

the OXTON SOCIETY



THE VILLAGE SPRINGS BACK TO LIFE!

APRIL marks the long-awaited easing of lockdown restrictions and Oxton residents have a lot to look forward to.

This edition of the Newsletter gives a taste of things to come.

While the pandemic has prevented the Secret Gardens of Oxton from opening to the public for the second year running, the team behind last year's online event is busy finalising plans for another 'virtual' extravaganza on Sunday, May 9.

Garden lovers can enjoy 'visiting' the Conservation Area's beautiful gardens from the safety of their own homes as well as being entertained with musical performances, raffles and quizzes.

2021 has welcomed an array of new businesses to the village and while some have enjoyed partial trading in line with Government restrictions, all owners are excited to open their doors fully to the public.



At The Willows, the new businesses are Host, De'laineys and Canine Cabin while in Christchurch Road we have Ewer Roberts Flowers, Macho Turkish barbers, Liverno and Indulgence.

The village will burst into colour again this summer with the return of the popular hanging baskets thanks to a generous donation from a Society member.



And finally, the Oxton History Walks are scheduled to resume from May 22 although participants will have to wear masks and observe social distancing.

Oxton Society chair Rhiannon Evans said: "We have experienced some very unsettling times over the past year and, fingers crossed, we have been through the worst and life is starting to get back to normal.

"The Society would once again like to acknowledge all of those businesses that have worked tirelessly to look after local residents during the pandemic.

"We would also like to welcome all the new businesses which will be great additions to our wonderful village.

"And to all of the bars, restaurants, retailers and salons which have been forced to close during lockdown, we look forward to seeing you all again soon as you gradually open up again."

THE HANGING BASKETS RETURN

THIS summer you will be able to enjoy the hanging baskets once again in the centre of the Village. It will be thanks to the very generous donation of £3,000 from one member of the Society who wants to remain anonymous. Our generous donor wanted to sponsor the baskets in memory of members of her family who passed away in the last couple of years. The Society is so grateful for this donation, coming as it does after two years when we have not been able to rely on income from Secret Gardens.

The baskets will be in memory of Barbara Taylor and Earl Lyden.

Barbara Taylor was a wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. As a professional woman, she worked as a journalist, mainly for local newspapers, and was a long-serving independent local councillor in Crosby. She served on many voluntary, church and charitable bodies, was a regular churchgoer and enjoyed a busy working life into her seventies, and an equally busy social life into her nineties.

Earl Lyden was a US businessman and qualified accountant who worked for Wells Fargo Advisors. Born in Detroit, Michigan, Earl worked in various locations across the country - including Grand

Rapids, Chicago, Oklahoma City, Richmond, Albany and St. Louis. A keen sailor and qualified pilot, Earl owned his own plane and sailboat and regularly took part in the annual 333 mile Chicago Yacht Club Race to Mackinac on Lake Michigan.



More than 50 baskets will go up at the beginning of June, and our thanks go also to local company Clearground, which will be helping us to put the baskets up.

SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ALTHOUGH we reported in the February newsletter that we would hold the 2020/2021 AGM in late April by Zoom, the extension of the lockdown until June has caused us to review our plans. We have checked with the Charity Commission and their information has confirmed that we do not have to hold an AGM if the accounts have been signed off and the 2019-2020 report has already been circulated.

So, we plan to hold an AGM for 2020-2021 in October 2021 and the agenda will include AGM business (including the formal approval of the 2019-2020 Annual report) together with the three topics mentioned in the February newsletter:

- Lessons from the pandemic
- Eco Oxton
- Quality of Buildings

There will be introductory articles in the July/August newsletter so that members can fully engage with the discussion and, as usual, we will circulate the Annual report with that newsletter.

The date will be confirmed as soon as we are able to book accommodation. If we find that we are in a further lockdown, we will hold that meeting by Zoom.

VIRTUAL SECRET GARDENS

THE 2021 Secret Gardens of Oxton will be streamed online on Sunday, May 9 between 10am and 4pm and organisers hope it will prove just as popular as last year's event.

Visitors will be able to view the beautiful gardens of Oxton from the comfort and safety of their own homes via Facebook – but don't worry if you're not a member. All you need to do is search www.facebook.com/oxtonsecretgardens on your internet browser and you will be able to take part.

The page will be updated throughout the day with videos and pictures of some the conservation area's lovely gardens as well as musical performances by local entertainers such as Emma Nowell with the PopVox Choir, Jo Richards with the Melody Makers, Brian Lupton, Erin Moxx, Simon Brown and Mike Withy.

The event is free to view and any money raised from business sponsorship and voluntary donations will be shared between the Oxton Society and Friends of the Arno.

There will be fun quizzes on the day and raffle tickets will be on sale in the village centre prior to the event with some fabulous prizes up for grabs. Don't miss the live draw online!

This year's main sponsors of the Virtual Secret Gardens of Oxton are Brennan Ayre O'Neill estate agents, Bogans Carpets and Revive Stone Walls.

Also sponsoring the day are Oven Pro, Oxton Electrics, Edwards and Bon Bakery, Ewer Roberts Flowers, Eraklis Developments and Host.



Last year's virtual event was a huge success, attracting more than 2,500 visitors and raising £3,000 for Wirral Foodbank.

The event will be supporting the Foodbank again this year by asking for food donations in various locations around the village over the Virtual Gardens weekend, so please think about adding an extra tin to your weekly shop for the collection.

If you would like your garden, plants or flowers featured on the day you have until Wednesday, April 28 to register.

With this being an online event it's an ideal opportunity for people with smaller gardens or balconies that don't usually open to the public but would like to showcase their plants and flowers.

You can submit pictures as well as videos. For more details and to register please email

Secretgardens@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Event organiser Kirsty Cotton said: "The Secret Gardens of Oxton is such a popular event and it's a shame that for the second year running we haven't been able to open to the public because of Covid restrictions.

"However, the online event is the next best thing and means hundreds of people can still enjoy a great 'virtual' day out from the safety and comfort of their own home.

"The organisers would like to thank all of the business that have sponsored this year's event or donated prizes to our raffle and, of course, all of the garden owners and entertainers who will make this another great day to remember.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW VILLAGE BUSINESSES

Ewer Roberts Flowers

WITH more than 50 years' experience between them, florists Sarah Ewer and Abi Roberts are thrilled to open their new shop, Ewer Roberts Flowers, in Christchurch Road. The pair have been friends for more than 20 years after working together at a florist in Liverpool.

Sarah, who has lived in Wirral for 21 years, said: "I used to have a shop in West Kirby and then concentrated on weddings and events.

"I moved to Cheshire for a few years and carried on my business from a workshop there. Five years ago Abi joined forces with me and we set up Ewer Roberts. When I moved back to Wirral we decided to find local premises.

"We shall still concentrate on weddings and events but expand into retail sales. We're very busy but still have a few dates spare for 2021/22."

Abi, who grew up in Oxton and moved back to the village following a spell in Oxford, said: "Our shop will be open Tuesday to Saturday and our aim is to

sell flowers that are seasonal and not in the supermarkets. We'll be using local and British suppliers wherever we can.

"Oxton is such a lovely village and we love the fact that new businesses are opening, complementing the existing ones – it's like the village is coming alive again. It's nice to be part of it as an Oxton girl."



Sarah and Abi of Ewer Roberts Flowers

Indulgence

ADAM Sinden has lived in Oxton his whole life and spent many years working in bars and restaurants around Wirral and Liverpool mastering the art of cocktail making.

So it was a dream come true to open his own business in the village – Indulgence on Christchurch Road – selling milkshakes, smoothies and crepes.

He said: "I have worked in the cocktail business for 12 years in various places in Liverpool and Wirral, including the OBK in Oxton.

"While working at Hickory's in West Kirby I also learned about making milkshakes and smoothies so decided to set up my own business. Making smoothies and milkshakes is very similar to making cocktails.



Adam outside his new shop

"We opened in February for takeaways and the response has been really positive.

"While the children might prefer the milkshakes, the adults really like the smoothies. When we can open properly there will be seats inside so people can dine in and we'll soon to be doing crepes as there is a keen interest in them.

"It's great to open my business here. I love Oxton. It's a lovely place to live and work and the people are lovely. Other businesses have been really supportive and I think we complement each other really well."

Liverno Oxton

FOOD has been a passion of Savas all his life and opening an authentic Italian pizzeria has long been his ambition.

When the former chemist premises in Christchurch Road became available, Savas jumped at the chance of opening Liverno.

The pandemic has delayed the opening, but in February Savas and his team finally opened for takeaways.

“My passion is Napolitana food and stonebake pizzas. I have worked in the food industry all of my life but undertook training in Manchester to learn about Italian cuisine.

“We use an Italian wholesalers in Manchester for all of our ingredients – oils, tomatoes and most importantly Il Fior Di Latte which is an Italian mozzarella made from cows milk rather than buffalo.

“Oxton is a nice community and when these premises became available I jumped at the chance of opening here. We had to apply for planning permission and then Covid delayed our opening for six months but we finally got to open as a takeaway in February.

“When we can open properly we will also be a casual restaurant although we won’t have an alcohol licence. Diners will be able to see their food being prepared in the stone bake oven.



*Yusuf and Femi
from Liverno*

“There has been a great response from customers and we already have regulars who are coming back time and again.”

Macho Turkish Barbers

MACHO Turkish Barbers in Christchurch Road is Erkan Tastan’s third barber shop in Wirral having opened shops in Bebington in 2017 and Higher Bebington in 2019.

Erkan lives in Woolton Village, Liverpool but has been a regular visitor to Oxton’s bars and restaurants and he’s always wanted to open a salon in the village.

He said: “I really like Oxton. I like the history of the village. It’s a small but traditional place and I was always looking for the right premises to buy here and in January I found them!”

Turkish barbers offer a variety of services over and above a traditional men’s hairdressers, such as hot towels, fire flames, razor cuts, waxing and beard trimming.

Erkan, who owned barber shops in his hometown of Bodrum, Turkey, has family in the UK and moved here to open salons with his brother Ramos.

He said: “I know a lot of people in Oxton and many are already customers at my other barber shops. The pandemic has been tough on our industry and we’re looking forward to opening and getting back to normal. I have nine staff in total to look after and they can’t wait to get back to work.”



Host

A UNIQUE shop has opened at The Willows which will sell a range of products from holistic therapies and hand-made artisan goods to ethically-sourced refreshments.

Host is the brainchild of Anouska Skeete and her partner Ashur Thomas whose inspiration for their new venture came from working abroad.

Anouska said: "I'm a make-up artist by trade and I worked in Ibiza for a time. Contrary to its reputation of being a party destination, it is a very spiritual place and everything is geared towards having a healthy state of mind and a good routine which has a positive impact on your wellbeing. This really resonated with me.

"When I met Ashur in Holland he owned a boutique which had a café and sold goods which had been produced by small, local, independent businesses.

"The pandemic happened while I was on maternity leave and obviously lockdown was a wash-out for the beauty industry. I had time to think about a more sustainable business and Ashur and I came up with the idea for Host.

"Everyone has been so positive and supportive and appreciate what the shop has to offer. After lockdown, we will be rotating our range of locally-made goods every month and will offer wellbeing and meditation classes for adults and children.



"We moved to Oxton because of all the places in Wirral, I think Oxton is the most unique. It is a quirky place where there are likeminded people who are health conscious, especially the young."

De'laineys

DE'LAINEYS in The Willows is family run and promises to bring a new shopping concept to Oxton.

Director, Natalie Williams, from Wirral, said: "I launched De'laineys store online in 2019 as a sister company to my property management company. During lockdown sales increased with people wanting to re furnish their homes.

"Like other businesses we needed to navigate ourselves to reflect the current times and De'laineys Oxton village was born. We pulled together all our years of experience in property to restructure our business and bring a furniture and property service to the local community.

"As we can't display all our furniture in the shop we're bringing a different type of experience where people can browse our catalogue of products using interactive services and brochures

within the store while enjoying a complementary tea or coffee. Small items can be taken home on the day where larger items can be delivered within 7 -10 days."



Property services include jet-washing, shelf hanging, TV mounting, wall panelling, and garden decking. They also have an in-house artist who will offer furniture restoration and bespoke wall murals. Also De'laineys want to help bring people together again so have created party packages for hire.

Natalie said: "There is a sense of community and family about Oxton. I've always felt comfortable here and I like the feel of the village. The world is opening up again after the pandemic and I think people will appreciate local

Canine Cabin

KIERAN Cowley is about to open his second business in Oxton village which is bound to be a huge hit with local dog owners.

The Canine Cabin is next-door-but-one to The Hideout Café in The Willows which Kieran opened late last year.

But rather than catering for humans, the new shop will specialise in all things canine!

Goods for sale include raw dog food, biscuits, disinfectant, deodorisers, beds, toys, leads and other pet essentials.

The Canine Cabin is also a specialised fertility clinic for breeders and offers artificial insemination, ultrasounds, scanning, microchipping, semen analysis and other relevant services.

Kieran, who has recently moved to Oxton from Noctorum, said: "I have always specialised in stud

dogs. I had a mobile business previously, travelling around the country, so it's great to open an actual shop.

"My family help me to run The Hideout Café which has been well received since we opened and it's nice to have two different businesses in the village.

"Oxton is a nice area and I have lived here in the past. I love the area and get on with everyone so it's been lovely to open the businesses here."



And a change of name - Colour Garden

CHRISTCHURCH Road hair salon, Gossip, has changed its name to Colour Garden and with a new, beautiful Ivy archway at the entrance, it aims to create a calming, welcoming atmosphere which promote clients' wellbeing.

Owner Karen Dawson is passionate about mental health awareness and her team have trained as mental health first aiders.

She said: "I have suffered personal tragedy over the past year and found being amongst nature is a great comfort. As being around greenery is known to help reduce anxiety I thought this would be a great theme to add for my team and clients' mental health after this difficult year.

"We have a garden arch as our entrance point and lots of plants to feel homely. We are known for our colouring skills and what represents colour more than a garden in bloom.

"Our salon is not intimidating at all. If people are having a bad day or not feeling very confident they can just sit quietly and enjoy having their hair done."

Colour Garden is one of the first salons in Wirral to introduce a gender-neutral pricing structure and has joined the Wirral Spend Independent loyalty scheme where members can enjoy discounts from local businesses.

Karen, who lives in Oxton, said: "I love working here as it's such a friendly community and the businesses support each other. It's a beautiful village which people like to visit."



GO WILD FOR WILDFLOWERS THIS SPRING

IMAGINE waking up one sunny, summer morning. Birds are tweeting, the air is still fresh, brew in hand whilst sat in your garden listening to the sounds of bees buzzing around the wildflower patch you planted in spring. Sounds perfect doesn't it?



Unfortunately, wildflowers are increasingly rare to find these days. We have lost 99 per cent of our meadows over the past 60 years, which is a truly devastating fact. We like our gardens to look neat and tidy as well as pretty and full of colour. But often the prettiest and tidiest of gardens don't offer much food for wildlife as most plants are non-native.

Our native bees have long, straw-like tongues which have adapted over thousands of years to drink the nectar produced by our native flowers. This isn't so helpful when it comes to drinking nectar from our non-native plants as the tongue simply isn't long enough!



Wildflowers not only provide the perfect food source for our buzzy friends, but they're also important habitats for our butterflies, beetles and moths! Without these amazing pollinators, we wouldn't have fruits, vegetables and many other foods. They're our underrated heroes who need us to shout from the rooftops on how important they are for ours and many other species' survival.

Fortunately, we can all do something about our wildflower meadows. We can all play a part in creating the change that's needed to support our heroes – in our own patches at home or community. Gardens don't need to be big to make a difference, even a balcony in the middle of a city can be enough! Wild hanging baskets, mini meadow patches at the bottom of the garden, wildflowers in an old paint tin, nothing is too small if enough gardens do it together.



Long grass, peppered with flowers, is one of the rarest habitats in our well-tended gardens, yet it is incredibly beneficial for wildlife. Patches of long grass encourage different plant species to grow, help insects to thrive and create feeding opportunities for birds. So simply let nature move in!

Set aside some lawn, leaving it to grow, and wait to see what arrives. The less pristine the lawn, the more promising it is for wildlife. Just raise the cutters on your mower to make some paths and leave the rest of the mowing until July or August after the plants have flowered.

Not sure on which wildflower mix to use? Don't worry we have it covered on our website as well as step by step videos on how to sow them

Some flowers and herbs you can plant along with peat-free compost:

- Knapweed
- Scabious
- Lavender
- Lobelia
- Wild pansy
- Ox-eye daisy
- Sweet alyssum
- Chives
- Rosemary
- Parsley
- Sage

www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/take-action/garden-nature/which-wildflower-mix-do-i-need

Article kindly provided by Rachel Bradshaw, Cheshire Wildlife Trust

THE CALLISTER GARDEN

TWO years ago we told you something of the history of the Callister Trust, a charity founded in 1925 for the welfare of girls and young women in Birkenhead. Since we last wrote about the Callister Garden on Slatey Road more than 400 visitors have been through the gate to visit this very secret garden and a further 100 members of the local community have taken part in woodland workshops and women's wellbeing workshops in partnership with GROW Wellbeing CIC.

This spring, thanks to the tireless work of our volunteers, all parts of the garden are developing with overgrown paths and beds emerging at the back of the garden. We are working towards the creation of a small wildflower 'meadow' and have the makings of a vegetable garden and a nursery orchard. A living willow tunnel made by volunteers, with staff from Wirral Environmental Network, is developing new shoots and the woodland area now includes a bug house and a campfire den.

The pond has been re-lined and is already rewilding and two cleared areas are designated for use by a girls' gardening club to be established for local young people. The Callister Trust has also worked with Wirral's refugee resettlement project to deliver gardening classes to local refugees and asylum seekers and to offer them the opportunity to work alongside local volunteers in the garden.

Finally, a derelict area to one side of the garden, historically home to a pavilion at the side of a tennis court will, we hope, become home to a new sustainable pavilion which will enable the garden to be used all year round and will sit perfectly within the garden's serene and secluded atmosphere.



A model of the proposed Pavilion

The initial stages of the Callister Garden Pavilion, the brief development and sketch designs were undertaken by students from LJMU Masters in Architecture programme as part of their professional practice live projects.

This work formed the basis of the project strategy which was developed by Smith Young Architects in association with Dominic Wilkinson from LJMU who provided the continuity from the students' ideas to the realised design.

Having recently been granted planning permission, the Callister trustees are in the process of fundraising in the hope of bringing the plans to fruition.



Callister Garden during lockdown

We look forward to the Garden featuring in the Secret Gardens of Oxtun virtual event and especially to opening the Garden to visitors again this summer.

For dates of open days and events, for information about our fundraising or if you are interested in volunteering please email us on callistertrust@gmail.com.

You can also follow us on Twitter@callister_trust or find us on Facebook @callistertrust.



A message from our President

AS a Lib Dem councillor 1987-2016 and as Mayor of Wirral 2002-3 I was frequently contacted about issues of concern, one of which was undesirable activities in the Arno Rose Garden and Oxtun fields. Consequently, I contacted the local press and the Oxtun Focus saying that I wanted to form a Friends group. After receiving interest from a small group of local people the Friends of The Arno & Oxtun Fields was formed in 2007.

The Friends' commitment and achievements have exceeded expectations. We are very fortunate to have knowledgeable people involved who freely give of their time and physical effort. I am sure that frequent visitors to the area will have noticed the enhancement and benefits that we all enjoy. Apart from gardening and litter picking we organise events to raise awareness of our activities and to raise money. Over the years, just to give a feel, we have purchased thousands of roses, restored the 'Gardeners' shed', planted hundreds of trees, shrubs and bulbs and installed a rose arch.

However, we always need and welcome new members and would really appreciate your support. If you would like to become a 'Friend' you will find information on how to join us on our blogspot, friendsofthearno.blogspot.com. Select the

down'arrow and choose "joining the friends'. Or you can contact our membership secretary Linda by emailing latkinson1958@yahoo.com or telephoning 0151 652 9016.

These last 12 months have been very difficult, and we have an urgent need for more volunteers. If you would like to become involved by doing a bit of gardening we meet in the Arno Rose Garden (weather permitting) every Monday morning and every first Saturday at 10am. You don't need to bring anything except a pair of gardening gloves. Obviously we are currently under Covid regulations but our park is big enough for us to work individually and safely.

We do hope you will consider joining us either as a 'Friend' or a volunteer or both, in order that we can continue to preserve our lovely green spaces in Oxtun/Prenton.

*Alderman
Patricia
Williams
(Pat)*



SAVING THE WILLIAMSON

A WIRRAL Borough Council public consultation before Christmas included a proposal to close the William Art Gallery, along with some of Wirral's other leisure services, in order to make up a budget shortfall. A public petition was set up in support of the Williamson, which gathered 13,000 signatures.

To the relief of all the threat of closure was averted and on 1 March the Council voted in favour of plans to keep the Williamson open. However, to allow the Gallery to stay open £90,000 will be cut from its budget, to be met through two voluntary redundancies and a reduction in opening hours.

Thanks to all members who signed the petition, and we look forward to the Williamson being open again.



ROLE OF THE OXTON SOCIETY IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS

WIRRAL Council consults the Oxton Society on all planning applications made within the Conservation Area. Responding to these consultations, and sharing our views with our members and local residents and businesses, is one of the Society's core functions.

This role goes back to 1979 when Wirral Council established Oxton Village as a Conservation Area, to preserve and enhance its distinctive character. Soon afterwards the Oxton Society was founded to promote the Conservation Area, and because it had the necessary local knowledge and expertise the Society was formally recognised by the Council as the Advisory Committee for the Conservation Area.

The Society's focus when it comments on planning applications is to safeguard and enhance the character of the Oxton Conservation Area. The Society's role is distinct from the 'neighbour' consultations which the Council is obliged to carry out, the purpose of which is to allow the owners and occupiers of properties close to the application site to comment on the proposals and to object to development which has a harmful impact on their amenity.

For this reason, the Society avoids involvement in representing the views of neighbour consultees on amenity issues, such as overlooking, which are specific to their property.

In an average year the Society will be consulted on around 20 planning applications, the majority of which are relatively small-scale "householder" applications - small rear extensions, porches, conservatories or window replacements - with the occasional major development such as 'The Willows'.

However even small-scale applications can raise concerns about loss of character. Planning Advice Notes on common issues can be found on the Society's website.

Our comments on applications – including objections or expressions of support – are advisory. The Council takes them into account but is not bound to accept them. We depend on the objectivity, consistency and expertise we bring to

bear to give weight to our views. The Society has delegated this responsibility to a Planning Group currently comprising five members of the Executive Committee, and we are fortunate to have within the Group members with a background in the planning and architectural professions.

There is always an element of judgement in formulating a response to a planning application, particularly where the proposals are significant in scale and complexity.

To ensure objectivity and consistency the Planning Group tries to ensure that its comments are based on a good understanding of the Council's and national planning policies.



The Society works closely with Oxton's local councillors and when a planning application raises major issues of policy or arouses widespread local controversy concerning the character of the Conservation Area we will seek their support in making our representations.

There is much more background planning information on the Society's website, including policy documents and a Code of Practice covering our approach to consultations.

We are always ready to provide advice on planning issues, contact us at info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk



2021 signals the end of an era for the Oxton Society committee with the impending retirement of one of our most well-known and much-loved members, Patrick Toosey.

Patrick, who will be 88 in October, joined the committee in 1998 and has enjoyed many roles including chairman and social secretary.

Together with his wife Monica, he was instrumental in organising the first Secret Gardens of Oxton back in 2001.

Born in Liverpool, Patrick's family moved to Willaston and later Hooton.

Patrick's father, Brigadier Sir Philip Toosey, was the war hero played by Sir Alec Guinness in *Bridge on the River Kwai* and there is a blue plaque honouring him outside his childhood home in Rose Mount.

When he was 19, Patrick did National Service for two years before going to Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1954, the same year he married his first wife Penelope Whitcher.

The couple went on to have four children – Nicola, Erica, Giles and Fenella – but Penelope sadly died in 1981.

Patrick married Monica Moran in 1983 and they have a daughter called Philippa.

Patrick spent his career in the shipping industry. He joined Elder Dempster as a management trainee and worked in Ghana and Nigeria for three years.

He undertook various roles in the company including running a round-the-world service with Norwegian and Swedish partners.

He eventually became managing director of Elder Dempster Lines prior to being made redundant a year after Penelope died.

Patrick then became import manager for the National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh before joining America Africa Europe Line's management team which meant relocating to Staten Island, New York with his family.

The line closed in 1993 but Patrick stayed on in America and set up his own company importing timber until 1997 when he returned to Oxton and joined the Oxton Society.



Patrick as a child

Your father was knighted in 1974. What are your childhood memories of him and how does it feel to have a film made about him and a Blue Plaque outside his former home?

My first real memory is in November 1945 when M V Orbita docked at Liverpool, Landing Stage and we were waving to my father from the stage balcony.

I also have many happy memories playing tennis and going shooting with my father in Anglesey and Shropshire.



Patrick at the unveiling of the Blue Plaque to his father in Rose Mount

Why did you join the Oxton Society and what have you enjoyed most about this voluntary work?

The Society is a great community asset and it is such a pleasure to volunteer amongst so many like-minded people.

You got the first Secret Gardens off the ground – how do you feel now that it has become a highlight in the Oxton calendar?

Monica and I are just so thrilled to see how the Secret Gardens has gone from strength to strength, become a well-known Wirral event and raised a fabulous amount of money for local charities and the Oxton Society - all thanks to a marvellous team of volunteers.

Why are you retiring?

There comes a time when all good men should retire!

People would be surprised to know this about me....

In 1959 I ran in the one and only Liverpool Marathon from St George's Hall to Anfield in

my Army issue pumps within my target time of eight minutes per mile.

In 1960 I was the only non-Ghanaian to run in the Founders Day Games Marathon for the Ghana Farmers Council.

I retired after 17 miles upon being overtaken by a competitor who was walking!

What do you like best about living in Oxton?

I like Oxton because it is such a vibrant community with a wonderful range of properties, a lovely village centre and wonderful green spaces such as the Arno, Oxton Fields, Oxton Cricket Club and Birkenhead Park.

Also, we have our Secret Gardens event, Christmas lights and hanging baskets.

What changes would you like to see?

I would like to see a solution to the parking problems in order to help the village businesses and to try to find some more space for additional green landscaping.

WHO'S BEEN LIVING IN MY HOUSE?

Do you know of any interesting characters who lived in your house in the past? Or, if you live in one of the older village houses, would you like us to find out about the previous residents of your house from censuses and other sources? We would love to feature some more Oxton houses in our 'Who's been living in my house' series, so please do get in touch with us at info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Urban Foxes

THIS letter has been received from an Oxton resident in response to the article on urban foxes in the last Newsletter.

As a veterinary surgeon and someone who grew up in the country, I read the article with interest. However, there were a number of issues raised which I feel require comment. In particular I note that there was NO mention of the problems that these animals can pose in an urban environment. There have been a few reports of attacks on young children by foxes entering houses. There are well authenticated reports of foxes attacking domestic cats resulting in bites and sepsis. They can, of course, attack and kill other domestic pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, etc. This is in addition to wild birds and poultry and recently hen carcasses have been found on local allotments. They do not just kill to eat but tend to cause havoc and mass slaughter in groups of birds and animals. They will also kill goat kids and lambs.

As important is the fact that they can carry a wide variety of disease including external and internal parasites which are transmissible to other pets such as dogs and other pets. The internal ones include round worms both intestinal and heart worms and some species of tape worms. The external ones include Sarcoptic mange, signs of which can often give a bedraggled appearance to the local foxes but is transmissible to man and dogs. They can also harbour bacterial diseases such as E. coli, Salmonella and Leptospira species of which are transmissible to humans. In view of all of this I would urge caution in harbouring them on domestic property let alone feeding them. They can be discouraged by not feeding them and by ensuring that bins containing waste food material are secure. In addition, both chemical and physical means of discouraging them are commercially available. If individuals wish to feed them it should be remembered that they are carnivores and any food should be meat based.

Remembering village shopping

THIS letter has been received from Andy Halliday, *former Cllr for Oxton ward, Columbia Lane Sea Scouts group leader, and member URC Church.*

I was born in 1950 and lived first in 39 Claughton Firs, before moving to 14 Village Road in 1953. I remember shopping in Rose Mount beyond the Talbot, going to Bakers, a sweet cabin, next to Adams the butchers with fascinating china pigs in the window.

I recall being sent to Mr Rowe for fish then a crusty cottage loaf from Bill Richardson, passing the Premier printers. My mum regularly took me into Miss Ryall's shop where I had to keep my hands in my pockets. Miss Ryall and her sister were lovely ladies who lived in Village Road and ran a shop selling glassware, pyrex dishes and decorated teapots. Up the road we passed Jones, fruit and vegetables shop, and took mum and dad's clocks into Frank Holmes - I was at Woodchurch Road School with his son Martin.

I enjoyed picking up my Robin, Swift and later Eagle papers from Miss Pomfret, completing the walk with a visit to ogle the numerous jars in Peevers sweet shop. Back in Christchurch Road the paraffin queue

at Longstaff's amazed me and delivery to our home was to follow. Mum also visited George Thurston, butchers, and Blackburns' in Claughton Firs, where they sold gloves, stockings, knitted items and umbrellas, the Co-op, and Mr Moore in the Post Office, crossing to Wharton greengrocery, and sometimes to get nasty medicines from Robert Powell, chemist. Mother being a sewing fanatic was often in Mrs Glass's shop.

The shop that frightened me was Baileys shoe repairs, dark and mysterious: I always dreaded going there with my little ticket to collect mended shoes. Father relied on Ken Guest for car servicing at Cookes, with tyres from Borough tyres, run by Mr Green. Other village services we used were Carter's plumbing and decorating services, and father had suits and blazers made by Fred Harris, and mother also got grocery ham, cheese and coffee from Mr Fletcher. They were great village shops. I moved to 21 Nursery Close in 1980, and I eventually moved South to Keynsham near Bristol in 1993.

Oxton has many happy memories for me, especially talking with the shop keepers and I think I have remembered a lot of the ones of my childhood.

OXTON HISTORY WALKS 2021

WE hope it will be possible to resume the programme of walks this year. The dates below are provisional and depend on the government's easing of lockdown restrictions. All participants will be required to wear face masks and observe social distancing and numbers on each walk will be limited.

EAST WALKS: 26 July, 11 September, 2 October

WEST WALKS: 22 May, 24 July, 15 September

ARNO WALKS: 12 June, 7 August, 18 September

WILLIAMSON WALKS: 27 June, 22 August, 19 September

All walks start at 11am and last between 1.5 to 2 hours. The walks are free.



Please note that you **must book** a place in advance. Until the Williamson reopens bookings can only be made by email to oxtonbooks@yahoo.co.uk

For further details and up to date information please check the website: www.theoxtonsociety.co.uk

A TRIBUTE TO MARTIN DECKER

MARTIN Decker, who died in March, was a valued member of the Oxton History Group and an enthusiastic leader of the History Walks, relishing the opportunity to tell the stories of Oxton to the public.

Martin was born on the Wirral in 1952 but spent his early years in Kent, returning to Oxton where he was educated at Redcourt and St Anselms College. After obtaining a law degree and attending the College of Law in Guildford he became articled to Peter Urquhart in Liverpool. On qualification as a solicitor he joined Mace & Jones as a defence lawyer in criminal cases and then practised in partnership with Alan Maddox before leaving to join a firm in Oxford.

However, the lure of Oxton and Tranmere Rovers proved too great and he returned to work for the newly formed Crown Prosecution Service in 1986 and remained with the CPS until his retirement in 2012. He prosecuted a number of major cases including a number of 'old cases' involving complex forensic evidence. He also played a key role in improvements to the prosecution of sex offenders on Merseyside setting up a specialist team of lawyers and investigators in 2010. He also lectured widely to other branches of the CPS. He was a very good advocate and loved appearing in court.

Martin's grandfather introduced him to football taking him to both Everton and Tranmere Rovers but it was his decision to follow Tranmere that was to set the pattern of his lifelong devotion to the club. A long-standing season ticket holder he was for some

years chairman of the Supporters Association. For many years he would not arrange holidays until the fixture list was published to avoid missing any home games. Following retirement he also attended nearly all the away matches.

Martin was widely travelled, enjoying sampling the local cuisine wherever he went, and loved entertaining and parties. His hospitality was lavish and his cooking adventurous. He loved conversation and good company and will be remembered above all for his generosity, his good humour and his infectious laugh. He lived life to the full and he will be greatly missed by his family and friends and all who knew him.



TREES AND PLANNING

Planning

THE Society has been consulted on just one new application since the previous report:

30 Birch Road APP/21/00074 : Conversion of a detached garage to create a workspace with an open roof terrace above.

Whilst the proposal for a high-level platform to be used as an outdoor sitting area generated a large volume of neighbour objections, mainly over concerns about loss of privacy and visual intrusion, the Society's role as a consultee is to focus on the potential impact of the proposals on the character of the Conservation Area. In this case the setting of the two Grade 2 Listed cottages on South Bank, which lie very close to the rear boundary wall of the application site, was the key issue of concern for the Society.

However, the application raised once again the problem that the Heritage Statement accompanying the application, which is a mandatory requirement, was wholly inadequate. In this case it failed to mention the key aspects of heritage impacted by the proposals, notably the Listed Buildings and the character of the main property.

In the absence of this information the Society asked to Council's planning and conservation officers to make their own assessment of the impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings, following national planning guidance, and recommended that the application should be refused if significant harm would be caused by the proposals in this respect.

The property is identified in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as 'making a positive

contribution' to the character of the Conservation Area. However, the garage proposed for conversion is detached and located at the rear of the property, set well back from the road. As a result the proposed development would not be very visible from any public area and the Society concluded that there were no grounds for objection arising from potential harm to character of the Conservation Area or to the character of the main building.

A revised application was subsequently submitted which removed the main source of objection, the roof terrace, and it has since been approved.

Trees

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

4 Arno Road - CA/21/0037

Woodchurch Court, Woodchurch Road - CA/21/0033

The Society made comments in relation to:

6 Talbot Court - T/21/0048

Proposal

Reduce heights of hawthorn, holly, beech, silver birch and sycamore trees by 50 per cent

Comments - The Oxtun Society has no objection to the proposed work being carried out on most trees. However, such radical work on the beech would have a significant effect on the landscape and suggests that its height be reduced by a maximum of 20 per cent.

Contacting us

We would welcome articles for the Newsletter or letters to the editors from any members of the Society. If you have a topic you would like to write about please do contact the editors via email to info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk or by post to the Secretary, 4 Willan Street, CH43 5ST.

You can also contact the Society about any other matter using the above addresses, or via the Oxtun 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 email address is not in the database, so please let us have it. Your details are confidential and will never be passed to third parties.

Newsletter editors - Carla Walker & Carolyn Weber