



OXTON SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.30 pm 29th September 2021 St Saviour's Church, Oxton

Present: 36 members of the Society and one non-member. Apologies were received from 10 members.

1. Welcome

The Chair of the Society, Rhiannon Evans, welcomed members to the AGM. It was explained that due to Covid-19 restrictions, an AGM could not take place in 2020 and that this deviation from normal governance was approved by the Charity Commission. Additionally, this AGM was arranged to minimise social contact and therefore some agenda items such as Design Awards and presentations were not included in this AGM. The Chair thanked, in particular, the 3 grocery shops in Oxton, namely Greens of Oxton, Stirling Wines and Edwards, for their actions during the Covid lockdowns in keeping vulnerable residents supplied with food.

2. Minutes of the last AGM

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

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Chair's report

The Chair outlined highlights from the last two years reports.

Annual report 2019/2020

- The Society celebrated 40 years since its inauguration
- History walks and history publications continued to be well received
- A new blue plaque to the composer Cyril Scott was unveiled
- A new Society logo was designed and approved emphasising "Conservation and Community" as the Society's major aims. Thanks were made to Phil Jenkins who was instrumental in formulating this new design.

- The 2019 Secret Gardens event was a huge success, providing vital funds to both the Society as well as the local sponsoring charities
- The Christmas Lights event took place.
- Hanging Baskets in the village received a gold medal award from the Royal Horticultural Society
- The unapproved appearance of a large mural in the village centre and the controversy this caused, resulting in referral to Wirral Borough council to enforce changes to the mural. Following this episode, the Society was forced to re-structure its Facebook sites in light of the abusive comments received, by creating a private Oxton Members site and a separate public “Only in Oxton” site.
- The Secretary, Alan Chape outlined changes that the Society were looking for to be included in the Planning Strategy Review undertaken by Wirral Borough Council; The Society wanted to see the bar raised for considering planning applications in the Conservation Area. Applications should be judged on the basis that they make a positive contribution to the character of the area rather than do no harm.
- Finance reserves stood at £27,000

The Chair asked for questions from members with one question asked concerning demolition of a sandstone wall. The question was referred to Steve Weber (chair of the planning group) who outlined the history of the unauthorised demolition which the Society was still pursuing with the planning enforcement section of the Council.

The Chair asked for approval of the report and this was received from the members present.

Annual report 2020/2021

- Completion of “The Willows” shops and accommodation
- Funding by the Society and installation of a defibrillator machine. John Field was introduced to members as the Lead person for this continual project.
- Christmas Lights were installed and proved a financial success with great support from the community through a JustGiving page.
- Cancellation of the Hanging Baskets project due to Covid, but replaced by the installation of bunting in the village during the summer months.
- The Secret Gardens event was cancelled due to Covid and replaced with a virtual event which raised £3000 for Wirral food banks.
- History Walks continued to be supported, and were communicated in a virtual status. These were a welcome addition to the community during Covid lockdowns.
- A new blue plaque installed, recognising Laura and Jeannie Willmer who lived together in Oxton during the early 20th century and were both the first women editors of local newspapers and female pioneers.

- The work of the Society in addressing planning applications, tree cutting applications and delivering our quarterly newsletters continued on, despite the Covid lockdowns
- A system of converting members to pay membership fees by bank Standing Order was introduced to start on 1st March 2021
- The Society suffered a financial loss for the year of £6,092, leaving reserves of £20,537. This loss was principally due to the cancellation of the Secret Gardens event.
- The Chair indicated areas of progress against the priorities the Society had set out in 2019.

There were no questions raised by members present for this report.

The Chair asked for approval of the report and this was received from the members present

5. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Griff Round presented an income and costs report for the last two years financial transactions. Emphasis was placed on there being a successful Secret Gardens event taking place in 2022 to make up recent losses, but overall, the future of the Society, financially, was very positive.

This financial report was approved by members present.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

The AGM elected the following to serve as Officers:

Chair – Rhiannon Evans

Vice Chair – Jeff Willis

Secretary – John Heathman

Treasurer – Griff Round

The following were elected to serve on the Committee: Dave Barden, John Booth Alan Chape, John Field, George Harrison, Chris Jarrey, Bob Knowles, Heather McGrath-Alcock, Carla Walker, Steve Weber, Dominic Wilkinson.

It was noted that as well as there being three co-opted members of the committee, being Don Firth-Williamson, Annette Capper and Allan Brame, that there are at present two vacancies on the committee and nominations were requested from members present for which none were received.

The Chair thanked Alan Chape for his commitment, influence, hard work and strategic vision he has brought to the Society in his role, for many years, as Secretary. Alan will continue as a member of the Committee, and also as Chair of the Wirral Conservation Areas.

7. Tributes to Retiring Committee Members.

Citations were read out to celebrate the significant contributions over many years of three retiring members of the committee; these being Patrick Toosey, Carolyn Weber and Steve Ferguson. These were enthusiastically acknowledged by members present.

8. Motions

There were no motions presented

9. The Future.

The Chair outlined the major items the Society will be concentrating on, these being:

- Lessons learned from the recent Covid pandemic
- Climate Change and the implications for Oxton
- A new local development plan being generated by Wirral Borough Council and its impact on the Oxton conservation area

Final questions were invited from the floor, and a query was raised concerning the installation of a CCTV system in the village centre. Allan Brame, who was present, responded with the latest status of this Council led project, explaining that it was hoped that installation of a camera would take place by 1st quarter of 2022. The Chair thanked Allan Brame for this and additionally for his sterling work during the Covid crisis in setting up volunteers to help vulnerable people, and his continuing hard work on behalf of the Society.

The promotional support by the Society for the Williamson Art Gallery was noted by one member and appreciated by members present. It was requested that a similar approach for Birkenhead Park took place. The Chair responded that the society was already in consultation with The Friends of Birkenhead Park regarding its 175th anniversary celebrations due to take place in 2022.

10 Close.

The Chair thanked members for attending, and the meeting closed at 8.55pm