

Manor House Press

Not for the first time, a Society Member has come across a reference to a book published in the 1930s at the Manor House Press in Charvil Lane. Titles appear to be bibliographic or religious in nature. If anyone has any information about who set the press up, how long it lasted or how many people were involved, please contact David Woodward on 969 3633.

Yes, there is an Oxfordshire Gardens Trust!

In case you have read the Brookers' piece on this page and were wondering, yes, there is a Trust for Oxfordshire Gardens. This was established in 2002 at Rousham, the home of 18th-century architect, William Kent which has a very famous garden. OGT's website is at <http://ogt.org.uk/>. It will be valuable to keep an eye on their events and research too.

Civic Day - Saturday 25 June 2011

Civic Day is a new initiative when civic societies across England will invite people to celebrate their area and discover more about where they live. A diverse programme of events and activities showcasing civic society activity is being planned.

Civic Day builds on a range of current initiatives, including the successful Civic Societies Week in Yorkshire and Humber. A small group of volunteers led by trustees, Freddie Gick and Paul Myers, has been set up to develop and deliver Civic Day in 2011.

Our Society has been invited to pass thoughts and ideas via info@civicvoice.org.uk and start planning what we can do to celebrate Civic Day now. The Executive will consider possible Society participation at its October meeting.



Future Events

Executive & Panel news

Gary Robinson, Alan Furness & Diana Coulter

More gravel extraction (Cont from Page 1)

roundabout as originally proposed. This would greatly reduce the impact of lorry noise and vibration on Sonning Eye. The Society believes that this option would have an additional benefit if it could be developed as an access for cars and coaches carrying visitors to the proposed wetlands area to the north of the site, albeit in 20 or so years time. The Society will continue to keep a careful eye on developments, and will report on progress to Members through this Newsletter.

Bluefin Insurance Offer for Members

Bluefin, the insurance broking arm of AXA UK, are offering an affinity insurance scheme for Civic Voice members, enabling them to benefit from exceptional levels of cover at discounted premiums. Because of our own membership of Civic Voice, any

Member or a family member of Sonning & Sonning Eye Society may contact Bluefin for a quotation for Home, Car, Travel, Heating, Pet or Private Medical Insurance.

Contact David Box and mention that you are a member of the Society. Tel- 020 8776 3327 Mobile-07738 882648 Email-david.box@bluefingroup.co.uk. For more information visit www.civicvoice.org.uk/bluefininsurance.

Historic Area Assessments

Understanding Place is a new publication/download from English Heritage. This aims to assist local authorities, community groups and others assess the character and significance of historic areas, be they ... villages or other ... landscapes. Historic Area Assessment (HAA) is an important and practical tool for the informed management of the historic environment.

Spotlight on Sonning Gardens

Brian & Julia Brooker

Starting in the 1980s, gardens trusts have now been established in all the English counties but Berkshire was the last to do so in July 2009. The wide range of aims and objectives of the Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) includes conservation and restoration as well as the promotion and enjoyment of parks and gardens.

In July this year we were approached by the BGT to provide a local contact and assist them in a Berkshire-wide survey of parks and gardens of historical, architectural and local significance. This survey, which will collect and collate information on many aspects of important properties, has tentatively identified some gardens in or near Sonning as possible candidates for further study. Researchers include en-



Influenced by Gertrude Jekyll, the gardens at Newbold College, Binfield, by Oliver Hill c. 1912-13 (Courtesy: Diana Coulter)

thusiastic and accomplished volunteers with experience in architecture, local history and garden design. They will draw on published information, record office and site visits to produce a dossier for each garden or park. A gazetteer of selected sites will be published and available on a national website managed by the University of York.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

- Saturday 11 September 2010 Village Show Sonning CofE Primary School 2:00 pm
Sunday 12 September 2010 Sonning exposed! A heritage trail 1:30 pm onwards, and a Guided Walk with Mark Green (See Page 2)
Wednesday 6 October 2010 Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 8:00 pm

- Saturday 9 October 2010 Architectural & historical walks around Sonning (See Page 2 and booking form)
Saturday 20 November 2010 AGM and Supper Pearson Hall 7:00 pm onwards
December 2010 (Date tbc) Executive Committee St. Sarik Room 8:00 pm
All are welcome to attend meetings of the Executive



Newsletter of the Sonning & Sonning Eye Society

More gravel extraction?

Gary Robinson

At Reading Rugby Club in July, Lafarge held a public exhibition of their plans to extend the area of gravel extraction from the area to the north-east of Sonning Eye between the Thames and the Henley Road, towards Shiplake. Soon Lafarge will start extracting gravel from the triangle of land formed by Playhatch Road, Henley Road and Spring Lane. The new proposal is intended to keep the Lafarge works going for the foreseeable future. The exhibition was well attended by residents of both Sonning Eye and Sonning. Lafarge staff and some of their consultants were on hand to explain the plans and to answer questions.



A geologist at the exhibition explains how the gravel is extracted. (Reading Evening Post)

Lafarge will probably submit an application sometime towards the end of the year, following public consultation. Crucially, this would pre-empt the Regional Minerals Strategy (RMS), which was being developed as part of the South East Plan. However, also in July the latter was revoked by the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Consequently, Oxfordshire County Council is reviewing its contribution to the RMS, and is considering challenging the original imposed figure of 2.1 million tonnes of minerals per year, on the grounds that much of this could come from recycled materials and/or from elsewhere. This change in attitude, reflecting the new Government's approach in

moving from regional to local planning policy, could influence its decision on Lafarge's application.

There has been resistance from local residents, especially in Sonning Eye, who have suffered from gravel workings for over 70 years, and this will undoubtedly grow in response to Lafarge's new plans. Some Sonning Eye properties have a history of flooding

whilst others have come within inches of being flooded. Their owners understandably fear that disturbance of the Thames floodplain might significantly increase this risk.

Residents also have serious concerns about the infilling of the site, both the large number of lorry movements

- one every 10-15 minutes during working hours - and whether the infill material itself might also change the floodplain characteristics. Lafarge also intend to transfer gravel into the works using a conveyor belt system over the Playhatch Road, leading to further concerns about noise. The Society shares these concerns and will be seeking further information relating to achievable noise levels as well as clarification of the potential for flooding and the knock-on effects.

Lafarge have attempted to allay some of these fears, by exploring an alternative access point directly off the Henley Road, instead of the Sonning Eye

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»Eye on Sonning a view from the Bridge

Bob Hine, Chairman

In the Summer edition of Bridge I commented on the presentation given in May at the Sonning Parish Council's AGM, entitled, 'Traffic in our Villages'. Following this, two parish councillors were welcomed to the August meeting of our Executive when they gave an update. In summary although more work is to be done, encouraging progress has been made to pave the way for trialling on a temporary arrangement, changes to traffic flows through Sonning Village. It is the intention of the Council to stage an exhibition in the Pearson Hall just as soon as the details of the trial initiative have been completed. Faced with the options of either 'Do nothing' or embark on a 'Temporary trial', I must say, I find the prospect of the latter exciting.

The Village Show will soon be upon us. On Saturday 11 September the Society will be staging a presence with a suitably interesting theme. We do hope that you will come along and support the Show. It will also be an opportunity for you to purchase tickets for the Society's AGM & Supper. Many of you will remember the excellent illustrated talk by Brian O'Callaghan in 2008 on the architectural development of St. Andrew's. Brian will be entertaining us at our AGM in November on a life in buildings, so do check your diaries and secure your tickets early.

Bridge: Newsletter of the Sonning and Sonning Eye Society

Education Panel c/o Red House Cottage, Pearson Road, RG4 6UH

tel: 0118 9692132 email: diana.coulter@mac.com web: www.sonning.org.uk

Things to do or look out for this Autumn

Penny Feathers and Diana Coulter

Heritage Trail & Tea



On Sunday 12 September the Society will once again be taking part in the annual Heritage Open Days Weekend. There will be a new Heritage Trail,

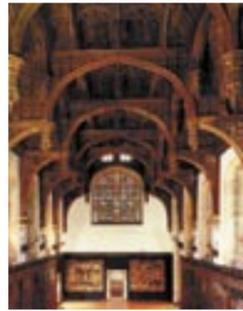
Sonning Exposed! for those wishing to wander round the village, and go down to the river and Sonning Eye in their own time, answering a set of questions as they go. The starting point for the trail will be the St. Sarik Room adjacent to St. Andrews Church, where you can pick up your maps and question sheets from 1.30 pm. This is an ideal event for all the family and we look forward to seeing many members and visitors. No booking is necessary, so just turn up and enjoy the fun. The trail will take about one hour to complete. On returning to the St. Sarik Room your trail answers can be marked and a cream tea will be available at a cost of £4 each.

Guided walk

If you would prefer to have someone tell you about Sonning, there will be one guided tour only on 12 September at 2 pm, led by Mark Green, also starting from the St Sarik Room. Booking is essential for safety reasons as we have to impose a group size limit. Please contact Diana Coulter on 0118 969 2132 if you would like to do the walk.

Royal Wedding invite

The Henley Society have kindly extended an invitation to our Society's Members to join the wedding preparations of Henry VIII and Kateryn Parr



at Hampton Court Palace on Tuesday 21 September. Tickets cost £22 each, and include entry, coach (from Henley), and tip. Please

contact Diana Coulter on 969 2132, who will arrange to drop off/post a form to you. If you go, do admire the splendid hammerbeam roof of the Great Hall,

that reputedly uses wood sourced in Sonning!

Autumn Walks

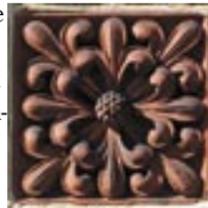
If you happen to be away during the Heritage Open Days Weekend, there is an opportunity to join Brian O'Callaghan and Diana Coulter when



they conduct the *Sonning: an architectural and historical walk* on Saturday 9 October. The walk will end with tea and biscuits in The Bull. While the September Heritage Trail will be free, there will be a cost of £3 per head for Members on these walks. Please use the enclosed booking form or contact Diana Coulter on 969 2132.

AGM and Supper

This year's AGM and supper will be held in the Pearson Hall on Saturday 20 November. The doors will open at 7pm when we look forward to welcoming you with a drink. The business meeting will begin at 7:15pm and the after-dinner speaker will be Dr. Brian O'Callaghan. Brian's working title is "A Mac and a Hard Hat: a life in buildings". Tickets at £12 each will be available from the Society's gazebo at the Sonning Show on Saturday 11 September and thereafter from Penny Feathers on 0118 934 3193. We look forward to seeing members and guests. Please note only Members can vote in the AGM itself.



» New Members

Welcome packs for new residents are available from the Membership Secretary, Carole Barnett, on 969 6693.

Life in the old house yet

Diana Coulter

Double glazing, fitted carpets or other wall-to-wall floor coverings, central heating, damp-proofing, loft insulation, modern finishes – welcome to the hermetically-sealed house, the paradigm of 21st-century living, designed to keep the rain and the cold out and us humans warm, snug and dry. Unless one lives in an area of desert, damp is an inescapable feature of the atmosphere, so we need to cope with it as do our houses. Our homes need to 'breathe' as part of their coping strategy, which is something our ancestors perhaps understood better than we think. Some of our 21st century 'treatments', applied to older properties, can have significant consequences. Allowing one's home to breathe is important for its survival.

The breathing roof

Roof insulation improves the energy performance of a house, but almost another topic in its own right, our expectations of energy are much higher than when our old house was built. Gone are the days when we might put on extra layers to keep warm and share activities to avoid heating or lighting more space than was needed. Central heating provides an ambient temperature, rather than relying on local sources of heat to keep spaces in use warm. Individual thermostatic valves probably work against a house's natural immune system.

Roofs were also designed with a steep overhang, so that rainwater was flung away from the walls. Even our 1914 semi has deep gables, and it can be surprising sometimes that the south facing landing window is rarely wet. A house like Old Cottage in Pearson Road would have been similar when first built but the infill between the timber studs now extends beyond their profile, and over time the roof has been re-tiled. Under the white paint, which disguises the house's history, one would probably find interesting evidence of how it was

originally built.

Breathing walls

As mentioned already, the deep overhang of the roof protected the walls. Another way of preventing damp walls was the use of lime mortars for the 'joints' between one stone and another, one brick and another, etc. Lime mortars (never cement) are key ingredients of a successful old building, while the use of lime washes for external render



Ray Moseley demonstrates lime plaster at Bursledon Brickworks, near Swanwick; fine mortars used at the Robert Palmer Cottages; and a steep overhang at the French Horn.



escape, and if the especially designed channels for taking it away are not kept clear, then it will overflow onto the wall. Just think of all those green stains you might have seen in older buildings.

Breathing floors

A friend of ours used to live in a cottage in York, near the Ouse. The cottage had flagstone floors. If the river flooded, a not unusual occurrence in York although not always on the scale of the 2007 floods, the cottage was flooded too, but as the water receded, so the flagstones dried out. Insurance claims were modest as fitted carpets and other furnishings were not ruined

in the experience. The installation of cement platforms in houses as part of damp proofing means that the damp in the soil beneath a house will look for other escape routes, typically up the walls.

The way it should work

Materials used should be permeable. Damp dries into the air through them. A steep roof and overhang sheds the

rain. Lime wash on lime render allows rain to be absorbed into the fabric, but it is able to dry out later.

Air is drawn in through chimneys and other openings - cracks around windows and doors. Circulating air ventilates damp in the atmosphere – think of all those buildings which have been shut up for a long time with no air circulation. Yes, it's that all too familiar musty brew that makes one crinkle one's nose.

If a home is a 'machine for living in' then it needs maintenance to keep it well oiled and smooth running. So, think about your house and whether you are allowing it to breathe sufficiently to last another century without inappropriate interventions that may be alien to how it was first built.

Who was Lord Stowell?

Jean Milbourne & Diana Coulter

This late brass ledger in the south aisle of St Andrew's remembers Lord Stowell, who died in 1836 in his 91st year. He is buried in Sonning because his first wife was the eldest daughter and heiress of John Bagnall who lived in Erleigh Court. Of their four children, only one daughter survived, Mary Anne, the wife of Viscount Sidmouth.



She too is buried at Sonning with a memorial tablet over the north door.

Although his father was a Newcastle coal merchant, William Scott and his brother, John, both rose to high rank. Both were lawyers, and Stowell's claim to fame rests upon his period serving as Judge of the Admiralty Court. His judgments on various aspects of international law were significant for laying the foundations of inter-state legalities: its applicability to states still deemed semi-barbarous, as well as the 'rules' on blockades, contraband and prizes, here used to mean seized cargo. So a significant historical person in our midst worthy of a full article sometime.