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stone masons, was founded 100 years ago by William Jones.

It is now run by the family's fifth generation brothers Angus Jones, managing director, and Ken Jones, director. The brothers and other

the stonemasons which included drinks, cake, snacks and a variety of leaving gifts.

The managing director thanked everyone for staying on after work

come to work. Through the years Jon has seen a development of technology — he remembers when it was just hammer and chisels. I want you to really celebrate Jon and the time he's spent with us as

Banker Shop". A banker shop is a masonry term for workshop.

Mr Griffin was pleased with his gifts and joked with his colleagues for the rest of his leaving party.

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Community asset: Sonning MP Theresa May and her husband Philip return to the village almshouses on Sunday where they attended a garden party

## MP revisits almshouses to mark association's 75th year

THERESA May was the guest of honour at a celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of The Almshouses Association.

Mrs May and her husband Philip were invited to a garden party at the back of the six terraced cottages in Pearson Road, Sonning, known as the Robert Palmer Almshouses, on Sunday afternoon.

These were built around 1850 and continue to provide a home to people who would struggle to afford rented accommodation. Residents only have to pay an annual maintenance fee.

The association, which is based in Wokingham, was founded to provide support and representation to more than 1,600 almshouse charities across the country.

Mrs May and her husband were welcomed by Mike Hart, chairman of the Robert Palmer's Almshouse Charity, as well as Jamie Taylor, the

vicar at St Andrew's Church in the village.

Mr Hart said: "I would like to say how much we as trustees have appreciated the role of the association and the help and advice you have given us over the years has been invaluable.

"The houses were originally built for impoverished farm workers in Sonning. Over the years they have been modified and adapted. In the 21st century, you might think their requirement would be less, but the are actually flourishing."

The event was attended by Nick Phillips, chief executive of the association, Colin Pearce and Bart Guthrie, former chairmen of the charity, and residents of the cottages.

The former Prime Minister last visited the almshouses in 2014 to open a new veranda when she was the Home Secretary. Mrs May said:

"I'm very pleased to be able to be here, both to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the association, but also to recognise the important role the almshouses here in Sonning play for our community.

"Companionship is important, but also community. It is great to be here and I would like to say a huge thank you to the current trustees and all those who volunteer, but also to those people over the years who have supported the almshouses.

"One of the great things about Sonning is that there are people who are willing to step up to the plate, take up these responsibilities and make sure over the years that the almshouses remain an important part of our community."

Mr Hart praised the role of Sonning Volunteer Fire Brigade Trust had played over the years. He said: "Sonning used to have its own fire brigade on the corner of Pound

Lane. Eventually that was stopped and the land was sold to developers.

"Two houses were built on the land and the revenue was put into a trust, which is used to help organisations and charities like us. They are a lifeline for some people. We don't charge rent because they are not tenants, but they pay towards upkeep."

The concept of almshouses dates back to the 10th century and events are being held across the country to mark the anniversary.

Ted Davey, 87, who has lived in one of the cottages since 2012, said: "I had heard of almshouses before, but I never thought I'd have the chance to live in one. The people in the village make it so special and have really taken to me.

"I walk around the village every day and I also go to church on Sunday. I live alone, but I'm not alone."