



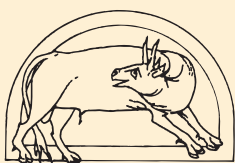
the
Oxton Society

**Annual General Meeting
and Celebration**

venue: Williamson Art Gallery

Wednesday 25th September 2019

Time: 18.15-21.00



THE OXTON SOCIETY

AGENDA

18.15-19.00 Wine and nibbles plus display of archive material, booklets and photographs.

19.00-19.45 AGM business

1. Chair's Welcome
2. Minutes of last AGM September 13th. 2018 (see below)
3. Matters arising
4. Summary of highlights and achievements in 2018-19. Chairs Report and approval of report
6. Approval of Treasurer's Report
7. Nomination and election of Executive Committee members and officers
8. Motions (to be notified prior to the meeting to the Secretary)
9. Questions
10. Oxton Society Awards
 - * Design Award (nominations to the Secretary required for Residential and Non-Residential properties by August 31st). see page 3
 - * Outstanding Contribution to Oxton Awards
11. Close of AGM

19.45 The 40 Year Celebration

- *Film of The Oxton Society 1996
- * **Oxton Conservation Area and the Oxton Society 1979-2019: Alan Chape to present**
- *Memories of Oxton: David Ainsley to lead a discussion with contributions from the floor
- *The Results of the QUIZ
- *The future: Allan Brame to lead a discussion with contributions from the floor

DESIGN AWARD

Purpose

A primary objective of the Oxton Society is to ensure that the special character of the Conservation Area is maintained and enhanced. The purpose of our Design Award scheme is to encourage and celebrate projects which contribute to this.

Eligibility

Awards are made at the Society's AGM. To be eligible nominate 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.

Award Criteria

In assessing projects for an award the Society will have regard to the following criteria:

Making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area
The quality of the design and its sensitivity to the context in which the project is located

The skilful use of appropriate materials

Creating a visible example of good practice which can inspire future projects of its type

Compliance with the approved planning framework for the Conservation Area

Assessment of Projects

Projects will be assessed by the Society's Executive Committee against the criteria above, taking into account advice from a panel of independent experts. The Committee's decision will be final.

Award Presentation

Providing that eligible projects of sufficient merit have been submitted, awards will be presented annually at the AGM. More than one award may be made if multiple projects of sufficient merit have been submitted. The most outstanding projects(s) will win the Society's Design Award and be presented with a plaque. Other projects of merit may be awarded a Certificate of Commendation.

How to nominate projects

In addition to the website, the Society will publicise and seek nominations for the Award widely in the Newsletter, on social media and on our notice board in the village. Nominations can be made by members of the Society at any time during the year. You should send nominations to the Society by email or post (see "Contact Us"). Ideally nominations should be accompanied by a few photos showing "before" and "after" if appropriate, and a summary of the work undertaken.

CLOSING DATE FOR 2019 AWARD – 31 AUGUST 2019

7.00p.m. 13 September 2018 Williamson Art Gallery and Museum.

Present: 61 members of the Society and Guests. Apologies were received from 15 members.

1. Welcome The Chair, Rhiannon Evans, welcomed members and made special mention of Councillors Alan Brame and former councillor Pat Williams.

2. Minutes

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

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair reminded the meeting of the key aims of the Society:

- planning and conservation;
- public awareness: history, architecture and environment;
- partnership working and community involvement;
- finance, membership and sustainability.

She then highlighted the main achievements of the 2017-18 year:

- the Royal Horticultural Society Gold Medal for the Village hanging baskets and the Special Recognition Certificate and Best Newcomer Trophy for Secret Gardens. It was noted that over 32% of the Society's Secret Gardens-derived income goes on the hanging baskets and that new ideas for future funding are welcomed;
- the financial success of Secret Gardens in 2017, with £22,000 shared between three charities, over 20 gardens and 500 volunteers taking part;
- the former Bank Site in the Village Centre is looking more hopeful now that work has started on the building there, The Willows, thanks to the persistent effort of the Society's Planning Group;
- the launch of the redesigned website, thanks to the work of Jeff Willis and Carolyn Weber;
- the success of the History Group, with 17 Oxton Walks attended by a total of over 200 visitors and the first Blue Plaque — to Sir Philip Denton Toosey. The Chair also drew attention to

two 2018/19 events: the Blue Plaque to Edith Smith, with accompanying booklet, and Jo Hipps' new book on Oxton Suffragists and Suffragettes, both now available.

The Chair noted that the Society in the coming year will be looking at prioritising spending to deal with the need for new Christmas lights, for planned publications and Blue Plaques, for the safety of the hanging baskets and for landscaping around The Willows. To those aims, the Society is very keen to recruit members to take special responsibility for co-ordinating Secret Gardens, the hanging baskets and editing of the newsletter.

Alan Chape, Society Secretary and Chair of Conservation Areas Wirral, spoke about the forthcoming audit of Oxton Conservation Area as part of an overall audit on the Wirral. He pointed to the concerns of the national organisation Civic Voice about current risks to conservation areas nationally and the difficulties some Local Authorities are having in looking after them and their reluctance to admit it.

Questions were then invited on the Chair's Report. One member asked if the Society has considered providing a defibrillator in the Village. The Chair said that the Society had been asked to contribute to the one in St. Saviour's Church, as a user of the premises, and that it might be possible for the Society to assist in any community fundraising initiative to provide one in the Village centre. This will be further discussed by the Committee. The Annual Report of the Chair was approved.

5. Treasurer's Report

Griff Round, Treasurer, drew attention to the accounts for 2017/8, a summary of which were included with the AGM papers. He highlighted:

- the increase in reserves, thanks to a successful Secret Gardens in 2017;
- the low membership income, but noted the value of Gift Aid on subscriptions;
- the fact that Christmas Lights is not a fundraising activity but adds to the ambience of the Village;
- the other major expenditures of newsletters and the History Group's work.

Questions to the Treasurer were taken from the audience. A member asked why the newsletter was still produced in hard copy rather than electronically. The Chair responded that there are still 30% of members who do not use email and that previous feedback

from members suggested that most still like receiving the joint newsletter and history periodical. A show of hands also indicated that this is the case among those present at the meeting, but the Treasurer suggested that this may be looked at again by the Committee if funding for future projects becomes tight.

A member enquired about how charities are chosen to work with the Society at Secret Gardens. The Chair explained the criteria and drew attention to the requirement that the chosen charities are required to provide volunteers for the event and to work jointly with the Society in running it. Lesley McGarrity, joint Secret Gardens Co-ordinator, pointed to the importance, in particular, of the youth clubs who work with the Society and provide staffing for the car park.

The Treasurer's Report was approved.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

The following were elected to serve as Officers:

- Chair: Rhiannon Evans
- Vice-Chair: Jeff Willis
- Secretary: Alan Chape
- Treasurer: Griff Round

The following were re-elected to serve on the Committee:

Jane Horton, Steve Weber, Carolyn Weber, Steve Ferguson, Patrick Toosey, Bob Knowles, Dave Barden, John Booth, Chris Jarrey, George Harrison. Eileen Lang was elected as a new member of the Committee. This leaves two vacancies for ordinary Committee members.

7. Motions

No motions were received.

8. "Let's Talk Trees"

Questions were invited for Ron Jones and Steve Ferguson, respectively current and former members of the Society's Tree Group. Ron Jones started by paying tribute to Steve Ferguson for his invaluable work in the Tree Group for many years. Questions and comments from the membership dealt with the funding of tree-planting by the Society; the process of contacting the Local Authority over notifications about proposed work on trees and the role of the Society in this process; a proposal to increase publicity about the work of the Tree Group; a suggestion to publish a map of all the trees in the Village that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order; protection and provision of trees on the former Bank Site.

9. Oxton Design Award

David Ainsley, architect and member of the Design Award Group, explained the principle of the Society's Design Award to promote good building design in the Village. He introduced the new category of Commendation. This year there were three Commendations:

- Francis and Danielle Johnson for exterior refurbishment at 16 Cloughton Firs
- Phil Stafford for the sandstone wall at 53 Rose Mount
- Paul and Kate Wyness for the exterior of Greens in Village Road.

There was one Award:

- Joanne Piercy for the improvement of the exterior of Chutney Street Food from the original shop front.

The winners of the Commendations were presented with their certificates. Members were invited to consider submitting any publicly visible work they undertake on properties in the Conservation Area.

10. Awards for outstanding contributions to Oxton

Alan Chape, Secretary, explained the first award: to Alan Brighthouse, who has had a lifelong association with the Village, including as a Liberal Party Councillor from 2010 to 2014 and a regular supporter of the work of the Society. Alan Brighthouse responded with thanks and recommended pride in being residents not just of Oxton but also of Birkenhead.

Geoff Willis, Vice-Chair, explained the second award: to Steve Ferguson, who has been a member of the Society Committee for 27 years; helped to start Secret Gardens in 2001 and had a primary role ever since then in co-ordinating the event; initiated and ran the Tree Group; developed the Society's membership database; edited the newsletter and, along with Sue Ferguson, continues to undertake the major task of arranging its distribution. Steve responded with thanks and noted that he is happy to see how succession planning has allowed all these activities to continue successfully.

11. Close of AGM

The Chair thanked all members present for their attendance and contributions, the Committee, all volunteers and garden owners for their work during the year, businesses for their support, Sue Spencer and her team for refreshments. The meeting closed at 8:15 p.m. and was followed by a presentation by architectural historian Peter de Figueiredo on "Conservation areas: sustainable places?".

The Chair's Annual Report 2018- 2019

I am delighted to report on another very successful year for The Oxton Society. This is only possible because of the hard work of over 400 individual volunteers, together with the Executive Committee and its eight sub-groups which carry out the main work of the committee.

Highlights



The Bank Site. The Willows has largely been completed and we will welcome the removal of the corrugated fence. There will be four new shops and eight apartments on the site. Through its trustees the Society will now 'police' the freehold to ensure the developer meets his obligations including exercising the covenant prohibiting the sale of alcohol. We will also be discussing our legal agreement with the developer to landscape the front of the site.



Bob Knowles, Chair of the Society's History Group, Superintendent Louise Harrison and Courtney Finn, Civic Society Grantham.

Blue Plaques. The second plaque, to Edith Smith (1876-1923), the first warranted woman police officer to be given the power of arrest, was unveiled at 18 Palm Hill on June 16th 2018 by her grand-daughter, Margaret Smith, in the presence of family members, local residents and official representatives of the police. Bob Knowles, chair of the Oxton Society History Group, who has championed Edith Smith's unique story, inspired a number of follow-up events including the erection of a headstone on her grave by Merseyside Police and a Blue Plaque in Halton where she died.

Secret Gardens (SG). A bumper year for this well loved community event thanks to glorious weather, a record number of open gardens (27), successful plant sales, raffles, music and entertainment, street stalls and a highly successful cafe. It was attended by the Mayor and the new Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside who celebrated the planting of the Society's 50th tree by slicing through the ribbon with his sword. Income exceeded the previous year and £21, 252 was shared with Birkenhead Woodcraft Folk, Sundowns and The Vikes Youth Club.

Hanging Basket Awards. Following our triple success last year, our much admired hanging baskets won another prestigious RHS/ North West Britain in Bloom award in 2018. We received a Gold Award in the Village category at a ceremony at the Southport Convention Centre in November. Particular thanks go to our co-ordinator John Booth and the volunteers who worked to put up, maintain and take down the baskets over the season.

Ongoing Work of The Society

Planning. The Society was consulted on 15 planning applications, none of which warranted any objection. Representations were submitted by the Society in support of two applications – including one for the former bank site which successfully proposed a change of use from offices to residential apartments on the first and second floors. The Society made one formal enforcement complaint about a potentially harmful unauthorised development

Trees. Over the past 12 months there were 48 notifications, sixteen of which were for trees covered by a tree preservation order. A new code of practice was introduced by the tree group, and from September 2018 onwards the tree group believes it has engaged better with applicants before passing comments on to the Council tree preservation officer. Where appropriate, we have suggested members consider replanting by making use of the Society's tree planting fund. The fund has supported the planting of four trees in the past year.

Membership. During the year the membership increased by seven, as 33 new memberships were signed up whilst 26 memberships lapsed for a number of reasons. At the end of the year there were 529 memberships. Of these 173 (32%) were individual; 298 (56%) were household and 57% (11%) were corporate. 84% of members make their fee eligible for gift aid; 75% pay for four years or more. The number of members paying by PayPal and by bank transfer have increased (now 43%). We received great support from Village Greens in our recruitment efforts and will continue to make use of the website and public events to recruit new members.

Oxton's History. Twenty two Oxton History Walks were conducted for more than 200 people. Walks were provided in the Wirral Walking Festival and The Wirral Heritage Open Days Week. As well as the East and West Walks, the new Arno Walk has proved a popular addition to the programme. The Oxton History Periodicals continued to be well researched and received enthusiastically by members and the general public. The "Oxton Periodicals" book

of the first six years of their issue continues to sell steadily. The group presented exhibitions of materials at major public events, including the Wirral History and Heritage Fair at Birkenhead Town Hall. A number of Oxton history talks were also delivered. Two Booklets concerning Oxton residents of note have been published, Edith Smith: Britain's First Warranted Policewoman and The Story of Oxton Women's Struggle For The Vote 1872-1928. Research of a forthcoming booklet about Cyril Scott, classical composer and writer was commenced. During the year the Archive at the Oxton Bookshop in the Williamson has been enhanced by additional material, maps, photographs and articles, and continues to be a popular resource for the public.

Communications. The new website was launched with a more efficient structure with separate but linked sub-sites for membership, history and Secret Gardens. Membership renewals and ticket sales can now take place efficiently online and 86% of members now use email. Archive images have been added to the history section. Overall we believe that our approach to communications with members has improved as we now combine: newsletters (4 per year), Facebook 1300 members (666 in 2018), Twitter 746 followers (472 in 2018), Mailchimp and the website.

Christmas Lights. 2018 saw the first fruits of our planned improvements to Xmas Lights. Oxton's "White Xmas" meant new white lights and new decorations to all the lamp-posts. Kate Wyness of Green's masterminded a very successful fund-raising drive, local businesses contributed and the Society then matched the sum raised. Our new contractor has upgraded all the electrics and made sure that the lights stayed on. The annual switch-on ceremony was performed by popular local teenager (aka Princess Elsa). The weather was kind and, once again, there was a good turn-out by local residents who enjoyed mulled wine, mince pies, choirs and our Xmas Raffle. The Woodcraft Folk provided children's entertainment.

The Village Centre. The Village centre has seen some changes this year with the sad loss of the pharmacy and the appearance of two new restaurants (Thyme and Sabrosa). In addition, the vacant Brimark premises are being converted to an artist's studio and living space. All these are welcome additions and are in line with the Society's view of a vibrant and successful Village centre with a mix of traditional retail and new uses. The Society is still concerned about the issues surrounding traffic, speeding and parking in, and around, the Village centre. The local Councillors have been active in this regard and the Society will be having further discussions with

them to look at possible solutions.

Partnerships. The Society continues to value and foster all its partnerships and works closely with Friends of the Arno, The Williamson, local churches, voluntary groups, schools and clubs. The Society's Secretary chairs Conservation Areas Wirral (CAW) which has been heavily involved in the consultations on the Wirral Local Plan. This has been primarily related to the possible impact of releasing green belt land on the two conservation area villages of Eastham and Saughall Massie. In addition, CAW has commented on the need for effective and enforceable conservation and heritage policies across the Wirral and especially in conservation areas such as Oxton. CAW also initiated a new Blue Plaque programme across the Wirral and there are now 25 Blue plaques either in place or being installed, including the six plaques in the Village.

Financial Summary. Overall 2018-2019 was successful financially with a small surplus of £417, less than in recent years. However significant investment was made in a new website and new Christmas lights. Good levels of reserves continue to be held; these stood at £21,664 at the end of the year.

Looking Ahead

The Executive Committee invited trustees and others to undertake a review of its existing strategy with a view to updating it. The revised document will be reported on in due course but key priorities for 2019-2020 have been identified as:

- Core business: preserving Oxton's character
- Sustainability and succession
- Communications
- Fund-raising
- The Business community

There is much to celebrate and to be proud of and the Executive Committee is indebted to all who make this possible: garden owners, the SG Task Group, hundreds of volunteers, the businesses, including Dovecote the provider of hanging baskets, and all our partners. We would like to thank Jane Horton, former Treasurer for many years, to whom we are indebted for our very healthy bank balance. I would also like to thank the Executive Committee who have worked with enormous energy and commitment on your behalf throughout the year.

Rhiannon Evans, Chair
July 2019

Accounts

					GR 30/7/19
Summary of the annual accounts for 2017-2018 and 2018 - 2019					
Year ended 28 Feb 2018			Year ended 28 Feb 2019		
Income	Expenditure		Income	Expenditure	
Administration					
£4,006		Memberships & donations	£4,059		
	£360	Accountancy		£360	
	£449	AGM		£638	
	£110	Subscriptions (CV,CAW etc)		£635	
	£83	Website hosting		£1,955	
	£1,229	Newsletters		£1,277	
	£165	Other		£257	
£4,006	£2,396		£4,059	£5,122	
Strategic aims					
£9,552		OxSoc Secret Gardens	£9,013		
£520	£480	Blue plaque		£867	
		Design awards			
		Dog fouling bags		-£20	
	£2,760	Hanging baskets		£2,814	
£60	£901	History group & periodical	£1,014	£1,794	
	£455	Tree planting		£1,249	
£3,884	£4,233	Xmas lights	£3,567	£5,613	
£500	£49	Oxton in Bloom	£340	£133	
	£18	Other		£4	
£14,516	£8,896		£13,934	£12,454	
£18,522	£11,292	Totals for the year	£17,993	£17,576	
£21,247		Carried forward	£21,664		
		Secret Gardens			
Secret Gardens 2018			Secret Gardens 2019		
£10,108		£6 Programmes (pre- sales)	£11,675		
£11,144		£8 Programmes (on the day)	£11,902		
£7,034		Other income	£8,522		
	£6,678	Expenses		£6,345	
	£12,965	Payments to charities		£15,451	
	£8,643	Balance to Oxsoc		£10,303	
£28,286	£28,286		£32,099	£32,099	
		Programme numbers			
1685		£6 Programmes (pre- sales)	1945		
1393		£8 Programmes (on the day)	1488		
3078		Total programmes sold	3433		