

## **Social and Community Services**

### **Cogges Manor Farm Museum**

#### **Cogges Project Bulletin 2    March 2008**

- ❖ COGGES OPEN FOR EASTER – Opening 22 March at 11am
- ❖ SPECIAL FOR 2008 – REDUCED PRICE SEASON TICKETS –

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#### **THANK YOU**

Very many thanks to the volunteers who turned out on Saturday 8 March for a 'Clean up Cogges' Day in preparation for the new season. More than 20 volunteers and 5 volunteer staff really made a difference to the site and tackled all sorts of work in the garden, on the farm and around the site. Many more (nearly 50) have volunteered to help during the season.

#### **1) Cogges Project Board**

The Cogges Project Board welcomed four new members to its meeting on 12 March: in the absence of David Freeman (Chairman of the Cogges Trust), Mrs Eileen Mawle and James Robertshaw have been invited to join the Board as Cogges Trust representatives; Debbie Dance (Oxford Preservation Trust) and Diana Shelton (West Oxfordshire District Council) have also been invited to join. The Chairman, John Jackson thanked the Trustees for the work of the Trust to date.

Two new proposals for the future use of Cogges Manor Farm Museum were reported to the Board. There was lengthy discussion about all the proposals received and how they should be evaluated. It was agreed that clearer objectives should be drawn up for the future of Cogges and that all the proposals should be 'tested' against those objectives.

#### **2) Conservation Statement (interim report)**

John Rhodes (external consultant) writes: Because of excellent stewardship so far, Cogges to an extraordinary degree does retain the texture, detail and evidence of its development over time, and to protect this for the future ought to be a central principle. This in turn should mean that the same high coherent standards of care and conservation are applied to all aspects of the site

(even/especially if some are considered for a degree of adaptation). The application of different standards could be very damaging, and whatever solutions are adopted, a central body of principle should inform all that is done and this, I hope, is what the Conservation Statement will be able to propose.

The Conservation Statement is scheduled to be completed by 8 April (the date of the next Project Board meeting).

### **3) National network of Rural Museums**

Roy Brigden (Director of the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading) and Stuart Gillis (curator at Gressenhall, Norfolk's rural life museum) have visited Cogges as representatives of a national network of rural museums. A report of their comments will be included in the next Bulletin.

### **4) The National Trust**

A number of people have suggested that the National Trust might be willing to take Cogges into its care. This idea was discussed with Patrick Begg, the Regional Director, in February. He said that the Trust has a strict policy of not taking over property which is already in public ownership and will normally not take over any property without a full endowment, but they may be able to help by way of offering advice. We will also be discussing the possibility of a transfer to English Heritage – and the results of that meeting will be reported back later.

### **5) David Cameron MP has asked to meet the Project Board in April.**

### **6) Schedule of Cogges Project Board meetings and Bulletins**

8 April, 15 May, 12 June – Bulletins will be sent out as soon as possible following each Board meeting.

### **7) Public Meeting 27 February**

168 members of the public filled Cogges Church for this public meeting led by the Cogges Trust. Trustee and Cogges resident David Bond took the chair in the absence of David Freeman (Chairman of the Trust) and thanked all for attending and for the tremendous show of community support for Cogges. He pointed out that although funding from the County Council has been agreed for 2008/9, the future remains very uncertain, and public support will be essential if Cogges is to thrive. County Councillor David Robertson, who is a member of the Cogges Project Board as both local member and Deputy Leader of the County Council, explained the County Council's position and its decision to continue to fund Cogges fully for one year whilst a long term solution is found to secure its future.

John Jackson, Director for Social and Community Services, said that the County Council has set up a Project Board to ensure that there is very tight management of the work so that we can monitor progress and achieve the best possible results. The Council are treating this as a formal project applying standard

project management principles. In his role as Director he has taken the view that he should oversee the project to chair the Project Board which meets monthly. Key officers involved are Martyn Brown, the County Heritage & Arts Officer as the project manager and Richard Munro, Head of Cultural & Adult Learning Services. West Oxfordshire District Council is represented on the Board and so is the Cogges Trust.

The project will report to Cllr Jim Couchman, the Council's Cabinet Member for Social & Community Services. However, in addition, the Cabinet has agreed that two other Cabinet members who have a local interest should be on the Project Board, they are David Robertson and Louise Chapman.

The Board has agreed the following medium term **objectives**:

- a) To seek a long term sustainable future for Cogges Manor Farm Museum, retaining public access to much of the site and a level of heritage education/interpretation (to be defined) in such a way to meet the financial plan set out by the County Council.
- b) To work with the Cogges Trust to seek external funding, grant aid, sponsorship and to maximise income potential.
- c) To identify possible commercial partners/providers to achieve necessary investment and increased income from compatible commercial uses.

The Board made the following **assumptions about the role of the County Council**:

- a) We will maintain ownership of Cogges site.
- b) We will ensure responsible care and maintenance of buildings and ancient monument.
- c) We will maintain ownership of museum collections – and/or to dispose of collections in accordance with national standards.

The **timetable** for our work is as follows:

- a) We intend to complete the business plan for Cogges by the end of June.
- b) Prior to this we will have considered all the proposals that have been put forward by interested organizations and parties.
- c) In June/July we will make recommendations to the County Council's Cabinet on the proposed way forward.
- d) Assuming that another party is involved we anticipate that there will need to be a period for negotiations and formal agreement.

Carol Anderson, Museum Service Manager, spoke about plans for Easter opening at Cogges and the programme of events for the season (the 2008 publicity leaflet was distributed in the meeting). She also asked for volunteers to help with a 'clean-up' day on Saturday 8 March, and to offer their help throughout the season. More volunteers are needed – so please contact the museum if you are interested. There are a variety of tasks to be done from helping on the farm, or in the tea room – to marketing and office duties.

Professor John Blair described Cogges as the natural centre for the study and interpretation of the extraordinarily rich landscape of the Windrush Valley – with major prehistoric sites at Devil's Quoits and Gravelly Guy; Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Standlake and elsewhere; important medieval manorial sites, and the Bishop of Winchester's Palace at Witney, and the Cogges complex of the 'castle', Priory, church and Manor House; and the late medieval manorial developments at Stanton Harcourt.

An hour of discussion followed with questions and comments. The need to increase the marketing budget was highlighted as the most urgent priority, plus better management and a clearer sense of direction. Numerous suggestions were made for possible developments including allotments, lectures, weddings, and coach parties.

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