

the

# OXTON SOCIETY

free to members



## Secret Gardens

The annual Secret Gardens of Oxton takes place on Sunday, May 11th with 19 residents showcasing their gardens to an expected 4,000-plus visitors.

From 10am to 5pm, the village will come alive with entertainment, craft stalls and plenty of food and drink as local businesses open their doors for a fun-packed day out.

To make this another bumper year for family entertainment and fundraising, villagers are being asked to spare a few hours of their time to help out on the day.

It takes a small army of over 400 helpers to make the event a success and as the supermarket saying goes 'every little helps'!

John Heathman, Secretary of the Oxton Society, said: "Events like Secret Gardens and the Christmas Lights Switch On can't happen without volunteers.

"A lot of our stalwart volunteers are well past retirement age now and we constantly need new people to support us.

"Secret Gardens is a great day out that everyone wants to enjoy, but even committing an hour or two of your time to help would make a massive difference and you could still enjoy the rest of the day and see the gardens.

"We are all volunteers and it's very rewarding to give back to this wonderful village of ours."



### *Support is needed for the following:*

Our 'T' tent, selling teas, coffees, homemade cakes and sandwiches, is a central part of our Secret Gardens event at Prenton Prep.

You can never have too many people helping to erect gazebos, put out tables and chairs, set up PA systems, erect signage etc.

For the Secret Gardens event we erect most of this the day before – which this year will be Saturday, May 10.

We then need people to help first thing on the Sunday morning (before visitors start to arrive around 9am) and then to dismantle everything at 5pm when the event finishes – many hands make light work!

If you could help, please email [kirstycotton@googlemail.com](mailto:kirstycotton@googlemail.com)



**The Oxton Society Cafe at The Hub** is always hugely popular and is a brilliant fundraiser for our partner charities on the day.

We need plenty of cakes to keep it going all day so if you are able, we would love to receive your baked goods! No cream cakes please.

Unless the cake is very delicate, please place it on a paper plate or piece of card then wrap in foil and clearly label the type of cake.

Please deliver cake to 13 Mount Pleasant (opposite Prenton Prep School) on the Saturday afternoon before the event or deliver directly to the cake stall on the day of the event.

We would be grateful if you could contact Dawn on 07976 739219 so contributions can be included in forward planning.

### Grand Raffle Prizes

The Grand Raffle is another highlight of our event where visitors can choose the prize they would like to enter - so we need plenty of ideas to tempt them!

This would be a great place to re-home any unwanted Christmas gifts! Toiletry sets, cookbooks, toys, kitchen items all gratefully received.

Our raffle team will need prizes by 30th April please so they can box or wrap them. The team is happy to accept donations of money so they can buy things to put in the raffle or to add to other items.

Please contact Monica Toosey at [pmtoosey@sky.com](mailto:pmtoosey@sky.com) or call 0151 652 1653.

Many thanks in advance for your support with cakes and raffle prizes.

We are also grateful to The Friends of the Arno for running the plant stall every year, but we are also dependent on Oxton Society members and others with green fingers to donate plants. *Please see Page 7 for details.*





## History-Group Award

The Guided History Walks run through the summer months and continue to be popular. There are currently five walks to various parts of Oxton and each run four times a year plus one-offs for various groups.

They aren't just informative, we try to make them entertaining too. Our guides team could do with another member. You would be given lots of information and support to get going, so all you would need is an interest in local history and feel comfortable about talking to up to 15 people.

To talk about this please ring Paul Smith on 07734558411 or Bob Knowles on 07946475087.



## Christine Lesley hair salon enjoys a makeover

Hairdresser Christine Lesley is used to giving her clients a 'new look' but this year she decided her Oxton salon needed a makeover too!

The premises, on the corner of Christchurch Road, underwent a major refurbishment, creating a central island feature for ladies, a new backwash area and extending the gents' barbers facilities managed by her brother, Adrian.

With clean lines, a monochromatic colour palette and natural lighting, the space has been transformed into a modern, communal space for clients to enjoy.

Last year Christine celebrated 30 years in business - 17 of which have been in Oxton. She said: "I wanted to invest in the business and give it a fresh new look as it had been a few years since the last makeover. I wanted something completely new and thought the island would be a great addition to the salon. The team love it and we've had so much positive feedback from customers."





## The Green Shop – Oxton's hidden gem

**The Green Community Shop has been part of the landscape in Oxton Village for 28 years but for many residents, it's still a bit of an enigma.**

It first opened its doors in the former Co-op building in Christchurch Road but when that was sold to make way for the Drawing Room, it moved 'across the road' to Number 49-51.

So what is it the Green Community Shop? The Oxton Society Newsletter talks to founder and manager Joanne Stakes...

### **What's the background to the Green Community Shop?**

I worked for Oxfam years ago and I used to talk about creating somewhere where people could go to for no other reason than to have a cup of tea and a gab.

Then I was asked to manage a new charity shop called the Green Lions that was setting up in the derelict Co-op. It was a wreck of a building and the Co-op said we could go in rent free. It had holes in the roof, the floor didn't meet the walls and it didn't even have a toilet.

We were there for a short while and we had a second-hand settee and invited people to come in and sit down for a chat - apart from when it rained as it was just too wet so we couldn't open!

Then Green Lions decided they didn't want a charity shop. I was talking to a resident who still lives in the village today and he encouraged me to carry on.

We moved across the road to the ex-catalogue shop and we're still here all these years later!

### **What's the concept behind the shop?**

We are not a charity shop, we are a not-for-profit community group.

We sell unwanted second-hand clothes, toys, books and household items that would otherwise go to landfill and this hopefully discourages people from buying new. We are very sustainable.

A social supermarket operates from here and we host various community groups. Groups like the Kailash Buddhist Centre and Birkenhead Woodcraft Folk hold some of their sessions here as we have a couple of rooms they can use.

We also collaborate with Wirral schools by providing unwanted textiles for recycling.

### **Who uses the Green Shop?**

Everyone is welcome here and some people have been coming for years



Everybody is seen as a member and lots of people end up doing voluntary work for us.

For me, the main thing is people can just drop in for a cup of tea and a chat if they need to. I want people to live in a more cooperative way and inside the Green Community Shop that's possible.

We created this from nothing. I did naively think that one would open up on every street corner but sadly not.

Our finances are always near to the bone but we're still going and that's also thanks to our landlord who has been very understanding, especially during Covid.

### **What plans do you have for the future?**

A lot of groups stopped coming after Covid but it's slowly building up again. A new sewing group has started and they've made some fabulous things.

It's interesting that some residents have never been in our shop or don't see us as accessible. We describe ourselves as a community space and that's exactly what we are – for the whole community.

The reason we're still here after 28 years is down to everybody around here who has supported us and that's something to be very proud of.

We have two part time staff and dozens of volunteers.

I see everyone who walks through the door as a volunteer because they're volunteering their time to come in here or they're volunteering their money by buying something.

Through Emulsion Support Painting and Decorating, the Oxton Society have just repainted the outside of our shop. That's a perfect example of how it works, people walking in and getting involved!

***The Green Community Shop opens Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.***







### *Did you know that over 400 individuals or households are now members of The Oxton Society?*

We are extremely grateful for your ongoing support – it really matters. Our members are our lifeblood, providing legitimacy for all the things we do to help make Oxton a better place to live and work. Members are also a source of a group of tireless volunteers who help run our events, deliver newsletters, liaise with the Council and ensure the village looks at its best through initiatives such as the hanging baskets scheme.

As a membership organisation, it is essential that we are accountable. We take this very seriously, publishing a regular newsletter hand delivered to all local members, maintaining a website and social media accounts, and ensuring we are visible at key events such as the Secret Gardens. Our autumn Annual General Meeting is open for all members to attend, and any member can stand for nomination as an officer or member of the committee.

Membership fees are an important source of income for the Society, and as we head into a new financial year, we have been contacting members to ensure that everything is up to date. Payment has never been easier and, like many charities, in recent years we have moved to a system where the only payment method we now accept is standing order. More than 8 in 10 of you now pay in this way, with the only exceptions being a small number of 'life members' and a group of members who have paid for a fixed number of years in advance under

arrangements that have now ceased. For these members, we have a record of when their fixed terms come to an end and will ask them to set up a standing order on expiry. Some of you may have recently received written notice of this.

The good news is that for the vast majority of members who now pay by standing order, membership renewal is automatic, and so there is no need to remember to complete any paperwork or online forms. Unless you terminate your standing order – in which case we'd be grateful if you would let us know – there is literally nothing further to do!

Of course we would love to have more members, and so please spread the word amongst your friends and neighbours who live in Oxton and care about the village. At £8 for individuals and £10 for households, annual membership is a bargain, and for those wishing to join, all the information they need is on the membership page of our website which can be accessed by scanning the QR code below.

If you have any questions about membership please contact me at [membership@theoxtonsociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@theoxtonsociety.co.uk)

*Hugh Owen, Membership Secretary*

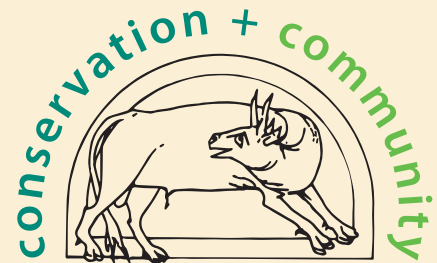
### YOUR MEMBERSHIP AT A GLANCE

#### **Membership Includes:**

- 3 newsletters a year
- 3 local history supplements
- Regular updates on local news & Society activities
- Members' emails, Facebook and Twitter notifications
- Advice on planning & tree work
- AGM, Annual Report and Accounts

#### **Your Membership Helps Us To:**

- Preserve and enhance the Conservation Area
- Raise awareness of our history and architecture
- Encourage involvement in community and civic pride
- Keep our finances in good shape



THE OXTON SOCIETY  
Charity no. 511130

If you are aware of people who have recently moved to Oxton or you have neighbours who aren't members of the Oxton Society but may wish to join, email [info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk](mailto:info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk) and we'll drop off a membership information pack.



## The Arno Recreation Ground - 125 years of Oxtou History

This section of an OS Map – dated 1898 - of that part of Oxton always known as **Arno Hill** shows that at that time its most noticeable landscape feature was a vast, deep but by then abandoned stone quarry.

A worthless place those might have thought who had so eagerly taken away its stone, but not everybody who lived in Oxton thought the same.

In 1900, two publicly spirited local residents, **Edmund Taylor** and **Catherine King**, realised its potential value as a healthy place of escape from the rigours of day to day life and so, and at their own expense, leased the site from its owner – the Earl of Shrewsbury - for a period of 15 years.

They then set about, again at their own expense, converting the abandoned quarry into an informal public park of sorts to which they gave the name **The Arno Recreation Ground.**

An article in a local newspaper in 1907 proclaimed that “Nature is bountiful here. Gorse, heather, bramble and wildflowers grow in riotous luxuriance” and then that it was now “... a haven of rest and contemplation for the adult, and for the children a bit of fairyland, the home of romance and mystery”.

To celebrate the **125th anniversary** this year of the founding of The Arno Recreation Gound, the **Friends of The Arno** are planning to place an Information Board telling its life story – for who might guess today how, why and when that story began. If only Catherine King and Edmund Taylor could see it now!

## Plants wanted!

Are you already taking cuttings, collecting plants, growing seedlings and potting ready for the Friends of the Arno plant stall at the Secret Gardens.

The plant stall is always a huge attraction at the Secret Gardens of Oxton with people queuing up to grab the best bargains!

The Friends' are dependent on their members and green-fingered residents who nurture, grow, split, dig up and pot plants ready to be sold.

All plants welcome.

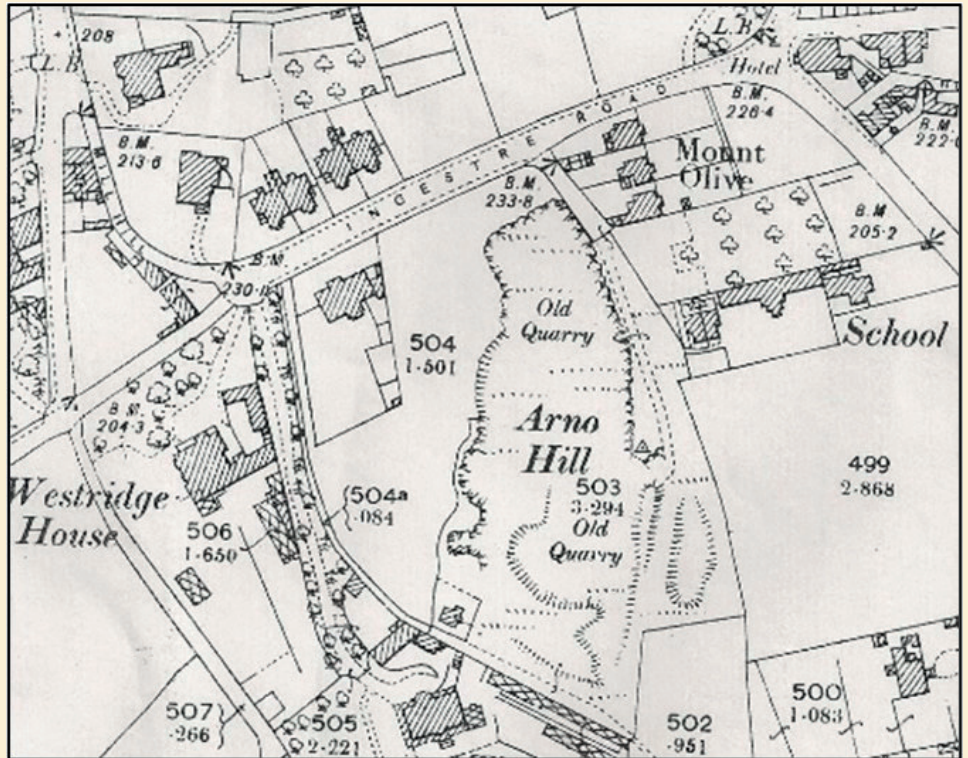
Plants can be delivered a few days before Sunday 11th at 1 Ingestre Road (you can leave in the porch).

Please label them if you know what they are, particularly if rare.

If you'd like them collected, please call Peter on 07717 291947 or they can be delivered to the stall from 8.30am on the Sunday.

The plant stall will be in its usual place of The Willows in the village centre. You can also leave your purchases there and collect at the end of the day.

All sales will be cash.



### The Arno today



## Ashton House development gets the planning green light

**This has been a long and complex process, beginning nearly four years ago when the planning application was first submitted. The site had been vacant for over six years after the NHS Trust withdrew its services, leading to community interest in its future use.**

The plans approved by Wirral Borough Council involve significant changes to the site.

Ashton House will be transformed into 11 apartments, allowing the historic structure to remain in use while contributing to housing needs.

In contrast, Adcote House and Kent House will be demolished to make way for five new homes -three of which will back onto Alton Road, and two onto Kent Street.

Importantly, the development will retain the distinctive sandstone walls and most of the mature trees surrounding the site, which are seen as key features of the area.

The entrance to the new development will be from Columbia Road, with parking included on-site to accommodate residents. There is also a smaller unit, Thorn Heys, at the top of Columbia Road, which remains unused but is still owned by the NHS Trust and is not part of this development plan.

Alan Chape of the Oxton Society said: "Community engagement has been a crucial aspect of the project.

"Cllr Allan Brame facilitated tours of the premises for

neighbours and members of the Oxton Society, allowing us to voice our concerns about preserving Ashton House as a landmark and maintaining the site's historical integrity.

"While the Oxton Society had initial reservations about the design of the new houses, these concerns were taken into consideration, leading to revisions in the architectural plans.

"The planning process faced several delays due to the need for environmental and bat surveys, administrative changes, and even instances of vandalism on the property.

"Despite these challenges, Cllr Brame worked diligently to advocate for the project, raising concerns about the efficiency of the planning process in light of larger housing needs in the Wirral area.

"With the recent approval, the community can look forward to the development of new homes that respect the historical character of the site while addressing local housing demands.

"Construction is expected to start this year, with careful measures in place to shield the work from public view using the existing sandstone walls.

"Hopefully a major plus for the village including a sensitive process of organising and completing the access and construction of the site via Columbia Road."



## Contact us



If you have any comments or suggestions for the Society or the Newsletter team please email [info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk](mailto:info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk) or post to the Secretary, 7 Kylemore Road, CH43 2HA. You can also contact the Society about any other matter using the above address or via the website [www.theoxtonsociety.co.uk](http://www.theoxtonsociety.co.uk)

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