



The Farnham Society

78th Annual General Meeting

Heritage Open Days 2024

During 2024 / 2025 our work consisted chiefly of running the September 2024 HODs festival, followed by preliminary planning of the 2025 festival.

Each year the National Trust, as national organiser, nominates a theme, and for 2024 it was Routes, Networks and Connections. It guided us to supplement our programme of favoured local heritage buildings with some more focused events.

The theme of Routes directed our thoughts to William Cobbett and his Rural Rides, inspiring a talk by Richard Thomas from the William Cobbett Society. We also thought of travellers passing through Farnham, and the inns where they stayed. One is the Bush Hotel, in continuous use for many centuries. Another is the former Lion and Lamb Inn, redeveloped along with surrounding buildings in the late 20th century to form part of the highly cherished Lion and Lamb Yard retail area. Architect Max Lyons gave a presentation on his work designing the precinct.

The Connections element of the theme inspired a talk by Peter Bridgeman on plant hunters travelling the world in previous centuries to bring exotic plants home. In the run up to the festival the National Trust highlighted a few events from across the country in an article on its HODs website under the heading 'All Our Stories'. Peter's talk was included in their listing.

We welcomed two almshouses as newcomers to the festival. Andrew Windsor Almshouses, in Castle Street, date back to the 17th century. Fortuitously one of the residences was unoccupied at the time of the festival and visitors had the opportunity to see inside a (much modernized) 17th dwelling. Sampson's Almshouse, in West Street opposite Farnham Cemetery, dates from the 1930s and is of heritage interest as the work of Harold Falkner.

One notable absence in 2024 was Farnham Castle, but happily, early plans for the 2025 festival were able to include the Castle once again.

Our thanks to our hosts, guides and volunteers without whom HODs could not take place.

Simon Bradbury
September 2025

Shaping our future, protecting our heritage