

Pooh Sticks fun moves to a new bigger venue

After 31 years at Day's Lock game goes to a Witney site

By Pete Hughes
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ONE of Oxfordshire's quirkier 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, it will be held in the summer.

The Rotary Club of Oxford Spire will hold the event at Langel Common in Witney on Sunday, June 7.

The common, a Downton Abbey film location with its 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



New venue . . . Lesley Adams gets ready to play Pooh Sticks at the Witney bridge with fellow fans of the game made famous by AA Milne's children's books in the background

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.

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

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 Cogges 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 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 about this year's event, go to the website: pooh-sticks.com



Looking back . . . People join the fun at Day's Lock

Councils could save £5m with new merging proposals

SAVINGS of £5m over a decade could be made if two district councils in southern Oxfordshire formed a link with other local authorities, it is claimed.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils are proposing to join with Hart District Council and Havant Borough Council in Hampshire, and Mendip District Council in Somerset.

The five councils could then ask an external organisation to provide human resources, internal IT support and

accountancy services.

The South Oxfordshire and Vale local authorities' council tax and benefits services have been provided by an external organisation since 2006. They also share a chief executive in David Buckle.

The two councils are now asking members of the public what they think about the proposal to join up with the other local authorities.

SODC's Conservative leader John Cotton said: "This is all about making sure residents get the same high-quality service from a lower council tax."

"I believe it's important to look at external options, but I want to hear what residents think."

The Vale's Conservative council leader Matthew Barber said: "We have put a lot of good work in over the last few years to get the Vale in a good financial position so we can protect our frontline services. "This is no time to rest on our laurels, so we are facing' up to difficult future challenges now."

He added: "Hopefully, our residents will agree this is the right course of action, but we're keen to hear what they think."

Any members of the public who want to comment on the proposals can take part in consultation by visiting tinyurl.com/corporateservicesproject.

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