



XMAS SWITCH-ON AND XMAS MARKET

White Xmas PLUS
grand illumination of
Village Centre Trees

12 Xmas Market food
and craft stalls

Music throughout the
event

SAT NOV 30TH

1.00-6.00PM



Mulled, wine, mince pies,
hot dogs

Kids' entertainment
by the Woodcraft Folk,

Carousel

Grand Xmas Raffle

Switch – on at 4.30pm by Mike Carr, with Carols from the Salvation Army

Santa Claus, his Elves, a gift for every child and photo-opportunity

Programme

- 1.00pm - stalls, kids' stuff and music begins
- 2.30pm – mulled wine, hot dogs and raffle begins
- 3.30pm – arrival of Santa and everything in full swing
- 4.15pm – carols and then switch-on at 4.30pm

Entertainment includes:

Erin Moxham, singer
The Luminelles
The Rock Choir
St Joseph's School Choir
Woodchurch Rd School Choir

Thanks to our supporters

Wirral Council's Community Fund
Bogan's Carpets – an Oxton-based family business
Edwards News and Bon Bakery for sponsoring Santa Claus
All our village businesses for donating and supporting the raffle

The Tale of 2 Trees

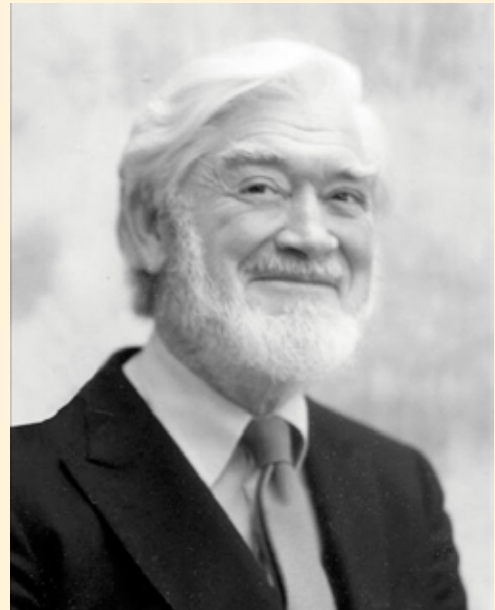


Last year's White Christmas was down to brilliant fundraising by village businesses and residents, providing new white Christmas Lights along shop fronts and on lampposts. This year's fundraising initiative – "The Tale of 2 Trees" - will light up two of the trees in the village centre.

Thanks to our local Councillors we have already received funding from the Wirral Community Fund to light up the third tree in the village centre.

All donations will be much appreciated, and there are collection boxes in shops, restaurants and bars throughout the village. The Oxton Society will match any funds raised.

Please help to make it an even brighter, whiter Christmas!



Congratulations to Mike Carr

The Oxton Society sends congratulations to Mike Carr, who celebrated his 99th birthday on 29 October, and entered his 100th year. Mike and Barbara Carr are the longest living Oxton residents, having bought their house in Fairclough Lane, one of the oldest in Oxton, in 1960, and they are also the Society's longest serving members.

We are very grateful to Mike for agreeing to perform the 'switch-on' of the Oxton Christmas Lights this year. He will be throwing the switch at 4.30 pm on Saturday 30 November.

Meet the Artists at the Oxton Art Fair



Saturday 30 November & Sunday 1 December - Williamson Art Gallery & Museum Oxton Art Fair – now in its 16th year – is a wonderful opportunity to meet the artists, view and purchase original, innovative artworks which make unique Christmas gifts.

22 Artists will be exhibiting paintings, printmaking, photography, 3-D art, ceramics, jewellery, textiles, basketry,

glassmaking and lots more. Come and enjoy the exhibition and meet the artists.

There are children's activities and refreshments in The Williamson Café.

FREE Entry and FREE Car Parking. For further information and updates see our website oxtonartfair.co.uk or OXTON ART FAIR on Facebook

The architecture of Charles Reed.



Collection of Charles Reed houses in Devonshire Road and Caroline Place

This article, first in a series, will explore the buildings of Oxtun through the work of its architects; some well-known, some obscure, some long dead, others still very much with us. The only thematic linkage is Oxtun.

The first architect on the list is Charles Reed, who had a significant impact upon the physical character of Oxtun and is chronologically somewhere near the beginning. Born in 1814, the natural son of the Rev Arthur Charles Verelst, (of more later), he was apprenticed to Robert Abraham in London. What brought Charles Reed to Liverpool is not clear, although Abraham was working for the Earl of Shrewsbury and perhaps this led to a connection with the Earl's newly developing lands around Oxtun. By 1841 Reed was living in Birkenhead with a practice in Liverpool, his first works being in connection with William Jackson's proposed Claughton Park Estate. Covering the land between the Williamson Art Gallery and Palm Grove, this was intended to a suburb of grand terraces and

villas. Local records show a layout for a circus in the manner of Bath's at the junction of Slatey Road and Charlesville, however what came to be constructed was a more modest series of streets (Charlesville, Reedsville, Caroline Place, Devonshire Road, and Grosvenor Road), flanked by detached and semi-detached villas and three groups of terraces (Cambridge Terrace, Kenyon Terrace and Reedsville). Modesty was clearly not evident in naming of the streets however, with two roads named after the architect.

In 1844 Jackson asked Reed to prepare additional plans for a grander estate of large detached 'country house' villas further north around Manor Hill which would include Jackson's own house, Claughton Manor, with gardens by Paxton.

By the 1850's Reed was an established local architect producing grand villas in the Italianate style throughout the north-west, including Cowley House in St



Charles Reed semi-detached villa, Rose Mount, 1840's

Helens 1849, and Halton Grange in Runcorn (now the town hall). He was not limited to domestic projects with churches including St. John the Evangelist, Birkenhead 1845, and more modern enterprises such as Holyhead train station 1850; perhaps due to a connection with Thomas Brassey, for whom he had designed several houses on Palm Grove and Devonshire Road. A curious anomaly at this time was his involvement in Plas Rhianfa, 1849, a 'French Chateau' on the Menai Straight, for two daughters of Sir John Hay Williams of Bodelwyddan. Stylistically a departure from Reed's usual Italianate, his work would become increasingly Gothic Revival, in the mid-Victorian tradition, throughout the 1850's. Stanacres near Raby is an important example, due primarily to the widely published gardens designed by Edward Kemp.

So what makes a Charles Reed house? The earliest Italianate villas are generally in stucco or stone with the entrance porch at the side and deep projecting eaves, windows are elegant casements using small side panes. The pair of houses at 41/42 Rose Mount are typical. After the repeal of the brick and window taxes in 1850, materials switch to brick and larger plate glass sash windows, but still with the same proportions and layout. The run of semi-detached houses along the north side of Devonshire Road is the most comprehensive cluster remaining. Reed's own house, Greenhayes, again in stucco with deep eaves still stands (much altered) on the corner of Palm Grove and Devonshire Place.

A pillar of the local establishment, a Birkenhead Improvement Commissioner, Reed was instrumental in establishing the Liverpool Architectural and Archaeological Society in 1848, presenting papers to them under the name of Charles Verelst in 1851. Reed had inherited his natural father's large country house and estate at Aston in Yorkshire on the condition that he change his name.



A typical pre-1850 Charles Reed window in Charlesville

Well you would wouldn't you. Despite this very large inheritance, Reed/Verelst continued to live with his family at Greenhayes until his early death in 1859 at the age of 45. He is buried at Holy Cross, Woodchurch. His family would eventually move into Aston Hall several years later.

By Dominic Wilkinson. Thanks to Miles Broughton for his amazingly detailed research into the life of Charles Reed.

Friends of the Arno & Oxton Fields - A Hotel and a Shed

The Friends have been busy creating two places of recuperation in The Arno. One is the Bug Hotel, a place of shelter for insects of all kinds. Made by two of our volunteers, its handsome framework is filled with hollow stems, fir cones, straw and twigs, with cracks and crevices which shelter woodlice, beetles, millipedes, ladybirds and other tiny creatures. It is proving popular with visiting school parties, and contributes to biodiversity in the park. In the Arno Rose Garden and borders, we are making a conscious effort to select plants which benefit pollinators. In autumn we leave plants to die back, providing food for wildlife in terms of seeds and rose hips and cover for spiders, insects and caterpillars. If every garden in the country followed these principles, it would provide a huge resource for our wildlife.

Not only have the bugs got a home, but also the volunteer gardeners: the former Parks Department gardeners' mess room, long abandoned and derelict, has been restored and is now in use as our hub. Thanks to our 'shed manager' John Booth and his assistant John Hall, the shed now has a new roof, a door, windows, electricity and water. There is a sink, a kettle for brewing up, and a second-hand fridge. Rainwater from the roof is collected in water butts for watering the plants, and there is a growing collection of compost bins made from old palettes and a potting-up bench. If you are walking in The Arno when the volunteer gardeners are

at work, come and say hello, and we will show you both the Hotel and the Shed... you might even get a cup of tea!



To keep up with news of Friends events and activities, don't forget to visit us on the internet at:

<http://friendsofthearno.blogspot.co.uk> or: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofthearno>

A Defibrillator for Oxton?

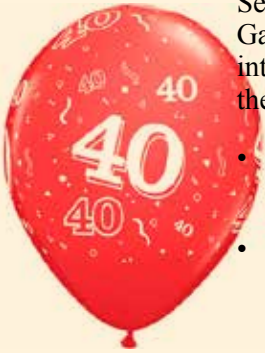


Many villages and small communities now have defibrillators which are accessed 24 hours a day and require a minimum amount of training. Undoubtedly, defibrillators save lives. Since the chemist has closed concern has been expressed by residents and businesses that there is no emergency first aid in the Village and the issue was first raised in the 2018 AGM. At the 2019 AGM the chair reported that the Society had agreed to take forward and facilitate an application on behalf of the Village community to buy a defibrillator. She also agreed to keep members apprised of progress through the newsletter and on the website.

The Society has registered with the British Heart Foundation but has not yet submitted an application as the exact site of the defibrillator needs to be identified first. If the application is successful there will be a shortfall of £600. It is hoped to make this up by a combination of an application for funding from the *Wirral Together Fund*, fundraising, sponsorship and donations. We have already had promises of individual donations.

If any members have experience of applying for defibrillators please get in touch. We'd like your help. info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

40th Anniversary Annual General Meeting.



The Society's 40th AGM was held on 25 September 2019 at the Williamson Art Gallery. The Chair, Rhiannon Evans, introduced the annual report, with some of the highlights of the 2018-19 year:

- The Willows development on the old Bank site had been largely completed;
- A second Blue Plaque, to Edith Smith, had been unveiled, producing a large amount of publicity for the Society;
- A bumper year for Secret Gardens, with £21,252 shared with three local charities;
- The hanging baskets won another prestigious RHS Britain in Bloom Gold Award;
- The first planned improvements to the Christmas Lights.

Since the end of the reporting year there had been further developments including a strategic review of the Society's business, the recruitment of new Secret Gardens Coordinators to take over in 2021, discussions about village traffic/parking issues and CCTV in the village centre, a third Blue Plaque, and a successful bid for funds to progress digitising the History Archive.

Looking ahead, the Committee would be finalising the Strategy Review, setting out priorities including the core business of preserving Oxton's character. There would also be a review of fund-raising and other income options, and a plan for succession to sustain the Society into the future. Communication would be another priority, to engage members and the business community and encourage feedback to the Committee.

The Treasurer, Griff Round, presented his financial report. It had been a financially stable year with a small rise in the end of year reserve. A continuing challenge for the Society was the dependency on Secret Gardens income to fund its activities. Questions from the audience concerned the funding of the Christmas Lights, how the proceeds of Secret Gardens were divided between the Society and the partner charities and whether the Society should

consider raising the membership fees.

The AGM elected the following: Chair – Rhiannon Evans, Vice-Chair – Jeff Willis, Secretary – Alan Chape, Treasurer – Griff Round

Committee members: Steve Ferguson, Patrick Toosey, Steve Weber, Dave Barden, John Booth, Bob Knowles, Carolyn Weber, Chris Jarrey, George Harrison, Dominic Wilkinson. The three co-opted members are: Annette Capper (Friends of the Arno), Councillor Allan Brame and Don Firth-Williamson. Three vacancies remained on the Committee.

Four Commendation Certificates under the Design Award Scheme were then presented: the successful schemes are shown on the back page.

Two Awards were made for Outstanding Contributions to Oxton. The first Award, to Kate Wyness, was for her impact on the village since she and her husband opened Greens of Oxton three years ago, and her partnership with the Society. Kate had a vision for improving the Christmas Lights with high quality white lights and her fund-raising initiative raised £600 from residents and businesses which was matched by the Society and paid for new lights. Secondly, she planned a revitalised village centre for the Secret Gardens event in May 2019, inviting the artisan makers who supplied her shop to purchase a pitch in the village and create a 'Makers Market' and young musicians to play throughout the day. Thirdly, Kate realised that the Society sometimes struggled to recruit new members and assisted the Society by providing space in the shop on Saturday mornings for Committee members to talk to people about the Society and invite them to join.

The second Award was to Jane Horton who had for many years been the Treasurer of the Society. Jane's greatest legacy was the sound financial footing that she achieved for the Society, and despite some decisions that were not universally popular, she had pushed home the argument that strong finances are a strong enabler

and allow an organisation to achieve so much more. As Treasurer Jane had dealt with banks, accountants, the Committee and individual members, and two large annual events, Secret Gardens and Christmas Lights, all involving a great deal of work for the Treasurer. Jane had turned the Treasury into a well-oiled machine and her contributions to the Committee and the Society would be greatly missed.



Kate Wyness, left and Jane Horton receive their Awards from Councillor Allan Brame.

The Way We Were - Past Annual General Meetings

Having just had our 40th Annual General Meeting we thought it would be interesting to trawl our archives to see what AGM's were like in the early years!

The first AGM was in April 1980, when the constitution had just been agreed and the Society was in the process of registering with the Civic Trust. The second, in April 1981, was much better attended, and there was a 'Brains Trust' with Committee members and representatives of the Council Planning Department on the Panel. 64 members attended and apparently there was a wide variety of questions, ranging from the meaning of Conservation Area and Listed Building status and broken paving stones to empty shops and shop displays obstructing pavements.

Throughout the 1980's it became the norm for the formal AGM business to be followed by a talk by an outside speaker. There were police officers talking about 'Law and Order', the Council Tree Officer on 'Trees in Conservation Areas and Tree Preservation Orders', a talk from the North West Civic Trust and a slideshow and talk on 'Wildlife of the Wirral'. There was even a talk entitled 'Seven Wonders of the Wirral' – what could they have been? Sadly, there is no record.

In the 1990's there were talks on 'Victorian Oxton' and 'The Coastline of Wirral' and in 1996 the AGM business was followed by a 20 minute film, 'Portrait of an Urban Village' made with the help of the Wirral Champion magazine. The film looked at how the buildings, walls and treescape of Oxton had developed, and the problems faced by urban villagers in a Conservation Area towards the end of the 20th century. There is a copy of the film in our archives, but unfortunately it is damaged and only a small portion of the film can be viewed. If anyone has a copy of this or knows where there might be one, please let us know, we would love to get a workable copy – email info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

As for refreshing the AGM audiences, in the early days there was always a break for tea and biscuits between the AGM business and the talks, but by the mid 1990's we had turned to alcohol and had a bar open after the meeting!

Lynda Roberts



Lynda Roberts is best known to many Oxton residents for her paintings and art work which have been exhibited at the annual Oxton Art Fair for the last sixteen years.

But there are many sides to Lynda. She was born in Croydon but, when she moved at the age of ten to East Kilbride in Scotland, a new life opened up. She could see mountains from

her bedroom window, and she was able to explore the open countryside around the town. A place at the coveted Hamilton Academy was followed by five years at Glasgow School of Art where she studied Textile Design, including at postgraduate level. Her love of wild landscapes began when students were taken up to Balmacara on the west coast of Scotland to sketch in the freezing snowy hills.

Work as a textile designer in Canada followed for six years in Montreal and Toronto, returning to the Wirral in 1973, married and with her first baby. Over the next twenty years or so Lynda was an Art teacher and Art Adviser in Wirral schools until she retired. Lynda says her first exhibited picture in 1991 was 'by accident' and her first sale led to solo exhibitions on a regular basis in Cumbria's 'Up Front' Gallery and every year at the Oxton Art Fair in the Williamson Art Gallery. She has also had exhibitions in the Bluecoat Display Centre, Liverpool and has been artist in residence on Bardsey Island, off NW Wales, where she has also attended writing workshops for a number of years.

Why the Wirral? I didn't know the Wirral but a Canadian friend said, 'it's a lovely place to be' and I have been here ever since.

What are you most proud of? Travelling on my own to Ghunsa 4000 metres up in the mountains in Nepal a couple of years ago. Ghunsa wanted an Art teacher, I applied and got the job. It took me six days of trekking and travelling in a jeep to get

there and I was accompanied by a guide and a porter for all the art materials I needed to take. I wanted to say thank you to Nepal for the many visits I had made in previous years when trekking as a member of small groups. My time in Ghunsa has been a seminal moment in my life.

Who would play you in a film of your life? Meryl Streep

I think people would be surprised to know that? I have cycled end to end on the Hebrides and walked sixteen long distance paths in the UK.

Which famous person do you most admire? Orla Guerin (*BBC International Correspondent*) for her commitment to the truth, her compassion and bravery

What do you like about Oxton? A sense of belonging to a community which does things together and yet one is able to maintain independence and a sense of being your own person.

<https://oxtonartfair.co.uk>



Trees and Planning

Wirral Borough Council decides all planning applications and applications for tree work. It invites the Society to comment on their impact for the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

Planning. The Society has been consulted on five applications since the last report. Two of these raised no issues at:

14 Rathmore Close - APP/19/01034

14 Palm Hill - APP/19/00938

Three applications were more substantial and comments were made in relation to:

6 Willan Street - APP/19/01035. - Proposal to demolish a section of sandstone wall to open up the former garage access onto Willan Street. On the Willan Street frontage the main change will be the creation of an up-and-over garage door similar to one that was removed in 2011.

The main development would be a single storey rear extension into the courtyard facing onto Village Road. This extension would have a flat roof and be faced in sandstone to match the adjacent Barns building. This rear extension would be most visible, although there is a substantial sandstone boundary wall. The property is shown in the Character Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

The Society concluded that there were no grounds for objecting to the principle of development. However, we have submitted comments pointing out the importance of choice of materials and that these should be agreed in advance before permission is granted, especially the sandstone facing of the rear extension and the garage door on Willan Street. Our comments also expressed disappointment with the content of the Heritage Statement

Beechwood, 21 Poplar Road - APP/19/01161 - Proposed extension of ground floor utility room and extension of first floor bedroom.

A significant and visible change to a fine early Victorian

villa. The Society raised concerns about the inadequacy of the Heritage Statement and recommended that the Council should seek further information before considering the application further.

Land to the rear of 38-40 Arno Road - APP/19/01069 - Erection of a bungalow with vehicle access from Arno Road.

The Society submitted an initial comment that the Heritage Statement is not fit for purpose and that the application should not be considered further until additional information has been provided.

Trees. The Society has been consulted on seven applications for tree work since the last report. At the following addresses there were no objections to the proposals:

46 Village Road CA/19/0161

12 South Bank CA/19/0165

11 Jarrow Close CA/19/0171

5 Nun Close CA/19/0173

27 Templemore Road CA/19/0174

7a Village Road CA/19/0191

The Society made comments in relation to:

3 Columbia Road CA/19/0175 Proposal to fell a large Lime as it is damaging a wall that has been rebuilt twice, lifting the pavement and is thought to be an imminent public hazard. Tree surgeons advise pruning or pollarding could make root growth more vigorous. Two similar trees would be planted further away from wall. The Society felt that this large imposing tree makes a significant impact on the local area and its loss would have a marked effect. If there is no way of successfully rebuilding the wall and the tree does need to be felled, the proposal to replant two replacement trees that will in time reach some stature would be supported. Tree Officer asked to suggest suitable species for the applicant.

Full details of all applications and comments are available on 'Planning' & 'Conservation' sections of the Society's website.

40th Anniversary Celebratory Booklet The Society will be publishing a celebratory booklet later this year covering the 40 years since its designation in 1979. The booklet will be available free to members and be on sale to the general public. Watch out for your copy!



Local Whats on

Williamson Art Gallery and Museum

Open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am – 5 pm. Fully accessible, car parking, café

The Williamson offers a range of courses and events. The details of these and the programme of exhibitions can be viewed at williamsonartgallery.org. Exhibitions include:

Christian Furr: a retrospective – an internationally renowned Wirral-born artist who in 1995 became the youngest artist to paint HM Queen Elizabeth II – a print of which is included in the exhibition. *To 24 November*

Distinctly – Britain through the eyes of ten leading photographers. In association with Look Biennial 2019. *To 24 November*

Nikki Parmenter – a Cheshire based artist who investigates myth and legend and the visual symbols which represent what is important to societies. *To 22 December*.

Oxton Art Fair – Private preview 29 November. Fair days Saturday 30 November and Sunday 1 December

St Saviour's Church, Bidston Road

'Celebrate Christmas' concert – Birkenhead Choral Society, including items from the BCS Brass Quintet. **Saturday 14 December, 7.30 pm** Tickets £13 (under 19's free) from Elaine Ray, 652 8170



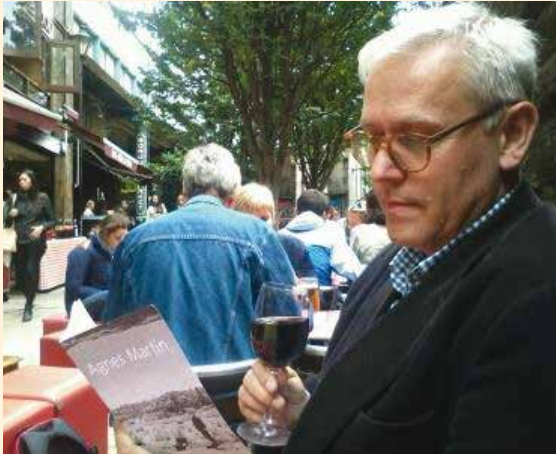
“Oxton to Aussie Outback - an Odyssey”

Thursday 14 November, 8.00 pm at the RAFA Club, 17 Shrewsbury Road. Society member Dave Barden will talk about his 10,000 mile bike ride through 18 countries. Cost is £5 on the door, concessions available. All proceeds will go to the British Red Cross.

New Faces

We are delighted to welcome three new faces – a new Committee member and two new Secret Gardens Co-ordinators, who will work with the existing Co-ordinators in 2020 and then take over from 2021

Dominic Wilkinson



Having arrived in Liverpool as an architecture student, I became aware of Oxton through invites to parties in Caroline Place and meetings at friends' houses with take-aways from the Mayflower. Many years later, I finally departed central Liverpool, taking on one of those large crumbling Victorian villas that the area does so well, and after 10 years on what estate agents refer to as Oxton Fringes, I have come to know the village well; a process hastened by volunteering to help with the history walks.

As yet another 'architect in the village', I am particularly interested in the buildings of the area, their history and protection, and look forward to contributing to this aspect of the Society's work.

Lisa Stafford

My husband Phil and I have lived in the Village for the last three years and feel very lucky to live in such a lovely and historic place. I work from home and can enjoy the village and myself and my dog Perc are regulars walking around the village. I also volunteer at Friends of Birkenhead Kennels on a Saturday walking the stray dogs whilst they are waiting for a new home. I feel it is very important to contribute to Village life so that the wonderful events that we enjoy like the Secret Gardens and



Christmas lights switch-on can still happen in the future.

Kirsty Cotton



I moved to Oxton 13 years ago from Manchester when I moved in with my now husband Paul and married in St Saviour's in 2007. We own rental properties locally and I have a part time job in a furniture & gift shop in Heswall. We have been in Rotary for over 10 years, being involved in many projects locally and internationally. I am also on the committee for The Mowgli Dog Show at Claremont Farm since it began 2 years ago.

We love living in Oxton and use the shops, hairdresser & restaurants. We have enjoyed attending Secret Gardens for many years so when we heard help was needed with the planning of the event realised it was time to step up! I am really looking forward to getting to know more local people and being part of this fabulous event.

Four 'Grand Designs'!

Each year the Oxton Society invites nominations under the Design Award Scheme, for projects which contribute to the Society's objective of maintaining and enhancing the character of the Conservation Area. Projects are scrutinised by an Assessment Panel comprising four members of the Committee and two expert advisers, both distinguished local architects.

This year the Panel felt that whilst there was not a nominated project that met the very high threshold required for a Design Award, there were four which fully deserved recognition with a Commendation. The Panel particularly welcomed the fact that three of the projects were for improvements to the frontages of village centre businesses. At the Annual General Meeting Commendations were awarded to:

- 1 **Cathy Frost, Thyme Restaurant**, Rose Mount, for shop front reconstruction. A very significant improvement over the previous front facade, which has enhanced the street scene.
- 2 **Michelle Fenton, Oxton Boutique**, Rose Mount, for shop front improvements. A good example of how a modest facelift makes a significant improvement to the appearance and character of a traditional shopfront.
- 3 **Jane Williams and Sara Poland, The Drawing Room**, Christchurch Road, for shop front improvements. Reconstruction was necessary due to serious decay in the existing fascia and the result was an enhancement to an already attractive shopfront.
- 4 **Chris and Jenny Dodd, 16 Kylemore Road** for reconstruction of boundary brick wall. The wall was carefully dismantled so that the original bricks and terracotta finials could be re-used and the reconstruction reflected the original character as closely as possible



Contacting us

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the Editor by email to info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk or by post to the Secretary, 4 Willan Street, CH43 5ST.

You can also contact the Society using the above addresses, or via the Oxton Society website at www.theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Do you have an email address? If you are not receiving emails from us with news updates, your current email address is not in the database, so please let us have it. Your details are confidential and will never be passed to 3rd parties.