

the OXTON SOCIETY



Oxton in full bloom again as hanging baskets adorn the village



AFTER missing out last year because of Covid, Oxton has welcomed the return of the wonderful hanging baskets.

More than 50 baskets were delivered from Dovecote Nursery in Burton and Phil Piercy's Clearground team helped volunteers put them up.

Jeff Willis from the Oxton Society said: "The baskets will make a cheerful contribution to the village until October. The secret is regular watering and feeding, masterminded by committee member John Booth.

"Watering comes from an elaborate system of small-bore plastic pipes linked to six supply points in businesses. Electric timers switch on the

flow early morning and evening. Usually they work smoothly but now and then John will be up a ladder making adjustments.

"Feeding also means regular ladder work and John, now in his 80th year, is looking for help in 2022."

The Oxton Society has previously received three Gold Awards in the RHS's North West in Bloom and judges returned again in July to see the displays. Fingers crossed they were just as impressed this year!

This year's baskets, costing £3,000, were provided by an anonymous member of the Society in memory of two family members, Barbara Taylor and Earl Lyden.

Above, pictures of the hanging baskets by Alla Barkova. Below, the volunteers



It's been a busy Lockdown for the Friends of the Arno

WE hope you enjoyed viewing the videos we produced for the Virtual Secret Gardens which was a great success raising funds for charity.

Although we have been through another Lockdown, our dedicated volunteers have worked really hard keeping the Arno looking its best.

We have been out watering with the water bowser due to the wonderful weather, the long border has been weeded and maintained and more jobs have been completed on the shed.

On the first Saturday in June we gathered together to pot up plants for our first event for 18 months, a plant sale that went very well. We are hoping this will become a regular event.

As a group we are supporting the re-wilding project on the Oxtan Fields and in the Arno. We welcomed 'No Mow May' which included some of our borders in the Arno.

We are now looking forward to see more trees and wildflowers being planted which will increase the biodiversity bringing back hopefully some of our much loved native wildflowers.



Above, volunteers take a rest in the Arno and right, volunteers at work

Many thanks to our Treasurer 'Ray' who has put together some wonderful facts about our native wild flowers, which you can read on our notice boards. We continue to keep our open spaces in good order for the many visitors and local community to enjoy.

Meanwhile, the Little Arno Park on Mill Hill is one of the areas where Wirral Council has ceased maintenance. It's seldom used, has no seating and it is looking neglected.

However, it is a significant part of Oxtan's history and could become a gem.

The Friends of The Arno are working on plans to turn it into a landscaped 'Pocket Park'. Local Architects Peter Gommon and David Ainsley (who worked on the Williamson courtyard garden) are working with us and have come up with some initial designs incorporating the history which Ray Johnson, our historian, has researched.

Allan Brame, our Lib Dem councillor, approached the council on our behalf and their response was overwhelmingly positive. He has secured their agreement to transfer responsibility of the park to the Friends, but also to provide some practical support for the project.

This will require substantial funding. If you would like to know more about the project contact Peter on 0151 652 1027 or 07717 291947 or post a message on our Friends Facebook page.

Virtual Secret Gardens raises more than £3,240 for charity



Two of the gardens that featured in this year's event

THE Secret Gardens of Oxtan was held online again this year because of Covid —and proved another success.

More than 25 residents submitted pictures and video tours of their gardens and an array of local entertainers provided musical performances. Over 3,000 people visited the Facebook page on May 9, which culminated in a live raffle draw by Oxtan Society

chair Rhiannon Evans, with prizes donated by local businesses.

A total of £3,242 was raised for the Oxtan Society and Friends of the Arno, thanks to raffle ticket sales, Just-Giving donations and sponsorship by Bogans Carpets, Revive Stone Walls, Brennan Ayre O'Neill, OvenPro, Ewer-Roberts Flowers, Edwards at Oxtan, Bon Bakery, The Oxtan Artists, Oxtan Electrical, Eraklis Developments and Host.

Food boxes were placed in the village and the Arno and nearly £200 worth of food items were donated to Wirral Food Bank.

To view the videos and keep up to date with plans for the Secret Gardens in 2022, visit www.facebook.com/oxtansecretgardens



A fond farewell to Kate... and a warm welcome to Emma

WHEN Kate and Paul Wyness bought Greens in 2016 they always intended to move on after five years - but it was still with a heavy heart that they 'let go of their baby' in June.

Kate, 56, who grew up in Wellington Road, said: "Having worked hard to build Greens into what it is today, it was quite emotional selling up as we'll miss the shop and the people, but we have done the right thing. We know it is in safe hands with Emma."

The couple's love for the shop today is a far cry from when they first took over, as Kate explained: "There was so much to learn as we'd never run a business before and that first week we thought 'what have we done?'"

"I was a district nurse at the time and Paul had been looking for a new venture after retiring from the police. However, we both got stuck in and started going to the markets for fresh produce and met lots of lovely makers and introduced new lines such as the pastries, bread and apple juice.

"After a year Paul realised being a greengrocer wasn't really for him but I loved it so I gave up nursing and went full time. There are now 52 local makers selling their produce in the shop. Wirral is lucky to have such talented people.

"We couldn't have achieved what we have though without the support of our sons, Will, 27, and Joe, 23. Will is a creative director for Selfridges in London and Joe is a graphic artist who's just opened a studio in the Baltic Triangle. Their input has been invaluable - from the initial refurbishment to their ideas for new products and what was trending."

Kate and Paul have been passionate about 'giving back' to the community and supporting village events. They bought last year's Christmas Tree and Kate was instrumental in changing the old-fashioned multi-coloured Christmas lights to white ones.

"The white ones are much more in keeping with this lovely old Victorian village," said Kate. "Oxton is a fantastic place and we should really appreciate what's on our doorstep. There's so much potential here and I



The Oxton Society's Don Firth Williamson presents a bouquet to Kate Wyness. Below, new Greens owner Emma Wombwell

hope people continue to shop local and support the business owners because they work so hard to make this village what it is. I love the history walks, organised by the Oxton Society's History Group, and would encourage anyone who hasn't been on one to do so. I also hope a solution can be found for the parking problems to help residents, local businesses and the environment."

Kate added: "I'm certainly not ready to retire. I love furniture, clothes and art so maybe I'll look for a new challenge in one of those areas. Watch this space!"



BUSINESSWOMAN, award-winning chef and mum-of-three, Emma Wombwell, is thrilled to have taken over Greens. Having got to know Kate and Paul through supplying them homemade pastries and sweets, Emma told them she would love the opportunity to buy Greens if they ever moved on.

Neston-born Emma, 37, who has twin boys aged 10 and a four-year-old daughter, is a chef by trade and worked at The Thatch in Raby for 13 years before starting her own businesses. Her and her partner, Mike Shand-Davies, also run deli and catering company, Boysenberry, in New Ferry where they cater for private dining, parties, grazing tables and private jets. They even got the opportunity to cater for the Sir David Attenborough naming ceremony and regularly work with Paul Askew of the Art School Liverpool at events.

Emma said: "I actually wanted to go to university but due to my dyslexia I really struggled with exams, so I just fell into the hospitality industry from the love of food and fell in love it. This is where I met Mike. We have both worked as chefs from London to Paris, West France to Plymouth but decided to settle back home on the Wirral to have a family."

Emma, who has won many awards, including Merseyside Chef of the Year in 2009 to name just one, added: "I opened Boysenberry around the same time Kate took over Greens. I believe you dream, plan and achieve and I always envisaged having a artisan deli. I love what I do. I have a passion for food, good produce and community. Everyone loves what Paul and Kate have done and I know I have big shoes to fill. We have the same ethos but I'm a different person and hope to carry on with what they have created. I don't want to take their place but I want to take Greens to the next level. I have lots of connections on the catering side and Kate and Paul have given me a really good foundation to build upon."

Oxton People—Author Helen Jones

HELEN Jones grew up in Wallasey before moving to Oxton in 2014, where she lives with her husband, Chris, four-year-old daughter Isla and two cats. The 35-year-old recently published her first book...

What inspired you to write a book?

I've always loved writing and wrote a lot of stories as a child. As I got older, I moved more towards writing poetry, as I find it a very cathartic and fun process.

Whilst on maternity leave, I read a lot of children's books to my daughter and I was captivated by rhyming stories in particular. I decided to write my own rhyming story book to read to her I wanted the book to have a moral to it, so that she could learn important life lessons in a light-hearted and interesting way.

What is your book about?

Mrs Muddle is a funny, rhyming, beautifully illustrated picture book which encourages children to be proud of who they are and to respect and celebrate each other's differences. Mrs Muddle doesn't worry about what other people think of her.

Ali and Jessica live down the lane and they are fascinated by Mrs Muddle's unique and peculiar ways. Together with her little pet mouse, Mrs Muddle tries to teach the children that life is so much more fun when you're just being yourself and not worrying about what others think. It is available on Amazon.

How long did the process take?

The story was never intended to be published, however two years after

writing it, I found myself going back and continuing the story. Once I was happy with it, I read it to my husband. He was really impressed and said that I should send it to a publisher. After much persuasion, I agreed and sent it away and, to my amazement, I ended up with three offers!

Once I signed the contract with my chosen publishers, the process took just under a year, however we were also in the middle of a global pandemic, which undoubtedly slowed the process down.



Author Helen Jones

Will you write a second book?

I have a few ideas which I'm exploring. I really have to be inspired and in the right frame of mind to write. If I sit down and try to put pen to paper (yes, I always write the old fashioned way!) when I'm not feeling excited and full of inspiration, then I don't produce my best work. I'm hoping to

start writing my second book at some point this summer.

What is your earliest memory?

My earliest memory is being three years old and going to Arrowe Park Hospital to meet my new baby sister.

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

I have changed my career quite a few times. After finishing my degree, I worked as a waitress and volunteered at a film company in Liverpool. I then went on to become Digital Media Co-ordinator at Hollyoaks, and after that I decided to go back to Uni to qualify as a primary school teacher. I then left teaching and I am now an Executive Assistant at Merseyrail (and in my spare time I run an online gift business). I always think that if there's something you want to do, then better to go and try it, rather than looking back and having regrets.

What do you like best about Oxton?

There is so much that I love! It's a privilege to have beautiful shops, bars and restaurants on my doorstep and I love the community spirit. When I'm in the village, I often think that you could be anywhere in the world. We are very happy here.

What improvements would you like to see in the village?

As a family we enjoy going for walks around Oxton, but we have noticed a big increase in the amount of dog muck on the pavements, which is a shame. We need to look after our wonderful surroundings so that we can all enjoy this beautiful place we live in.

These boots were made for walking...

HEAR about the many stories of people and events from the village's rich and varied history brought to life by an Oxton Society Walks Guide.

EAST WALK: Fairview Road, South Bank, Arno Road: 10 July, 11 September, and 2 October.

WEST WALK: Village Road, St Saviours, Wellington Road; 24 July and 15 September. The East and West Walks begin in the village centre, by the post box

ARNO WALK: Ingestre Road, Birch Road, Woodchurch Road: 7

August and 18 September. The Arno Walk starts by the play area next to Sainsburys petrol station CH42 8PQ
WILLIAMSON WALK: Slatery Road, Devonshire Place, Beresford Road: 27 June, 22 August and 19 September. The Williamson Walk starts at the Williamson Art Gallery.

The Wombles of Oxton Village are we...

“WHY do we pick up litter around Oxton? Because we really love where we live and we want to help make the village look as lovely as possible.”

Those are the words of ‘Oxton Womble’ Philippa McGuire who has collected hundreds of bags of rubbish over the past five months with the help of like-minded residents.

Philippa was inspired by Greasby sisters Andrea Cutts and Lyndsey Whitley who set up the successful Wirral Wombles earlier this year to tackle grot spots on the peninsula.

Philippa set up an Oxton hub – supplying bags, litter pickers and hi-vis jackets from Wirral Council - and was joined by her friend Jane Williams, who owns the Drawing Room, Tina Hogg and Toni Houghton for Saturday clean-up sessions.

“We start in the village centre and then pan out to do a road each,” said Philippa, a retired art teacher. “It’s very rewarding and quite therapeutic. You feel like you’re doing something really positive. It’s lovely when the children take an interest



Philippa McGuire below and Jane Williams and Angela Watson above



and they love trying out the litter picker.”

Jane added: “We set out to do one hour but we often stay out longer as it’s quite addictive picking up rubbish. Even when I’m walking my dog I will always have a picker with me!”

Discarded face masks, cigarette butts and empty spirit bottles are the most common items found littering our streets, and volunteers have noticed an increase in household waste items being placed in the village’s bins.

“People are trying hard to dispose of their litter responsibly but there are only five bins in the village and they get full pretty quickly,” said Philippa. “Local businesses really appreciate the effort we’re making. Wayne from Biffa does a great job, he’s a real star, but ideally we need the company to do more collections. Litter is an ongoing problem and we’d like more volunteers. If anyone would like to join us that would be great.”

Dates for litter picking are advertised on Only In Oxton or you can leave your details at The Drawing Room.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE Society is still investigating the format of the 2021 AGM. We are concerned that the meeting should not exclude members who don’t have access to Zoom and that we are able to process the main business with the widest possible member involvement. An agenda will be distributed shortly.

OUR programme of commemorating Oxton people of note is continuing on August 7th at noon. George Schultz was born at 3 Silverdale Road. George became a Captain in the renowned Birkenhead Bantams in the First World War and lost his life in Picardy leading his battalion to capture a strategic hill, known as The Knoll. Current serving officers and men, together with veterans will be in attendance for the unveiling by Major Paul Hands from Chetwynd Barracks. A Booklet about George is available at the Oxton Bookshop. We do receive suggestions regarding people of note from Oxton for articles in the

History Periodical and for a Blue Plaque. Send your suggestions to history@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

THE Oxton Society has contacted North West Ambulance Trust to investigate why the device is not yet registered. In the meantime, the Oxton Defibrillator Cabinet code, if required in an emergency, is held by Edwards at 23 Rose Mount and Christine Lesley at 54 Christchurch Road. Please note, the code can only be used once 999 has been called.

A REMINDER that the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum and café is now open 12pm to 5pm Wednesday to Saturday.

THIS sample of wallpaper is still in situ in an untouched part of a 1907 house in Glenmore Road. Probably in what was the ‘butler’s pantry’ originally, this paper would have been installed because it was easy to clean.



Typically stamped ‘hygienic’ on the reverse, and costing in the region of 2/6d to 3s a roll, these kinds of roller relief printed tile pattern papers were very successful because they were so practical. The iris flower was a popular motif at the turn of the 20th Century, often used in a more sinuous, flowing style as part of Art Nouveau designs: this version is a moderated variation that would appeal to more modest pockets as an enduring pattern, suitable for the less-seen parts of the house.

Who's been living in my house?

Retired chartered chemist Peter Humphreys and his wife, Brenda, moved into one of seven flats in Eastcourt, Talbot Road seven years ago. He has spent the past three years researching some of the residents who lived there before him. He shares what he's learned for this edition of Who's Been Living in My House...

A BRIEF history of Eastcourt was reported by the History Group in February 2019 so this article focusses on some of the former residents.

Sisters Mary and Fanny Rose, proprietors of a boarding school for young ladies at Oakfield House, Beckwith Street, reopened as Highfield Ladies' Boarding School at Eastcourt in 1860.

Eastcourt was called Highfield then and had an adjoining West Highfield building which has since been demolished.

Septimus Ledward JP became the next occupant in 1862. He was the seventh child of Edward Ledward, hatter, of Liverpool who had died in 1835, aged 57. Septimus was just 16.

He was to become an Iron Merchant and owned tracts of land in Liverpool and Birkenhead. Before taking up residence at Eastcourt he had been living on Oxtown-hill since 1856.

In 1859 he was instrumental in establishing the volunteer Cheshire Rifles Corps, and in 1861 he led a deputation calling for John Laird to stand as Birkenhead's prospective MP.

In May 1862, he became a Justice of the Peace and in October was drawn into a dispute following bloody riots in Birkenhead when Liverpool Police declined to offer support. They were, however, assisted by Cheshire County police and 3,000 local volunteers were sworn in as special constables.



Above, Eastcourt today. Below l-r, the family grave of the Ledward Family in Frankby, Ledward's Clock Tower in Royden Park and the first Hillbark House

Ledward vigorously defended the local police, many of whom had suffered serious injury.

He was also one of the key players in the long-drawn-out dispute between Henry, 18th Earl of Shrewsbury, and the numerous Oxtown merchants who had been issued notices of eviction following the Earl's assertion that their leases were invalid in law. Litigation ensued over a number of years in what was known as the case of 'The Oxtown Leases'.

Ledward had close connections with the Royden ship-building family, his wife, Harriet, being invited to launch the *Savoir Faire* in her capacity as ship's sponsor. Her maiden voyage, to the Far East, was a great success but her next not so, as she foundered off the Irish Coast.

But perhaps his greatest legacy is the Royden Park estate, where he built

the first Hill Bark during his residency in Oxtown. The grounds remain a popular visitor centre today where his splendid clock tower is, perhaps, a most fitting memorial to the gentleman.

He died in 1890, aged 71, and was interred in the churchyard of St John's, Frankby, his family grave-stone being second only in prominence to the Royden family tomb. His Will records £67,336 10s. 5d.

Thomas Eden, a member of The Royal College of Surgeons became the next resident. He was awarded a Gold Medal by the University of London. From the British Newspaper Archives, there are references about his involvement in the Temperance movement, having founded The Elms Temperance Institute in Toxteth Park.

In 1896 we find a new owner, Hubert Edward Richmond-Gale-Braddyll, a Cotton Broker who changed the name of the property to Eastcourt. There is compelling evidence, through family ties, that the name originated from East Court, Charlton Kings, near Cheltenham.

Hubert descended from the Braddylls of Conishead Priory, Cumbria. His Great-Great-Grandfather, Wilson Gale-Braddyll, was MP for Lancaster and subsequently for Carlisle, Colonel in the 3rd Royal Lancashire, or Prince Regent's Own, Regiment of Militia and Groom of the Bedcham-



Tribute to former chairman of the Oxton Society

AN early member, and later Chairman of the Oxton Society, William Bruce Harrison passed away in Tauranga, New Zealand, on 23rd May 2021, aged 85.

Bill was born in Rock Ferry in 1935 and studied at Bangor University, later working as a purser on ships sailing between Liverpool and New Zealand. settling in Hamilton, Waikato, he began his career in radio journalism.

Returning to England in the early 1980s and joined by wife Pip, Bill became a specialist diagnostics representative for Schering AG.

Pip said: "We lived at 10 Palm Hill which we loved and he became the Chairman later in the 1980s.

"His committee members included our neighbour John Hinchcliff, who succeeded him as Chairman.

"Other members of the committee included Alan Hansen, Alison Clarke from Fairclough Lane, Bev Hague and Joe Parker the architect of his house at 1 Ingestre Road and an accredited silversmith.

"Mike Gallagher, also from Palm



Bill Harrison who was a former chairman of the Oxton Society and one of the founders

Hill, was roped in for the Society's two annual events.

"The summer annual fête, in the traffic-free village centre, featured Splat the Rat, throwing sponges at a policeman (not a real one!), Alison's gorgeous fudge, homemade cakes, a candy-floss van and other low-tech activities.

"From memory, the weather was always obliging, enabling the Society to add to its small funds.

"The carols at Christmas event, held in the Midland Bank carpark, was accompanied by roasting chestnuts."

Bill's retirement was spent in New Zealand from the early 2000s, first in Cambridge, Waikato and then in a Tauranga retirement village.

Pip said: "Bill's life and refined mind were vivid, filled with folk, classical and jazz music, golf, art, poetry, real ale, wine and he collected hundreds of books on these topics as well as architecture and gardening.

"He upheld community values while never fettering himself with petty conventions.

"He worked to maintain Oxton's fabric while encouraging new life into the village was crucial, he felt."

If you have any early memories of the Oxton Society, remember any of the people involved, or would like to contact Pip, please email the newsletter editors at info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Tribute to Steve Atkinson who founded the Oxton Bar & Kitchen

THE funeral of Steve Atkinson took place on Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

Steve and his wife Rachel had been Oxton residents for well over 30 years and the family established the Oxton Bar and Kitchen in the village in 2004.

Steve was taken ill quite unexpectedly and died shortly afterwards so his death was a great shock to his family, friends, ex colleagues and past clients.

His funeral took place on a beautiful sunny day with the funeral cortege leaving from the OBK car park so locals and business owners could pay their respects as numbers were strictly limited at Landican.

Those attending the service heard about his adopted and birth families, his great penchant for collecting antiques, his fascination with travel, music and of course, his love for Rachel and the couple's two sons Michael and Edward.

It was a service full of love, affection and humour and a true celebration of his life and legacy.

He will be greatly missed by many as he had become one of the 'great characters' of Oxton village.

Steve Richard Atkinson who set up the Oxton Bar and Kitchen in 2004 with his wife, Rachel



Trees and planning

Planning

THE Society has been consulted on the following:

Queens pub APP/21/00504:

2 externally illuminated and 3 non-illuminated fascia signs, 2 wall mounted non-illuminated signs, 1 post mounted sign to car park, 2 decorative lanterns fitted with led lamps to illuminate signage & building.

Comment: The style and appearance of the new signage is prominent without being overbearing and the lighting is not considered excessive having regard to the nature of the business and its location. The car park signage is considered an improvement on the existing.

11 Poplar Road APP/21/00668:

Creation of new entrance to the property adjacent to the existing drive and pedestrian access.

Comment: The property is identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The design of the new entrance and choice of materials is sympathetic

ic to the character of the building and hidden behind a high boundary wall. *No objection.*

The Willows APP/21/00505:

Variation of Condition 2 of planning application APP/13/00755 to reflect the car park as built and proposed increase in height of boundary wall.

Comment: This is to address the fact that the level of the new car park is higher than shown on the approved plans. To mitigate the impact on neighbouring properties the proposed solution is to increase the height of the side boundary wall. This should be of brick rather than a fence.

5 Parrs Road 21/00453:

Erection of a two-storey side extension following demolition of existing side extension.

Comment: This semi-detached cottage is identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, as are the neighbouring properties. The existing flat roof side extension has a negative impact on its character and the proposed pitch-roof replacement is con-

sidered an improvement. In particular it is proposed to remove the existing pebble dash render from the property frontage to reveal the original sandstone and to construct the extension in matching sandstone. This is the approach that has been adopted in the neighbouring cottages at 1-3 Parrs Road, which has had a positive effect. *No objection.*

Trees

38 Poplar Road—1 Beech tree diseased / fell and Beech tree on boundary with neighbouring property diseased / trim. *No objection.*

5 Birch Road—Eucalyptus tree / fell *No objection*

31 Fairview Road—Trim 4 sycamore trees —*No objection*

1 Nun Close - Fell 3 Leylandii.

Comment: These are mature trees and their removal would have a significant effect on the landscape. In view of their adverse impact on the adjacent property we would not oppose the application, but would recommend replacement with a more suitable tree species.

All eyes on new village CCTV initiative

IN recent weeks the Society has received a number of enquiries about CCTV in the village.

To clarify, the Society does not have any direct involvement in providing CCTV however, we have been in discussion with ward councillors.

Cllr Alan Brame (Lib Dem) said: "Oxton's councillors have been trying to persuade the council to install a CCTV camera in the centre of Oxton village – and at last progress is being made.

"We contributed about £6,000 from our ward budget to-

wards the installation.

"I attended a site meeting with council officers, along with Kate Wyness, formerly of Greens, and Don Firth-Williamson from the Oxton Society earlier this year.

"We identified the best location, close to the pillar box outside The Willows, with nearby access to the BT Openreach manhole.

"Officers tell me that all technical surveys and quotations have now been received and the next stage is the public consultation, which should take place soon.

Contact us

WE would welcome articles for the newsletter from members of the Society. If you have a topic you would like to write about, email info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk or post to the Secretary, 4 Willian Street, CH43 5ST.

You can also contact the Society about any other matter using the above addresses or via the website

www.oxtonsociety.co.uk

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