sales documents found in many homes, which we should do more to preserve and record. However, this is for the most part a history of men - the history of women and children's lives is perhaps harder to extract, though publication of the 1921 Census in 2022 will at least give us a greater insight into the basic facts of their lives.

