

# bridge

Issue 42 • Spring 2015

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

## Sponsor heritage skills

Annabella Marks

The Society has some funds generated from sales of the book 'Village Voices' that was published following on from the successful exhibition in 2009. It is eager to use these funds to help a young person, or a group of young people, to develop an interest in their local environment. This may be either helping with training with a view to a career or in a project that helps in their understanding of the locality.

There are several local organisations, and many nationally, that specialise in conservation projects e.g. learning to build in a way that is sympathetic to heritage properties, using traditional materials, learning traditional crafts which are in danger of being lost for ever, or developing a deeper knowledge of the things that have made the local

environment what it is. There are short courses as well as apprenticeships that are available and the Society would help the candidate find what would be most appropriate for them. At present the society could donate up to £3,000 to help fund the course(s) but would look to fundraise in the future if the scheme is successful.

The sponsorship is open to any young person in Sonning or Sonning Eye whether they plan to do vocational training or to study at university. The hope is that we can support someone to develop a lifelong interest in conservation and their local environment, even if this is not the focus of their career.

Please contact Annabella Marks by email at [dunsden@aol.com](mailto:dunsden@aol.com) if you would like to discuss this opportunity further.

## »Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

What makes a village special? Ten years ago *Country Life* magazine ran a campaign to find England's Favourite Village. The panel of five judges selected Kingham in Oxfordshire over other contenders including Cerne Abbas in Dorset. The seven criteria selected in the campaign were architectural merit; charm, beauty and setting; quality of life; amenities; vibrancy and community spirit; transport; and village green. The choice of Kingham surprised many people as it was not a chocolate box type of village. The judges chose it because it was more of a working village than a tourist destination and because it had a great all-round atmosphere which catered for everyone within its community.

Sonning and Sonning Eye residents are justifiably proud of their villages, which comprehensively tick the boxes of architectural merit, charm, beauty and setting. These are hugely important but I believe that the most important factors making both so special are the intangible ones of quality of life, vibrancy and community spirit.

In future editions of Bridge we would like to publish your views on what makes Sonning and Sonning Eye so special. We would welcome hearing what about both places ticks your boxes. Please contact us on either of the addresses below.

Bridge: Newsletter of the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society

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Ray Moseley, Director of Bursledon Brickworks, near Swanwick in Hampshire, coaches a College of Estate Management postgraduate student in the handling of lime plaster to make a wattle and daub panel.

# » Executive Committee & Panels: breaking news

Andy Bell, Patrick Hamblin and Pauline Simmonds

## Co-options onto Executive

Jeremy Gilmore, Lesley Heaney and Pauline Simmonds have been co-opted onto the Executive for 2014/15.

## Planning applications

The Planning and Traffic Panel has continued to meet monthly. There have been a number of applications since the last edition and comments have been made by the Society on those for The Little Cottage in the High Street and for Holme Park (Reading Blue Coat School).

Representatives of the Panel met with the developers of August Field and Acre Field to have informal talks on the proposed revised layout for the site.

## 'No Cold Calling Zones'

The Panel has written to Sonning Parish Council (SPC) expressing concern that still more signs will be erected in connection with this initiative.

## SPC Planning Committee meetings

The Society continues to attend the above meetings as an observer.

## Gates in Sonning Lane

A quotation has been obtained for the restoration of the Sonning Lane 'gates'

and an order placed for the work to be carried out. The Scarecrow Committee has agreed to fund the repairs.

## Cycle racks

The Panel continues to investigate suitable locations and types for the provision of cycle racks in the village.

## Sonning Cutting

The initial work carried out by Network Rail, described as 'the massacre of Sonning Cutting' led to many trees being cut down or very poorly and dramatically reduced with much of the undergrowth being removed. The banks of the Sonning Cutting were home to a variety of trees, wildlife and plants and much of the habitat has been destroyed. Thanks to the intervention of Theresa May and Ali Driver the work was stopped and there have been various discussions involving Network Rail and Ali. Ali produced a ten-point plan for the remainder of the work that is being carried out, which has been generally accepted by Network Rail.

## Traffic

The Panel still has to complete its assessment of the practicality of improve-

ments in a number of areas relevant to the village. A report will be available for submission to the Parish Council in due course.

In connection with an additional bridge across The Thames, Wokingham BC, Reading BC, Oxfordshire CC and South Oxfordshire DC are jointly funding a detailed traffic modelling plan to look in detail at traffic on both sides of Sonning Bridge.

## Lafarge Planning Permission for gravel extraction

The Society is supporting the comments made by the Sonning Eye Action Group relating to the lack of consideration to the major issue of flooding in Sonning Eye following the proposed infilling with inert materials following gravel extraction.

## A date for your Diary - 5 June



Our summer outing on 5 June will be an exclusive morning visit to the privately owned Tudor manor, Hardwick House and its surrounding estate, near Mapledurham. More details will follow in the next edition.

# Conserving the Thames

Education & Social Panel



Our next event is a talk on Friday 13 March in the Pearson Hall

The speaker, Dr Richard Mayon-White, has spent many decades exploring the River Thames on foot or in boats and canoes from its source in Gloucestershire to the sea. He has recently written a guide

book, with Wendy Yorke, entitled "Exploring the Thames Wilderness", and his illustrated talk will focus mainly on the 'natural Thames' with examples of its wonderful wildlife and unspoilt nature reserves. But he will also highlight public places, smaller tributaries and hidden pathways in our local area – and hopefully encourage us all to walk and explore on our own

as the weather improves!

The evening starts at 7.30 pm. Tickets cost £4 for members (£5 for guests) and includes a welcoming drink. They are available from Penny Feathers on 0118 934 3193 – or by using the enclosed form.

## » New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

- Mrs J Hunt
- Mr G Pierce

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.



## » Bridge Ends

### Notes and queries

#### Windsor, Eton & the Great Park: a retreat

Members are invited to join a four-day history retreat, 30 March - 2 April 2015, in Cumberland Lodge. This educational event aims to discover the rich history of Windsor, Eton and the Great Park. Talks will be given by William Shawcross (biographer of The Queen Mother), Hugo Vickers, (writer, broadcaster and royal historian), Lady Jane Roberts, (former Royal Librarian and Keeper of the Print Room at Windsor Castle) and Mark Flanagan (Keeper of the Gardens, Windsor Great Park).

Situated in the heart of Windsor Great Park, Cumberland Lodge, a former royal residence, is now run by an educational foundation. More information can be found here: [www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/history-retreat](http://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/history-retreat)

#### Berkshire Gardens Trust events to note

Don't miss this great opportunity to see the restoration work at Shaw House in Newbury. Kate Harwood, an experienced lecturer from Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, will lecture on late Tudor and early Stuart Gardens with relevance to Shaw' House's own early gardens, on Thursday 26 March, at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm in Shaw House, Newbury, West Berkshire. Tickets are £12.50 for members, £15.00 for non-members and £25.00 for two.

Visit West Green House, near Hartley Wintney, Hampshire on Monday 8 June. There will be an exclusive guided tour of these constantly evolving gardens, as well as a cream tea.

#### Erratum re WBC conservation advice

WBC wishes readers to note that its Conservation Officer is full-time and available five days a week, and not part-time as mentioned in the last issue.



## Future Events

# A new app for Wilfred

### David Woodward

The Dunsden Owen Association is in the throes of testing its brand new Android and iPhone app which will guide visitors on a tour of local sites connected with Wilfred Owen, the famous First World War poet.

Produced with the help of a £22,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant received by partner organisation Outrider Anthems, the app features 15 different themes taken from Owen's time in Dunsden. Over 80 images are integrated with professionally produced soundtracks to bring the world of Wilfred Owen to life. The app, featuring an interactive map which provides routes for walks on foot or journeys by car, is the result of weeks of dedicated work by Jennifer Leach of Outrider Anthems.

The main sites featured are the church, graveyard, vicarage and school, and outlying sites such as the house in Emmer Green to which Wilfred's parents retired. The clip relating to this house (now privately owned) provides a flavour of the trail:

*...it is from this house that a final Owen story can be spun; a colourful and eccentric story that would have pleased*

*Wilfred himself. When Wilfred's unmarried sister Mary died in 1956, the house was cleared. It was only at this point that the vast collection of Wilfred's letters – 673 in all – were discovered. Not neatly gathered, not archived in an orderly fashion, not even assembled in one place. They were discovered haphazardly in every room and every nook and cranny, amongst scraps of silk embroidery and odds and ends of material in the house, in tea chests and nailed-up boxes in the garden shed. Only one letter had been carefully stored in [his mother] Susan's jewellery box – carefully enclosed in an envelope and labelled in pencil, 'Wilfie's first letter'.*

It is hoped that the app will be officially launched in Dunsden on May Day (4 May). Events on the village green will include a family fun day, with refreshments in the village hall and the official unveiling of a blue plaque which commemorates Wilfred Owen's time in Dunsden. For more information please see [www.owenindunsden.org](http://www.owenindunsden.org). Dunsden Owen Association is also on Facebook and Twitter.

## Conservation Area Appraisal

### Mike Hart

As you will recall, the Society has been assisting Sonning Parish Council with an update of the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal, the previous version of which was adopted in 1996. Teams of residents were assigned different character areas of the village and asked to record good and bad features using a Toolkit developed by English Heritage in association with the Oxford Preservation Trust and Oxford City Council. The surveys took place in the summer of 2012 and the results were compiled into the first draft which was

showcased in Pearson Hall in February 2013.

The updated drafts have been reviewed by Sonning Parish Council who have appointed a planning consultant to liaise with Wokingham Borough Council and prepare a final draft. This version will be open for a 6-week public consultation within the coming weeks. We will notify Society members by email when this public consultation is due to take place and would urge you all to respond.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Members are welcome to attend Executive meetings. Please note that meetings now begin at 7.30 pm

#### 13 March 2015

Conservation of wildlife habitats along the Thames and its tributaries - a talk by Richard Mahon-White Pearson Hall (see Page 2)

#### 29 April 2015

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7:30 pm

#### 4 May 2015 (tbc)

Wilfred Owen events in Dunsden

#### 5 June 2015

Private visit to Hardwick House near Mapledurham (More information on the web and in the next issue)

#### 10 June 2015

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7:30 pm

#### 19 August 2015

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7:30 pm