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**BENSON BULLETIN REPORT – OCT 2023**

Well, that’s it, Summer seems to have been and gone and except for the start in June, it did not make much of a mark – unless that is you were affected by floods, forest fires, strikes or software breakdowns! However Autumn, as seen from early September, seems to offer a little more. Thankfully, it is not often that these articles carry bad news in consecutive months. However, I am sorry to note the death of Denis De Beger who was a long-time member of the Society and served on the Committee in a number of roles. Denis was also another one of those people who put much more into society than they ever take out, both locally and in the wider community. The Society has sent our sincere condolences to his wife Jill and his family. He will be much missed by all who knew him and those who benefited from his commitment to serve others. There was an IN MEMORIAM in the September issue about Denis, written by his great friend John Tchighianoff our Membership Secretary, and another giving further insights into his personality at the end of John Murphy’s piece THE VIEW FROM BENSON. For those of you who missed them look the September issue out and read them, as they far better describe his interests and, through them, his unswerving wish to serve others. As we had no meeting in August, this article has no talk on which to comment, so I will cover general happenings that have taken place in the area, along with our future talks programme.

As I hope we all know, the weir bridge at Benson lock is still closed and is likely to be so for some time but for those walkers and cyclists who are either local or those following the Thames Path the installation, or should I say reinstallation, of a ferry service has been most welcome. The service runs daily, about every 10 mins or so, between the slipway adjacent to Waterfront Café and the lock, from 09:30 to 18:00 on a vintage boat named Ferret, provided by Bygone Boating and is run by a series of volunteers that includes both the President and Chairman of the Society. The charges are £2 for a one way crossing and £3 for a return, with half-price for children. A big ‘thankyou’ must go to Bygone Boating and all the volunteers who offer their time.

Keeping to the theme of the river, the talk for September, which will have taken place by the time you read this and on which I will report in the October issue, is entitled Thames Bridges. It will be interesting to see if the original Horse and Cattle Ferry, which started in 1760 near Preston Crowmarsh mill or the subsequent ones near the lock, which lasted into the 1960s, get a mention as sort of ‘floating bridges’. The talk on the 27th October is entitled Armistice 1918 and is about the impact the First World War and the Armistice had on local communities. Sadly, many rural communities were hit hard with the menfolk, who often all joined the same regiment, all dying together on the western front. This led to a lack of farm labourers and coupled with the advance in machinery and technology, stimulated by the war, led to far reaching changes to rural economies.

I hope to see many of you there.

Regards, David McGill