

The Cookham Society



May 2019 Newsletter
PHOTOGRAPH - Spring View by Barry Weare

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

NEWSLETTER UPDATE

Welcome to the Spring edition of our newsletter.

Annual General Meeting:

More than 40 people attended the Society's AGM on 7th March and heard an amusing opening talk by the Right Hon. The Lord Young of Cookham CH, entitled, "The Lighter Side of Politics" – a timely alternative to the current febrile atmosphere in London S.W.1. Your President, John Bowley, then made a presentation of the Society's 2019 Design Award to Karina Mellinger, owner of Chapman's Orchard in Cookham Dean. Pablo Dubois, who was the originator of the annual award, was made a Life Member of the Society.

Giving his annual report, your Chairman, Tom Denniford, reported that the Society had experienced another busy year, 217 planning applications had been scrutinised; 30 letters of objection had been submitted to the Royal Borough; and the Society had made representations to 4 planning appeals.

The Society was continuing to make efforts to secure flood resilience for the village. In view of the limited

amount of flood modelling data provided by the EA, the Society had commissioned its own consultant to undertake limited modelling of the effect of possible changes to the Widbrook culvert and the Whitebrook channel. The Society had also been able to convince the Borough to double the frequency of gulley cleaning in Lower Road. Pressure by the Society had pushed Network Rail into refurbishing the waiting room at Cookham Station. The Society was continuing to play an active role in the Marsh Meadow Management Committee, the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons Advisory Committee and to maintain memberships of MMPA and HACAN. The Society's officers and committee remained unchanged after the meeting. The Chairman drew attention to the current committee vacancies and invited anyone interested to come forward.

He also noted a decline in the Society's membership and the accompanying financial loss we had sustained in 2018. The committee had decided to raise subscriptions to £5.00 per annum and to move gradually over to a system of annual memberships with subscriptions payable by banker's standing order. In fact, he said, it was gratifying that, in changing over to this arrangement, several members had made additional donations.

Gordons Barn, Lower Mount Farm;
Photo by Barry Weare

THIS ISSUE:

- Sale of Cemetery Field
- Light Pollution in the Cookhams
- Sustainable Development or Green Belt

STOP PRESS!

- **RWMB gives the go ahead to change the use of agricultural building to dwelling.**

The Cookham Society has raised its concerns with RBWM regarding a recent application to demolish an old barn at Lower Mount Farm to facilitate building a house.

We shall be considering this decision at our next planning meeting, particularly with regard to its implications for any potential future 'change of use applications' relating to other farm buildings

Let there be light?

For better or worse Cookham Dean has no street lighting. Some residents light their front door, and a few have lights on gateways. Other houses have powerful security lights with movement sensors that are, thankfully, more frequently turned on by deer or badgers than burglars.



Very recently we have received comments from concerned members about the current trend for extensive outside lighting of houses and gardens.

It appears that one person's illuminated external décor can be very unwelcome light pollution to a neighbour.





May 4th to 19th
A feast of the arts
www.cookhamfestival.org.uk

f facebook.com/Cookham.Festival @cookhamfestival

Have you got your tickets?

In May it will be Festival Time and once again Cookham will be laying out its store of talent to engage and entertain. The Festival is now the largest community activity in the Cookhams as well as being one of the major arts events in the area. We attract more than 15,000 people over the duration of the Festival and we have a policy of making the ticket prices exceptional value and curating a range of events for all ages: from bumps and babies to our community's oldest residents and all in between.

This year is no exception. Music, as ever, features prominently with everything from folk and the Big Band sound, through pop and rock – the latter at the now annual **Let's Rock the Moor** - to brilliant brass and classical choral pieces. And our young primary school performers will be on stage to delight us too, this year with a **World Premiere – Katie Cox and the Rhythm of the River**, written by local musician and composer Rob Castell.

And if that's not enough we will be hosting a full orchestral **Family Concert** featuring Peter and the Wolf, and narrated by Timmy Mallett.



The Festival happens because of the time and energy of many people in our community. In particular the Festival Committee and an army of Festival Makers who curate the events and make it possible. Our thanks to them – and of course to you – as without you there would be no Festival. So please check out the Festival Brochure which is now available and find your favourite events: There is something for everyone.

Thank you, **Malcolm Stork**

For more information on and tickets for all Festival events including the above please go to:
www.cookhamfestival.org.uk



The visual arts will also play a prominent role with the **Sculpture Garden** now a major national attraction. The Cookham Arts Club has challenged its members to **Square up to Cookham** and capture a moment in time on a 30x30 cm canvas. You can also accompany Timmy Mallett, **The Cycling Artist**, as he makes his epic painting pilgrimage by bike from Cookham to Santiago de Compostella and the Festival will also be hosting an exhibition of photos collected as part of the **Wild about Cookham Photography Competition**. Art professionals will provide expert guidance and tuition to all ages over the first weekend in the **Festival Arts Hub** and James Ferguson will be exhibiting a selection of his fabulous cartoons.



We're delighted that Richard James is returning for a one man show **'The Seven Ages of Shakespeare'** and he will also be reading excerpts from David Walliams' books to our younger audience in **The Wonderful World of Walliams**. We will have an **Evening with Will Greenwood MBE** who will tell the story of his life as a rugby hero, pundit and Arctic adventurer. And we will also be telling the remarkable story of Holy Trinity Church's own **Anchoress**, holed up in a cell to pray for the sins of Henry II. Plus, you can learn to dance and attend numerous talks, poetry and the riotously funny **Festival Comedy Club**.



Is this Sustainable Development or protection of the Green Belt?

Last summer the **Boroughwide Development Management Panel of RBWM** gave permission for the demolition of a large modern agricultural barn and the construction of an **H shaped, highly glazed, office building at Mount Farm at the top of Long Lane**.

This decision was taken by elected Councillors against the clear advice of planning officers based on their professional interpretation of the legislation. The barn had only been built about 20 years ago but half of it had already received planning

permission by Permitted Development Rights for change of use to offices in 2016 and the remainder of it by a further permission in 2017. The office block approved is substantially bigger than the original barn and unlike the barn not the sort of building one would expect to find in a rural position in the Green Belt.



Mount Farm photo by Barry Weare

In February a further application was approved by the Maidenhead Panel to add an extra floor to the building. The revised plans indicate a capacity for around 150 staff. In a rural location without any access to public transport, this could hardly be described as sustainable development and there will no doubt have to be large areas of car parking to accommodate all the new staff. Neither the current local plan nor the new Draft Borough

Local Plan suggested that this Green Belt site might be a suitable location for office development. We appreciate that there is little that could have been done to resist the initial Permitted Development permission, but we are very disappointed that Councillors have pushed through this massive office development on an isolated site in our Green Belt.

Battlemead Common

We very much welcome the Borough's recent purchase of riverside pasture and woodland at White Place Farm.

It is mainly in Cookham Parish and as it adjoins the National Trust's Widbrook Common it should enhance this important open meadow.

The Society is enthusiastic about both the potential for improved public access and the preservation of an important wildlife habitat. We also believe that proper management of the White Brook in this area is required to maintain and hopefully improve the flood drainage of south Cookham.

The Borough tell us that a "Friends of Battlemead Common" group will be formed, and that the Society will have a voice on this.

We look forward to the first meeting of "The Friends" and working with other interested groups to ensure that the full potential of this site is achieved.



Cemetery Field

Cemetery Field - For Sale

News of the potential sale of the Cemetery Field – 57 acres of arable land next to Switchback Road – has caused widespread interest, especially at the asking price of more than £20,000 per acre. This is a price well above economic agricultural value, which suggests the vendors may think its potential lies elsewhere than farming.

The land is a very important part of the open area between Cookham and Maidenhead. Its Green Belt

designation should provide some comfort, but deficiencies in the planning rules suggest this sort of area can easily become cluttered with the small-scale buildings and paddock detritus which blight our urban fringes.

It would be good if this land could have a future which would secure it from development in the long-term, but ideas such as its re-creation as a nature reserve at present seem ambitious against the price being sought. In the meantime the Society is happy to have discussions with anyone with a practical proposal which will ensure it is kept free from development.

The Society is delighted to feature a piece about our fellow organization - Wild Cookham's work in our local area.

Words by Mike Copeland.



Make your garden a little wilder

Perhaps the single most useful thing you can do for our planet this year is enter for the Wild about Gardens Awards here in Cookham. It is widely believed that our generation has witnessed the destruction of 97% of the UK's wild flower meadows, which are critical to our food chain. Gardens make up 10% of the land in our borough so ensuring that these green spaces are wildlife-friendly can make a real difference to our local flora and fauna.

It doesn't take much effort for you to introduce nectar-rich plants, provide shelter and water and make it easy for wildlife to move from one garden to another.

Last year 50 gardens entered our award and this year we want that to be 150. The scheme is also now being introduced across several Maidenhead communities so the good work is spreading.

View the checklist and enter online at www.wildcookham.org.uk or pick up a form from the Stationery Depot in Cookham Rise. The website will also tell you about the many activities of WildCookham which are dedicated to making Cookham a great place for all life, for the future. (Our next event is a Dawn Chorus walk on 26th May. Details on the website).



Wild About Gardens Award Winners

Some of the Gold Award winners from 2018 with their plaques, made from Cookham-grown holly tree wood.

(Left to right) Ann Harris, Adele Weiner, Anthea Webb, Clare Padmore, Margaret Harrold, John Southgate, Janet Fisher.

The Society was pleased to hear of the appointment of Dick Brealey as the new Chair of the Friends of Stanley Spencer Gallery and wish him every success in the coming years. He has taken the time to talk to the Society about his new role.



I had been a Friend of the Stanley Spencer Gallery for many years, but when Michael Johnson announced his retirement as Chair of the Friends, it seemed to me a good opportunity to become more involved. In some ways this was a foolish decision, for everybody told me what a hard act Michael would be to follow. However,

in the short time that I have been Chair I have come to appreciate more than ever what a treasure Cookham has in the Stanley Spencer Gallery and in the wonderful group of people who run it.

The Friends enjoy unlimited free admission to the Gallery's exhibitions and to various events. In return for these advantages Friends support the Gallery in two ways. First, the Friends periodically provide grants for the Gallery to maintain its facilities and its unique collection of Spencer's works. For example, I am delighted that since becoming chair the Friends have been able to help fund new display facilities and a project to conserve its collection of Spencer's drawings. Second, Friends already assist in running the Gallery, such

as by serving as custodians, but I believe that we need to explore a variety of other interesting ways that they can provide assistance.

The extent to which we can offer additional benefits to the Friends and to which we can help the Gallery fund new projects depends on the number of Friends. So I believe that an important priority is to make sure that we market the Friends effectively. As Chair, I would like to encourage more people to enjoy and support the Gallery by joining the Friends.

Application forms to join the Friends are available at the Gallery and online at www.stanleyspencer.org.uk.

COOKHAM SOCIETY DESIGN AWARD 2019

The Cookham Society's annual Design Award was awarded to Chapmans Orchard, a house renovation project in Cookham Dean. The 1960s building was reworked in a more modern style, for owner, Karina Mellinger and the architects were Bowen Evans, of Marlow.



Image left; Chapmans Orchard prior to renovation

Image right; Chapmans Orchard after renovation

Join the Debate - Have your say on our facebook page or listen to other peoples points of view. Join us on facebook - www.facebook.com/groups/thecookhamsociety. For facebook enquires email barry.weare@btinternet.com