



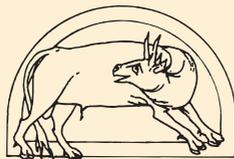
Oxton Society

**Annual General Meeting and
Celebration of Achievements**

**venue: Oxton Cricket Club
Townfield Lane**

Wednesday 13th September 2017

Time: 18.30-21.00



THE OXTON SOCIETY

Programme

Refreshments will be available upon arrival from 18.30-19.00

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 19.00-20.15

1. Chair's Welcome
2. Minutes of last AGM September 14th. 2016
3. Matters arising
4. Summary of highlights and achievements in 2016-17: Chair's Report and approval of report
5. Approval of Treasurer's Report: income and expenditure accounts attached
6. Nomination and election of Executive Committee members and officers
7. Motions (to be notified prior to the meeting to the Secretary)
8. Questions and Open Forum on priorities of the Society
9. Oxtton Society Awards
 - * Design Award (nominations to the Secretary required for Residential and Non-Residential properties by August 31st.)
 - * Outstanding Contribution to Oxtton Awards
10. Close of AGM

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20.15-21.00 Speaker and Panel Discussion

Speaker from Civic Voice on the topic of the Conservation Conversation: celebration of the 50 years of the Civic Amenities Act and the advent of conservation areas

Meeting will close at 21.00

Minutes of 2016 OXTON SOCIETY AGM

7.00 p.m., 14 SEPTEMBER 2016,

WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY

Present: 59 members of the Society and representatives of local businesses attended.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from 15 members

2. Welcome

The Chair of the Society, Rhiannon Evans, welcomed members to the AGM.

3. Minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM, which had been previously been made available to members, were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Report

The Chair, Rhiannon Evans, introduced the annual report, which had been made available to members. The report reminded members of the key tasks identified at the end of the 2015 report and summarised progress made in 2015-16 under the four long-term strategic aims of the Society.

The main highlights were:

- The emergence of an Oxton business club, which has started collaborating with the Society, for example over Secret Gardens
- The preparation of a retail action plan by Wirral Borough Council in conjunction with the Society and local businesses
- The advent of new businesses, bringing a more diverse range of services
- The continued success of the hanging baskets scheme, which was to receive an RHS 'In Bloom' award for 2016
- Improved use of social media to promote events and communicate with members
- A successful range of Oxton History events, including History Walks and the annual History Open Day
- The Secret Gardens event, the first to be held in June, which was more successful than the previous year, despite inclement weather. For 2017 the event would revert to May, to be held on 14th May
- A major membership drive, resulting in 64 new members, and an increase in membership fees, effective from August 2016, which will help the Society to remain sustainable

- Collaboration with a wide range of organizations including local churches, schools, charities and businesses, the Williamson Art Gallery, Ness Gardens, Friends of the Arno and the Oxtan Artists.

**Looking ahead to 2016-17,
the Society has the following priorities:**

- Conservation and planning – using our influence to try to secure the development of the former HSBC site, where work had been started to protect the planning permission but appeared to have stalled
- Oxtan Village Centre – collaboration with the new Business Club on matters of common interest
- Financial sustainability – diversify fund raising and increase income streams
- Succession planning – ensure that the Committee attracts new members and recruit new volunteers for the main activities
- Celebrate Oxtan's famous men and women – introduce a Blue Plaque scheme
- Develop a contingency plan for future Christmas Lights events, in case of adverse weather

Members approved the Annual Report.

6. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Jane Horton, introduced her annual report and the Financial Statement. She reported that the late cancellation of the Christmas Lights event had an adverse effect of the financial outturn for the year, as the bills for road closure still had to be paid. The carry forward from the 2015-2016 year was less than previously, but was still robust.

The accounts were formally adopted, and thanks expressed to the Treasurer for her work.

7. Election of Officers and Committee

It was reported that there were a maximum of 13 members on the Committee, along with 4 Officers. 10 nominations had been received for re-election as members, and 3 Officers were standing for re-election and there was 1 new nomination for Treasurer.

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 serve on the Committee: Steve Ferguson, Ann Fordham, Patrick Toosey, Steve Weber, Dave Barden, John Booth, Bob Knowles, Karen Freeman, Carolyn Weber, Chris Jarrey

Three vacancies remained on the Committee and the Chair invited anyone interested in joining the Committee to contact her.

Griff Round and Chris Jarrey, who were new to the Committee since the last AGM, introduced themselves to members.

8. Motions

No motions had been received for the Annual General Meeting

9. Questions from Members

One member asked about the future of the former Brimark premises in Rosemount, following the rejection of planning permission for a microbrewery and restaurant. Alan Chape and Steve Weber reported on the views that the Society had sent to Wirral Borough Council about this application relative to the character of the Conservation Area, and indicated that it would be necessary to wait and see what emerges from the market in relation to future development of the premises.

10. Oxtton Design Award

It was reported that nominations had been received for the Design Award, but they did not meet the agreed criteria.

11. Outstanding Contribution to Oxtton Awards

Members of the Committee introduced the nominees for the Outstanding Contribution to Oxtton Awards, which were awarded to:

- Pat Williams, for her outstanding contribution to the Society and the local community. She has been a local councillor for nearly 30 years, Wirral Mayor for one year, and a member of the Oxtton Society Committee since 1989. She has worked tirelessly for Oxtton, making a real difference to local life, and has been a crucial liaison between the Society and the council on issues such as licensing, planning and traffic.
- Colin Farquhar, for his outstanding contribution as a shopkeeper in Oxtton Village over the past 30 years. Through all the changes that have happened in the village, his Village Greens shop has remained an essential part of the village scene and community life for 20 years. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Society's activities, and we wish him well in his retirement.
- Wendy Nelson, for her outstanding contribution in a variety of retail outlets in the village over 29 years and her contributions to work on the

history of Oxton. She has developed the 'Historical Shopkeepers of Oxton' Facebook page, gathering fascinating information about previous shopkeepers and their families, and has been a real asset to the village with her enthusiasm for local life.

12. Vote of thanks

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 Jane Horton, who is standing down as Treasurer, for her contributions in the role, and to Jenny O'Sullivan is standing down as a Committee member.

13. Close of AGM

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their attendance and for their contributions to the discussions, and closed the Annual General Meeting at 7.45 p.m.

Chair's Annual Report 2016- 2017

I am pleased to report on another very successful year for The Oxton Society. This is only possible because of the hard work of over 500 individual volunteers. The eight sub-groups of the Executive Committee are hugely effective and this report highlights the commitment and achievements of these teams. These are Planning, History, Secret Gardens, Trees, Newsletter & Communications, Village Centre, Membership, Officers. I'd like to highlight the work of the hanging baskets' team for the Royal Horticulture Society's award for best neighbourhood in the North West, which illustrates the collaborative way that The Society works.

The summary in section A below reminds members of the key tasks which were identified at the end of the 2015-16 annual report for action by the Executive Committee in 2016-17. Progress against the four long-term strategic objectives of The Society which outline our main purposes and public benefits is reported in section B. We look ahead in section C and welcome feedback from members.

A. Summary of key areas for action in 2016-17

- Secure the development of the Bank Site. While there have been some signs of activity The Society has no confidence in the completion of the agreed scheme for which planning permission was given in 2007. The Society will continue to press the developer and the

Council on this matter.

- Collaboration with the Oxton Business Club
- Diversifying fund raising sources and increase income streams
- Succession planning for volunteers, officers and the Committee
- Celebrating Oxton's famous men and women with a blue plaque scheme.

B. Progress against long term strategic objectives

1. *Promote and secure high standards of planning, landscape and architecture to preserve, improve and develop the area and its environs.*

a. The preparation of a retail action plan by Wirral Borough Council in conjunction with The Society and local businesses. This highlighted in 2016 the problems of inadequate and irresponsible parking and the need to secure the development of the former bank site. Both problems remain and what is especially disappointing is the continued lack of development on the bank site. The Society will continue to press the Council for action on both and try to keep the pressure on the bank site developer (see section C).

b. The emergence of an Oxton Business Club. The Society continues to collaborate when possible with the Oxton Business Club, which is currently led by Angela Adlard, the Florist. The collaboration is mainly focused on the Secret Gardens and Xmas Lights events; however, the Society and the Club are open to sharing new ideas of common interest generated in support of the common goal of promoting the Village Centre and building an attractive community. The relative vibrancy of the Village Centre has continued with a further tranche of new businesses including Greens, Chutney and Rockz and Frockz. This, in line with many urban villages, is part of the changing nature of Oxton to a more diverse range of restaurants, fashion shops, financial, personal & fitness services.

c. Planning. The Society was consulted on 16 planning applications and it submitted objections to five, including one supported by a petition, where it considered the proposals would harm the character of the Conservation Area. We were able to withdraw two objections when modifications to the concerns were made by the applicants. Conformity with the Conservation Area Management Plan is a key consideration and, following The Society's collaboration with Council officers, the majority of applications are now supported by a heritage statement. However there is still room for improvement and the Society is actively pursuing this.

e. Trees. During this year Wirral Council asked The Society's Tree Group for its comments on nearly 50 proposals for tree work including 15 applications for trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). The Society's comments are published in its newsletters and on its website. These comments often suggest alternative ways to achieve owners' objectives in a way which is more sensitive to Oxton's treescape as viewed from a public place, including recommending the designation of TPOs. Three trees were planted under The Society's Tree Planting Fund scheme this year making a total of 49 trees planted since the scheme began in 2006/7. The early ones are already making significant contributions to the Conservation Area treescape and requests for planting during 2017/18 are already being received.

f. Hanging baskets. The Society fully funded 53 hanging baskets and made essential repairs (at an increasing cost of £2900). The fully automatic watering system installed with the help of local businesses kept the baskets in prime condition from June to October. The Society was delighted therefore to have this work recognised by the RHS when it was awarded Outstanding in the North West in Bloom award and winner of the cup for Best Neighbourhood in the North West.

2. Enhance public awareness of Oxton's history, architecture and environment.

a. Communication and PR. Four newsletters, history periodicals and walks leaflets were designed by Phill Jenkins and printed by Impressions again this year. The May issue was shortened to focus on Secret Garden arrangements. Publicity material was produced for The Society's annual events: Secret Gardens/History Open Day/ Christmas Lights. The website was further improved with a major new section on historic images of Oxton – freely available for downloading. It continued to get a few hundred hits per week and had over 4000 hits in the weeks leading up to Secret Gardens.

b. Social Media. Facebook had 318 followers in 2016 and now has 407 and is an active site for the discussion of The Society's events and activities. Twitter followers have increased from 303 to 472 and it has been particularly effective in the promotion of history walks, Secret Gardens and other events. Facebook and Twitter have resulted in a wider profile for The Society, greater publicity for Secret Gardens and instant interactions with members and wider communities. A dedicated Facebook site was set up for Secret Gardens in 2017 which resulted very quickly in 330 followers.

b. History. More than 16 Oxton east and west Heritage Walks were conducted for more than 150 people, including from several local organisations, one of which, for a group of architecture students, was on Oxton's

buildings. The History Group presented exhibitions of materials at three major public events, including the Wirral History and Heritage Fair at Birkenhead Town Hall. A number of Oxton history talks were delivered, including at the “Birkenhead Memories” evening at the Little Theatre to an audience of more than 250. The Oxton History periodicals are extremely well researched and are received enthusiastically by members. Work on the Archive at Oxton Books in the Williamson and a possible publication continue.

c. Blue Plaques. A concert by Orange Zebra was held in the Oxton Cricket Club in January to raise money for the proposed Blue Plaque scheme. Over one hundred people attended and a sum of £1400 was raised including a contribution from HSBC of £500. Following this a working group was set up to create criteria and review the nominations provided by the History Group. It was agreed that the first plaque would be Brigadier Sir Phillip John Denton Toosey and a short list of others was agreed for 2017-2018.

3. Foster community and business involvement to encourage civic pride.

a. Secret Gardens. The 2016 event was again planned for Father’s Day in June and although there was incessant rain most of the day, the event was still a success. 2,600 tickets were sold and £25,000 income was received from sales, donations, sponsorship, refreshments, raffle and plant sales. This resulted in a distribution of £3600 to each of the three partner charities: The Birkenhead Youth Club, The Terral Morgan Foundation and Wirral Women and Children’s Aid and £7,300 to The Oxton Society for hanging baskets, the Christmas lights, history events, dog bags and tree planting. Twenty two gardens were open and nearly 500 volunteers ran the event.

b. Christmas Lights. This year we were blessed with good weather for the annual switch-on ceremony and the contingency plans for a bad weather event were not needed. There was a good turn-out from local residents, who were entertained by choirs and the Salvation Army Band. Donations from local businesses and takings on the night just about covered the cost of the lights contract and the road closure.

c. Membership. During the year the Society recruited 13 new memberships; however there were 45 lapsed memberships and the net decrease therefore was 32. At the end of the year there were 519 memberships, of which 163 (31%) were individual, 305 (59%) household and 52 (10%) cor-

porate, giving a total of 800 individual, household and corporate members. 83% of members use email; 83% make their fees eligible for gift-aid and almost 50% of members pay for four years or more. As our numbers decreased slightly during the year there will be a recruitment drive during Autumn 2017.

d. Dog dirt. We provided 20,000 biodegradable dog dirt bags from 12 dispensers to encourage dog owners to clear up after their pets at a cost of about £500. We have now reviewed the programme and have decided to discontinue it. Many of the dispensers are coming up for expensive replacement and we believe that most responsible dog walkers now carry their own bags.

4. Maintain The Society on a sound and sustainable basis and work in partnership with others.

a. Income. The overall financial position of The Society is sound but too heavily reliant on Secret Gardens to fund all The Society's activities and other fundraising opportunities are being explored.

An increase in membership fees was approved by the Executive Committee, as reported in the February newsletter, and was implemented in August 2016. No objections were received.

b. Partnerships. The Society has collaborated with, and been supported by a very wide range of organisations including: local churches, the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, charities, schools, local businesses and Oxton Artists. It has excellent relationships with its local Councillors who are keen to support the work of The Society. The formal agreements with Friends of the Arno and Oxton Fields, Ness Botanic Gardens, Dovecote nurseries (Burton) and the new partnership with Oxton Cricket and Sports Club bring mutual benefits. The Wirral Conservation Forum under its chair, Alan Chape, Secretary to the Oxton Society, has continued to have positive discussions with the Council and with English Heritage about significant developments which could benefit Oxton and the other Wirral conservation societies. This includes the development of a Conservation Areas and Heritage Trail due to be launched this year on the Council's web site and an improved process for submitting planning applications in Conservation Areas.

d. Plan for Succession. We are delighted that new volunteers have come forward to take on key roles in the work of The Society and on the Executive Committee. However, more volunteers are needed as Committee members and volunteers take on new roles, retire or move on.

C. Looking Ahead

The Executive Committee recognises that the key areas for action are, in many cases, long term and hence it will take forward the following priority areas for 2017-18.

- Securing the development of the former bank site. As part of this process we are launching a petition in conjunction with local businesses and will be seeking to publicise this more widely.
- Diversifying fund-raising sources and increase income streams.
- Succession planning.
- Continued collaboration with the Oxton Business Club.
- Unveiling further Blue Plaques to celebrate Oxton's famous men and women.

There is much solid work upon which to build and the Executive Committee is indebted to all who make this possible. I would particularly like to thank the garden owners who opened their secret gardens, members of the Secret Gardens Task Group and the volunteers who combined their efforts to make this, our core event, a success, despite the rain. I would also like to thank Jane Horton, Treasurer for the last seven years, to whom we are hugely grateful for keeping us well within our means despite our aspirations. We welcome the new Treasurer Griff Round who has been working alongside Jane for much of this year. Huge thanks go to the Executive Committee members who worked with enormous energy, commitment and good humour on your behalf throughout the year.

Rhiannon Evans Chair

July 2017

Further information on The Society's work can be found on the website (www.oxtonsociety.org.uk) on Twitter (@oxton2) and on Facebook pages (Oxton Society), which are updated regularly.

