



BARN DOOR BULLETIN

Issue No.26

Autumn 2009

WHAT'S INSIDE?

- **VIEW FROM THE CHAIR**
- **THE FARMER & THE GOOSE ... AND THE AGM!**
- **HERITAGE OPEN DAYS REPORT**
- **ORCHARD HARVEST DAY REPORT**
- **VOLUNTEERS & NEW MEMBERS**
- **BARNFORCE REPORT**
- **NEXT INSTALMENT FROM THE WILLOW MAN**
- **2009 EVENTS COME TO AN END**

* * * * *

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

.....An incredibly hectic year on barn duty nears its end.

I want to thank each one of you for helping to push our quest on a little bit each day. We organised a lecture in the barn, basket making, a Medieval Fayre and an Orchard Harvest Day. The Medieval Fayre was an experiment which worked spectacularly well and our Orchard Harvest event drew record crowds.

It is tempting to relax and let things take their course. This would be fatal. We need to push on again, this time with our second Annual Public Meeting (and AGM) at the barn on Wednesday 11th November at 7.30pm. I am delighted that Dr Martin Davis has agreed to come and talk to us about his recently published book "The Farmer and the Goose with the Golden Eyes." The book is a celebration of a vanished part of rural South Gloucestershire, and the founding of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Please wrap up warm and come and enjoy a late autumn evening with us in the barn! We will be offering a hot, seasonal toast to warm the cockles!

The major thrust of our work in the coming year will be to begin to nail down an agreed direction for the project following the recent public and member consultation on the project. I am very grateful to South Gloucestershire Council for supporting this piece of research which has resulted in a rich set of ideas as to the way forward from both public and Members of the Trust alike. The document giving the results of the consultation are being sent out with this

bulletin to all Friends and Members of the Trust and to those Orchard Harvest Day visitors who took part in it.

Our collective task is to develop a business plan which will see the practical implementation of this complex, and sometimes daunting, project. I need to ask some of you to become Trustees and I need to lead from the front in developing a "Management Team" capable of delivering the plan on a day to day basis, with the dedicated support of a paid project director who reports directly to the Trustees. This can ONLY be successful if we have a business case which is robust and which is based on the creation of a Centre for Rural Regeneration which delivers a range of exciting learning opportunities for visitors.

I will also be turning some of my energies into securing patronage for the project from a number of well known and respected figures with links to heritage, food and education.

The owners of the barn complex (South Glos Council) need to have full confidence in our plans before they will consider leasing the barn to the Trust. The Trust itself needs to continue strengthening its resource base in order that we are able to deliver our plans to revitalise the whole site.

My hope is that 2010 will see significant steps being made in implementing our hopes and aspirations for our beloved barn. I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Public Meeting and AGM.

Good wishes

Richard Spalding
Chair, Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust

* * * * *

THE FARMER & THE GOOSE ... AND THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING & AGM!
7.30pm WEDS 11 NOVEMBER 2009

All Trust Members and Friends of the Barn should have received notification by e-mail, post or hand delivery, of the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust which will take place in the Winterbourne Barn, starting at 7.30pm and lasting less than 30 minutes. The general public are also welcome to attend.

We are delighted that **Dr Martin Davis** will be Speaker at the Annual Public Meeting that follows the AGM. Dr Davis will be talking about his new book, "**The Farmer and the Goose with the Golden Eyes**", which tells the story of Little Stoke Farm and traces its history from the 1300s to its disappearance under the roads and housing estates, which now make up Bradley Stoke and Little Stoke. Dr Davis's father, Howard Davis, was the last man to farm the land and the photographs and descriptions are a most valuable record of a vanished way of life. But the book has a second story to tell. Howard Davis was not only a farmer but also a keen ornithologist and he had a pivotal role in the founding of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge. Sir Peter Scott's widow, Lady Philippa Scott, has written the foreword to the book. This promises to be a fascinating evening held in a superb medieval building which was itself once the focus of local farming. Entry is free but donations are always appreciated.

Anyone is welcome to attend but organisers warn that it might well be chilly on a November evening, so wrap up well! There will be hot seasonal drinks available – and possibly even a spot of impromptu dancing to keep people warm. A range of the Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust's merchandise will be available, including the remaining stock of last year's

popular WMBT Christmas cards, so it will be a good opportunity to do some Christmas shopping. Dr Davis's book will be on sale, as well as two books by one of our Trustees, **Linda Hall** – “**Down the Garden Path: Privies of the Bristol and Bath area**” and “**Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900**”. For that extra touch for your Christmas presents, the authors will be available to sign their books!

We look forward to welcoming you and your families and friends.

* * * * *

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS REPORT

Jane Melville, Coordinator

The weather played tricks on us during the weekend of the Open Days. Saturday was much warmer than expected so we all felt overdressed and then Sunday caught us out, as we arrived more lightly dressed, by being much colder! We welcomed 176 visitors over the weekend and the feedback contained in completed English Heritage questionnaires and visitor book sheets was very complimentary and encouraging. Many visitors were, as one might expect with the nature and intention of the Open Days, very knowledgeable or interested in history, architecture and local heritage and this produced several interesting and informative discussions.

We were delighted to welcome on Sunday both Martin Davis with his new publication about Little Stoke Farm, ‘The Farmer and the Goose with the Golden Eyes’, and Dorothy Brown with her new publication ‘Rediscovering Acton Court and the Poyntz family’. They signed copies of their books bought from our shop. The presence of both authors generated some lively discussion and reminiscing with visitors and volunteers. We are indebted to them for the generous proportion of income they and Linda Hall give us from our sales of their books.

This was not a major fundraising event but donations from visitors amounted to nearly £60 and we received a further £40 from book sales. We also sold £100 of our own merchandise stock.

* * * * *

ORCHARD HARVEST DAY REPORT

Jenny Reed, Coordinator

Our fourth Orchard Harvest Day was not only a success but I think all involved are still recovering!! It is true to say we were (happily) overwhelmed by the numbers of visitors, with a final total of 756 people crossing the entrance. This did have its drawbacks as it seemed all one could hear from lunchtime onwards was “we have sold out of ...”. Although the weather was a little disappointing compared with the Saturday, I felt it leant a rather autumnal feel and encouraged people to buy the hot refreshments available.

The Barn provided a perfect back-drop for all the events and activities. One of the highlights of the day was the Winterbourne Down Border Morris Dancers providing excellent entertainment and added colour. It was a very appropriate setting for them to be dancing in the Barn courtyard accompanied by their musicians. They enjoyed being there just as much as we enjoyed hosting them. Another highlight was Neil Phillips’ beautiful photographs projected on the interior wall of the barn, reminding everyone of the importance of preserving our Orchards.

The children’s activities provided by the Avon Wildlife Trust were very popular again and included the Longest Peel, making a Bird Feeder, apple sculptures, games and a quiz. The

image of a child walking up the road with a bird feeder swinging from her hand will stay with me for a while. We don't have a tally of exactly how many children attended, but they were certainly kept busy and we hope to include more activities for them in future events. While people waited for their refreshments in the Barn Café they were also able to enjoy the display of poems on autumn written by children of Elm Park School.

In spite of running out of some of their products early, the Barn Café kept the teas and coffees going and earned approximately £240. Vickie's homemade Squash & Garlic soup and Jenny's Mulled Apple Juice were both very popular on the chilly day. The two WMBT stalls of donated cookery and gardening books and donated plants raised £96. As we go to Press, we are still awaiting confirmation of the donations from the Rustic Rocket BBQ and the Great Western Brewing Company but they both did a roaring trade throughout the day and found they had underestimated demand by a long way. GWB had to send out for more supplies and still ran out before the close. Monies received from other stall holders, general donations, and donations from the children's activities came to £240.

Dr Martin Davis braved the chilly air to be available to sign copies of his book again. The WMBT Shop received nearly £40 from more sales of Dr Davis's and Dorothy Brown's books. We also sold £110 of our own merchandise, including more of last year's popular WMBT Christmas cards.

Contributions to the event were also made by SITA, who provided waste and recycling bins and collection afterwards, and by a South Gloucestershire Council grant to cover some of the costs, including the Avon Wildlife Trust children's activities, the Morris dancers, first aid cover, and portable toilets.

This was my first year of co-ordinating and I would like to say straight away it is certainly not a job for one person. Many thanks to all the volunteers who gave up their time to help on the day, and also before and after; the actual hours involved to produce such a successful event amounted to over 500 hours of volunteers time. If we had to employ the volunteers it would cost a minimum of £3000!!

As a team we haven't got everything right yet to accommodate such large visitor numbers and we will need to act on many of the suggestions to improve the event next year. Personally, I was aware of the lack of Cider and juicing, that visitors had expected, and issues around parking, disabled access to the Barn, providing for vegetarians; to name but a few. BUT overall it was a fantastic day and it was great to see people lingering and enjoying all the day had to offer.

* * * * *

VOLUNTEERS & NEW MEMBERS

Jane Melville, Membership Secretary

It has been very encouraging to find that, as the Trust events have attracted more visitors, we are also welcoming a few more volunteers to spread the work of running them. It isn't everyone's cup of tea to work in a cold, damp barn or at the wind-swept gate for an hour or two on an October Sunday, but when the crowds flood in and you are kept busy, time soon passes and I can assure you that your help in this is absolutely invaluable. It can also be very enjoyable and there was lots of laughter as well as shivering! Three UWE volunteers joined our ranks for the Orchard Harvest Day and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, partnering our member volunteers and bringing a youthful buzz to our work. Welcoming them into our community when they are far from home gives them something as well as us!

As Jenny wrote in her report above, Orchard Harvest Day was made possible by over 500

volunteer hours in total. This carried out by various volunteers across several weeks of preparations, including Barnforce days, throughout the actual day, and then winding up the organisational and financial loose ends, so there are many flexible opportunities for Friends and Members to help. These will be better identified in the coming months so it is easier for potential volunteers to understand the varied work and commitment that might be asked of them.

The Trust's work is a lot more than running heritage-based or fundraising events but, if you don't have business or project management or financial skills to help the Winterbourne Barn project move forward in a direct way, you can be a part of the support team. Look out for more details on your membership renewal form at the end of January.

We have also been very pleased to welcome several new Friends of the Barn and Trust Members who joined during our last couple of events. Our active membership is now up to nearly 200 individuals.

* * * * *

BARNFORCE REPORT

Graham White & Robert Beetham, Barnforce Coordinators

With the help of good weather and willing hands, including about 20 volunteers from UWE for our first October meet, we have been able to present the grounds in as good a condition as possible for the two Heritage Open Days and the Orchard Harvest Day. We have also completed the levelling of the vacant ground in the North Yard and despite a dry September during which a gamble on forecast rain failed, the grass seed that was scattered on this ground is now germinating well.

The winter months are usually when we make progress with improving the site. It would be good to demolish the two remaining mounds of earth so that any rubble could be added to the pile in the North Yard before this is removed. But there is a problem as to where the earth should go. An attractive solution would be to fill in the ditch in the South Yard-but this does act as a reservoir in very wet times and filling it may have undesired consequences.

Our planned Barnforce meets for the next months will be Saturdays November 21, December 19, January 16, February 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 19. As usual we will begin at 10am and fade away towards 1pm, but there is no clocking in and helpers are welcome for whatever part of the morning they can make.

Contact details are: Graham White - 01454 778065 - mrfruit@btinternet.com
Robert Beetham - 01179574921 - robert.beetham@phonecoop.coop

* * * * *

A RURAL RAMBLE WITH THE WILLOW MAN

Rob Govier (Winterbourne Willows)

Ah well, the year rolls on. The summer promised by the Met Office didn't quite materialise and the charcoal remained on the supermarket shelves. We did however enjoy a dry and sunny early autumn, with nature providing a breathtaking abundance of colour well into October.

Did you see or perhaps more likely hear the Canada Geese 'kerhonk' their way over the rooftops in the first light of morning and then off again as dusk fell? This is a ritual carried out every autumn around Winterbourne and Frampton as they descend on the surrounding

stubbles to glean anything left from the harvest. I photographed a flock of 16 in the field alongside Park Lane in September and where do they come from? Not far it seems. Apparently they are quite well established on the lakes of the Kendleshire golf course and I'm told by local golfers they can also be found on the lakes at Woodlands golf course on Trench Lane. Maybe it is the same flock. If you play golf on either course and have any idea of their actual numbers, I would be interested to hear from you.

As I recounted in my previous article, the swallow despite the weather had a successful season and I'm sure raised not one but two broods to maturity in the cow byre and hopefully have by now arrived safely in their wintering quarters; most probably in South Africa. It got me to thinking about before the days of Bill Oddie, David Attenborough, TV, radio and the affordability of books, let alone the ability to read them. What must the generation of countrymen toiling in and around Court Farm Barn have made of these migrants, along with swifts and house martins, suddenly appearing in the skies around them in spring only to disappear, god knows where, come the end of the summer? If indeed they were visiting these shores six or seven hundred years ago!

Today perhaps the departing of such species is not really noticed, our lifestyles not being so integrated with the countryside as had been the case with our forefathers. Watching the autumn skies as the last of these aerial athletes disappeared to who knows where must have been quite a poignant moment, perhaps reflecting on the hard times to follow before hopefully they would return with the promise of everything that was required to sustain life itself.

* * * * *

2009 EVENTS COME TO AN END

This has been a momentous year in our events history, with record numbers of visitors and a very successful first Medieval Fayre. Apart from the barn and grounds being open to visitors on Barnforce Saturdays (dates as advised in the Barnforce report above) the Annual Public Meeting & AGM is the last event of the year.

Plans are being made for the 2010 schedule and full details will be published in the next bulletin. The Events Group are keen to keep the events manageable and to allow for the energies of key Trust Members and Friends to be directed towards moving the very important main barn project forward. To this end, there will be no expansion of our activities in 2010, rather a consolidation. Lessons learnt from this year will be used to improve some of the basic organisational aspects of events and prepare the ground for expansion in the future.

Thank you to all of you who have supported our events this year.

* * * * *

www.winterbournebarn.co.uk

* * * * *

(If you would like to send us comments on anything in this bulletin, please e-mail to wmbt@jmbs.demon.co.uk or write to WMBT c/o 32 Watleys End Road, Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1PQ)