

Pearson Hall cycle rack in use



Sonning Village Show 17 September 2016
The Society will be at the Village Show on Saturday 17 September. This is an opportunity to meet new residents and to explain the work we do and the benefits of membership. Given the successes we have had - the *Village Voices* project and a range of successful walks and talks - what's not to be proud of? If you can help on the stand please contact Pauline Simmonds on 969 7033.

Berkshire Gardens Trust AGM

The Trust's AGM will take place on Tuesday 18 October at 7pm in The Barn, Purley on Thames. The event will include refreshments and a guest lecturer will soon be confirmed. Please look on the Trust's website for further details: <http://www.berks-gardens-trust.org.uk>.

More walks successes

Our team of guides won't just be busy for the Heritage Open Days Weekend (see Page 2). On 28 July an enthusiastic group from Radstock WI (in Earley) enjoyed a walk ending with tea and cake at the lock tea garden. On 1 September a local U3A group walk will be combined with a church tower visit. So all sorts of permutations are possible. If you know a group or society that would like a walk, please contact Diana Coulter on 969 2132.



Future Events

Salisbury link explored

Education Panel

It is easy to forget the Salisbury connection. Some house names hint at it: Sarum Cottage, Deanery Garden and Bishopsclose. Yet every visitor entering St Andrew's via the north porch is reminded in the left-hand label stop of the entrance arch: the arms of the Diocese.

Hugh Pearson, the parish's long-serving vicar 1842-1882, was the son of a Dean of Salisbury, who for a brief while rented The Grove. At the time of Pearson's appointment, Sonning was still within the diocese, passing to the Diocese of Oxford in 1846.

Why Salisbury? Because the Saxon bishopric of Sonning transferred to that diocese and it was in Sonning that the Bishops maintained a palace (site of Bishopsclose) to facilitate easy transport to and from the court in Windsor.



The Cathedral has a special place in the history of English art and architecture. In part this is due to Constable's picturesque paintings from the water meadows, its spire - the tallest in England - and the remarkable uniformity of its Early Gothic architecture. The consistency of its architectural style is the result of the cathedral having been relocated on a new site in 1220 and completion in less than 40 years. The spire was not part of the original design, but an addition at the end of the 13th century.

Salisbury's status as an exemplar of Early Gothic architecture in England is also the result of Victorian preference.



19th-century restorations swept away many mature Gothic and later additions, preferring to return Salisbury to what was regarded as an example of the best style of medieval architecture. This inclination to discard the unfashionable has been maintained into modern times when some of the finest examples of Victorian Gothic, e.g. the chancel screen, were in their turn ejected from the building. It is to be hoped that the fine examples of modern art that now grace the cathedral do not suffer a similar fate.

S&SES is pleased to welcome Stephen Dunn, Head Guide at Salisbury, to talk about this iconic Gothic building, described by Bill Bryson as "the single most beautiful structure in England" on Friday 30 September. This will take place in the Pearson Hall at 7.30 for a 7.45pm start. Tickets at £4 for Members and £5 for guests and non-members will be available at the Village Show on 17 September, from Penny Feathers on 934 3193 or on the door.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Members are welcome to attend Executive meetings.

8-11 September 2016

Heritage Open Days Weekend walks - see Page 2

17 September 2016

Sonning Village Show 2.00-5.00pm

30 September 2016

Salisbury Cathedral: "The single most beautiful structure in England" - talk by Stephen Dunn (see above)

19 October 2016

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7.00pm

19 November 2016

AGM & Supper Pearson Hall 7.00 for 7.15pm - See Page 2

7 December 2016

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7.00pm

February 2017 (Date tbc)

Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 7.00pm

bridge

Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

Ali's Pond LNR Award

Alastair Driver

Sonning's very own nature reserve, Ali's Pond LNR, has recently been recognised as a national flagship example of small-scale practical nature conservation, by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Having attended the ceremony for these prestigious awards as a guest last year, the site's founder and voluntary warden Alastair Driver, decided to enter the project into this year's awards on behalf of the Friends of Ali's Pond, who have looked after the site under his supervision, since its creation 21 years ago.

The key criteria for projects entering this "small scale practical nature conservation" category are that they must cost less than £25,000 and "must enhance biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and sustainable development". The four other categories for these flagship project-based awards were: large scale practical nature conservation; innovation; knowledge-sharing; and stakeholder engagement. The awards ceremony was held at the superb Birmingham Botanical Gardens and the Friends of Ali's Pond were represented at the ceremony by Alastair and Belinda Driver and John Woodhouse, with Sonning Parish Council represented by Trefor Fisher. After a fine lunch and an excellent post-Brexit speech by Wildlife Trusts Chief Executive, Stephanie

Hilborne, the suspense for Sonning's representatives was finally lifted when Ali's Pond was announced as the winner of the small scale practical nature conservation award. To make it an even better day for Alastair, another of his project creations, SuDS for Schools, was entered by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and won the Innovation Award category.



In addition, all the category winners were automatically entered into the Tony Bradshaw Award for Outstanding Best Practice, which recognises exceptional projects that achieve an overall impressively high standard. Alastair Driver was told afterwards by the chairman of the judging panel that "all the judges were extremely impressed with the project and in fact it came within a whisker of winning the Tony Bradshaw Award." As Alastair said in the press release which followed: "To have been recognised in this way by CIEEM is hugely significant, because it is they that set the standards for the nature conservation profession in this country and if they think that Ali's Pond is the best example of its kind nationally, then we should all feel mighty proud of what we've achieved."

Information and images of the key moments in the history of the site can be found in the September edition of the Sonning Parish Magazine.

»Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Mike Hart, Chairman

In past issues, this column has asked what makes Sonning special. With the news that our local MP, long-term Sonning resident and Society supporter Theresa May, has been appointed as Prime Minister, it would seem that our beautiful village with its vibrant community is not only a popular place in which to live but that it also has a very positive impact upon those who choose to live here. We wish Theresa and Philip every success in their new challenge.

We look forward to the talk by Stephen Dunn, Head Guide of Salisbury Cathedral, on 30 September. As an Old Blue, Stephen is familiar with the village and this fascinating talk will provide a glimpse into the historic links between Sonning and Salisbury, further evidence that Sonning has been a special place for a long time!

Following a long period of updates and reviews we have heard from WBC that the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal is expected to be adopted by late November after a 6-week public consultation in September. An exhibition will be held in Pearson Hall to showcase the Appraisal and provide an opportunity for feedback. We will inform members individually by email of the consultation and exhibition dates and hope you will take the opportunity to have your say on this important document.

Bridge: Newsletter of the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society

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»Executive Committee & Panels: breaking news

Patrick Hamblin, Andy Bell and Pauline Simmonds

*** STOP PRESS *** Conservation Area

Appraisal formal consultation at last

WBC is aiming to hold a six-week public consultation on the agreed appraisal document, commencing in September. It is then hoped to adopt the document in November. Please look out for firm information about the commencement date and a public open day on the Society's website and in the Parish Magazine.

AGM and supper

The AGM will be held on Saturday 19 November in the Pearson Hall. There will be a welcoming drink and the AGM will start promptly at 7.15pm. Tickets cost £16 and are available at the Village Show on 17 September or from Penny Feathers on 934 3193.

Cool tea party to celebrate Queen's 90th

Society Members, Mary and Gordon Jones, kindly opened their beautiful garden in West Drive for our well-attended Summer Party on Sunday 26th June (pictured above right). The sun was in short supply but members and guests thoroughly enjoyed a challenging Treasure Hunt around the garden, and a Quiz based on the 'Life of our Queen', covering 90 years. A traditional



tea with strawberries and champagne completed a memorable afternoon.

Planning applications

The Planning and Traffic Panel meet monthly. There have been 21 applications reviewed since the last edition of *Bridge* and the Society sent comments to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) on the revised applications for the Sonning Golf Club Pound Lane development and the land adjacent to Model Farm Cottages, Bath Road. Planning permission has since been refused for the development of the latter. It is of course likely there will be an appeal by the applicants.

SPC Planning Committee meetings

The Society has attended all the Parish Council's planning meetings since the last edition as an observer.

Cycle racks

Cycle racks have now been installed outside the Pearson Hall (see photo on Page 4). Consideration will be given to providing further racks in the King George's playing field once some work has been carried out in connection with flooding problems.

Traffic

SPC has agreed to a joint working group with S&SES to consider traffic problems and options for improving the situation. S&SES will be represented by Patrick Hamblin and Bob Hine with Mike Hart as reserve. Due to holidays and business commitments it is likely the first meeting will be in October.

Local Plan Update

WBC initiated consultation on the 'Issues and Options' document for the Local Plan Update on 4 August. It is understood the intention is to issue various information on 21 September 2016. The Society is registering its interest to receive this information when it is published.

Sonning Cutting

The Society continues to be grateful to Ali Driver for maintaining his involvement with Sonning Cutting issues.

Free heritage walks

Pauline Simmonds



Four walks are planned in 2016 as follows:

- Thursday 8 September at 2pm
- Friday 9 September at 2pm
- Saturday 10 September at 11am (note the earlier start time due to a wedding)
- Sunday 11 September at 2pm

All walks start in the Churchyard near The Bull. Booking is essential via 969 2132 or diana.coulter@mac.com.

Led by our team of experienced guides our walks have proved a very positive

contribution to the village calendar and have often brought in new members or been a way for new residents to find out more about the village and its history. Over the past 11 years, we have shown over 500 people around Sonning, many from within the village or the greater Reading area, with some coming from further afield.

The guides explain the evolution of St Andrew's from medieval to present-day church; view the site of the Bishop's Palace; and look at the rich variety of domestic vernacular architecture in Pearson Road and the High Street, whether timber-framed or built of brick. For safety reasons it is not possible to cover the equally interesting buildings in Thames Street.

» Membership news

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

If you know anyone whom you think would enjoy Society membership, please encourage them to visit the Society's stand at the Village Show on 17 September. Anyone joining there or before 31 December will get up to 16 months' membership for the price of twelve months.

Membership rates remain: Single £5.00 and Double £8.00. The Society continues to be proud not to have needed to raise the subscription since its foundation in 2004.

Up hill and down dale in two counties

Brian & Diana O'Callaghan

Once they spotted us from the other side of the field, the two roe deer gazed at us carefully, friend or foe? They hugged the hedge alongside the steep valley leading down to the back of Hennerton House before scampering off. The steepness should not have been a surprise given knowledge of the Wargrave Road into Henley. The stretch from Wargrave itself down into Aston and thence to join the Thames Path almost opposite Hambledon Weir was an interesting, hilly contrast to the flat walking to be had from Sonning to Wargrave and then from Henley back to Sonning.

Besides the deer we passed paddocks with horses who surveyed us with slight curiosity. We were not passed by too many vehicles on the back roads and, surprisingly, saw few fellow humans on our route - the occasional dog-walker perhaps and where we crossed the golf-course, the chipping sound of club against ball could be heard. Alongside the public footpath going through



Grade II listed Aston Farmhouse

the course there was an abundance of damsons waiting to be harvested and preserved for winter treats.

Sustaining treats

Sustaining treats could be had during the course of the walk. The cafe in Wargrave, that was forced to close but has now re-opened mercifully, tempts with excellent coffee and scrumptious cakes. The Flowerpot in Aston was doing a brisk trade - a free house with a respectable pub menu and a pampered African Grey holding forth to customers in the small bar. The River and

Rowing Museum, as ever provided a relaxing environment for tea or coffee, again with sugar-boosting cakes.



Farrell's post-modern boathouse-cum-temple at Henley

Exciting buildings

Visual treats included buildings of many different styles and periods. The walk to Wargrave along Loddon Drive is remarkable for the wide range of architectural styles that can be found along it, particularly the contemporary houses designed ecologically, with green roofs and constructed using sustainable materials. The climb up Wargrave Hill where an old brick wall points to the loss of a large house and its replacement with a housing development within the site. The arts and crafts credentials of the Well House in Upper Culham stand out, while adjacent to The Flowerpot is a delightful, 16th-century timber-framed hall house.

Going down to and walking along the Thames Path affords excellent views across to Hambledon Mill and lock, as well as Greenlands, the country house converted to become Henley Business School. On the Berkshire bank clusters of red-brick farm buildings frame Remenham church, largely re-built in the 19th century but displaying externally one original window in Decorated Gothic. The Copas family which owns the farm here have made efforts to interpret the landscape and heritage of the village with informative display boards.

Modern architecture can be celebrated in the updating of Wyatt's Fish-

ing Temple on Temple Island, Terry Farrell's post-modern boathouse for the Royal Regatta adjacent to Henley Bridge as well as, of course, the River and Rowing Museum itself. The rather unexpected and whimsical architectural treat is the model railway in a private garden at Shiplake, complete with a scale model replica of St Moritz railway station - eclectic to say the least and installed as recently as four years or so ago.

Welcome home

At Shiplake after a breather on a welcome bench beneath the College, our walk hooked into Joyce Reed's literary walk featured in *Bridge* Issue 35. The beauty of our 17-mile walk was the potential for it to be broken down into more manageable sections to suit all ages and abilities. Others can dip in and out of it using public transport on the Berkshire side of the river as the 850 bus conveniently links Sonning on the A4 with Wargrave and Henley, while train is another possibility using the Henley branch line from Twyford. We enjoyed the walk thoroughly - although never was Uri Geller's old home a more welcome sight at the end of it - and we hope others may feel inspired to try some or all of it.



Approaching St Moritz station in miniature