

PUTTENHAM BARN BUNKHOUSE

Newsletter – Summer 2021



New beginnings...!

Dave makes our new name official.



'Farewell Puttenham Eco Camping Barn, hello Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse!' The Covid situation prompted us to have a serious rethink about the use of the communal sleeping platforms at the barn and it was decided to replace two of them with bunk beds. Thanks to much hard work by our hardy volunteers on cold and/or wet winter days the kits were assembled and we now proudly present our four bunk bed units. We do still have remaining one section of the original sleeping platform, providing for example a fun option for children to hunker down together.

After a longer than usual gap we are delighted to say hello again to all our supporters near and far and to give you an update on some of the happenings at Puttenham Barn during the last 18 months or so.

All plans for the 2020 season sadly ground to a halt as Covid-19 struck the country. The barn had to remain closed to visitors for the remainder of the year but we agreed to offer our volunteer wardens 'sole use' for a few nights each. A number of people were pleased to accept and all enjoyed a relaxing break amid the woes of the summer.

Committee meetings continued to take place thanks to the hurried acquisition of Zoom skills. One focus was to find new volunteers to take over many of the operational duties associated with running the barn smoothly. This has been successful in part and we thank all new members of the team.

We take this opportunity to notify you of some particular changes on our Operations Committee:

- After over 6 years in the role of Honorary Treasurer **Keith Chesterton** passed the reins over to **Martin Barnes** (apt surname!) in 2019. We thank Keith for his invaluable contribution to the project, he continues to support the project in various ways.
- We are welcoming several further new volunteers, with some job allocations still 'work in progress'. Two changes of note are that **Ben Smithies** has taken over the role of Wardens & Bookings Co-Ordinator and **Tish Piwozarek** is now our Temporary Volunteer Coordinator.

After much hard work by a core group we are also pleased to report that a new lease was finalised in February this year and we are therefore optimistic that we will be able to continue to keep our lovely rustic barn doors open to visitors for many years to come!

We finally opened up again to paying visitors at the end of June. Our first guest this season was an older gentleman walking the Pilgrims' Way from Winchester to Canterbury, he was very grateful for the warm welcome awaiting him in the beautiful village of Puttenham.

One of our new 2019 wardens, Brenda, left this heart-warming message in our visitors book: *'French couple cycling had planned to camp but could not find a campsite. Were delighted with the barn as they were tired and hungry and could cook straight away and have a hot shower. As they were cycling route 22 it was the ideal location. The lady really liked the garden.'*

Another comment gladly received, this time on a Visitor Feedback form, reads *'The friendliest hostel out of more than 200 I have visited.'*

To find out what we have been up to and what's coming up, please follow our Facebook page by searching for Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse. We would love to see your photos or read your comments so feel free to post away!



Our volunteers continue to ensure the barn and barnyard are kept neat and tidy for our visitors' enjoyment. In late sunshine Eric and Keith are cutting back the wildflower areas at the end of season work party.

Photo by Dave Williamson

Volunteers Chris, Dave and Dave(2) welcomed Sam Dalley with friends and family to the barn for friendly discussions. Sam is founder and joint editor of the splendid *Independent Hostel Guide*, in which we have featured for many years.



Photo by Sam Dalley

VOLUNTEERING

- The annual request for volunteer help is here again! Do you enjoy editing webpages, excel at customer service, or love health and safety? We are looking for assistance in many areas and would be pleased to have a chat with anyone who can spare some time to join our friendly team. In fact, one gap to fill is the role of a volunteer to help with finding new volunteers! Please contact Tish Piwowarek on support@puttenhambarn.uk or check Puttenham Barn's page on the Voluntary Action South West Surrey website.
- Additional volunteer wardens are also always sought to fill the gaps in the wardening calendar. Please contact Tish if you or a friend would be interested in this very rewarding role; full training will be given.



This lovely atmospheric photo was taken on a balmy summer evening by volunteer warden Connie van K.

VISITORS' COMMENTS

Comments in our visitors book continue to reflect how appreciative our visitors are of the barn's facilities and the warm welcome offered by our volunteer wardens. The many positive comments added to our visitors book during the 2019 season included the following:

- *July 2019: Our first visit and a really lovely one – we are walking the Pilgrims Way and this felt absolutely the right place to spend the night. Met very interesting fellow guests and lovely warden – thank you!*
- Heather & Gill, London
- *September 2019: What a beautiful retreat! I will definitely come back – with family! Lovely walking, Watts Chapel my favourite, welcoming and nourishing for the soul. Thank you.*
- Helen
- *October 2019: Priceless. A fabulous resource for us tired bikers. Would definitely look to return and look forward to doing so again soon.*
- Bournemouth Barry

***This newsletter is published by Project Oasis North Downs,
the registered charity that manages Puttenham Barn***

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