



The Cookham Society

Registered Charity No. 257224 | messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk

Spring 2024 Newsletter

FLOODS IN COOKHAM *By Tom Denniford*

Once again, Cookham Village was cut off when high river levels, exacerbated by Storm Henk, forced the closure of both the A4094 and the B4447 on Sunday 7th January. It does seem that the stand-by arrangements that the Society pressed for over many years provided some relief, with The Causeway being opened part-time for vehicles and access arrangements made for the emergency services. Back in 2011 the Royal Borough resolved not to allow vehicles to use this alternative access, thereby effectively cutting the village off, which prompted a campaign led by our previous chairman, David Ashwanden, supported by Dick Scarff. It is pleasing to see that the success of this battle continues to the present day.



Drone picture courtesy James Camplin of Flight Surveys



The Causeway in 2024



The Moor in the 1990s, open to brave souls on horseback only!

AGM

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 7th March 2024 at the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

OH, NO, NOT AGAIN!

By Dick Scarff

Probably one of the most unpleasant consequences of the 2014 floods was the failure of the Lightlands Lane Sewage Pumping Station. Flood water swamped the shallow defences, causing an electrical failure which allowed foul sewage to flood nearby properties. After the 2014 flood, defects in the construction of the bund wall were identified and rectified by Thames Water. We were deeply critical of the standard of the alterations and remained unconvinced that the work was flood resilient. We urged Thames Water to raise the electrical work above flood level, but they refused. The repeat failure of the pumping station this year has most regrettably proved us right and Thames Water wrong. We will now renew our campaign to get the electrics raised out of the danger zone.



Photo by Dick Scarff

BATTLEMEAD FENCING, DOES IT WORSEN THE EFFECTS OF FLOODING? *By Tom Denniford*

Widbrook and Battlemead Common are two crucial sites contributing to the removal of floodwater from around Cookham. Yet, as our photos show, the fencing that the Royal Borough has erected on the Common is a trap for debris and is blocking the flow of water. Bill Perry, the Society's Chairman, who

lives nearby says: "The Society has repeatedly made clear to RBWM its concerns about obstructions to flood flow on Battlemead. The new fencing across the site acts as a trap and this is exacerbated by hedge-rows, unmanaged trees, and the new planting on the causeway. As these photos show, bales of

hay washed against the fencing, combined with leaves and other detritus, caught by even wide-meshed wire, prevent water from draining away. RBWM must restore a clear water corridor across Battlemead to safeguard Cookham and to allow wildlife to escape."



Debris trapped against, and bending the wire fence. Photo courtesy Ann Darracott, Maidenhead Civic Society



Photo by Bill Perry

RICHARD POAD, LOCAL HISTORY EXPERT, TO SPEAK AT COOKHAM SOCIETY AGM

The Society are delighted to announce that the speaker at the Cookham Society's AGM this year will be Maidenhead's 'Mr Heritage' Richard Poad. One of the founders of Maidenhead Heritage Centre, Richard will be bringing along, and talking about, some of the Centre's extensive collection of Cookham-based historical artefacts.

COOKHAM BRIDGE PROGRESS REPORT

By Dick Scarff

Our latest bridge update confirms that the original target date of 9th December to lift the bridge deck off the abutments at each end, to allow replacement bearings to be installed, has now been delayed to February. We understand that this is primarily due to the poor condition of other elements of the structure which were revealed by initial exploratory work. The good news is, that by rescheduling other work elements, the team are still on-target to re-open the bridge to traffic by the original planned date of 22nd March 2024, although some works may continue after opening.

We look forward to the reopening and hope that the traffic lights can be re-programmed to ensure that there



is minimal build-up of traffic queuing in the High Street and Sutton Road. We are also gratified to hear, that after all our years of campaigning for weight-limit enforcement, RBWM will now install ANPR cameras on the bridge to ensure compliance with the 7.5 tonne weight limit.



LOCK ISLAND *By Dick Scarff*

Further protracted discussions with the Environment Agency have resulted in their agreement to reopen access over Odney Weir to Lock Island. This will be on a trial basis for three months, on weekdays only, starting on the first of March 2024. In our view, the EA are being unnecessarily cautious about reopening, but we have accepted that they wish to fully re-assess safety issues for visitors and staff before returning to the opening arrangements we had before 2020. We will continue



to press for a return to the seven days a week opening that we had before the closure.

MINI ZOO, LOWER MOUNT FARM

By Lysette Penston

The Society has added its voice to concerns raised about a retrospective application by Wildway Wildlife Ltd for a change of use of a site on Lower Mount Farm for use as a mini zoo animal education centre.

The application includes the erection of a substantial number of structures to house animals and offices, and includes significant areas of fencing. The cluster of development would undoubtedly contribute to the degradation of the openness of the Green Belt.



COOKHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN *By Dick Scarff*

Over the last three years the Cookham Society has contributed to the working party which has been drafting the Cookham Neighbourhood Plan (CNP). Unlike the Village Design Statement, which was a joint operation, sponsored equally by both the Society and Cookham Parish Council (CPC), the CNP is solely a CPC project. Whilst the Society has



welcomed the opportunity to have a voice on the working party, ours is only one opinion among other competing interests. It has been a difficult, and at times, contentious job, with constraints on a plan that must be in line with other established planning documents and seek to align competing demands from different groups in the village. Specialist consultants employed by the Parish have now produced their final draft document which will go forward for pre-submission consultation and independent examination, before being put before a public vote in a local referendum. We hope that after this lengthy process the CNP will help to protect what we cherish in Cookham and guide future development in a constructive way.

WHAT NEXT FOR AL37

By Tom Denniford

It is difficult to envisage a more damning report than that of the RBWM Highways Department into the planning applications (refs. 23/02019/OUT and 23/02022/OUT) for 200 dwellings on the site at Cannondown Road, which firmly recommended refusal. Among the issues considered unsatisfactory were road layout design; visibility splays; lack of electric vehicle charging points; parking provision and junction modelling; to name but a few.

The Society has been highly critical of the current proposals. We consider that the proposed layout, which is based upon a single spine road, is an inherently poor design. A development on this scale should have more than one access point. Additionally, the design of houses and the materials to be used should reflect the local vernacular



but here are merely the developer's bland, stock designs used elsewhere in the country. Altogether, the proposals fall well short of what should be expected on this important site. Cookham deserves better!



ARE POLYTUNNELS BUILDINGS?

For the second time in five months the Royal Borough has turned down applications to change the use of two polytunnels situated at the derelict chicken farm on Winter Hill Road, reaffirming a decision it took in 2017. Case law dating back to 1947, and cited by the Society in our recent objections, makes clear that if

structures are to be described as 'buildings' they must be substantial and have a degree of permanence. The erection of polytunnels may be 'development', but they are not 'buildings' and, therefore, in this case, they did not enjoy the benefits allowed under recent Change of Use regulations.



5G MASTS *By Lysette Penston*

The Society was pleased to note that following our objection, RBWM refused permission for the installation of a new, 18-metre-high telecommunications mast with 6 antenna and three cabinets at the junction of Cannondown Road and Whyteladies Lane. It was refused on grounds of scale, its prominent siting and the planners noted that no effort had been made to push the large development back behind the tree line. The applicant also failed to prove that they had eliminated the possibility of piggy-backing on to already operating masts.

ENFORCEMENT *By Lysette Penston*

The Society invites members to contact them if they are aware of an abuse of local planning legislation and don't want to be the person to report it. We are sensitive to the fact that near neighbours may not wish to offend those they live close to but wish to report a planning rules contravention.

Contact us on: messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk

THE COOKHAM SOCIETY DESIGN AWARD

The Society has been awarding an annual Design Award Prize since 2014 although we will not be making an award for 2024. However, we will be on the lookout for projects completed by the end of the year for the 2025 award. If you are starting a new project that you think should be considered - it can be a build or a garden - please go to our website and fill in an application form.

www.cookhamsociety.org.uk/design-award



AGM SPEAKER, RICHARD POAD

Richard Poad has been involved in the Heritage Centre from its start in 1993 and was its chairman for over 25 years. His lecture at our AGM will look at some of the wide variety of Cookham-related objects in the collection. He has curated many exhibitions for the Centre and was responsible for building its Air Transport Auxiliary collection into one of the most important in the world.



MEMBERSHIP

Our much-valued Cookham Society members are asked to make sure that their Standing Order payments for the annual subscription to the Society are up-to-date. If you have received a reminder and haven't got round to renewing, please do so, we greatly value your support.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Andy Harle, Committee member

Andy is married to Karen, and they have two daughters, a son, and a one-year-old grandson. They moved to Cookham in 2019. They both love the local area and revelled in all the local walks during lockdown when they were both working from home. Andy also enjoys tennis, kayaking on the Thames and cycle rides in the Chilterns. He says Cookham represents the best of all worlds, access to the Thames, beautiful countryside, and great links to London. Andy is an architect and takes an active interest in local planning issues.



Liz Peters, Committee Member

Sadly, long-standing member of the committee, Liz Peters, is to retire after eleven years' service. Liz moved to Cookham in 2011 from Huntingdon where she had been a parish councillor. She has enjoyed her time on the committee and will continue singing with the Marlow Choral Society where she helps organise concerts and events. We wish her all the best for the future.

The Cookham Society is happy to support WildCookham with their: BIG COOKHAM WILDLIFE WEEKEND

By Brian Clews

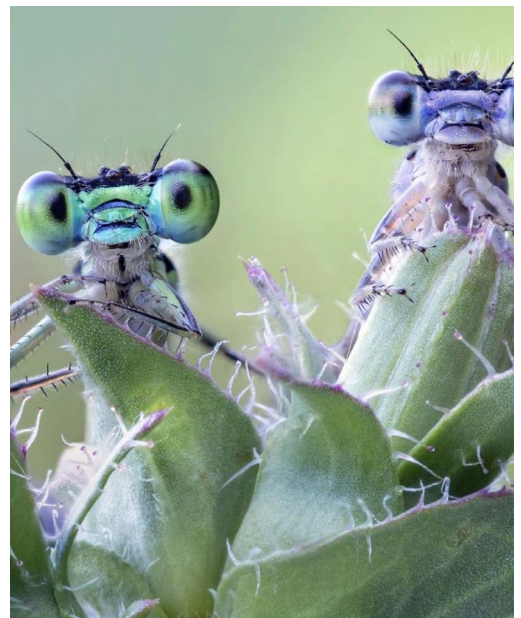
To celebrate our tenth anniversary, Wild-Cookham is inviting all Cookham residents to join us on a 'wildlife summer safari'. You can take part in the following ways:

Ponds: Why not create a pond early in the year, it doesn't have to be huge but can be fish-free and suitably planted. A handy guide is available from: brian.clews@btconnect.com.

Wildflowers: You can also create a patch of wildflowers in your garden. Much-missed local expert, Adrian Doble, created a mix of seeds perfectly suited to our area. Follow us next month to find out where to obtain a pack.

The June Event: We are urging locals to spend the weekend of 22nd and 23rd of June observing and recording as many critters and creatures as possible. Search shrubs, bushes, under leaves, stones and so on. List the ones you know, but also count all the different sorts of birds, butterflies, bugs, beetles, ladybirds, bees, and other beasties you see. Useful resources to follow in due course.

Mark up your diary and get ready for the 'holiday safari' of a lifetime!



KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH THE SOCIETY

You can keep abreast of key issues facing Cookham by staying in touch with the Society in any number of ways.

- Join the Society and get access to our twice-yearly newsletter
- Read our website, www.cookhamsociety.org.uk
- Follow us on Facebook 
- Read the Drum on Cookham Station concourse

