

the OXTON SOCIETY



Newsletter April 2018



Whatever Happened to the Old Bank Site?

The vacant old HSBC bank site at the centre of the village has been a constant eyesore in the heart of a thriving village. What's been happening?

In 2007, following the closure of their branch, HSBC granted a 999-year lease to Samlaw Holdings Ltd. At the same time the Society was granted the freehold by HSBC and a restrictive covenant prohibiting the sale of alcohol.

In 2013 an existing planning permission was renewed for 4 retail units at ground floor level, 8 offices and 1 residential unit with a landscaped public space to the front of the site - the subject of the joint agreement with the Oxton Society, as freeholder. In 2015 Samlaw reassigned their lease to a company called Grizedale. Between then and 2016 little happened. The Oxton Society was in contact with both Samlaw and Grizedale to ascertain their intentions. Samlaw approached the Society to ask if we would remove the restrictive covenant (we declined) and in 2017 a petition was launched by the Society, aimed at getting

the developer to start.

Later in 2017 there were signs of activity (see photo). Construction appeared to have started. So the Society contacted Grizedale to remind them of our interest as freeholder, and was involved in correspondence with Council about the planning application. This revolved around what are known as 'pre-commencement' conditions attached to the planning permission (e.g. on the type of materials to be used), which should normally must be sorted out before work commences on the site. In this case work had started before the conditions had been agreed and as a result, the Council stopped the developer from doing further works. The developer has engaged his architect to 'discharge' the conditions. As soon as this is agreed the developer can proceed with the works on site and the original scheme, for which permission was given (see above) can be constructed. So we await developments...

Don't Forget!
Secret Gardens
13th May!
see page 2

Secret Gardens Can you help?

Sunday, 13th May, 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

This year we have set you a challenge. There will be more than 25 gardens for you to see! Will you be able to manage this in just one day? You will have to be organised – buy your programme/ticket before the day so that you can plan your route (and save money). You will need to be up and out early to get to the village centre plant stall. Don't forget to allow yourself a lunchbreak so that you can sample the homemade cakes on offer at the impromptu OxSoc Café. You'll need to make time to dawdle over the Grand Charity Raffle to see which of the tempting prizes you want to try for. Buy a programme to see all the details – they will be on sale from 3rd April.

See the enclosed leaflet for details of how to buy your programme. If you can help by giving out more leaflets to encourage your family, friends and colleagues to come along, contact Lesley McGarrity on 0151 653 3088 or email alsr.mcgarrity@tiscali.co.uk.

With more than 25 gardens for them to see we have our own challenge - we will need to supply stewards to over 25 gardens as well as all the other volunteers that are needed to help the day to run smoothly and safely. Can you help? If you do you will be raising money for the Oxton Society and for our 3 charities, Birkenhead Woodcraft Folk, who work with young people locally, Sundowns which supports the families of children who have Downs Syndrome and The Vikes, a local youth club which provides a safe place for young people to spend time and to take part in activities. If you can spare about 3 hours (or longer) on 13th May please contact Lesley McGarrity on 0151 653 3088 or email alsr.mcgarrity@tiscali.co.uk.

Calling all Cake Makers!

This year our visitors have been set a challenge, 25 gardens to see, this means that they will need plenty of cake to keep their strength up! As you know we rely on the bakers of Oxton (and often beyond) to supply Monica and her team with tempting homemade cakes. If you can supply one (or even two or three) please contact Monica on 0151 652 1653 or pmtoosey@sky.com so that she can include your contributions in her planning. Please deliver your cakes to 8 Mount Pleasant by Saturday, 12th May. When you are sorting through your recipes please remember we cannot sell cakes with

fresh cream filling as there is not enough fridge space to keep them cool.

Calling the Green Fingered!

Again this year The Friends of the Arno have agreed to support of the Secret Gardens event by running the plant stall for us. The Plant Stall has always been a great success, but it would not be without the many green fingered people who have grown, split and potted on plants to be sold. We hope that you are already taking cuttings, collecting plants and growing seedlings for this year's plant stall. If you are splitting herbaceous plants in your gardens, digging up seedlings or otherwise have anything to spare, please put them into pots and let us have them to sell.

They can be delivered (during the few days before Sunday, 13th May) either to 1, Ingestre Road or 3, Fairclough Lane (if no-one is at home leave them by the porch at Ingestre Road, or in the courtyard to the right of the front door at Fairclough Lane). Please label them if you know what they are, particularly if they are rare, and no bluebells thank you. If you would like them to be collected or have any queries, please phone Peter on 652 1027.

Calling Prize Givers for the Raffle!

Ticket buyers choose which prize they would like to enter for so we need plenty of ideas to tempt them. If you have any new (or good as new) things that don't quite fit in your house let us find someone who can give them a new home and help out our charities into the bargain. Perhaps you have:

- Homemade jams and preserves – give them a pretty labels with the details
- Gift sets of cosmetics
- Toys, cookery books or kitchen equipment
- Gardening tools or furniture

Our raffle wrapping team will need the prizes by 5th May so that they can box and wrap them. The team are happy to accept donations of money so that they can buy things either to add to donated items or to be prizes on their own. Please contact Lynda on 0151 652 7778 email: lroberts.lynda@gmail.com.

Gardening

Fancy a Cuppa Camellia?

If you are having a cup of tea as you read this, you may not realise that you are drinking an infusion of the leaves of the camellia plant. *Camellia sinensis* appears first to have been discovered in the Yunnan province during the Shang Dynasty (1500 BC–1046 BC), as a medicinal drink. All traditional varieties of tea, including Indian Assam, derive from variants of the same plant. Apart from the beverage, other useful extracts of the Camellia plant include tea oil from the seeds of certain species, which is used widely in cooking in Southern China, for lubricating blades and as a hair treatment.

Of course, these products are not from the same species of camellia that we see in our gardens. The camellia has been cultivated as a garden plant in the UK only since the end of the eighteenth century, when it became associated with romantic figures like Alexander Dumas' *Lady of the Camellias*, who also inspired Verdi's *La Traviata*.

There are in fact up to 300 species and around 3000 hybrids in existence. *C. japonica*, *C. sasanqua* or *C. reticulata* are the most popular garden species, with several hundred cultivars of these available, as well as multiple hybrids. Their flowers range from white through pale pink to light red, including some with stripes. Like rhododendrons, they are generally happy in a woodland setting in acid soil, where they can grow to a considerable height.

One advantage of the camellia is its early flowering period, with early varieties appearing even before spring bulbs. This is a risky strategy for the plants in colder areas, as the early buds can easily be damaged by frosts and too rapid thawing in the winter sunshine. Camellias are also susceptible to drought and this can lead to failure to flower in the subsequent year. Where a camellia plant consistently fails to flower, it is worth moving it from its long term home, especially if it is in a dry area of the garden, and replacing the compost with an ericaceous mix in an evenly moist position.

It could then be fed them with a potassium-rich fertiliser later in the year to help bud and flower development in the winter and spring. Re-planting will also give you the opportunity to examine the roots for evidence of vine weevil larvae, which should be removed and destroyed.

You will have spotted some magnificent camellias in the gardens of Oxtou: whether you have a large garden or a patio with pots, the camellia is a rewarding plant with its early flowers and shiny green foliage throughout the year.



Oxton People



Christine Broad

The Revd. Christine Broad is the Associate Vicar at St Saviour's Parish Church in Oxton. Born on the Wirral, where her parents still live, she went to Birkenhead High School and then to University of Leeds to study Biology. Her first job on qualifying as a teacher was in Congleton at Heathfield High School where she met Nick a fellow teacher who taught Maths. They married and had two children. Over the next twenty years or so Christine worked in various school and colleges in South Cheshire and North Staffordshire.

Christine has always been a regular churchgoer but in her early 30s she experienced a growing realisation that God was calling her into a full time role in the church. This developed into a firm resolution that her calling was to be ordained as a priest.

A long pathway lay ahead. Still teaching part-time with a young family, Christine relied on her "phenomenally supportive" husband so she could travel weekly to Manchester to study for a degree. A few years later she was awarded a B.A. in Theology and Pastoral studies.

In 2006, newly ordained, she took up a post in Newchapel, Stoke-on-Trent as a curate. After three years she got the job of team vicar in the Hanley Team Ministry, a group of five churches in and around Hanley. This job was her first incumbency. For the next few years she worked with a team of talented people serving the local communities and their churches. This was a happy and creative time for her. In 2013 she was appointed team rector, a role which required her to call on her teaching skills to help train new staff.

By 2016 she felt it was important to move back to the Wirral to be with her parents.

Her husband, now retired was happy with this plan. She saw an advertisement for the job at St Saviour's Church in the Church Times. Now two years into her post she enjoys her job and finds the parishioners of Oxton very warm and friendly!

1. What is your earliest memory?

Waiting for my baby brother to be born when I was 4. I was very excited at the prospect of becoming a big sister and having a sibling to play with!

2. What are you most proud of doing?

Becoming a Mum myself – I am so proud of my 2 children who are now themselves adults.

3. Who would play you in the film of your life?

Bette Davies- such expressive eyes!

4. I think people would be surprised to know this about me?

I am a qualified football referee- although I have never refereed a football match. I signed up for the course because I liked the coach- we have now been married for nearly 30 years!

5. Looking back, do you regret any lost or missed opportunities in your life?

No- I have been blessed to have had many opportunities and choices as I have travelled through life, there were other roads I could have taken but I am glad I took the paths I took. As a Christian, I believe that God has a plan for my life and even if I have sometimes chosen a path God would not have chosen for me, by his grace He has brought good out of it!

6. Which famous person do you most admire?

Well that would have to be Jesus! Why? Because to quote John chapter 15 v 13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends"- and he did!

7. What do you like about Oxton?

Lots of things- - the people- so friendly, -the location- so convenient for a visit to a City (Liverpool or Chester) or the beautiful countryside of the Wirral or North Wales, - the amenities- so enjoyable particularly the coffee shops in the village and my lovely hairdressers, and of course- the Churches!

8. What changes or improvements would you like to see in Oxton Village

Any empty shops to be put to good use, so that there are even more super amenities for everyone.

Oxton Design Award: New Guidelines Agreed

For many years the Society has presented annual Design Awards, to encourage and celebrate projects which contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the special character of the Conservation Area. The Design Award advisory group recently reviewed the scheme and agreed there was a need to emphasise the wider scope of the Award, and to make changes to the purpose, eligibility criteria and assessment process. Their recommendations were adopted by the Society's Committee last year.

The key points for change are:

- A statement setting out the purpose of the Award
- The time-frame for eligible projects has been extended from one to two years prior to the AGM
- There is a fuller description of the range of projects eligible for consideration and a fuller description of the criteria used to assess projects
- A 'commended' category of award has been introduced

Awards are made at the Society's AGM. The Society will publicise and seek nominations for the Award later in the year via the Newsletter, the website, on social media and on our notice board in the village. However, nominations can be made by members of the Society at any time during the year.

Projects must be located within the Conservation Area and have been completed within the two years prior to the AGM. A wide range and scale of projects, both residential and commercial, are eligible for consideration including:

- A new building
- An addition to an existing building
- A renovation, upgrade or repair of an existing building
- The renovation, repair or improvement of outside features within the curtilage of the property, such as boundary walls, hard and soft landscaping, including tree planting.

The full amended Design Award scheme can be found on the Oxton Society website at <http://oxtonsociety.org.uk/wp/design-award/> along with details of some previous winners.



13 Mount Pleasant - 2015 Winner

Trees and Planning

Wirral Borough Council decides all planning applications and applications for tree work. It invites the Society to comment on development proposals in or adjacent to the Oxton Conservation Area and on tree work proposals. All planning decisions are taken by Wirral Borough Council and not by the Society: the Society's role is to present informed arguments to the Council for the protection and sensitive enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The following are the comments made by the Society; if you wish to see the final decision of the Council please consult their website.

Trees

Oxton Society's tree group comments on recent applications:

26 Rose Mount T/18/0016

Proposal: Copper Beech; crown raise to 5m and crown reduction by 25%

Comment: The tree is spreading widely especially the lower branches. No objections.

10b Victoria Mount T/18/0035

Proposal: Fell Laburnum in raised bed in front garden. Trunk rotting near base. Damage to wall

Comment: This tree is clearly in a poor state and has lost several branches in the past. It has outgrown the small raised bed and surrounding sandstone wall. No objections.

7 Alton Road T/18/0047

Proposal: 2m reduction in height and thinning of 2x Sycamores to allow more sunlight in garden but retain privacy

Comment

No objections to these works which should retain the overall appearance and shape of the trees.

11 Alton Road T/18/0048

Proposal: 2m reduction in height and thinning of 2x Sycamores to allow more sunlight in garden and surrounding shrubs

Comment: No objections to these works which should retain the overall appearance and shape of the trees.

35 Village Road CA/18/0009

Proposal: Removal of flowering Cherry in rear garden; not visible from road.

Comment: We visited the pavement outside of the property and were unable to identify any trees resembling the one in the application. Hence, we were not in a position to comment.

46 Arno Road CA/18/0011

Proposal: Removal of Beech tree in neighbour's garden. Blocks out sun in both gardens. Replant with mixture of *Pittosporum* and *Betula Pendula Fastigiata*

Comment: The application, which we received, was in the form of a letter from a resident relating to a tree in an adjacent property. There was no plan attached so it was impossible to determine the tree in question. We did observe a number of large mature trees which appeared to us to border on the premises. They appeared to have an extensive canopy and in

our opinion their removal would affect the tree vista.

15 Fairview Road CA/18/0015

Proposal: Rear garden

1. Damson; reduce crown by 10% and shape.

Remove overhang of garden no 17

2. Elder; shape regrowth to form good crown

3. Laburnum; reduce crown by 20% and shape

4. Evergreen Oak; reduce crown by 10% and by 20% on side nearest flats and crown raise 1m above carport

5. Holly; shape to maintain conical shape and crown raise by 1m

6. Magnolia; shape the crown and clear shed by 1m

Front garden

7. Holly; trim to maintain conical form

8. Beech; trim by 1m. crown thin by 10%

9. Lime; crown thin by 10% and shape

10. Holly; trim crown by 1m

11. Laurel; trim back by 500m to rectangular shape

Comment

A plan for sensible management of all these trees:

1-4 Not visible from road, no objections; 5-11, no objections

6 Victoria Mount CA/18/0016

Proposal

1. Fell pine tree, wall coming down directly onto kerb

2. Fell Laburnum visible drooping of trunk and root directly under house

3. Fell conifer due to proximity to conservatory and causing damage

4. Fell dead apple tree

Comment

1. No objections. This is an extremely large tree out of keeping with the other local trees. The wall is clearly damaged and leaning. If removed we would suggest an alternative deciduous species be planted nearby but away from the wall.

2. No objections; a misshapen tree of little amenity value

3. No objections as barely visible from the road

4. No objections; cannot be seen from road and tree is said to be dead

37 Village Road CA/18/0025

Proposal

1. Fell dead tree

2. Fell partially dead Silver Birch

3. Fell tree of unknown species impacting on magnolia

4. Remove 2 saplings

Comment

All these trees are in the rear garden. Trees 1 and 4 cannot be seen from the road. The other 2 trees have minimal impact on the overall treescape. No objections.

Rathmore Road CA/18/0038

Proposal

Oxton Hall

1;Fell Holly tree

2;Remove one crooked fork from Beech tree

3; Remove 2 large horizontal branches
5a & 6a Prune 2 Magnolias
4 5 6 7; Crown cleaning and thinning Horse Chestnuts and cut back branches overhanging Oxton Lawn Mews
8; Cut back holly tree overhanging 1 Oxton Lawn Mews

Oxton Lawn Apartments

9; Fell diseased tree and adjacent Sycamore growing together. Replant with suitable tree

Comment: No objections to any of these works. We are pleased there is an intention to replant in the Oxton Lawn Apartments with a suitable tree. It is suggested an application will be made to the Oxton Society Tree Planting Fund.

67 Arno Road CA/18/0046

Proposal: Fell 2 sections of Leylandii hedge which has outgrown location

Oxton Society Comment: No objections to removal of these tall sections of hedge. Will have little impact overall on the wider environment.

Planning

The Society has been consulted on four recent planning applications. As noted below, none raised significant issues for the character of the Conservation Area and so comments were not submitted to the council.

This report also updates the position on 17 Rose Mount.

5 Rose Mount (The Courtyard) APP17/01603 & ADV18/00019

17/01603 relates to the proposed building works to expand the existing bar/restaurant (7-9 Rose Mount) into the neighbouring premises at 5 Rose Mount (former Halligans), including: erection of a single storey ground floor extension to the rear no. 5 Rose Mount; a first floor extension to the rear of 7-9 Rose Mount; a new external staircase to improve rear access to the existing second floor residential apartment at 5 Rose Mount.

Most of the exterior works are to the rear, facing onto the service yard accessed from Prices Lane. It is possible that residents in the apartments in Prices Lane, the rear elevations of which face the service yard, will have some concerns. However, the proposed development will hardly be visible from the public highway and will not harm the character of the Conservation Area. The interior works are to connect the dining facilities and reconfigure the upstairs space, including the residential accommodation.

18/00019 contains proposals for additional signage on the front elevations of the expanded Courtyard premises, carrying the current house-style to their new premises at 5 Rose Mount. The main feature is a new hanging sign over the entrance, illuminated by external lights, identical to the current sign over the entrance to 7-11. Low level frosted window

advertisements similar to the existing are also proposed. They also propose to paint the exterior to match the existing premises. Our conclusion is that care has been taken with the design of the signage which would not be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area.

3 Kylemore Road APP/18/00114

Part demolish existing lower ground floor extension and replace with single storey conservatory to rear. Reface existing low level parapet walls and make alterations to garden retaining walls. This is minor development which would hardly be visible from the public highway.

West Ridge Lodge, Ingestre Road APP 18/00122

Proposed new garage and associated minor alterations. This is minor development which would not be visible from the public highway.

Update on 17 Rose Mount APP18/01457

Change of use to restaurant with ancillary bar. Although there was no reason for the Council to over-turn the previous refusal on the grounds of harm to residential amenity, the application has now been approved. There are conditions relating to control of noise from the use of audio equipment and hours of opening: 11:00 - 23:30 Monday to Saturday, and 11:00 - 22:30 on Sundays.

Local Whats On

Oxton Society Secret Gardens: 13 May

History Walks: East Walks 21 April, 9 May, 30 June; West Walks 5 May, 2 June, 14 July; Arno Walks 20 May, 16 June, 28 July

St Saviour's Friday Talks 27 July
'Reminiscences of H.M.Y Britannia' Captain Hugh Dalglish

Williamson Art Gallery and Museum
(more details available on the website www.williamsonartgallery.org) or by ringing 0151 666 3537

The Williamson Open Art & Photography Exhibition 23 March - 6 May

Life drawing class (£10) 5 April, Cafe open at 6pm, club starts at 7pm

Books and Banter - informal book club (Free) 5 April, Cafe open at 6pm, club starts at 7pm

Jewellery making workshop with Noctua 13 May

Blue Plaque for the First Woman Police Officer

Plans for unveiling a second Blue Plaque are well underway. It will be to commemorate Edith Smith, Oxton resident, and the first warranted woman police officer in Britain.

Guests will hopefully include chairs of the History Groups from Grantham (where Edith was warranted in 1915 and where there is already a plaque) and Runcorn (where Edith died), Edith's granddaughter, who is a senior woman officer in the Merseyside Police, with civic representation of Wirral.

Bob Knowles is presenting a talk on Edith Smith at 2.30pm on April 28th at Birkenhead Library. You can book a place with the Library.

Suffragists and Suffragettes in Oxton

The History Group has carried out extensive research on a number of prominent Oxton women who were active in the movement for women's suffrage. As early as 1872 the first women's committee was set up which was chaired by Fanny Binns, wife of the Rev Binns, a Unitarian minister and contributor to a number of social and cultural organisations on the Wirral. It is hoped that a small pamphlet will be produced in this centenary year to highlight the contribution of these important women.



Contacting the Oxton Society and the Newsletter

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the Editor by email to info@oxtonsociety.org.uk or by post to the Secretary, 4 Willan Street, CH43 5ST. You can also contact the society by any of the telephone numbers or email addresses given in this Newsletter and via the Oxton Society website www.oxtonsociety.org.uk Many smart phone apps will get you straight to the Oxton Society website by means of the code printed here.

Do you have an email address? If you are not receiving e-mails with news updates, your current email address is not in the database. Please send it.

Details are confidential and never passed to 3rd parties.

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Oxton Adds Fifty Trees

The Oxton Society has planted its 50th tree, marking a significant moment in its twelve-year investment in the enhancement of the Conservation Area's treescape.

Last February the tree, a Silver Birch, was planted in a front garden on Poplar Road by staff from the Port Sunlight Village Trust. During this year's Secret Gardens event there will be a short celebration of the planting with the garden owners, the Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside, the Mayor of Wirral and representatives of the Oxton Society and Port Sunlight Village Trust, cutting a ribbon to celebrate the "50th Tree Planting". This will mark the significant progress of a community-led tree planting scheme which has few, if any, parallels elsewhere.

When Oxton was designated as a Conservation Area in 1979 its trees were identified, along with its houses and walls, as making vital contributions to Oxton's distinctive character. From the outset the Society was concerned with the built environment, but in the early 1990s, with the encouragement of Wirral Council, it became engaged in advising the Council on issues relating to Oxton's natural environment.

While the Society had the skills to focus on tree protection, its ability to engage in tree planting was limited by lack of finance. The success of the Secret Gardens made financing possible and in 2006/7 the Society established a Tree Planting Fund. Since then some £7,300 has been invested, working with Port Sunlight Village Trust who use their professional skills to source and plant trees recommended by the Society and chosen by members for planting on their property. Thirteen different varieties have been planted in places where they will contribute to the future treescape of the Village. For information on the tree planting scheme and an annotated list of trees suitable for planting in Oxton go to the Society's website (see 'Trees'). And do come along and join the "50th celebration" at 12.45pm, 13 May, at 5 Poplar Road, and launch Oxton's move toward its 100th tree!

For information on the tree planting scheme and an annotated list of trees suitable for planting in Oxton go to the Society's website <http://oxtonsociety.org.uk/wp/trees-2/>