

SageDiary

Tuesday 6 February: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 – 3.30pm, 70 St Leonard's Road, Headington. Contact Averil on 01865 762383 or averil@poetic.demon.co.uk.

Thursday 8 February: *Why is it so hard for us to engage with climate change? Understanding the psychology of denial*, 12.30pm, St Giles Church, Oxford. Lunchtime lecture by George Marshall, Climate Outreach Information Network.

Friday 9 February: *Climate Change – a theological and practical response*. 7.30 - 9.30pm, St Andrew's Church, Linton Road, Oxford. Speakers: Martin & Margot Hodson. Organised by the Oxford branch of Christians in Science. Contact Diana Briggs at diana.briggs@gmail.com.

Sunday 11 February: BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship live from Jesus College Chapel, Oxford, 8.10 - 8.50am. Preacher: Sir John Houghton on a Christian response to climate change. Admission by ticket: if you would like to attend please e-mail info@sageoxford.org.uk. The service will be available on the Radio 4 website (www.bbc.co.uk/religion/programmes/sunday_worship) for about a week.

Thursday 15 February: *The church, theology and climate change*, 12.30pm, St Giles Church, Oxford. Lunchtime lecture by Rev Dr Andrew Bunch, Vicar of St Giles & Dr Paula Clifford, Christian Aid.

Saturday 17 February: Sage visit to Averil Stedeford's ecohouse, 70 St Leonard's Road Headington, 11.30am - 4.30pm. Including bring & share lunch (drinks provided), and a walk, short quiet time and cup of tea. Please contact Averil if you are coming on 01865 762383 or averil@poetic.demon.co.uk.

Thursday 22 February: *Climate change and biodiversity*, 12.30pm, St Giles Church, Oxford. Lunchtime lecture by Dr Mike Morecroft, NERC Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

Saturday 3 March: Sage work party, 2.00 - 5.00pm, Boundary Brook Nature Park. Contact Clare on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Tuesday 6 March: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 – 3.30pm, 150 Leiden Road. Contact Caroline on 01865 432600 or caroline.steel@ntlworld.com.

Friday 9 March: Sage bring & share meal, 7.00pm, 42 Morrell Avenue. Contact Clare on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Saturday 24 March: *Why should Christians Care for the Planet?*, 9.15am - 4.00pm, Sarum College Salisbury. Speakers: Sage members, Mike Morecroft and Martin & Margot Hodson. Sarum College can provide accommodation. Details and booking form available at www.sarum.ac.uk/pages/data.asp?layout=Event.htm&Id=2299.

Tuesday 17 April: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 – 3.30pm, 42 Morrell Avenue. Contact Clare on 01865 242588 or can@freenet.co.uk.

Tuesday 15 May: Sage prayer meeting, 2.00 – 3.30pm, 14A Osler Road, Headington. Contact Jennifer on 01865 768436 or richardgunraj@onetel.com.

Sunday 3 June: Sage taking part in Environment Sunday service, St Margaret's, Lewknor.

More events which may be of interest to Sage supporters are listed at www.sageoxford.org.uk/calendar.htm.

SageWords

The newsletter of Sage, a Christian environmental group in Oxford

January 2007

www.sageoxford.org.uk

Church and Natural England in Chiltern Gateway project

Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (NNR) might be described as the most visited and yet least known nature reserve in Britain. Few will have heard of it but thousands drive through it every day on the M40 through the cutting in the chalk ridge that forms the Chilterns. We receive a steady trickle of visitors off the Ridgeway National Trail or more often taking a break from the motorway in The Olde Leathern Bottle.

But Aston Rowant NNR, despite its stunning views across the Thames Valley, its bee orchids and its red kites remains largely unknown. Natural England, who manage this Site of Special Scientific Interest, has nowhere to host its visitors. This severely limits its ability to open up the reserve to the public.

Facilities that we have come to expect, like toilets and even shelter in wet weather, cannot be housed in the shed that serves as an office for the warden and community liaison officer. With the government's initiative to open up access to the countryside work has been undertaken to improve signing and upgrade the stiles and gates that lead into the reserve. Where could Natural England find a convenient 'visitor centre' to bring their visitors to?

The Chiltern Gateway project, a partnership that brings together those concerned to open up Aston Rowant NNR and community groups including St Margaret's church and Lewknor Parish Council, believes that all could benefit from a visitor centre in the



The M40 cutting at Aston Rowant

village. The church building, just five minutes walk from the reserve, offers the ideal site. The first stage of this project is now under way with the opening up of an exhibition providing an overview of the area's history, geography and local places of interest. It was installed at the end of November 2006. Further developments are under discussion, as the church looks at the

Continued overleaf

Chiltern Gateway *continued*

way its large building could be used to offer hospitality to the visitor.

St Margaret's Church Council, however, has a wider vision. The Chiltern Gateway project offers us the opportunity to use the church building as the starting point for an exploration of God's creation. In the current debates about our fragile environment the Church has rich resources to draw on, and we believe that the project provides the ideal place and setting to make our contribution. We are at the beginning of a journey and there are many places to explore - maybe I can share that journey with you. For the moment we take our inspiration from that seasoned traveller Jacob, who found a place on the earth to rest before he set off and found to his surprise: "How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." (Genesis



Red kite

28:17). Our sleepy rural churches could well find, like us, that around them lies a world to be explored and a heaven waiting to be discovered.

Simon Brignall

Sage will be taking part in Environment Sunday at St. Margaret's, Lewknor on Sunday 3 June. More details in the next Sage Words.

Volunteers needed at Aston Rowant

Aston Rowant NNR is one of the country's most important reserves. Renowned for its red kites and rare wild flowers the reserve is primarily species-rich chalk grassland and beech woodland, and needs a lot of regular maintenance. Site management tasks are led by our experienced site managers and may include scrub clearance, path maintenance, fencing, species protection, interpretation and even livestock husbandry. No experience is necessary as training for all tasks is provided on the day. The group ranges in experience, all you need is lots of enthusiasm!

A regular group meets every Monday but volunteers are welcome Mondays to Thursdays from 9.00am for however long you want to



stay, usually up until around 4.30pm. Meet at Aston Rowant NNR Natural England Office - take junction 5 of the M40 and follow signs to the A40 Stokenchurch. After turning onto the A40 take the first right where you see a sign to "English Nature Office" and follow the track up to the office on the left. If you reach signs to the reserve and Christmas Common you have gone too far! You will need to complete an application form when you start volunteering. Travel costs are covered. All volunteers over 15 years of age are covered by Natural England insurance. If you wish to join, please contact us on 01844 351833 or

jenny.crook@naturalengland.org.uk.

Jenny Crook

Army of Sage volunteers at Green Fair

Saturday 9 December was a long day in Oxford Town Hall for Sage and our mini army of supporters. At 8.30am Martin and Margot loaded up the car with all needed to do a Green Fair. When we arrived there were already lots of people setting up. Very soon help was at hand in the form of Clare, Jess and Tom, with Jane P only slightly behind them. So this was our set-up team- stuff to put out, boards to erect and populate. Ruth soon arrived with the SS Mary & John churchyard project materials for the half table next to ours. We were easily set up in time for the opening at 10.30am. Next on the stand were David and Jane W-R. Late morning Joyce, Simon and Maranda took over, which allowed the rest of us to have some lunch. The afternoon team was Richard, Jennifer and Averil. Finally, Ed joined Ruth, Martin and Margot to pack up at 4.30pm.

The day was quieter than normal, and our takings were well down on last year at



£112.75. (Most of this will go the Cornerstone in Grove, and we are grateful again for their support). However, this allowed plenty of time for our team to get to know each other - we had Christians from many different churches in Oxford, Lewknor, Kidlington, Abingdon and Stanford in the Vale. We had some good conversations with people, lots of literature went, and made some useful contacts. Many thanks to the whole team for their efforts.

Martin Hodson

Church climate change stories sought

Anne Martin of Christian Concern for One World (CCOW), which operates with all denominations in the Diocese of Oxford area, is preparing a resource for churches on climate change and wants stories to inspire other church action. She writes: "We would be looking for churches which might have got a Green Team together, held a Creation service, started a car share scheme, changed the church light bulbs, use the magazine to share information on cutting their carbon footprint, started on the EcoCongregation modules, become an Operation Noah church, or any other similar initiative in their church. Any stories are greatly welcome and we would like to talk to people so as to write it up." So if you live in the Oxford Diocese area please contact Anne at **anmartin@onetel.com.**

Grebes seen on Sage New Year walk

About a dozen of us enjoyed a gentle New Year's Day walk around Farmoor Reservoir, west of Oxford, with views of the Thames and surrounding countryside. Among the birds on display were cormorants and both great crested and little grebes. Many thanks to Caroline for hosting us before and after the walk for brunch and tea respectively.

