



Inside Oxton's Not So Secret Garden

Gareth Twigg is possibly Oxton's most famous (and not so secret) gardener. Gareth is Principal Contra Bassoonist in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He and his garden, and briefly his bassoon, featured in TV's recent 'Garden Rescue' programme, when the team of designers, led by Charlie Dimmock, gave his tiny rear garden the full makeover treatment.

It was Gareth's mum who pointed the programme out to him. Gareth saw a couple of the programmes and decided to apply, filling in the form to give it a go. 'It's a different kind of house so we thought they might be interested' he says. 'I mentioned the Secret Gardens on the application and they did run with that. But I didn't realise that they had done all the back stuff, with interviews with the Secret Gardens organisers though'

Gareth says he was really delighted that the programme showed Oxton Village and

made it look so idyllic. As well as the garden, there were interviews with Jay Little, Secret Gardens organiser and a couple of well known Secret Gardens owners, as well as brief slots for shops in the village including Greens.

One fantastic feature of the house and the garden are the great long views across south Wirral and over to Wales and Cheshire, seen to good effect from the first floor living room in the town house. The view of the garden from above makes a good foil for these long distance views.

What was it like? 'It was a really positive experience' says Gareth, "and yes I'd definitely do it again'. The programme team came up to Oxton before the work started, to show Gareth the designs, and then returned a couple of months later. They started the hard landscaping work first and then had a second day shoot-

Oxton's Blue Plaque Unveiled - Special Supplement Inside!



ing with the designers. 'The designers were really nice', says Gareth, 'and I was pleased that it was all so innovative. The steel box is the best thing because the garden was so slopy. The overall look of the whole garden is really surprising'. Though Gareth is not sure about the little wilderness patch at the back of the garden, as it's the hardest bit to maintain and 'maybe a bit too wildernessy'.

Gareth decided to move to Oxton a couple of years ago having lived in south Liverpool. Apparently lots of musicians in the Philharmonic Orchestra live in or near Oxton, including Vasily Petrenko, the conductor, the leader of the orchestra. Gareth first saw Oxton when he was invited to a party held by one of his colleagues at the former Villa Jazz

restaurant and thought it would be a great place to live.

It has made Gareth a bit of local celebrity: 'I did get recognised by a lady and her mum at Lime Street' he says 'Have you just had your garden done?', they said. Though I did have my bassoon on my back at the time'.

So far there haven't been any parties in the new garden. But the good news is that you might be able to see it at a future Secret Gardens event. So long as Gareth is able to get the time off work to open it that is. And will he be joining the Oxton Society? 'Yes, joining the Society is the first thing I did when I got here!' he says.

Biggest Ever Oxton Art Fair



On Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th November, 24 artists will fill 4 rooms of the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum: the largest number ever, taking over more rooms than ever before, but with the same creative mix of painters, photographers, jewellers, potters, illustrators, printmakers and textile artists, only bigger !

As always, children's activities are on hand - more creativity, fun... and peace for the parents. The new Café will be serving delicious food. And you can peep at the progress of the Quad project, transforming the space in the centre into the Ultimate Secret Garden. We look forward to your visit.

Annual General meeting

Members of the Society and representatives of local businesses attended the AGM on 13 September and were welcomed by the Chair, Rhiannon Evans, who introduced the annual report.

The main achievements of the 2016-17 year were:

- Royal Horticultural Society Award for Best NW Neighbourhood, for the hanging baskets
- £25,000 income from the Secret Gardens event
- Majority of planning applications now being supported by heritage statements
- 15 applications made for Tree Preservation Orders
- Significant progress with the use of social media, and with full colour Newsletters
- Increased profile of history and heritage activity
- First major fund-raising event in aid of the Blue Plaques programme
- Recruitment drive and strengthened partnerships

Jane Horton, outgoing Treasurer, reported that the Secret Gardens income had been slightly up from the previous year and the concert in aid of the Blue Plaque project had been very successful in raising funds. The costs of the hanging baskets had continued to rise. The Christmas Lights event had made a good recovery from the cancellation in the previous year. New Treasurer, Griff Round, indicated that the first five months of the new financial year had been very encouraging, with Secret Gardens proceeds up 15% with over £4,000 going to each partner charity. Attempts were being made to diversify funding.

Members felt that the Society should make it clearer that a significant proportion of the proceeds goes to local charities. The Secret Gardens organisers said that they had plans to publicise this more widely.

The AGM elected the following to serve as officers: Chair, Rhiannon Evans; Vice-Chair, Jeff Willis; Secretary, Alan Chape; Treasurer, Griff Round. The following were elected to the committee: Steve Ferguson,

Patrick Toosey, Steve Weber, Dave Barden, John Booth, Bob Knowles, Karen Freeman, Carolyn Weber, Chris Jarrey, George Harrison

A panel consisting of Griff Round, Alan Chape, Steve Weber and Bob Knowles answered question from members on the old bank site, the Society's freehold of the site, history walks, tree preservation orders, the Arno and village businesses.

The 2017 Design Award was awarded to 17 Glenmore Road (Neil and Rhona Walklett) for extensive renovation of an Edwardian property and grounds. The Award was accepted by Neil Walklett, who said that the renovation had been a long process since they moved to the property six years ago, with much of the work being done by him personally.



The Outstanding Contribution to Oxton Award, was awarded to Christine Wray for her contribution to the Tree Group over many years, including six years as coordinator of the Group. Accepting the award on behalf of Christine, Ian Wray acknowledged the great contribution of Steve Ferguson to the Tree Group.

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their support during the year, and the Officers and other members of the Committee. Particular thanks were expressed to Ann Fordham who was retiring.

Oxton People



Kate Wyness

Kate and her husband Paul are the owners of Village Greens, Oxton's newest village shop which opened last year. Kate grew up in Wellington Road, Oxton where her mother still lives.

Kate attended Holt Hill Convent and later, Marion High. She sat A-levels and decided to embark on nursing although she would have liked to have studied Art in some form or other. However, she enjoyed the nurse training course at Arrowe Park and remains in contact with her group.

Kate went on to become a district nurse based in Moreton. But the many changes in the health profession and the lack of funding and constant need for more nurses made it less and less attractive. Kate was looking for some other outlet for her skills and wondering how they could be transferable to other situations when the shop in the village came on the market. She and her husband Paul, a recently retired police officer thought they might be able to make a go of it.

They were encouraged by her mother who thought Paul would make a great greengrocer! Their two sons, William and Joe thought their parents had a good working partnership and could be successful. They felt they also had a valuable contribution to make in creating a new and vibrant business. The boys both work in the creative media and manage the Facebook which has proved to be very successful with 15,000 likes.

Kate discovered there was an enormous amount to learn about marketing and

finding out what customers wanted. They aim for a niche market who are looking for quality but affordable specialist products and concentrate on the basics like bread, butter and vegetables and introducing a selection of Spanish and Italian products.

The work schedule is tough. Kate works 7 days a week and Paul goes to the market at 5.45am three times a week, a punishing schedule which they hope to be able to relax, perhaps by having the occasional Sundays off!

1. What was the most important experience that happened to you in your life?

Meeting Paul my husband and the birth of my two children William and Joe.

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

Sarah Jessica Parker who played Carrie Bradshaw in Sex and the City.

3. Which living person do you most admire?

My mother. She is 85 years old. She still keeps an allotment pristine and grows fruit for jam which she sells for charity. She has raised thousands of pounds over the years.

4. How do you like to relax?

Running helps to clear my mind and gardening relaxes me.

5. Do you find a difference dealing with customers to being with staff and patients in the NHS?

You are still providing a customer service but in less testing circumstances. Generally I find most people are nice!

6. Where do you go for inspiration and new ideas for your shop?

Farmers' markets, food shows, keeping up with food trends.

7. Why do you choose to live and work in Oxton?

I have lived almost all my life in Oxton save for the couple of years my family lived in Anglesey. Working in Oxton gives you a real insight into village life.

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

I would like to see a signpost in a prominent place showing the layout of the shops so everyone, especially visitors, could find out where the shops are located and what they and the businesses offer.

A Bridge Over The Battlefield: Oxton Society's First Blue Plaque



The Oxton Society's first Blue Plaque was unveiled in an extraordinary gathering of over a hundred people at 20 Rose Mount on July 29th and later seen on BBC North West Tonight. The plaque commemorates Sir Philip John Denton Toosey, a man already well known across the world through the film *Bridge On The River Kwai* but less well known for his later achievements at home.



Sir Philip Toosey



It was officiated by Rhiannon Evans, Chair of the Oxton Society, and Patrick Toosey, Sir Philip's son, who is so well known in Oxton as a previous chair and long term member of The Oxton Society.

Funding for the plaque had been raised by an event in January 2017 at which 100 people enjoyed an evening of food, socialising and Oxton's very own band, Orange Zebra. Alan Chape, Secretary to The Society and Chair of Conservation Areas Wirral and Rhiannon Evans outlined plans for more Blue Plaques across Oxton and the Wirral.

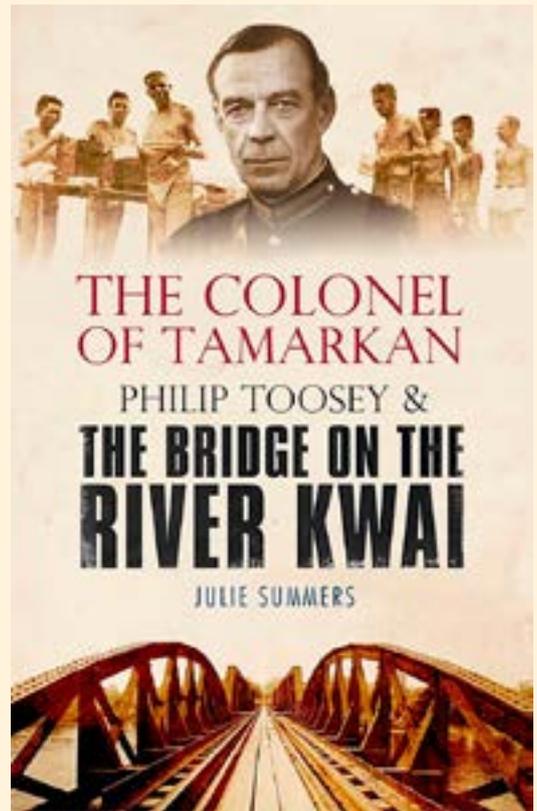
The plaque was unveiled by two survivors of the same POW camp that Lieutenant Colonel Toosey had been in charge of from 1942-45. Maurice Naylor, aged 96, and Gus Ankorn, 98, had not met until the day of unveiling. They spoke of the horrendous conditions endured in the

camp and how the Colonel had done his utmost to improve conditions for his men. Gus said “In the first six weeks we had nothing to eat as the Japanese had not anticipated that they would have to feed 100,000 POWs; we foraged for anything, grass, leaves, rats, insects.”

Julie Summers, Sir Philip’s granddaughter and author of the book *The Colonel of Tamarkan*, spoke movingly about Sir Philip, the man.

“He was born in 1904 in Upton Road and moved to Rose Mount in 1910 where the family lived until 1932. He played a significant role in the lives of many thousands of people from all walks of life from Liverpool to Lima, from Barings Bank to the Bridge on the River Kwai and from Oxton to Africa. At the fall of Singapore to Japanese forces in 1942 he had refused evacuation and chose to stay with his men and did everything he could to improve their miserable existence in the Tamarkan camp with smuggled medicines and food.. After the war he became the first President of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, determined to make use of his experience in trying to prevent disease in the camps and hospitals. And he used his banking experience to fundraise for the School.”

Julie Summers picked out one particular man and incident to demonstrate the impact Sir Philip had had on the lives of others. “ To one man he was a figure of such significance that he changed the course of his life. Sergeant Major Saito was second in command at Tamarkan in Thailand when Colonel Toosey and his men marched as POWs into the bridge camp on the river Kwai to the tune of Colonel Bogey. Saito was a regular army officer from the Imperial Japanese army and although his methods were brutal, Colonel Toosey always argued that he knew how to handle his men; so an unlikely bond grew up between the two men based on mutual respect. Colonel Toosey wrung concessions from Saito such as rest days or the right to discipline his own men. In return he agreed to keep the camp clean and morale high which in itself saved hundreds of lives. In 1943 Colonel Toosey was involved in



Guests at the Plaque unveiling



a plot to help men escape. The men were captured and executed. Colonel Toosey told Saito that he had known about the plan and he was subject to a severe beating and forced to stand to attention in the tropical heat. But Saito's action had saved Colonel Toosey from a much more severe punishment by the Kempai Tai (the Japanese equivalent of the Gestapo).

At the end of the war he told the investigators that Saito was not guilty of war crimes and this made an enormous impression on Saito. Almost thirty years later, in 1974, he wrote to Colonel Toosey

“For a long period I have been harbouring the wish to meet you and express my thanks to you. I especially remember in 1945, when the war ended and when our situations were completely reversed, I was gravely shocked and delighted when you came to shake me by the hand as the day before you had been a prisoner. You exchanged friendly words with me and I discovered what a great man you were. Even after winning you were not arrogant or proud. You are the type of man who is a real bridge over the battlefield.”



Sir Philip Toosey with Prince Philip at a Japanese POW re-union

A decade later after Sir Philip's death, Saito came to Britain at the invitation of Professor Peter Davies, his first biographer. Together they visited his grave in Landican cemetery and Saito was surprised that instead of a great monument there was a simple headstone. Following afternoon tea with Monica and Patrick Toosey, he wrote:

“One thing I regret is not visiting Mr Philip Toosey when he was alive. He showed me what a human being should be and he changed the philosophy of my life.” The family discovered following Saito's death that he had converted to Christianity.

After the war Philip Toosey took on a number of civic responsibilities: Justice of the Peace, High Sheriff of Lancashire and in 1974 he was awarded an honorary LLD by Liverpool University and was knighted. He died in 1975 aged 71.

The ceremony ended with Councillor Alan Brighthouse's words:

“Today has combined a personal narrative and story of an exceptional man with a reminder of the two significant events that really marked the end of the British Empire: Dunkirk and the fall of Singapore which led of course directly to the capture of Sir Philip. I am delighted that The Oxtan Society has begun the process of marking and bringing to our attention the men and women of note who have lived here. Congratulations to The Society for doing so.”



Young and Old have a chat



Patrick Toosey says a few words



Final words from Councillor Brighthouse



photos courtesy of

Local What's On

The Oxton Society

December 2nd: Christmas Lights

Exhibitions at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum

Until November 19: Wirral Society Of Arts Open Exhibition

Techy Art from Birkenhead Central Library

November 25-26: Oxton Art Fair (with drop in workshops for families)

Transformation Station - ongoing painting of a mural in response to collections from Joseph Venning

Events at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum

November 11: Williamson and Priory Friends get-together and lunch

November 16: Liverpool Guitar Society Showcase Concert £10/£8

December 9: Family Drop in Workshop 11-4pm

December 10: Jewellery making workshop

December 17: Carol concert at 2pm with Heswall Operatic Society

Please note the gallery closes for Christmas and New Year on December 23 at 5pm and will reopen January 10 to allow for some essential repairs.



We desperately need more helpers for the Secret Gardens this year and if you are able to assist in any way, please do contact the organiser, Jay Little, on 653 7025 e mail to little@gmail.com

Similarly the future of the Xmas Lights

on 2 December is in doubt unless we can find more volunteers. We need the following: children's entertainments coordinator; children's entertainment helpers; raffle helpers; road marshalls and switch-on team; litter pickers; Santa's little helpers; treasurer's assistants. No experience necessary as training will be given. Sixth and Fifth formers are very welcome – helping the community would help your University application. If you can spare a couple of hours for any of these jobs please contact Marie Pennington, our Xmas Lights Coordinator, on 652 2068 or email to mariejpennington@sky.com

Missing Some Nice Denby Plates?

If you forgot to collect your Denby plates after donating cake to Secret Gardens Refreshments in 2017, please contact Monica Toosey on 652-1653

Planning

The Society has been consulted on 13 new planning applications since the last Newsletter report. We submitted comments on four of these, as follows:

17 Rose Mount (former T for 2 café) APP17/00654

Proposal: To change the use of the premises to a restaurant and bar on the first and second floors with seating for 44 customers.

Comment: The key issue is the impact on residential amenity. We asked the Council to very carefully assess this application in the light of the criteria in the relevant planning policies and any further information provided by the applicants to ensure that residential amenity is protected. (Note: the application was subsequently refused by the Council on the grounds that it would be detrimental to residential amenity).

Flat 1, 'Denehurst', 6 Talbot Road APP17/00728

Proposal: Replacement of existing timber sash windows to all first floor elevations with uPvc double-glazed sliding windows.

Proposal: The property makes a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. It is proposed to use of a design of replacement uPVC windows which would maintain the style and proportions of the original timber sashes. The Society would not object providing that any permission is conditional on the use of the window design specified.

7 Village Road APP17/00845

Proposal: To demolish a flat roofed double garage to the side and replace with a pitched roof garage and store.

Comment: This house makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. In most respects the replacement would be an improvement. However, the Society recommends that natural slate roof tiles be used to match the existing house roof, rather than concrete tiles.

14 Arno Road LBC17/00869

Proposal: External repairs and refurbishment and internal alterations to the Listed building. No physical alterations are proposed to the external elevations.

Comment: This is a welcome scheme to rescue a fine Listed property from serious dereliction. The Society welcomes and supports the application.

The Society did not comment on the following nine applications as they would have no harmful impact on the character of the Conservation Area:

8 Newburns Lane APP17/0600

- Retrospective application for retention of rear decked yard area.

'Point of Ayr', Mill Hill APP17/00671

- Erection of a single storey garage and adjoining store on the main frontage.

3 Columbia Road APP17/00688

- Demolition and replacement of existing rear conservatory and construction of a second conservatory.

'The Drawing Room', 60 Christchurch Road APP17/00763

- Change of use to rear of shop unit to install a small tea shop area and a kitchen. .

Talbot Ridge', 9 Talbot Road APP17/00831

- Single storey flat roof rear extension, single storey front porch and new roof tiles to main house.

Flat 1, 'Eastcourt', 20 Talbot Road APP17/00873

- Replace ground floor rear timber sash window with timber French doors.

1 Roslin Court, Roslin Road APP17/01111

- Proposed disabled access ramp and lift to front entrance.

15 Ingestre Road APP17/01153

- Two storey extension to the front of the property and new porch.

6 Palm Hill APP17/01037

- Proposed two storey side extension to the rear of an original two storey porch.

Additional details can be found on the Planning pages of the Society's website

Trees

5 Alton Road CA17/0216

Proposal: Remove Leylandii in front garden and replace with something more suitable

Oxton Society Comment:

This is a large somewhat overpowering bushy tree in a small area between 2 gateways.

We did not object to its removal and replacement with a more fitting species.

12 Claughton Firs T17/0225

Proposal: Pollarding of large Lime tree in front garden that has previously been pollarded.

Oxton Society Comment:

This is a large tree that is part of a group of trees along Claughton Firs.

Previous pollarding has produced many new branches. Although we agree that some reduction in height and thinning of the canopy would be appropriate we were concerned that further formal pollarding may cause numerous further branches to sprout and may not be the best plan for this species. We cannot comment if the tree is diseased or not.

We suggest the opinion of a professional tree surgeon to advise.

14 Birch Road CA17/0233

Proposal:

Remove Bramley Apple tree to rear of property

Oxton Society Comment:

This is an old spreading apple tree which is visible from Birch Road between numbers 12 and 14 and also from South Bank.

Whilst the removal of this tree would make the rear of number 14 Birch Road more visible from South Bank its loss would not have a major impact on the overall feel of the local environment. As such we do not object to its removal.

Talbot Court, Village Rd T17/0234

Proposal: Remove 1 x Cotoneaster, 2x Ash, 3 x Cherries and 1 x Lombardy Poplar between the rear of garages 42-46 and 17 Alton Road.

Crown lifting to give 4m clearance above garage

roofs to Sycamores at rear of garages 40, 26, 25, 23, 19 & 17 and to Lime at rear of garage 21.

Removal of 2 small upper branches and lower regrowth from Horse Chestnut outside apartment 73.

Oxton Society Comment:

The Horse Chestnut tree referred to clearly lies outside the Oxton Conservation Area so we made no comment on this.

There is dispute as to the ownership of the other trees and also some uncertainty as to whether they lie within the Oxton Conservation Area. Having been asked for comments on this application we considered the impact of the proposed works on the trees lying behind the Talbot Court garages without prejudging any ownership issues.

The line of trees lying between Talbot Court garages and the properties in Alton Rd are clearly visible from Alton Road and Village Road within the conservation area (and to some extent from both Wellington Road and Shrewsbury Road looking into the conservation area). They are mature trees and contribute to the character of Oxton Conservation Area especially in the context of the older listed properties at the Village Road end of Alton Road.

Removal of the trees at the rear of garages 42-46 would be a sad loss to the overall line of mature trees. We note that 2 Lombardy Poplars behind 17 Alton Road have already, recently been felled and that reduction of the crown of at least one of the other trees in this group has also taken place.

Crown lifting of the other trees would have a lesser effect on the overall appearance of the line of trees particularly from afar. However we wondered if a more piecemeal approach in removing individual low lying branches may be all that is necessary to prevent damage to the garages.

37 Christchurch Road CA17/0238

Proposal: Remove 2 lower branches of Ash. Minor pruning of Cherry in front garden

Oxton Society Comment:

The lower branches of the Ash are not visible from a public place and removal will not affect the overall appearance of the tree as seen from afar. No objection.

We had no concerns about minor pruning of the Cherry to maintain its overall shape so long as work is done by a qualified tree surgeon.

6 Mount Pleasant CA17/0242

Proposal: Remove branches of Ash. Trim Laurel hedge. Remove Laburnum. Reduce height of Holly by 50%

Oxton Society Comment:

Removal of lower branches of the Ash will not affect the overall appearance of the tree as these are not clearly visible from the road. No objection.

No objection to trimming of hedge

The Laburnum is a spindly tree within a larger group of trees and its removal would have no significant impact on the overall group. No objection

The Holly again is part of a larger group of trees and as seen from the road a reduction in height of this tree would have little effect on the overall appearance. No objection

16 Shrewsbury CA17/0247

Proposal:

1. Reduce to 6-foot Willow to right of house as viewed from road
2. Remove completely Willow to left of house as viewed from road
3. Reduce overhang and trim sides of Sycamores at front

Oxton Society Comment:

1. This Willow is visible between nos 16 and 14 Shrewsbury Road. We felt that reduction to a height of 6-foot is excessive but that more judicious pruning by a qualified tree surgeon may be appropriate to ensure retention of the tree.
2. The second Willow is not visible from the road so we had no comment.
3. The trees at the front comprise a Silver Birch, a conifer, a Hazel and also smaller Holly and Rhododendrons rather than the stated Sycamores. Some trimming back of overhanging lower branches by a qualified tree surgeon would be reasonable.

2 South Hill Grove T17/0248

Proposal:

1. Fell Beech trees near house and replace with Ash
2. Fell Beech trees near house and replace with Ash
3. 20-30% crown reduction of 2 x Beech trees retaining shape
4. Prune back Holly restoring shape
5. Prune back Holly restoring shape
6. Raise crown of Sycamore by 5 meters retaining natural shape
7. Ash Sycamore and Holly; no work proposed
8. Yew; no work proposed
9. Fell Hornbeam and replace with 2x Holly bushes
10. 10-20% crown reduction to maintain shape
11. Holly left border small tidy up to maintain shape

Oxton Society Comment:

No comment apart from:

3. The Beech can only partially be seen from Arno Rd and is part of a larger group of trees. The proposed work sounds reasonable.
6. This tree is clearly visible from Arno Rd. Removal of lower branches will not affect overall shape but does crown need to be raised as much as 5 meters?
10. Not clearly seen from Arno Rd; a small crown reduction is reasonable
11. This large Holly tree is clearly visible but some minor "tidying up" to restore the shape would be reasonable.



Oxton Christmas Lights 2017
Saturday, 2nd December
4.00pm - 6.00pm.

Programme

- 4.00pm Stalls and other attractions open
Father Christmas arrives at Santa's grotto
- 4.05pm Carol singing, led by the Salvation Army Band
- 4.30pm Countdown to the Switch-on by Andy Gill, from the BBC's North West Tonight
- 5.00pm Arrival of Mayor
- 6.00pm Event closes

Attractions include

- Children's carousel (ages 2 to 10)
- Splat the Rat / Lucky dip
- Pluck-a-duck / Xmas Raffle / Carol singing
- Father Christmas

Food and Drink

- Mince Pies and Mulled Wine
- Street Food
- Other food and drink from Village businesses

Profits help to pay for the lights and the charity collection goes to the Mayor's Fund and the Salvation Army

Bad weather - the event will go ahead on a limited basis even if there is bad weather, thanks to the co-operation of local traders




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.