

Case Study - Heritage Counts 2015

South West Case Study

Name of project: 'Lock Up Patch Up' – Conserving Bradford-on-Avon's Town Bridge Lock-Up

Location: Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire

Duration: January to September 2015

Theme demonstrated by case study: Positive local management by community group



Bradford-on-Avon's Town Bridge and Lock-Up is a much-loved local landmark and part of what makes the Wiltshire town distinctive. The Lock-Up has been a popular attraction as part of Heritage Open Days (HODs) for a number of years. The Bridge and Lock-Up is a Scheduled Monument and Grade I listed building.

The C13th pack-horse bridge was rebuilt and widened in the C17th, when what may have originally been a chapel was rebuilt as a Lock-Up, or Blind House, due to its lack of windows. It was used to hold prisoners until they could be brought before a magistrate and, often, to contain drunks overnight. The small building was divided into two 'en suite' cells in the 1820s, but it fell out of use just thirty years later.

By the early C20th, the lock-up was being used as an ammunition and rifle store and had fallen into disrepair. Although it underwent major repairs in 1927, by HODs weekend in September 2014, volunteer steward Rod Johnson began to have concerns about the condition of the interior masonry and ironwork.

Rod set up a team of local enthusiasts - the 'Lock Up Patch Up team' - to tackle the condition of the building. The team approached Historic England to begin discussions about Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), a process none of the team were then familiar with. A site visit was quickly arranged to inspect the building and to discuss the process and requirements for Consent. Historic England supported the team to develop an application for SMC and an appropriate schedule of work. SMC was duly granted, and repairs got under way in January 2015.

The Lock Up Patch Up team effectively channelled local enthusiasm for the building in order to secure its repair. The team was instrumental in securing financial support for the project from Wiltshire Council, the owners of the building. They were able to commission experienced local craftsmen (a mason and a locksmith) to carry out the repairs. And they enjoyed the support of Bradford on Avon Town Council, who took on the role of registering the Lock Up for Heritage Open Days after the local Tourist Information Centre closed, and helped celebrate the reopening of the building as part of Heritage Open Days 2015. Finally, Rod and his team harnessed public enthusiasm for the building, raising enough money over HODs weekend 2015 to recover all their costs for the project - the strongest indicator of just what this historic building means to its community.

The newly repaired Lock Up will remain open by appointment and on Heritage Open Days for many years to come.



Local historian Margaret Dobson and Lock-Up Team leader Rod Johnston celebrate the reopening of the Town Bridge Lock Up following its repair. Over 1,000 visitors came to see the smallest building to take part in Heritage Open Days 2015. (Wiltshire Times ©)

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