



News from Thames Valley Probation



Press Release

Issued: September 8, 2009

Heritage Open Days in Newbury – your chance to see more

On September 12 and 13, 2009 many of Newbury's historic buildings will be open as part of the National Heritage open days scheme. This is your chance to see some of these beautiful buildings that are not normally open to the public.

Thames Valley Probation has been working in partnership with both St Mary The Virgin Church and Elmore Abbey, Speen, Newbury to maintain the grounds for some time. Offenders sentenced to Community Payback by the courts and managed by probation started work clearing the churchyard which was completely overgrown and in a state of disrepair.

During the five years of hard work, more than 10,000 hours of Unpaid Work (now called Community Payback) have been 'paid back' to the local community at St Mary's Church and outstanding improvement made to the church grounds which are now beautiful and enjoyed by members of the public. There is, however, still a huge amount of work to complete and maintain the work already what has already been done.

Located next door to St Mary's Church is Elmore Abbey. Offenders supervised by Thames Valley Probation also work on maintaining the Abbey's grounds, putting in more than 14,000 hours at the site. The partnership working will continue well into the future.

"Your groups have transformed the grounds and surroundings, including the carpark, formerly a largely neglected area, into an amenity which is visited and enjoyed by so many people and which is used by the local community, as it is now possible to erect gazebos and site chairs and tables," said Brain Nobes, Church warden for the Parochial Church Council St Mary's, Speen.

"There has also been a marked increase in weddings held at St Mary's Church, due in some part, I'm sure, to the photogenic quality of the now beautiful grounds," he added.

You can visit St Mary the Virgin Church or the grounds of Elmore Abbey as part of National Heritage week on Saturday, September 12 and Sunday, September 13, 2009. No pre booking required.

ENDS

Community Payback in Thames Valley explained

In the Thames Valley, around 2,000 of the 8,000 offenders we supervise in an average year are carrying out Community Payback (Unpaid Work) in the community and complete almost 300,000 hours annually. That's about £1.5m of free labour.

The work benefits local schools, faith groups, charities, community organisations and partnerships. The range of work can include: Graffiti removal, ground clearance, building maintenance and landscaping, improvement to parks and community facilities, general gardening projects, painting and decorating in community centres and meeting places.

Unpaid Work is the name of one of the 12 Requirements that comes under the generic community sentence called a Community Order. Offenders on an Unpaid Work Requirement can be ordered by the courts to do between 40 and 300 unpaid work hours.

Thames Valley Probation works with adult offenders, supervising them through their Community Orders and assisting with rehabilitation. We also supervise offenders released from prison on licence and work with victims of serious crime. The main aim of the service is to increase public protection and reduce the re-offending rate. Community Payback is the name and logo used for the Unpaid Work that offenders carry out. It has been designed to highlight the work of offenders to put something back into communities in which they've offended.

See our website: www.thamesvalleyprobation.gov.uk for further details.

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