



Newsletter – May 2010

Introduction

This newsletter is shorter than usual so as not to duplicate information contained in the reports for the AGM on 15 June. We hope to see as many as possible of you there. We would also like to hear from any of you who could help with our activities, either by joining the Council or by helping with projects. We have lots of ideas but need more pairs of hands to make them happen.

Civic Voice

This is the new national organization launched in April to replace the Civic Trust which was wound up a year ago. We were fortunate to have arranged for the Director of Civic Voice, Tony Burton, to speak to us on 28 April, just 10 days after the launch. He gave us an inspiring talk which prompted a lively question and answer session. Some of the key themes from the launch event and the talk were:

"Talking Civic Sense"

This is the strapline they have chosen for their logo and there is much emphasis on the importance of local Civic Societies and Civic Voice being seen as a positive influence, putting forward constructive suggestions and working with authorities to solve problems – not just "NIMBYS" who only speak up when they want to object to proposals for change. Given the emphasis that some of the political parties are making on encouraging community involvement this could be very important in future.

Civic Pride

Civic Voice believes that "everyone has the right to live somewhere they can be proud of" and that local Societies can play a major role in promoting this – both by attention to detail and protecting local "treasures" (most of our activities fall in this category) and at a broader level by organising or helping with

bigger events (such as Heritage Day) which promote community bonding and local economic wellbeing.

Look outwards

We need to engage with the local community, especially younger people: some Societies are already well advanced with this and there are plenty of examples we can learn from.

As reported in the last newsletter, the role of the national organization is to support local Societies in practical ways by providing us with information, access to services and "toolkits" for campaigns and a voice at national level discussions e.g about changes to the planning systems. Several of the Trustees of Civic Voice already have high profiles in this field.

There is a lot more information about Civic Voice at <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/>. Members might also like to take part in the "Love Local" survey which can be accessed from that site.

The Friends' Executive Council has decided that we should join Civic Voice for this year and will be asking the AGM to ratify this for the future.

Civic Matters

Planning

We have made two submissions to the District Council planning department.

Champion House (Summerfields), Wootton Road

We commented on an application by developers to demolish the existing house next to John Mason School and build 24 retirement apartments. This has been refused without going to committee on the grounds that the building was too massive with insufficient vision for access to the road.

In addition, there was no affordable housing proposed and no progress on developer's contribution.

Your Vale Your Future

This was a general submission commenting on the proposed town centre development.

We are pleased to see a new tea shop in West St Helen's street and a guitar shop in Stert Street, each filling a niche. Otherwise there is a trend towards conversion of town centre offices into apartments and we are concerned at the poor provision for on- or off-street parking.

Please contact Pat Bryden if you would like more information or have any comments on planning issues.

Choose Abingdon Partnership

The Friends are continuing to work with the Partnership on the design of the new Town Maps and are discussing other possible projects.

The Partnership worked with the Craft Fair organizers to promote the Craft Fair and other events in Abingdon, including a feature and a supplement in the March issue of Round & About which went to surrounding areas of Oxfordshire. This, combined with the Easter Holidays and very warm weather, brought a lot of people into town and the Friends stall at the Craft Fair generated a lot of interest in the Abbey Buildings.

Heather Brown, the Partnership Manager, will make a presentation to us after the AGM.

Abingdon Museum

The Friends wrote to the Town Council earlier this year offering our help when the Museum closes for refurbishment. As a consequence a meeting was set up between representatives of the Friends, the curator of the Museum, Dr Lauren Gilmour and representatives from the Town Council.

The Abbey Buildings are often in use and security would present a problem for the storage of valuable items from the museum. However it is hoped that the Friends could house the Time Line (which they have in the past) and offer the use of the Buildings when they are available for the supervised children's activities, which the Museum has organised for some years.

Wanted: a volunteer to help the paid supervisor who would run the childrens activities. Training would be provided. Please contact Sylvia Bird if you can help.

A message from the Abingdon Museum Friends

"One of the most exciting happenings in Abingdon this year has been the award by the Heritage Lottery Fund to the County Hall and the Museum for their refurbishment. Extra funding from both the Councils and the community will be required to enable the project to achieve a much greater potential. Because of this, the Museum Friends will, over the next couple of years, be organising many events for everyone to take part in and enjoy. It is hoped that not only will everyone in Abingdon have fun, but that this will raise the Town's profile in the area and bring in new custom for the businesses and add vitality to the Town centre."

Details of the initial events are on page 3. If anyone would like to help the Museum Friends with their activities, please contact Peter Clare pj.clare@virgin.net or phone Ruth Weinberg on 01235 524119. Their website should be available very soon, but in the meantime, they have space on www.abingdon.gov.uk. As well as help on the day of an event, they would also greatly appreciate other assistance such as cakes or plants for sale and raffle or tombola prizes

The History of Abingdon School

We were delighted to welcome Mr. Mark Turner, the Headmaster of Abingdon School (shortly to become Headmaster of Shrewsbury) as our February speaker. Despite a delayed start due to certain incompatibilities in our projector system we were treated to a fascinating illustrated history of Abingdon School, alias the Grammar School or Roysse's School, from it's shadowy past under the aegis of the Abbots of Abingdon through the turbulent times of the dissolution and its rescue under the backing of Christ's Hospital and the Borough of Abingdon and re-endowment by John Roysse in 1563. We learnt of the vicissitudes of subsequent headmasters until the school moved in 1870 from its town centre home to a new home in the Albert Park development where it continues to flourish. Much more for a further lecture but sadly not by Mark Turner whom we wish all success in his new appointment.

Events in Abingdon

Friends' Events

AGM Tuesday 15 June 19.30 Abbey Buildings followed by a talk from Heather Brown of Choose Abingdon Partnership then wine and strawberries.

Visit to Compton Verney, Warwickshire.

Saturday 3 July

Self drive trip. A group booking has been made so that we can obtain a discounted entrance and have lunch there. If you are interested please phone Pauline Burren on 01235 521873.

Visit to Chastleton House, Moreton in the Marsh. Saturday, September 25

A group booking has been made. They advise visitors to come in a small coach. We can have lunch at a pub nearby. If you are interested please phone Pauline Burren

Unicorn Theatre events

The Hypochondriac by Roger McGough, based on Moliere

*19.30 Wednesday 19 – Saturday 22 May
Studio Theatre Club*

Tickets £7.50 (concessions available) from <http://www.studiotheatreclub.com/> or 01865 778105 or from The Gift Centre.

Oxfordshire Drama Network Festival

19.30 Sunday 30 May – Saturday 5 June

2 or 3 one-act plays per night, Mon – Fri with the best 3 called back for Saturday's Gala Night.

Tickets £6 from The Bookstore (Abbey Shopping Centre) or from 01865 736913

An Experiment with an Air Pump by Shelagh Stevenson

*19.30 Wednesday 14 – Saturday 17 July
Abingdon Drama Club*

Tickets from The Bookstore or contact <http://www.abingdon-drama-club.com/>

Inspector Drake and the Black Widow by David Tristram

*Wednesday 28 – Saturday 31 July
Old Gaol Theatre Company*

"Fuchsias My Way" 19.30 Thursday 27 May
Talk by Joy Craig, British Fuchsia Society
Tickets £5 at the door. Proceeds to Flexicare (Oxford & Abingdon), a disabled children's charity. More details from Jenny Berrell 01235 553701

Unicorn Comedy Club opening night

19.30 for 20.00 Thursday 10 June.

With Ava Vidal and other acts. Tickets £7 from <http://unicorncomedy.moonfruit.com/>

Other events in Abingdon

The Twenty-six Centuries of Abingdon: County Hall Museum from 15 May

A major exhibition of the town's rich history and a foretaste of what we will see when the museum re-opens in 2012. Accompanied by a themed exhibition on the Stuarts, following last year's Tudors exhibition,

Abingdon Museum Friends fundraising launch event. 19 June 2010 from 10.30am

Entertainment in the Museum with fun for everyone – exhibitions, activities, basement open to display the gas engines, roof open (weather permitting) - look over Abingdon and watch the Morris Dancers from on high.

Walking tour of Abingdon Tues 6 July 18.30

with Dr Simon Bradley, architectural historian and editor of Pevsner Architectural Guides. The tour will take in the highlights of Abingdon's architectural heritage and marks the launch of the first new edition since 1966 of the Pevsner's guide which covers Abingdon. 10% of all proceeds from the sale of the new guide on the evening to Friends of Abingdon Museum to support the museum redevelopment fundraising campaign.

More details from Mostly Books 01235 525880 or www.mostly-books.co.uk

Gardens open around Abingdon in aid of Museum Friends appeal Saturday 10 July
Details from Museum Friends nearer the time.

Heritage Weekend 11 – 12 September

More details in next newsletter but get it in your diaries now.

Please remember that there is no parking at the Abbey Buildings: drop off and pick up only. There is free parking after 16.00 at Abbey Meadows, Abbey House or Cattle Market car parks.

Audrey Tamplin

News of Audrey Tamplin's death from pulmonary fibrosis on 30 March took me back to May 2003. It was then that, as Mayor of Abingdon, she bestowed on me a Mayor's award for my efforts to "improve the life of Abingdon" by Town Crying and acting as the first chairman of Abingdon Museum Friends. It was typical of Audrey that she would want to thank someone who was doing what they enjoyed immensely anyway. She had a mind that took in detail that would elude most folk, and would quietly process it and produce a result, sometimes at the most unexpected times. There was nothing loud or fussy about her – she was always a lady. In fact I often saw her as the little old lady in the 1955 Ealing film "The Ladykillers", where she foiled a dastardly plot whilst in (feigned) ignorance of what was going on around her. I recall meeting Audrey in the bosom of her family, when it was revealed that as children their favourite game was "trials". Her siblings would take it in turn to be judge and counsels for prosecution and defence, but Audrey was always cast as the prisoner in the dock. It wasn't clear to me how often she was found guilty.

Audrey and her husband John married in 1963 and spent some years globetrotting as part of John's engineering career. After settling here, they had both been councillors in Abingdon (with Audrey as Mayor for 2002/3) until they retired to the Lake District, where their daughter is an inspector in the Cumbria police service. Sadly, John suffered a stroke shortly after the move, but with typical Tamplin family determination he was nursed and supported back to mobility and they returned to Abingdon. Audrey resumed life as a Town Councillor, helping also with the activities of the friends of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and remained active in spite of her illness until shortly before her death. Her death represents a great loss to us all and our sympathy and best wishes go out to her family, especially John and her children Jane and Richard, and all who knew her.

Tony Legge

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