

# Pooh Sticks competition finds a new home on the Windrush

**Pete Hughes**



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ONE of Oxfordshire's quirkiest rituals, the World Pooh Sticks Championships, has found a new home in the county.

The annual competition is set to go ahead at a new location in West Oxfordshire this year and, for the first time ever, it will be in the summer. The Rotary Club of Oxford Spire will hold this year's event at Langel Common in Witney on Sunday, June 7, after an appeal in the *Oxford Mail*.

The common, a *Downton Abbey* film location with its picturesque bridge over the River Windrush, lies between Witney and Cogges Manor Farm.

Rotary club member Karen Eveleigh said: "We were delighted to receive such great publicity and support in our search for a new venue and are thrilled to have found this location in Witney."

For 31 years the annual competition, inspired by AA Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, attracted thousands of people to Day's Lock at Little Wittenham, near Didcot.

Some 700 competitors take it in turns to drop sticks off the bridge and "race" them to the finish.

But the event became a victim of its own success and ran out of space for 300 or more cars to park at Little Wittenham.

The rotary club announced in January that it was looking for a new home and found one less than a month later.

It will now organise the day in partnership with Cog-



**STICKS AT THE READY:** From left, Carol Harris, Alice Wilson, Councillor Richard Langridge, Lesley Adams, Lorraine Wilson, Deborah Axtell, Karen Iveligh, Stephen Axtell and Cogges director, Colin Stone

Picture: OX27240 Julián Rus

**CHAMPIONSHIPS:** Move means that annual event will now be able to be held during the summer months

ges Manor Farm, which is planning to organise a Stick Day alongside the championships.

Cogges director Colin Shone said: "Playing Pooh Sticks is one of the most special and essential memories of any childhood."

"We are delighted to be supporting the new home for the World Championships."

Due to the high level of boat traffic during the summer on

the Thames at Little Wittenham, the Environment Agency only allowed the event to be held between October and March.

This resulted in the event having to be either postponed or cancelled due to bad weather twice in recent years.

The new location on the Windrush, which has no river traffic, will mean that the Rotary Club can hold the championships in the Summer for the first time.

Members are gearing up to hold it on June 7, subject to obtaining the council event permissions.

West Oxfordshire District Councillor Richard Langridge said: "We are thrilled that Witney has been chosen as the new venue for the World Pooh Stick Championships and we can assure them that they will be given a very good welcome."

The annual event helps the Rotary Club to raise thousands of pounds for local, national and international charities.

The game was first played by the author and his son on a bridge in Ashdown Forest, East Sussex.

▲ For more details, go to [pooh-sticks.com](http://pooh-sticks.com)

**Playing Pooh Sticks is one of the most special and essential memories of any childhood**  
Cogges director Colin Shone

## Traffic disruption ahead as road repairs to begin

**MOTORISTS** are set for disruption in Oxford today as work on Frideswide Square clashes with two other sets of road repairs.

Workers are to start preparing Frideswide Square for redevelopment work, which will get under way on Friday, February 27.

Engineers will begin removing traffic islands to allow the first stage of the £5.8million project to start.

A large roundabout is to be built at the entrance to the train station and two smaller roundabouts at the other end of

the square in front of the Royal Oxford Hotel. There will be a series of public open spaces.

Cowley Road will also be closed in both directions today between The Plain roundabout, which is being redeveloped, and Tynedale Road.

Vehicles coming into Oxford will be diverted to Ifley Road via Temple Street. Those leaving the city will be diverted on to Ifley Road and back onto Cowley Road via Circus Street. Cyclists in both directions will be diverted via Dawson Street and St Clement's Street.

The road is being widened in the £1.5m scheme to improve safety for cyclists. There will also be rerouting on the A34 at Milton Interchange today.

Traffic travelling south towards Newbury will be limited to 30mph and vehicles will be diverted down the slip road, around the A4130 roundabout, and back onto the A34.

This is to give the Highways Agency space to grit the A34 if necessary.

The £10.6m scheme at Milton will see a 'hamburger' style roundabout controlled with traffic lights to try to cut congestion.

### Driving the way to fulfil lad's final wish

**ABINGDON:** The Loom to the Moon campaign hits the road today to help a five-year-old's last wish to make the world's longest loom band.

Skye Hall, from Abingdon, died in August after battling a brain tumour for a year.

He launched the Loom To The Moon fundraising campaign in a bid to break the Guinness World Record for the longest loom band, where coloured elastic bands are twisted together.

His parents Andrew and Sally and younger brother Jesse, three, will now travel from Aberdeen in Scotland back to Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital to boost the campaign. For details, visit [blueskythinking.org](http://blueskythinking.org)

### Woman assaulted

**OXFORD:** A woman in her 30s was taken to hospital with serious injuries after being attacked at a house in Headington yesterday morning.

Police said the woman was attacked inside the house in Warren Crescent just before 8.30am, then got outside before officers arrived.

No weapon was used and her injuries were not thought to be life-threatening.

A 38-year-old man was arrested by police on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm and possession with intent to supply a Class A drug.

### Sex attacker alert

**OXFORD:** A woman was sexually assaulted in Kensington Crescent, Littlemore.

Police said a man on a bike approached the victim in her 50s and sexually assaulted her last Monday. Police only released details yesterday. He is described as black, of medium build, 5ft 6in to 5ft 8in, with a shaven or bald head and younger than 40.

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