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LEISURE

No plain sailing: Pooh Sticks contest needs a new home

By Oscar Quine

Should you own a plot of land that includes a river crossed by a bridge – with ample space for nearby parking – you could well be the saviour of a particularly British institution.

The World Pooh Sticks Championship needs a new home. With up to 2,000 visitors – from as far afield as Japan, Kenya and Australia – the annual event has outgrown its current site at Days Lock in Little Wittenham, Oxfordshire. “It’s always been

a popular event but it’s grown in the last few years,” said Karen Eveleigh of organising body the Oxford Spirens Rotary Club. “And it’s a very small village with a narrow lane down to the bridge.”

With March – the month in which the championship is held – fast approaching, Ms Eveleigh admits the 2015 event may be a makeshift affair.

The requirements for the Rotary club’s ideal venue are particular. As well as a bridge to hold six competitors side-by-side and parking for 300 cars, space is needed for a registration tent, a tea and cake stall and, ideally, village fete games including hook-a-duck and chuck-a-welly.

“It’s difficult, because you see a nice river in an area that looks pretty and you think ‘Ok, is there parking nearby?’” she said.

On championship day, competitors drop coloured sticks off one side of a bridge with the owner of the first to reach the finishing line – roughly 5m downstream – crowned winner.

The game was invented by the Winnie the Pooh author AA Milne.



Pooh Sticks was originally played in the Ashdown Forest, near the home of Winnie the Pooh author AA Milne
TOM PILSTON

ii Originally played near

AA Milne’s home in the Ashdown Forest, Poohsticks featured for the first time in The House at Pooh Corner.

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